

Mr Kittel speech - summary

I have been honoured to be invited to the graduation ceremony as a representative of our homeland community. We see it as appreciation of our efforts to reevaluate the post war history that has led to the evacuation of the german population from the bohemian lands.

To confront the past one needs courage and openness for dialogue - ask questions in order to enable new points of view. We feel gratitude that our former hometown of Česká Kamenice was selected for the project initiated by Mrs. Švejdová.

The meeting with the students was an emotional experience for the participants on our side. We felt immediately that the young people were keen to seriously engage with history - they perceived the eyewitness stories with great interest and asked diverse questions. It is also remarkable that a letter exchange and personal contacts between the students and the eyewitnesses took place, as we used to do with our Czech neighbours in my childhood.

The cooperation with English College is a valuable contribution for further understanding that we were striving for. We were not able to face these issues before because of the national sensitivities. It has recently become possible to open this dialogue.

Thank you to all that initiated and participated in the project so far, in order not to repeat the history again.

Oswald Kittel, May 2023