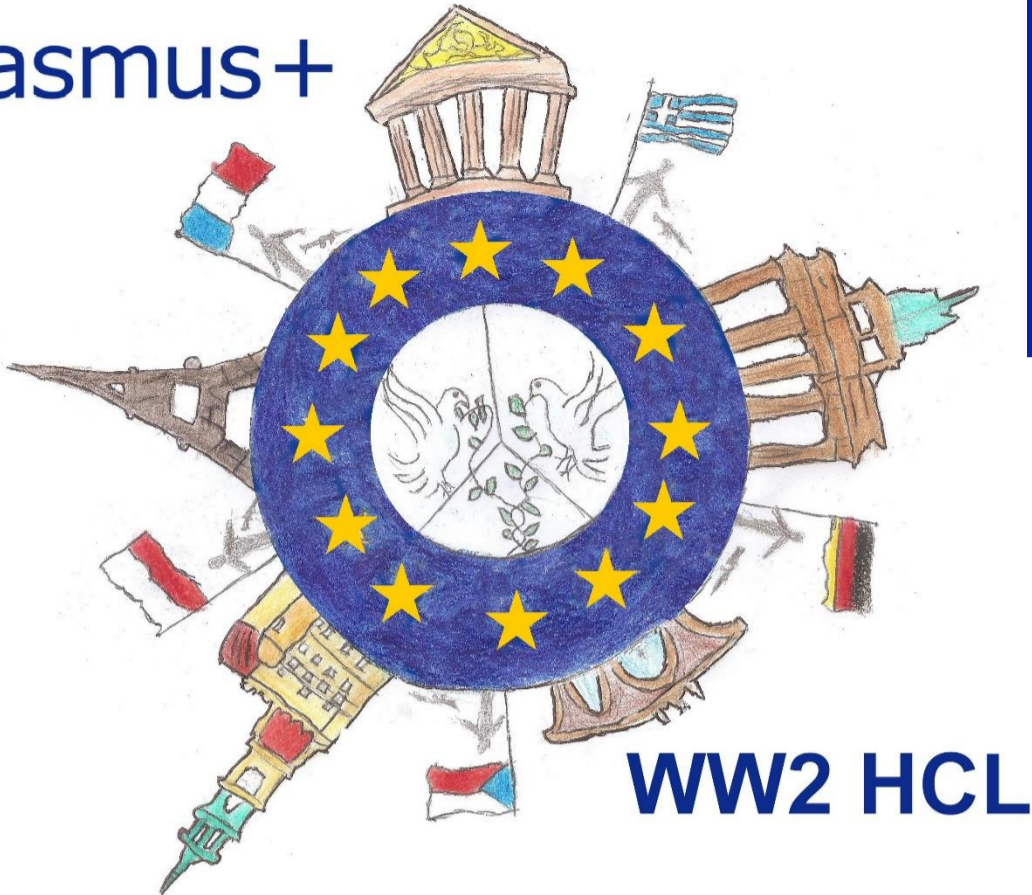


THE ERASMUS MAG

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Erasmus+



Welcome to Germany

The first mobility of the project WW2 “Our history and its cultural legacy”

As part of the school’s Erasmus+ project on WW2 “Our history and cultural legacy” we welcomed our partners from France, Greece, Poland and the Czech Republic between 21st - 26th January 2019

To prepare for our first mobility, which focused on the topic “Young people in WW2”, we met a veteran from the war. Herr Bruno Hoenig served as an anti-aircraft assistant near Koblenz when he was only 16 years old. He had to operate a cannon in order to shoot down enemy aircraft.

The most difficult task his unit had to do was to execute renegade soldiers.



Bruno Hoenig (90) at the Heinrich Böll Gymnasium in December 2018

Day 1 Welcome to Cologne

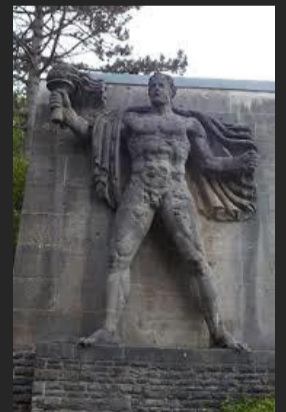
On Sunday, January 20th, 2019, our guests started arriving in the youth hostel in Cologne, where we had booked rooms for all of us. After some guided tours around the city, we had a first gathering to get to know each other and decide on logo for our project.

We then learned about our partners by watching videos about our partner schools in Olomouc (Czech Republic), Wormhout (France), Nova Slupia (Poland) and Chania (Crete)



The first meeting of the whole group in the youth hostel in Cologne-Deutz.

Day 2 Burg Vogelsang



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Day 2

Burg Vogelsang

The Vogelsang *Ordensburg* was built by the German Labour Front (DAF) between 1934 and 1941 and was one of three *Ordensburgen* designed to train future Nazi leaders. Its operation as a training establishment started in 1936.

With its roughly 100-hectare large area, the former National *Ordensburg* Vogelsang in the Northern Eifel district is one of the largest constructions of the Nationalist Socialist period.

A disturbing site that poses many uncomfortable questions

In addition to ideological schooling, physical exercise was an important element of the training. By the end of their formation, the course participants were supposed to resemble the ideal “new German” and appear as leaders of a “master race”.

