

Memorial for Soviet Prisoners of War – Preserving Memory, Restoring Dignity

Historical Background

During the Second World War, the prisoner-of-war camp “STALAG IXc” was located in the Richelsdorf Valley near Gerstungen. Prisoners from various nations were held there – among them many Soviet soldiers who were forced to perform labor under inhumane conditions. Far from home, many died from hunger, disease, or during dangerous work assignments, such as the construction of the motorway bridge.

The original burial site was established in 1948 in the Richelsdorf Valley – in remembrance of Soviet prisoners of war, forced laborers, and children who fell victim to the Nazi regime. Burial sites are protected by the state and must be preserved with dignity in accordance with German and international law.

The obelisk erected there in 1954 was relocated in 1977 from the former border area between the GDR and the FRG to the Untersuhl cemetery. However, the mortal remains of the deceased remained in the valley. Over the decades, the gravesite fell into neglect and was gradually forgotten.

The Reburial Project

In the summer of 2023, the remains of more than 70 young prisoners of war were recovered from the Richelsdorf Valley. The municipality of Gerstungen and the German War Graves Commission (Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge) worked together to ensure that the deceased received a dignified final resting place. The reburial was carried out with reverence by the municipal service “Gerstungen Grün und Service” in close coordination with the State Administration Office.

On June 22, 2023 – the anniversary of the German invasion of the Soviet Union – 60 of them were solemnly laid to rest at the Untersuhl cemetery. A moving ceremony with music, prayers, and personal memories honored their fate. Relatives from Russia also attended, establishing a personal connection to the deceased.

Additional remains of unidentified individuals of other nationalities were interred on a separate burial field following anthropological examination on August 26, 2024. They too were remembered in a quiet memorial service.

A Place of Reconciliation

With the redesign of the memorial at the Untersuhl cemetery, the deceased and the historic obelisk have been reunited.

This memorial stands as a reminder of the prisoners’ suffering and as a symbol of humanity, reconciliation, and peace – then and now. It reflects our responsibility to remember history and to return to the victims a dignified place of remembrance.