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Speech by Klaus Heilinglechner, first major of Wolfratshausen at the opening ceremony of the Remembrance Place BADEHAUS on the 21/10/18

Translated by Julia Grimm

I am delighted to welcome each and every one of you here at Waldram, a very special city district in Wolfratshausen. A place steeped in history.

You have all come here today because of one particular building: the so-called Badehaus. It is not just a normal building with walls and a roof. The building is a witness of history, it not only helps us remember, but also serves as a teacher of the past.

I believe that it is fair to say that the preservation of the Badehaus does not only help to process the past, but that it is also an investment in the future. Because only one who is aware of the past, is able to shape the future.

These days we have to be especially aware of this fundamental principle. Because I do ask myself sometimes if people have not learned their lesson from our country's past regarding all the ongoing demonstrations by Right wing extremists. We have to stop future generations from making the same mistakes as those hate-filled and envious few who started the world war.

This is why we have to make sure that our past will be never forgotten and the Badehaus will surely fulfill this task and serve as a constant reminder.

The Badehaus reminds us of the story of the present Waldram, which I would like to summarise in three different time periods: First, there was the war period. Forced labourers had to manufacture ammunition.

People of a culture threatened by extinction lived in former Föhrenwald and the Badehaus. Where they could, fortunately, find shelter.

And finally, this place was influenced by people of different origins who had to flee or where expelled from their home countries.

The post-war years were tough, no one can deny that. Nevertheless, the story about Föhrenwald-Waldram seems to be a story with a happy ending:

The emotional and physical damage caused by the war was hard to overcome for many. Föhrenwald, however, was a place of shelter. For many it was a place in which they could express their culture again. Föhrenwald did rescue a culture in a way, and I have to say I am very happy about this.

Like any other story, Föhrenwald tells the story about very brave people who became heroes to me. Even though the people generally lived isolated from the Germans, there are certainly exceptions to this. One such exception was, for instance, a German hairdresser, who took care of the people in camp, doing their hair. She was warmly accepted by the residents of the camp. This example

represents a successful intercultural understanding across different nations – something very brave to do back then.

Both in the past as much as today – one needs to have courage for a successful intercultural understanding. And it also needs elements of both empathy and sympathy.

Together - Let us tell the story of Waldram in a place such as the Badehaus.

Together – Let us encourage people with this story.

Let us show people empathy and sympathy.

And let us deliver the message that there is one certain thing we all have in common: We are all human beings.

The Badehaus is supposed to become a centre to learn and meet. It is supposed to provide thousands of events, thousands of workshops and feasts. So that everyone can breathe in a bit of this story and then shape the future with a fresh inspired breath.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and respect to the members of the association „Bürger fürs Badehaus“. Thanks to your initiative we are able to open the Badehaus today, and thanks to you the story of former Föhrenwald and the present Waldram will continue to be heard. It is overwhelming how much effort you have put into this project; this shows how deeply you care about it. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of your efforts.

Also, I would like to thank the Church which agreed to maintain this significant building and therefore laid the foundation of this project. Furthermore, I would like to thank the city council of Wolfratshausen which supported this project with 500.000 Euros. This shows how much trust is given to this special project.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you a great day. A day full of encounters, full of memories and full of hope for our future.

Thank you so much