This makes the former *Ordensburg* a memorial, which does not primarily deal with the victims of the National Socialist dictatorship but with the National Socialist activists, hangers-on and perpetrators – a disturbing site that poses many uncomfortable questions.



With the outbreak of the Second World War, the educational courses were stopped. Initially, the men of the *Ordensburgen* went into war as soldiers. Later hundreds of them were deployed to Poland, the Baltic States and the Ukraine.

Day 3 The NS Documentation centre in Cologne

On this day we went on the train to Cologne. First we had a guided tour of Ehrenfeld, where we learned about the Edelweiss Pirates (see below) who were very active there. After that we visited the so called “EL DE Haus” (photo)



This building was the headquarters of the Cologne Gestapo (secret police) between December 1935 and March 1945. In the final months of the war, several hundred people, most of them foreign forced labourers were murdered in the courtyard of the building. With a touch of historical irony, the building was one of very few which were not hit by any bombs.

Today's NS Documentation Centre is dedicated to the commemoration to the

victims of the Nazi regime, as well as research and educational work about Cologne's history during the Nazi era. The former Gestapo prison was opened as a memorial site on December 1981. Some 1,800 inscriptions and drawings by prisoners have survived on the walls of the ten cells. The Gestapo prison memorial site is one of the best-preserved prisons from the Nazi era, representing an historical asset of national and European importance.



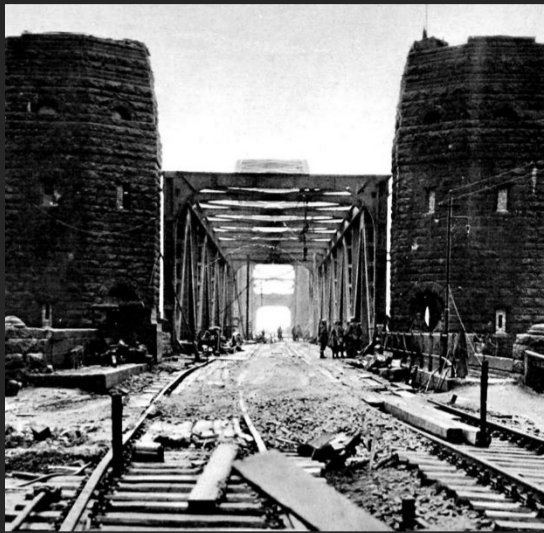
NOT EVERYBODY AGREED

The Edelweiss Pirates (*Edelweißpiraten*) were a group of young people in Nazi Germany, who opposed the Nazis.

Those boys and girls did not support Hitler and they wanted boys and girls to be able to meet and in the Hitler Youth boys and girls had to be strictly separated. They also had their own songs and clothing style.

During the war some of them started to do more dangerous things like helping foreign slave workers who had run away from the Nazis. For that reason, many of them were taken to Nazi prisons and some were even executed.

Day 4 Remagen



The Remagen bridge

On Wednesday we visited the famous Remagen bridge

The **Ludendorff Bridge** was the only bridge across the Rhine still standing in March 1945. All other bridges had been destroyed to prevent enemy forces from crossing the river.

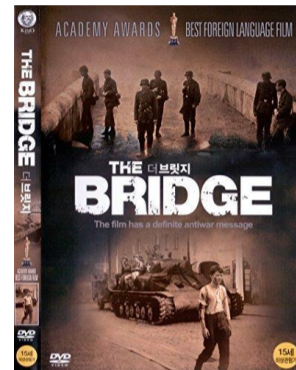
On 7th March 1945 US troops were surprised to find the bridge still standing because the German army had failed to destroy it. So, the American troops were able to capture it and establish a bridgehead on the eastern side of the Rhine. Today the remaining pillars house a "Museum of Peace".



A film about the battle was made in 1968:



But this film does not really show what a terrible thing war actually is. So we can not really recommend watching it. A film that can be recommended instead is this one by Bernhard Wicki:



The Rhine meadow POW camps

After the the "Museum of Peace" we went to a small chapel by the Rhine, a memorial to the many German soldiers who were put in large camps here in 1945.



Towards the end of the Second World War , the American troops set up prison camps for German soldiers along the Rhine . When the Rhineland was conquered, 250,000 German soldiers were taken prisoners of war, and after the Ruhr basin was broken up , another 325,000 were added. From mid-April 1945 around 660,000 Germans were held captive in these camps.

The camps were built from April to June 1945 according to a uniform scheme. A certain area of land was divided into ten to twenty camps with masts and barbed wire, which offered space for five to ten thousand prisoners. Dirt roads were converted into camp roads and some nearby buildings were used for administration, kitchens and hospital wards. The prisoners of war had to hand over their military field equipment, including tents and blankets, and were therefore forced to dig holes in the ground for sleeping.



After several weeks, those who were politically unsuspecting, especially Hitler Youth and women, were released from the camps.

Afterwards certain professional groups that were important for the reconstruction were dismissed: agricultural workers, truck drivers, miners.

At the end of June 1945, the Remagen camp was dissolved again.

Day 5: Farewell

After an exciting week, we had to say goodbye to our partners. We had made a lot of new friends and were looking forward to meeting them again in the mobilities to come.

