

**Sperrvermerk bis 17.04.2011, 14 Uhr,
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort.**

Opening speech at the commemoration of the 66th anniversary

– **Bertrand HERZ –17th of April 2011**

today we commemorate the 66th anniversary of the liberation of the Buchenwald camp.

Every year this commemoration recollects an important event of the long time of Nazi barbarism from the ascendancy of the regime until its collapse.

Last year the 65th anniversary of the liberation of the camp on the 11th of April 1945 was ceremonially commemorated. About 15 veterans of the US Army and 200 former prisoners and their next of kin participated.

Tribute was paid, on the one hand, to the efficient American troops continuing their successful advance through Thuringia and chasing away the garrison of the Lager-SS and, on the other hand, to the courage of those illegally offering resistance. Not waiting for the imminent arrival of the Allied troops, they liberated the camp disregarding possible dangers.

This year we commemorate a tragic occurrence of the war.

On 22 June 1941, that is 70 years ago, the Hitler regime commenced a thorough eradication campaign against the peoples of the Soviet Union. Millions of people, men and women, servicemen and civilians, lost their lives by Nazi barbarism.

The International Committee goes along with the commemoration of the sufferings. It joins the tribute to the Soviet soldiers, of who several millions were murdered nefariously. Some of them, even women suffered in the camps of Buchenwald, Dora and the subcamps, often refuse forced labour and in some cases were murdered in cold blood.

Let us also pay tribute to the courage of the Soviet peoples facing Nazi aggression. Let us also refer to the heroic behaviour of the inhabitants of Leningrad, who were resisting the bomb raids and the hunger of a siege lasting almost 900 days, sacrificing 1 million dead.

The International Committee pays tribute to the fights of the Red Army, its victory at Stalingrad and its very decisive contribution to the destruction of Nazism.

And yet another commemoration moves us.

This year the Federal Republic of Germany ceremonially paid tribute to the suffering of the Sinti and Romani during the Second World War and to the horrible mass murder this society was affected by. On the 27th of January this year, a survivor rose to speak facing the members of the Bundestag in Berlin within the commemoration of the victims of Nazism.

At the same time, that is in recent months, there unfortunately also were racist ideas

and declarations against this community in Europe, in some countries assaults, calls for hatred and even murders..

The International Committee goes along with the commemoration of the mass extermination of the Sinti and Romanies, many of them were our fellows in the camp. It also goes along with the fight against racism and ostracism this community still is exposed to even today and against negationism trying to delete any kind of genocide committed by the Nazis in the memory of the European nations.

I asked Romani Rose to rise to speak. He is chairman of the centre for documentation and culture of German Sinti and Romani which has, for many years, persistently and courageously been standing up for the recognition of the mass murder of this community.