

**Speech Stefan Wunsch**

for the opening of the exhibition “Gerettet – auf Zeit. Kindertransporte nach Belgien 1938/1939“ by the Lern- und Gedenkort Jawne und Anne Prior in the Kulturkino Vogelsang IP:

Dear viewers, dear colleagues,

welcome here in Vogelsang, more precisely in the Kulturkino at the International Place Vogelsang IP in the Eifel National Park. We, the entire team of the NS-Dokumentation Vogelsang, are very pleased that the exhibition “Gerettet – auf Zeit. Kindertransporte nach Belgien 1938/1939” (Saved – for the time being. Children’s transports to Belgium 1938/1939), which has been set up here for quite a while, can finally be opened today.

This important exhibition, developed by the Lern- und Gedenkort Jawne from Cologne and Anne Prior, directs our attention to the escape aid to our neighboring country Belgium and thus to the life stories of the people involved.

These so-called “Kindertransporte” at the end of the 1930s were a direct reaction to the almost inconceivable violence of the November pogroms of 1938 and, of course, to the increasing persecution and exclusion of German Jews and to the massive pressure from Germany to force them to emigrate. The “Kindertransporte” to Belgium enabled around 1.000 children to be rescued – often only for a certain time, because after the Germans had invaded and occupied Belgium, they continued their persecution measures there as well; in many cases, however, the “Kindertransporte” also ensured the survival of these young people.

Escape from exclusion and violence, escape of unaccompanied minors, young people, escape of children, help for refugees, looking the other way, exclusion and again violence; a very current topic in our present.

Let’s take a closer look for a moment to understand why it is so important for us to show this exhibition precisely here in Vogelsang, at this perpetrator site in the Eifel.

Kurt Korona from Dinslaken was orphaned and 14 years old when he fled to Cologne with other children after the events of the November pogroms, on November 10th, 1938. On December 20th, 1938, Kurt arrived in Belgium in a “Kindertransport”. He lived in different places in Belgium, for example in an orphanage and in July 1942 he received the so-called ‘Arbeitseinsatzbefehl’ from the German military administration

and complied. Already on August 4th, he was deported from the 'SS-Sammellager Mecheln' – where today there is the memorial Kazerne Dossin – to Auschwitz and most likely murdered there. Today, a 'Stolperstein' (stumbling stone) in Dinslaken commemorates Kurt.

Bernhard Szleper from Cologne, born in June 1930 and raised in the 'Griechenmarktviertel' of the cathedral city, was just eight years old when his parents entrusted him to a "Kindertransport" to Belgium in February 1939. There, in Belgium, where his parents also later managed to escape to, the family was again exposed to constant persecution and constant danger to life since the German occupation of Belgium in 1940. Without the courageous help of women and men of the Belgian rescue resistance, the family would probably have fallen into the hands of the occupying forces even sooner. While his father did not survive the deportation from Mechelen to Auschwitz, Bernhard's mother survived the deportation as well as camp imprisonment. Bernhard himself lived in Brussels until his death in 2017.

And the third example: The siblings Inge and Heinz Bernhard, who we also learn about in this exhibition, also experienced the November pogroms in 1938 in Dinslaken: Inge was ten years old, Heinz was 17 years old. Both reached Brussels with a transport of fugitive children at the end of January 1939. In Belgium, both lived with different families, changing them several times. Heinz, the older of the two, was taken to southern France in 1940 and detained there until he finally managed to escape to Switzerland, similar to his sister. Inge, as a twelve-year-old refugee, also made her way from Belgium to France, and at the age of 15, she finally fled further to Switzerland. The siblings survived; their parents were murdered in Auschwitz. Inge and Heinz emigrated to Palestine in 1945.

These were four brief examples on four life stories of German Jews from this very important exhibition. At the time when these four young Germans had to flee from their homeland because of persecution and violence by Germans, that is in the winter of 1938/39, the training for National Socialist activists here in Vogelsang, who were supposed to and also wanted to be raised to become racist and anti-Semitic thinking, feeling, acting 'Herrenmenschen', was running at full speed, so to speak very close to the events of the "Kindertransporte".

The violence that Kurt, Bernhard and the siblings Inge and Heinz experienced, especially in the winter of 1938/39 in Cologne and in the Lower Rhine region, and which led to their escape, came primarily from Nazi activists similar to those who were to be trained at the 'NS-Ordensburg Vogelsang' as so-called 'Ordensjunker' to become a supposedly elite ruling personnel of the 'NSDAP'.

So if we look at the history told by this very informative exhibition and at the history that can be discovered in our permanent exhibition here in Vogelsang, we take – to put it quite simply – complementary, supplementary and mutually dependent perspectives on National Socialism and actions of the individuals at the time. So to speak, we then have the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous before our eyes, in the form of inclusion and exclusion as techniques of ruling: Exclusion, persecution, massive violence on one hand, and hopes and promises of advancement, the offer of participation and belonging as 'Herrenmenschen', as functionaries of the racially homogeneous imagined 'Volksgemeinschaft' on the other.

