

## Lernen aus der Geschichte e.V.

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Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

### **A Square is Built Anew**

"On October 5, 1938, the city of Mülheim an der Ruhr became the new owner of the synagogue ... During the night of November 9-10, 1938, the synagogue was destroyed by Nazi arson ... The arsonists had not considered that ownership of this house of worship had been transferred to the city savings bank several months earlier." (In: Alfred Maletke, *Die Geschichte der Juden und Jüdinnen in Mülheim 1620-1994* [The History of Jews in Mülheim, 1620-1994]. Mülheim an der Ruhr 1994)

"Despite the rapid and varied recovery in the 1950s, many residues of the Nazi era and the war were still visible and to be overcome. Some of them were resolved within ten years, one could check them off as solved ..." (In: Franz Rolf Krapp, *Vom Wiederaufbau und Wachstum einer Stadt. Mülheim an der Ruhr nach 1945* [The Reconstruction and Growth of a Town: Mülheim an der Ruhr after 1945.], ed. Stadtparkasse Mülheim an der Ruhr 1983, p. 214)

#### We imagine:

*After 1945 the city of Mülheim offered the Jewish community the option of buying back the site where the synagogue once stood.*

## **Student texts:**

**The only thing** that reminds us today of Jewish life at *Viktoriaplatz* is a metal (tin) plaque, well hidden, weatherworn and difficult to decipher. When the square was rebuilt after 1945, it was very simple: one used bulldozers instead of pen and ink; one revealed duplicity and greed instead of repentance and restitution. For the uninformed bystander, the square seems amazingly colorful and charming; for the knowledgeable observer, blood spurting from the stones is surely clearly recognizable. This place stinks. It smells of money, power, corruption. Whoever would like to learn how to convert a public square into a cold impersonal place is in just the right place in our town.

**"Viktoria – Hurra!"** The Emperor arrives on this square in the center of a German small town with pomp. A brass band, uniforms, salutes, cheers. Several years later, the victory parade of automobiles in this small town facilitated the conversion of the "victory square" into a parking area, a marketplace for vanity and strong horsepower. I am seated on the entrance steps to the old post office and see the history of this square as though through time-lapse photography. A new building is being constructed next to the post office; the Jewish community is building a synagogue; the square is colorful in my imaginary film, with people, songs, cultural activities. And then: the Nazi dictatorship. The brown rulers merge with the city fathers, the synagogue building is legally sold, without force and at an appropriate price, as the history books tell us. Then there is the pogrom against Jewish citizens, the synagogue burns, war, demolition of the prayer house, a new beginning. New? Beginning? It is rather that new rulers arrive and occupy the square with banks. Architectural artistry is also nonexistent, culture is erased, public life obstructed. I imagine how I would build this square anew. I take my paint box, my pencils, sketch, write. Describe a reality that once existed, that can never reappear; a new counterfeit reality unfolds before me, but one without color and without joy. No wings carry me, no life, a new power center arises before me.