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Speech by Dr Josef Schuster, president of the central committee of Jews in Germany at the opening ceremony of the Remembrance Place BADEHAUS on the 21/10/18

Translated by Carolin Heep and Julie Adams

It gives me great pleasure to be able to celebrate the opening of the memorial site Badehaus Waldram-Föhrenwald with you today. I am particularly pleased that so many guests have come from Germany and abroad. We just had the opportunity to hear the memories of contemporary witnesses of their lives in the DP camp Föhrenwald. The history of the Jewish DP's, the Displaced Persons, has long been a forgotten chapter of post-war history. From today's point of view this is difficult to understand. After all, there were hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who came from Eastern Europe to the Western occupation zones after the war, fleeing anti-Semitism and misery. After the horrors of the Shoah, Germany was by no means their desired destination. But after the riots and pogroms in Poland in 1946, many Eastern European Jews saw no choice but to leave their homeland for good and embark on a journey to the West - to the free world.

They were people who had often lost everything - their families, their friends, their belongings. They found temporary refuge in the DP camps. Often the temporary solution lasted for years. Most DP camps were closed in 1951, but the last DP's did not leave Föhrenwald until 1957.

Last year, Hans-Peter Föhrding and Heinz Verfürth published their book "Als die Juden nach Deutschland flohen" (When the Jews fled to Germany). The contemporary witness Ruwen Waks described in it how he remembers his childhood in Föhrenwald. At times this sounds very idyllic: sledging on the hills, gathering berries in the forest. That was exactly what often severely traumatized parents wanted for their children: many DPs at that time told little or nothing about the horrors of the past. And with the best of intentions: They wanted to protect their children as well as possible. Often the children were the reason why their parents still had the courage to live. Maybe that's why so many children were born in the DP camps: It is said that these camps had the highest birth rate of all Jewish communities in the world after the war.

Perhaps the children were also the reason why some of those who actually wanted to emigrate to Israel or the USA stayed here in Germany - and contributed significantly to the development of our Jewish communities. As President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, I don't really need to mention this explicitly: In Munich and Upper Bavaria, but also in other German regions, the former "Föhrenwalder" are an indispensable part of Jewish life in the post-war period and to this day. One of them was my esteemed predecessor in office, Dr. Dr. Simon Snopkowski sel. A., the long-standing president of the Association of Jewish Communities in Bavaria.

For a long time little has been said about their history. But in recent years a number of documentaries have appeared which recall the fate of the DPs.

Dear Ms. Krafft, dear Mr. Saal, with your commitment you have made a significant contribution to the opening of this memorial site today. I think this is of great importance, because it shows: Jewish life in Germany did not end with the Shoah. And I hope that many people from Wolfratshausen, the surrounding area and from all over Germany will visit the Waldram-Föhrenwald Bathhouse Memorial and view the exhibition. Because here you can see Jewish and German history, which is made clear and comprehensible through personal testimonies - an all-round successful concept.

I wish the initiators of the memorial site all the best, many visitors and much success also in the future!