Especially at a place like the former 'NS-Ordensburg Vogelsang', which cannot be a "neutral" place nowadays, the history told by the exhibition about the "Kindertransporte", the life stories that this exhibition brings to light, are of great importance.

Democracy is not self-evident. We are by no means only reminded of this fact by looking back into the past, as the exhibition allows us to do, but this fact is before our eyes every day in our present, through the activities of the Extreme Right, through antisemitism, through conspiracy theorists, through racially motivated incidents or such attitudes that we encounter in everyday life. It is up to all of us to shape and live a democratic and humane society of the many.

Finally, I would like to thank the team of the Lern- und Gedenkort Jawne and Anne Prior and all those involved. I would like to thank our shareholders and the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung NRW and finally I would like to thank our team here on site, which helped to make this exhibition possible, I would like to mention Gabi Harzheim, Eva Krane, Dörte Stein, Nicole Junker especially. And last but for sure not least, a very special thank you to the former "Kindertransportkinder" and their descendants, who are sharing their life stories with us today in the context of this opening and in the exhibition.

**Speech Anneke Winckel and Adrian Stellmacher**

for the opening of the exhibition "Gerettet – auf Zeit. Kindertransporte nach Belgien 1938/1939" by the Lern- und Gedenkort Jawne und Anne Prior in the Kulturkino Vogelsang IP:

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

My name is Anneke Winckel. Adrian Stellmacher and I speak today on behalf of the exhibition team of the Jawne Learning and Memorial Site, which also includes Claire Merkord and Ursula Reuter. Our cooperation partner Anne Prior not only inspired this project with her research on the Israelite Orphanage Dinslaken, also worked on many themes for the exhibition

A veritable luck is also the cooperation with the artist Ludwig Dunkel and the curator of the artwork, Werner Fleischer. With these two, we were able to win two men whose approaches to dealing with history and memory has heartened us and continues to inspire us. Therefore, a section of the sculptural installation of the table can be found on the posters, invitation cards, the flyer and the catalogue.

We are very pleased that our exhibition can be shown in the cultural cinema of the Vogelsang IP. Hopefully the pandemic situation will soon allow you to have a look at it as well.

With the November pogroms of 1938, the persecution of Jews in National Socialist Germany intensified considerably. But where could they still flee to? Most states in the world did not accept Jewish refugees. However, this changed at short notice after 9/10 November 1938 - at least for unaccompanied children and teenagers. The horror at the extent of the violence and the fact that only children could leave Germany prompted their parents to take a difficult decision. They placed their children in the care of strangers in order to assure their safety.

The parents were the first and most important rescuers of their children.

The fact that not only the British but also the Belgian government had organized such a rescue program is still quite unknown and needs further research.

In 1938 and 1939, about a thousand Jewish children were able to escape persecution in Nazi Germany to the safety of Belgium in 17 Kindertransporten - only a temporary safety, as became clear at the latest after the German occupation of Belgium in May 1940. This is what the title of our exhibition refers to. The Kindertransporten were enabled by the extraordinary commitment of many organizations and individuals in Belgium and the German Reich.

On November 24, 1938, the Belgian authorities authorized the first transport of 16 children – destination Antwerp. On July 17, 1939, the 17th and last Kindertransport

left Cologne Central Station for Brussels. About 160 children from the Rhineland and Westphalia, 60 of them from Cologne, were able to leave Germany this way. After Vienna and Berlin, Cologne provided the third largest contingent of children for the Kindertransport to Belgium.

In 1938/1939 some children could travel on to Great Britain, Palestine or overseas. When the Germans occupied Belgium in May 1940, those who had remained in Belgium were once again in a very precarious and life-threatening situation. Many of them survived with the help of the Belgian resistance. This was as diverse as the Belgian population: there was the organised resistance of the Jewish Defence Committee, there were nuns and priests who hid children in their institutions, there was the non-Jewish girlfriend and the non-Jewish colleague from work who took in a Jewish child or even an entire family. Jewish children also survived in sanatoriums with falsified medical records or after an adventurous escape to the south of France.

But also many of the Kindertransport children were imprisoned, deported and murdered. We want to honor their memory with our exhibition.

Our main concern is to make the life stories of the children of the *Kindertransports* and the *enfant cachés* – the hidden children – visible with this exhibition – to pay tribute to their individual and collective history of persecution and rescue and also to honour their rescuers.

This appreciation cannot be concluded with historical contemplation, and certainly cannot be ascribed to it. This appreciation can only be sincere if it includes solidarity with the Jews living today.

This also means, and not least, the continuous fight against anti-Semitism in all its forms today.

Even though we cannot meet in the exhibition today, we would like to briefly introduce our exhibition to you: When you enter the exhibition room, the first thing that catches your eye is the sculptural installation *the table* of Ludwig Dunkel. In the same room you will see 81 portraits of the children who escaped to Belgium on a Kindertransport on December 20, 1938. Their stories and the places where they lived in Belgium can be traced on a screen station.

