

Press Release by the Committee for a Commemoration Site "Hotel Silber" Stuttgart
(Initiative Gedenkort Hotel Silber Stuttgart) March 2nd 2010

State Government of Baden-Württemberg set to demolish crucial building commemorating Nazi period

The State Government of Baden-Württemberg is set to demolish the Stuttgart centre of Nazi terror in the heart of Stuttgart, Dorotheenstrasse 10. An international architectural competition has been launched for the new layout of a lucrative city area, with the participation of famous architects like Foster and Partners, London, Richard Meier, New York, as well as Behnisch, Stuttgart. We doubt whether Foster and Meier were given the full background information, whether they can be aware of participating in the attempt of annihilating an historic site.

We will know more by Wednesday, March 3rd 2010, the date set for the jury to choose the winner. As a next move the Stuttgart City Council will have to decide, whether the majority are prepared to accept a draft which involves the demolition of the former Central Headquarter of the Gestapo. The new majority of Green and leftwing parties together with the Social Democrats, an outcome of recent local elections, might yet thwart the plan.

Fourteen organisations which for many years have made it their task to keep the Nazi period alive in the memory of the public are opposed to the building being demolished. They call for its preservation and designation as a documentation centre for the commemoration of the Nazi period, modelled on exemplary sites in Cologne, Berlin, Nuremberg and Munich. This scheme is being supported by many public figures from all walks of life, among them Guenter Grass, Nobel laureate in Literature.

The so-called "Hotel Silber" was the Gestapo Headquarter for Stuttgart and Württemberg. In this building people were humiliated, interrogated, tortured and murdered, people who the Nazis denied the right to live, or who were opposed to their doctrine. In this building the blueprint for the deportation of Jews from Württemberg to concentration and extermination camps was drafted. Lina Hatje, the Jewish wife of an "Arian", was interrogated here, later to be murdered in Auschwitz. For her granddaughter Caroline Hatje the demolition of this building would signify a slap in the face of all families whose loved ones were killed under the Nazi regime.

"Hotel Silber" stands in the way of a projected development in which Breuninger, an upmarket fashion company, has a vested interest. Their objective is to extend their sales area in the city centre. A luxury hotel and new offices for the State Government are also projected on the site.

Alfred Breuninger, company head in the Nazi era, was a member of the NSDAP, which nominated him Councillor in the City Council, and he was a profiteer of the Nazi regime. As an "Arian" he "took over" the business, prestigiously located on the Stuttgart market square, from a Jewish owner. He employed forced labourers and made money from providing uniforms for the "Wehrmacht" (armed forces) and for prisoners.

The Baden-Wuerttemberg State Government is notorious for its lapses as to Germany's Nazi history. Hans Filbinger, formerly State Prime Minister, participated even after the end of World War II in passing death sentences on "deserters", which eventually led to his demise from office. At his funeral in 2008, Guenter Oettinger tried to clear his pre-predecessor of any responsibility. In Oettinger's era the so-called "DaVinci-Project" was launched, Stefan Mappus, his successor, is holding fast to it.

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