



Greetings on the occasion of the 76th anniversary of the shipping disaster in Lübeck Bay

Speakers reserve the right to deviate from the manuscripts

Short welcome address by Sönke Sela, Head of the Neustadt Town Council

Welcome speech by Klaus Schlie, President of the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament

Welcome speech by Mirko Spieckermann, Mayor of Neustadt in Holstein

Welcome speech by Swenja Granzow-Rauwald, President of the Young Committee of
the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme



Short welcome address by Sönke Sela, Head of the Neustadt Town Council, for a silent commemoration on the occasion of the 76th anniversary of the Cap Arcona disaster

President of the Parliament,
Ms. Granzow-Rauwald,

I would like to welcome you to Neustadt in Holstein in my capacity as the Head of the Neustadt Town Council – and on behalf of our Mayor, Mr. Spieckermann – and to thank you for coming here today.

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, this year we are again forced to meet in a small group at the Cap Arcona Memorial to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the shipping disaster which took place on May 3, 1945.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Schlie, also on behalf of Mr. Spieckermann, for attending today's commemoration and thus giving it special significance since you are the highest representative of the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament.

And thank you, Ms. Granzow-Rauwald from the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme, for representing the Amicale which has a particular connection to the memory of the past events.

It is my fervent hope that on May 3 next year we will be able to meet here in large numbers to remember the events of May 3, 1945, especially in order to involve young people in the tradition of remembering the those who were murdered at the time as we had done in previous years.

I would like to yield the floor to the President of the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament.

Klaus Schlie
President of the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament
Welcome speech for the silent wreath-laying ceremony at the Cap Arcona Memorial in
Neustadt/Holstein on May 3, 2021

The speaker reserves the right to deviate from the manuscript.

Mr. Sela,
Mayor Spieckerman,
Ms. Granzow-Rauwald,
ladies and gentlemen,

Seventy-six years ago, a tragedy took place here in Neustadt Bay which was a part of one of the gravest crimes against humanity in history. During an Allied air raid, more than 7,000 people died aboard the Cap Arcona, a passenger steamship, and the Thielbek, a small cargo ship. Most of the victims had previously been prisoners of Nazi concentration camps. They lost their lives a few days before the end of the war, which would have meant the salvation of these tortured people.

The fact that the missiles that sank the ships in Neustadt Bay were fired by British pilots is still a particularly tragic aspect of the disaster that took place on May 3, 1945. The British believed they were firing on German Navy ships and knew nothing of the helpless concentration camp prisoners they were carrying.

And the German guards were counting on this mistake. The prisoners had been forced on death marches in Hamburg in the effort to clear the camps before the Allies reached them and in the perfidious hope of destroying the evidence of the inhumane Nazi crimes.

Herding the enfeebled survivors onto the ships was also about extermination, in the true sense of the word, about the murder of concentration camp prisoners shortly before the end of the war. The lifeboats on the two floating prisons were deliberately tampered with and the hulls filled with flammable fuel by the SS. The tragedy of Neustadt and the death of thousands of people were planned by the Nazi henchmen. They are the ones who bear the responsibility for this crime.

Ladies and gentlemen,

the memories of what happened on May 3, 1945 in Neustadt Bay first had to be compiled during a long process. Shortly after the war, there was a conscious effort among the German people to suppress the thought of the Nazi crimes and the feeling of their own guilt and their responsibility towards the victims.

Very slowly, initiatives to commemorate the victims of Nazi crimes started emerging. An exhibition dealing with the events of 1945 was opened in Neustadt too. A plan is currently being drawn up for the redesign of the exhibition. Remembering victims in the form of commemorative ceremonies at cemeteries has repeatedly directed public attention to the Nazi past at our doorstep. This is important because the mass murders did not only take place in extermination camps in Eastern Europe but also in camps in Germany.

This is where the Nazis started committing their unspeakable crimes in 1933. The dreadful events in Neustadt Bay also took place right in front of the eyes of the German people, some of whom even participated in the brutal murders. Therefore, no one could claim in 1945 that they had not noticed the Nazi extermination machinery.

Seventy-six years after the horrible crimes the Nazis committed, a once lively thread of memory is in danger of vanishing. That is precisely why the initiatives to keep the memory alive and to get the next generations actively involved in remembrance work are so important.

The Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme is one of the important organizations which have been responsible for establishing and maintaining contacts among survivors and their relatives for 63 years now. Together with its numerous volunteers, it has been a symbol of a collective remembrance work connecting people regardless of their nationality or age.

Former German President Roman Herzog once said: "The memory must not end. It must remind future generations to be vigilant."

Today, the vigilance seems to be more important than ever. Unfortunately, there is an ever-growing desire to reduce complex challenges to oversimplistic formulas and slogans not only here in Germany but all over Europe and the world. This is deeply disturbing, and these observations remind us to not forget the foundations which our liberal democratic society was built on more than 70 years ago and which made a new beginning possible.

