

BISINGEN – I Places - Concentration Camp Cemetery

By Christine Glauning – Translation Judith Renschler, Bisingen 2008



Cemetery of the concentration camp in Bisingen (inaugurated in April 1947), around 1947, private property



Cemetery today – Hentsch

On April 29th, 1947, the so called “Ehrenfriedhof” (cemetery of honour) for the victims of the concentration camp in Bisingen was inaugurated. Together with representatives of the French military government state (Württemberg) and community (from Hechingen) officials as well as the inhabitants of Bisingen and its neighbouring villages had to attend the celebrations. As nothing was left at the site of the former camp grounds that would remind of the concentration camp this cemetery, as can be observed for numerous other places as well, served as the first central place of remembrance. The cemetery is situated on a small hill. Its centre is marked by a huge cross which, according to the French, should be visible far away. Today this is no longer possible as the surrounding terrain is grown over with large trees which hide the cemetery. In the beginning always one wooden cross represented one of the 1158 victims, which had been taken out of the mass graves. In the 1960s those crosses were replaced by few stone crosses, always two by two, whose design resemble a soldiers’ cemetery thereby disguising the victims’ identities. No symbol reminded of the Jewish victims.

There are various inscriptions on the pedestal of the huge cross. The French (representing the victor powers) and Latin (universal representation of all victims) words not only ever got translated they also do not mention the historical background. The visitors neither learned anything about the existence of a concentration camp in Bisingen nor about the origin and destiny of the victims. **The**

French inscription (“1158 victimes de la barbarie nazie qui reposent en ce lieu”) only generally reminds **“1158 victims of the Nazi’s barbarity who rest at this place”**.

The biblical words in Latin – as well as in their translation – raise more questions than provide answers: “Dederunt se periculo ut starent sancta ipsorum et lex” – 1. **Book of Maccabeus 14:29**. – **“They exposed themselves to danger / risked their lives in order to prevent the extermination of the sanctuary and (God’s) law”**.

The memorials’ inscriptions at numerous places, not only during the first post-war years, neither provided with information nor explicitly remembered the victims. Therefore the concentration camp’s history disappeared from public consciousness. The pretended remembrance at the first and up to the present central memorial site in Bisingen significantly concealed the NS-past.

This is still true with the “Stele” (square pillar/column) designed by sculptor Ugge



Bärtle from Tübingen (1961-63) with its relief of a figure suffering miserably, which was placed at the edge of the cemetery. The inscription at its pedestal says: “Hier ruhen 1158 Tote unbekannten Namens aus vielen Ländern Europas. Den Opfern ruchloser Gewalt“ (“To 1158 unknown dead bodies from many European countries – victims of wicked violence”).

Today the sculpture is of no great regard. As the cemetery’s entrance was relocated the visitors usually do not pass the memorial any longer. Only those who know about the “Stele” and look for it will finally find it.

(further information on the cemetery of the concentration camp:

Christine Glauning, “Entgrenzung und KZ-Systeme”, p.381-384)



Jewish memorial, donated by the administrative district Zollernalb and the community of Bisingen, unveiling on October 25th, 1998.

The French occupying power carried on the oil shale works in Bisingen after the war, yet stopped the production in 1946 due to ineffectiveness and blew up the factory.

Today the terrain of the former quarry is used as sports ground which is surrounded by a forest planted in the 1960s. The barracks of the concentration camp were pulled down; the terrain of the camp is – still – vacant lot.

The former delousing barrack, which had been placed outside the camp in “Schelmengasse” was rebuilt a residential building in 1945 and can still be seen. The historical sites are connected by a historical track (s. part III “learning areas”).

Memorials – Illustrations look at [“german-blog-illustrations”](#)

Two inscriptions – in French and Latin – at the cemetery (at the base of the large cross

Since 1962: “Stele” at the cemetery (designed and created by sculptor Ugge Bärtle)

Since 1969: Memorial on the former quarry in “Kuhloch” which was erected by German and French soldiers when building the sports ground.

Since 1985: Memorial at the cemetery (initiated by “Juso” Bisingen – youth organization of the democratic socialist party)

Since 1991: Memorial at the entrance of the cemetery (put up by the administrative district “Zollernalb”)

Since 1996: Sign at the entrance of the cemetery with information on further memorial sites within the districts “Zollernalb”, “Rottweil” and “Tuttlingen” (suggested by “Initiative Gedenkstätte Eckerwald”)

Since 1998: Jewish memorial, donated by the administrative district Zollernalb and the community of Bisingen

and Sign in remembrance of Godfried de Groot, donated by Holocaust-survivor les Arbeid, Holland

Since 05/2005: Second memorial for the Jewish victims of the concentration camp (erected by Shalom Stamberg, Haifa-Israel, survivor)

Since 10/2007: Memorial in remembrance of Yankel Gelibter, Polish Jew who died in the camp (erected by Chaim Gil, Tel Aviv-Israel, brother of the victim)