We would like to describe the work of Ludwig Dunkel in the words of its curator Werner Fleischer:

*"It consists, on the one hand, of a table group formed by a dining table without a tabletop, four chairs pushed under the table, and a multiple wrapping of this furniture with a plastic sheet; on the other hand, of a stack of wooden timbers placed over and next to each other. The elements are placed in such a way that visitors can circle around them, step between them, and can see through them. The block of beams is*

*oriented toward the group of tables at an acute angle in such a way that, if set in motion, it would strike them. The arrangement is one of abandonment. The work stimulates the perspective of a specific historical situation. However the constellation of history, no one can get access to anymore, is equally one of the present, in which the artist expresses something that refuses access. It is the paradox of an open form, visible to all, but locked in itself."*

However, the biographical islands are at the heart of the exhibition. On eleven double panels you will find the biographies of individual children or siblings from Dinslaken, Duisburg, Essen, Halberstadt, Cologne, Wuppertal and Vienna who were able to travel to Belgium with Kindertransports or illegally.

Right next to the biographical panels, you will find in-depth information on helpers, organizations or homes that played an important role in the biography of the child presented.

Of course, you will also find general information about the Kindertransports and the situation in pre-war Belgium and in Belgium during the occupation.

With our three-year research project and the exhibition **Saved – for the time being. Kindertransports to Belgium 1938/1939** we close today a gap in research and memory. We wish you interesting discoveries and experiences in our exhibition.

Finally, we would like to thank all those without whom this exhibition could never have been opened:

Many thanks go to the Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Nordrhein-Westfalen for funding the project over the past three years. Many thanks also go to the Landschaftsverband Rheinland, which generously sponsored the exhibition.

We thank our graphic designer Claudia Oly, who developed the fabulous exhibition design. She has impressively translated our research and ideas into an unmistakable and appropriate design.

Special thanks go to Johannes Blum, without whose support this project would not have been possible.

We would also like to thank the former children of the Kindertransports and hidden children who told us their story and supported us so much, once again thank you for their trust!

Thank you very much for your attention!

**Speech Eva-Maria Krane**

for the opening of the exhibition “Gerettet – auf Zeit. Kindertransporte nach Belgien 1938/1939“ by the Lern- und Gedenkort Jawne und Anne Prior in the Kulturkino Vogelsang IP:

Dear viewers,

as the person responsible for the cross-border historical-political educational project “Euregionaler Erinnerungskultureller Jugenddialog” (Euregional Remembrance-Cultural Youth Dialogue) of the NS-Dokumentation Vogelsang, which is funded by the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Nordrhein-Westfalen and in the context of which the exhibition “Gerettet – auf Zeit. Kindertransporte nach Belgien 1938/1939” (Saved – for the time being. Children’s transports to Belgium 1938/1939) is shown in the Kulturkino Vogelsang IP, I would like to conclude by thanking you for your interest and participation in this digital opening.

We are glad that we were able to give you different impressions and insights into the stories and topics of the exhibition by the Lern- und Gedenkort Jawne und Anne Prior with the opening event today: We learned something about the ‘offer of participation’ in the context of the training of the future political leadership of the ‘NSDAP’ in the ‘NS-Ordensburg Vogelsang’, about simultaneities and conditionalities of inclusion and exclusion processes driven by racism and antisemitism. We heard about the historical context of the “Kindertransporte” in 1938 and 1939, gained insights into the life stories and into individual as well as collective transnational stories of persecution and rescue of the “Kindertransportkinder” and hidden children and addressed the purposes and research perspectives as well as the content structure of the exhibition. We were also able to listen to very personal testimonies that demonstrate the connections between history and the present.

For these impressions and insights, I would like to say thank you:

Danke to Stefan Wunsch as well as Adrian Stellmacher and Anneke Winckel. Merci à Adolphe Nysenholc, Renée Grabiner et Marcel Frydman. Thanks a lot to Paul West and Susan Sanders. Merci beaucoup à Henri Roanne-Rosenblatt.

For us as the team of the NS-Dokumentation Vogelsang, showing the exhibition by the Lern- und Gedenkort Jawne und Anne Prior is an important thematic extension of our historical-political educational work and enables us to start conversations about transnational contexts of National Socialism at this perpetrator site of history and – by

making the stories of the “Kindertransportkinder” visible –to fill our own voids with regard to the historical experiences, voices and perspectives associated with this place.

The exhibition “Gerettet – auf Zeit. Kindertransporte nach Belgien 1938/1939“ will be shown at the Kulturkino Vogelsang IP until June 30, 2021. We really hope that we can make the exhibition accessible to as many people as possible over the course of the next few months and we look forward to your visit as soon as it is possible. In the meantime, you can find up-to-date information about visiting the exhibition and further digital insights on our homepage and on our social media channels.

All the best to you all and very warm greetings from the International Place Vogelsang IP in the Eifel National Park.