In Neustadt and throughout the state of Schleswig-Holstein, committed citizens, mindful of the never-ending responsibility Germans bear for the Nazi crimes, have made it their mission to introduce future generations to this important topic, vital to our democracy.

Seventy-six years later, this is a good sign: We, citizens of Schleswig-Holstein, keep facing up to our responsibility, dealing with our history and drawing important conclusions from it.

Schleswig-Holstein owes its new beginning to the trust of the countries that defeated National Socialism in 1945 at the cost of many lives and gave us Germans our freedom.

If we do everything today to commemorate the victims of National Socialism, never to forget them and to end any attempt at such a crime before it begins, we do it fully aware of the gratitude towards all the people who, in the face of monstrous crimes, did not lose their faith in democratic Germany.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Together with the citizens of Schleswig-Holstein, the members of the Schleswig-Holstein Parliament remember those who died on May 3, 1945. The work that has already been done in Neustadt to remember this day is impressive and the will to keep the memory of it alive for the future generations is praiseworthy. I would like to express my gratitude, appreciation and respect to all those who have contributed to this.

I wish all those who are involved in this work in Neustadt and elsewhere in our country success and perseverance – you are actively and resolutely building our house of democracy.

Time and again, you point us to the immovable foundation of this house: the responsibility to actively shape and actively defend our democracy! I thank you all very much for this commitment.

Mirko Spieckermann
Mayor of Neustadt in Holstein
76th Cap Arcona anniversary on May 3, 2021

Fellow citizens, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with a heavy heart that we must cancel the commemorative ceremony to mark the 76th anniversary of the Cap Arcona disaster due to the Coronavirus pandemic yet again this year. We would have liked to hold a ceremony with survivors, former prisoners' relatives, members of prisoners' associations and religious communities as well as representatives of federal, state and local governments to commemorate the victims and express our sympathy to their relatives.

What happened must not be forgotten!

A few days before the end of WWII, a tragic mistake led to aerial attacks on the Cap Arcona and Thielbek ships by British fighter planes (Typhoons). The ships were bombed because they were believed to carry German troops. However, almost 10,000 Neuengamme prisoners were aboard the ships, 7,000 of whom lost their lives during the air raid.

What a tragedy it was to see the long-awaited liberators bring death and destruction upon prisoners.

It is important to keep the memory of this dreadful catastrophe alive and to remember the victims.

What happened must not be forgotten!

Since the honorary cemetery was opened, many people have visited it or stopped by to remember the victims.

Who were those people held prisoner on the ships under the Nazi dictatorship shortly before the end of WWII, facing the hours to come with great trepidation? They were people like us whose hopes of liberation were never fulfilled.

The survivors suffered under atrocious conditions and that is why it is necessary to keep the memory of the horrors of the Nazi rule alive and to join us in commemorating the victims.

What happened must not be forgotten!

In order to cope with the past, it is vital to educate ourselves about the Nazi crimes against humanity. As long as the eyewitnesses live, they can tell us about their lives and testify to the inhumane system of the Third Reich. It is particularly important for young people to know what led to the disastrous development in Germany and what its consequences were because they are the ones who will take over the political responsibility in the future.

This is why it is important to learn about the painful history of our people and draw the right conclusions from it. Only then will we be able to defend ourselves from demagoguery and political radicalism.

What happened must not be forgotten!

Today, we Germans have to live with the fact that no other European nation has ever done so much injustice and brought so much suffering to their neighbors like ours.

And we Neustadt residents have to live with the fact that a particularly tragic chapter of the war played out in our city. The Cap Arcona disaster became a dreadful part of the history of this city 76 years ago.

The town of Neustadt in Holstein takes over the responsibility for the atrocious events that took place in it or in its vicinity. Another part of this responsibility is the Cap Arcona Museum which was founded in 1990.

The state of Schleswig-Holstein has allocated 300,000 Euros for the museum's redesign and for this, I would like to thank you, Mr. Schlie. Please, take our thanks back to Kiel as well.

We will look closely at how the Cap Arcona Museum can be redesigned, especially having in mind young people and exploring the ways in which new media possibilities could be used. But we also need to reconsider the content.

Because keeping remembrance alive means introducing new information and developments, questioning and reflecting on the forms of remembrance and changing them if necessary.

What happened must not be forgotten!

We owe it to the victims to not let their suffering be forgotten. It is our responsibility to make sure the history does not repeat itself. The peace, freedom and solidarity we have the privilege of living in today must never be taken for granted.

That is why we are committed to protecting democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Far-right parties are gaining more support all over Europe. Such parties compromise human rights and undermine the rule of law. In other countries, dictators are coming to power and disregarding the rule of law. Minorities are being oppressed and political dissidents incarcerated. We have to do something to counter such alarming developments.

