

2nd International Conference

**Remembrance as a commitment for peace,
democracy and human rights**

**Dresden –
Place of remembrance, place of meeting,
place of education**

**8-11 February 2008
Dresden, Germany**

Organizers

Action Reconciliation Service for Peace

Bürger.Courage e.V. (initiative Citizens Courage)

City of Dresden

Evangelical Reformed Community Dresden

Friedrich Ebert Foundation

HATiKVA – Education and Meeting Centre for Jewish History and Culture in Saxony

IG »13. Februar 1945« e.V. (association »13th February 1945«)

Jewish Community Dresden

Kulturbüro Sachsen e.V. (association Cultural Office Saxony)

Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation Dresden e.V.

Supported by: Frauenkirche Dresden Foundation

Project concept

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Topic

Historical symbols and myths as a source of citizen's involvement in peace, democracy and human rights in the 21st century

Participants

90 participants from Russia, Poland, Czechia, Netherlands, Great Britain, Israel, Spain, Germany and others

Venues

Dresden, Germany:
Evangelical Reformed Community Dresden & Jewish Community Dresden

Background information

Immediately after the historical events of February 1945, the remembrance of the destruction of Dresden's city centre during the Second World War by the Royal Air Force and United States Army Air Force adopted a symbolic dimension reaching far beyond the local context. The reason for that is based both in the gravity of the events and the fact that the German war propaganda immediately addressed the Dresden events in mythicizing and positioning them as a discharge argument.

Since then the collective memory of the events in February 1945 has been developed in a permanent, complex and contradictory process – influenced by the intense use of the remembrance for different political objectives, by a broad citizens' remembrance culture in Dresden and by worldwide artistic and scientific discussions about the "symbol of Dresden".

Against this background, valuable experiences of a responsible and future-oriented dealing with the past have evolved during the past decades in Dresden. In 2004, these experiences were summarized in a document which was compiled by citizens and democratically legitimized – the "frame of remembrance".

Contrary to this process, however, the city has faced an increasing misuse of the "symbol of Dresden" during the past decade. In particular German and European right-wing extremists use the commemoration of the air raids in Dresden as a platform for publicly propagating historical revisionist views.¹

Objectives

The 2nd International Conference builds upon the discussion processes of the "frame of remembrance" and the results of the 1st International Conference "13th February: Day of remembrance, day of encounter, day of education" in February 2005.

With the 2nd conference, the initiators pursue three main goals: First, the contents of the conference should contribute to the current international discourse of the meaning of history and identity for the creation of a Europe of peace, democracy and human rights. Second, the international context of the conference should give impulses for a future-oriented development of Dresden's remembrance culture and for the defence of historical-revisionist misuse. Third, the conference aims for a profound international cooperation of citizens associations, in particular between the twin cities of Dresden, and beyond.

¹ Thus, on occasion of the 60th anniversary of the city's destruction on 13 February 2005, 5.000 right-wing extremists from Germany and other European countries took part in a "funeral march" to mourn the people killed during the bombing. It was one of the largest neo-Nazi demonstrations in Germany's postwar history.

Contents

Above all, the conference is meant to be a frame for an intense exchange among the participants and involved actors from Dresden. Keynote presentations by well-known international scientists and activists and artists involved in historic-political contexts will precede discussions. Excursions and meetings in Dresden will complement and deepen the discourse of the conference.

The program of the conference is divided in three parts: The starting point will be the reflection of the origin and impact of historical symbols. In the following, the potential of such symbols for citizens' involvement in peace, democracy and human rights will be analyzed by means of the experiences in European places of remembrance. The third conference part finally gives the opportunity to discuss the specific situation in the city of Dresden and to reflect places and activities of remembrance in Dresden.

Program (working draft)

Friday, 8 February 2008

Arrival & Opening

- 17:30 – 18:30 Opportunity to attend the Sabbath Service in the Synagogue of Dresden
- 19:00 Opening & Welcome
Lutz Vogel, Lord Mayor, City of Dresden
- 19:45 Snack with music and pantomime
Mime Studio

Saturday, 9 February 2008

Meaning and functions of historical symbols

- from 08:00 Morning coffee (optional)
- 09:00 – 10:30 Key note:
The long shade of the past. Remembrance culture and historical politics in the 21st century
Aleida Assmann, Department of Literature and Anglistics, University of Konstanz
- 10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00 – 12:00 Historical symbols and biography
Alexander von Plato, Institute of History and Biography, University Hagen, Lüdenscheid
- 12:00 – 13:00 Historical symbols and identity
Speaker from the Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge
- 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch break
- 14:00 – 15:00 Historical symbols in arts and media
Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, Chair of sociological theory and cultural sociology, University of Dresden
- 15:00 – 15:30 Documentary "Embracing Story"
Eve Rennebarth, filmmaker, Berlin

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16:00 – 18:00	"World Café", round table talks, snacks
18:00	Dinner
20:00	Cultural event

Sunday, 10 February 2008

Historical symbols and the commitment for peace, democracy and human rights

from 08:00	Morning coffee (optional)
08:30 – 09:30	Opportunity to attend the service in Protestant Frauenkirche or Catholic Hofkirche
10:00 – 11:00	Coventry – The city and its twin cities as symbolic places of remembrance Andrew Rigby, Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies, University of Coventry
11:00 – 12:00	Remembrance as a commitment for peace, democracy and human rights in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods Maurice Blanc, Professor of Sociology, University Marc Bloch, Strasbourg
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break
13:00 – 14:00	Symbolic places of remembrance in Poland – from Katyn via Auschwitz to Kreisau Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, Department of History, University of Wrocław
14:00 – 15:00	Symbolic places of remembrance in Germany – Nürnberg and other German places of remembrance Speaker not confirmed yet
15:00 – 18:00	Places of remembrance in Dresden guided tour in and around Dresden
evening	Opportunity to visit organizations and institutions in Dresden active in memory work

Monday, 11 February 2008

The example of Dresden

from 08:00	Morning coffee
09:00 – 10:00	Dresden – symbol and myth Yariv Lapid, director of the Education Department of the Mauthausen Memorial Matthias Neutzner, association »13 February 1945«, Dresden

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10:00 – 12:00	Arts as a place of remembrance: "Street-Action", street theatre State Theatre Dresden, Theatre Young Generation Dresden, Bürger.Courage e.V., Kulturbüro Sachsen e.V. "Winners", music and multimedia production association »13 February 1945«, Dresden; Fabrica, Venice
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break
13:00 – 14:00	Future-oriented remembrance Christian Staffa, Action Reconciliation Service for Peace, Berlin
parallel	Press meeting
14:00 – 17:00	Final discussion with participants and journalists Closing of the conference

12/13 February 2008

Side events

12 February	"Sign of life" – meeting of the survivors of 13 February 1945, Dreikönigskirche Dresden
12 February	Free entrance to the museums and sights in Dresden
13 February	Public commemoration of the air raids in Dresden in February 1945: wreath-laying ceremony at Heide cemetery, demonstrations and events in the city centre