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ERLANGEN - The mobile part of the „Grey Bus Monument“ of the Centre for Psychiatry (ZfP) Suedwuerttemberg and the City of Ravensburg, which commemorates the victims of so-called „euthanasia“ under National Socialism, has been moved from Emmendingen (Baden-Wuerttemberg / Baden) to Erlangen (Bavaria / Franconia).



The immobile part of the „Grey Bus Monument“ of the owners ZfP Südwürttemberg / Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy I of the University of Ulm on the one hand and the City of Ravensburg on the other hand has its permanent place at the old gate of the ZfP Suedwuerttemberg in Ravensburg-Weissenau. The second, mobile part of the memorial now for a considerable time, stood at the Centre for Psychiatry Emmendingen and enriched the culture of discussion in this clinic in Baden on many occasions - for example at conferences and on memorial days.

At the time, however, it was by no means intended to be on display in the „Breisgau“ for several years: A work of art in the culture of remembrance, which is committed to so-called conceptual art, needs publicity and provokes the gathering of interested parties. However, this was not only difficult to achieve during the pandemic, but at times simply prohibited, legally. This is now a thing of the past. The artists Horst Hoheisel and Andreas Knitz, together with the ZfP Suedwuerttemberg, Prof Thomas Müller, have been planning the next location in Erlangen, Franconia, for some time now and out of the pandemic.

In Erlangen, many involved parties of e.g. the university, city administration and urban / civil society have been discussing possible forms of remembrance culture in respect to the crimes of the Nazi era with great commitment and, in some aspect, with controversy, for several years, focussing more than anything else on the former asylum. In the city's jargon, this is also referred to as „HuPfla“ (short for: „Heil- und Pflegeanstalt“). A „Place of remembrance and future“ is now to be created here, which aims to link aspects of the culture of remembrance with medical ethical issues of the future.

Firstly, the history: as in many places in the German Reich, many people were not only deported from the old Erlangen asylum - 905 patients according to current research. The

Erlangen asylum was also a place where the inhumane „starvation diet“ "invented" by Bavarian psychiatrists and used primarily in Bavaria and Saxony, was applied. This cost a large number of patients their lives. Book publications by Skribeleit and Helm (2023), Frewer (2020) and Frewer and Leonhard (2023) have already been published, and a working group led by medical historian Leven is also preparing another publication on the subject.

Many months of intensive preparation for the erection of the „Grey Bus Monument“ now lie behind the city archive, city hall and medical history institute of the Franconian city. On the morning of 6 February 2024, the „Grey Bus Monument“ was presented to the Erlangen public on the „Hugenottenplatz“. Erlangen's First Mayor Dr Florian Janik, Prof Thomas Müller on behalf of the above-mentioned owners of the monument and Horst Hoheisel on behalf of the artists who created the monument in 2007, spoke to the numerous citizens, in front of the „Huguenot Church“.

Representatives of the campaign alliance „Shaping remembrance - preserving HuPfla“ were also very supportive. The location at Hugenottenplatz, close to the main railway station of the town, is one of the most central traffic junctions in Erlangen city centre and is visited and passed by many people every day.

In the evening of the same day, a book presentation was held on the topics of both research and the culture of remembrance, to which the Research Unit for the History and Ethics of Medicine of the ZfP Suedwuerttemberg has also contributed. The exhibition accompanying the „Grey Bus Monument“ can currently be seen in the nearby Neustadt Church, which is also the university church. Events with school classes and more are planned.

Text & Photo: Prof. Dr. Thomas Müller