To make sure a tragedy such as the one from May 3, 1945 never happens again, we must keep the memory alive at all levels of the society and among all age groups. The schools and the Children and Youth Network of Neustadt in Holstein show how students can learn about our history across the education system. Whether it is a moving documentary, a traveling exhibition or a memorial stone, it is the students' way of saying: "We have not forgotten, and we never will!"

What happened must not be forgotten!

We are here to commemorate the victims of the Cap Arcona disaster. Their fates must be a legacy for us to fight for tolerance, peace and humanity. The town of Neustadt in Holstein and its citizens are aware of this obligation and their responsibilities.

Today, we will lay wreathes here at the honorary cemetery on Stutthofweg and at the Jewish cemetery on Grasweg and observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims. Please take a moment to think of the victims so that we can remember this disaster together but also everyone for themselves.

Let us pause for a moment of silence to remember and learn for the future.

Thank you!

Swenja Granzow-Rauwald
President of the Young Committee of the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme
May 3, 2021
Neustadt-Pelzerhaken

Representatives of the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament and the Town of Neustadt,
Mr. Hawling,
Survivors of the Neuengamme concentration camp and former prisoners' relatives,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have gathered here at the honorary cemetery in a small group to honor the victims of the shipping disaster which took place on May 3, 1945. I would like to thank you all on behalf of the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme for coming here today. I would like to extend our thanks to the people all over the world who pause today to remember the concentration camp prisoners who died here 76 years ago a few days short of their liberation.

In late April 1945, around 10,000 prisoners of the Neuengamme concentration camp were forced to march in the direction of the Lübeck harbor. Upon their arrival, most of them were loaded onto the ships Thielbek and Athen and later the Cap Arcona as well. Below the ships' decks, the prisoners were suffering from hunger, thirst and disease.

When the British Royal Air Force attacked the ships on May 3, 1945, they did so on the assumption that this would prevent German troops from retreating across the Baltic Sea. Seven thousand prisoners died in the flames, drowned or were shot. Marian Hawling is one of the 450 survivors.

In his short speech, which can be accessed today from 11 a.m. at neuengamme.international, he talks about how he managed to leave the burning Cap Arcona and to reach the shore.

Marian Hawling was born in Poland. He was active in the resistance against the German occupiers in various European countries and survived several concentration camps. Following his liberation, he emigrated to Australia and started a family there. He told his children about his experiences much later.

Yevgeny Malychin also survived the shipping disaster 76 years ago. In the speech he gave here at the honorary cemetery in 2019, he expressed his hope for the future generations in the following manner:

“May equality and brotherhood become a normality in their lives because that is how they will learn to respect human life and dignity.”

Mr. Malychin traveled to Neustadt for many years. Lately he was always accompanied by his grandson Aleksander. Last winter we received the sad news of his passing. Just like his grandson, we too will always remember his story and the story of his comrades.

The families in which the stories of the catastrophe that happened 76 years ago could not have been passed down directly have also been shaped by it and the imprisonment that preceded them.

Bernard Jeune was a young boy when he lost his father Eugène Jeune, who was a French resistance fighter. Thanks to his father’s fellow prisoner who later became his stepfather, he found his new home in Denmark. In a time like this, when many people are leaving their homes in search of new ones, stories like Jeune’s should make us stop and think.

By being here today, you, Mr. Schlie, Mr. Spieckermann and Mr. Sela, are setting an example. You are showing those directly affected by the disaster – the survivors and their relatives in different countries – that you can see their pain and grief. You are showing that the Cap Arcona has its firm place in the memory of the state of Schleswig-Holstein and the town of Neustadt. We share a common responsibility to make sure the future generations too regard this statement as self-evident and take active part in giving it shape. On behalf of the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme, I would like to thank you for your commitment and for walking this path together with us.

I am speaking here today in my capacity as the President of the Young Committee of the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme whose work is directed toward the third and fourth generations. The Amicale is the umbrella organization representing associations from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. Its goal is to make sure the history of the Neuengamme concentration camp, the experiences of its former prisoners and the postwar history in Germany continue to be explored and dealt with.

Seventy-six years after the war, there are only a few survivors who are still members of these associations. Today, it is mostly their relatives who are the active members. They show that the Nazi crimes continue to have an impact on the families of those who were persecuted at the time. For them,

it feels natural to be confronted with the thought of what this history has to do with their lives every day because they continue to feel the loss and the pain and ask themselves: "What might have been?"

Every exploration of a family history leads to the discovery of new details and connections which facilitate the understanding of the history. "What do the events that happened 76 years ago have to do with me?" Our goal at the Amicale Internationale is to have people in Neustadt, Schleswig-Holstein, in Germany and abroad answer this question with "It has to do with all of us."

We remember the people who, following their suffering in concentration camps, died here 76 years ago. We keep their memory alive and the memory of their individual stories and experiences. In this way, we commit to their ideals of humanity and brotherhood. We say, "Never again" and we know that we all must do our part, day after day, to protect and strengthen our democracy.

Thank you very much!