

## Unity monument European freedom bell

The unity monument „European freedom bell“ was established in 2007 on a free surface before the bell palace. It reminds of the case of the „iron curtain“ and the in peace and freedom regained unity of Germany and Europe.

Developer and owner of the monument is the charitable association “The Bridge” whose statutory major task exists in the support of the understanding among nations, in particular between East Europe and Western Europe. Initiator and planner for the monument is the developer of the neighbouring “Bell Palace”, Horst Wrobel.

The association has established the monument without any public support, numerous conveyor applications to different public places, institutions and endowments (under it town and administrative district Gifhorn) were rejected. To be able to realise still the planned project whose patronage Prime Minister Christian Wulff from Lower Saxony at that time had taken over, the association depended on it, the required money (only the downpour of the bell cost nearly 180.000 Euros) so far as possible by donations to procure. In addition, a bigger private advance without which the financing would not have succeeded was granted. Through this the monument could be established within one year.

The fact that this monument had to be established exclusively by private initiative and without public support underlines the thought that initiatives, activities and projects must grow for overcoming borders, to the understanding among nations and for the peace protection from the people or from the people and that in so important questions may not be waited for politics and management. In this respect the unique monument also has the status of a „monument of the people“. The calls in the Monday demonstrations „We are people“ are poured here virtually symbolically in bronze.

Central component of the monument is the „European freedom bell“ with a weight of more than ten tonnes. It is not only the biggest bell of Lower Saxony, but also one of the biggest bells of Germany. As a centre of a monument of European meaning she is even unique.

For the downpour of the bell the royal bell-foundry steeped in tradition of the Netherlands "Royal Eijsbouts" could be won in lugging. All presentations for decorations, inscriptions and portraits on the bell were produced in the bell palace in Gifhorn and were delivered on lugging. The specialists of the Dutch foundry inserted this expertly in the mould. On the 28th of June, 2007 the more than ten-tonnes-bronze bell could be poured in a ceremonious act. Moreover the initiators and project supporters had also travelled on lugging to see the important moment for the bell founding.

The bell should lend expression to the joy that by the peaceful case of the borders new possibilities became possible for a future cooperation of the people in different countries of Europe and the world. However, she should also encourage at the same time directed in future to overcome separating over and over again peacefully.

The following generations are reminded of the achievements of the courageous statesmen Michail Gorbachev (Soviet Union), George Bush sen. (The USA), Gyula Horn (Hungarian) and Helmut Kohl (Germany). On the bell the portraits of these personalities were illustrated together with specially by them personally for the bell to written dedications. Thus this monument is a unique specimen and will attain itself historical character.

The following dedications have written the called statesmen for the European freedom bell:

- „The ringing of the freedom bell of Gifhorn shall be heard in every house.“ (Michail Gorbachev)

- „The German reunion will be seen by historians as one of the most radical, historical events of the 20th century - the peace in Europe took a wonderful step forward. I have respect before Federal Chancellor Kohl and Michail Gorbachev for her crucial role with the peaceful union of Germany.“ (George Bush sen.)
- „The ringing of the bells, hitting the heart and the slap are the messengers from tomorrow.“ (Gyula Horn)
- „The reunion of our native country in peace and freedom is a reason for big joy and gratitude. This luck obliges us to speed up also the arrangement of Europe.“ (Helmut Kohl)

Boards in the columns of the monument show other personalities which have written history in connection with the division of Germany and Europe or with the peaceful opening of the borders: Seriously Reuter (of Ruling mayors of Berlin - West at times of the Berlin blockade), Lech Walesa (of former chairpersons of the Polish trade union of Solidarnosz, former president of Poland and Nobel peace prize bearers), pope Johannes Paul II and the former GDR politician Günter Schabowski.

For the monument the personal dedications which adorn the bell tower have written furthermore Federal President Horst Köhler at that time, Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, Karl Kardinal Lehmann (chairpersons at that time of the German bishops' conference) and bishop Wolfgang Huber (advice chairpersons at that time of the Protestant church of Germany):

- Unity and right and freedom - these values are to us an order in united Germany, in combined Europe and in one world.“ (Federal President Horst Köhler)
- „This bell reminds to us Germans of the precious treasure of the German unity. She reminds us, to the peace and the freedom in Europe and in the world to these.“ (Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel)
- „Blessedly which donate peace (Mt. The bell tints 5.9) - of it. The Christian roots of Europe remind: Peace and freedom only with the help of God.“ (Karl Cardinal Lehmann)
- „The bell shouts for the prayer around God's help to peace and freedom in Europe.“ (Bishop Wolfgang Huber)

On eight boards put up all around the monument important events of the German and European history are to be seen between 1933 and 2007, beginning with the assumption of power of the National Socialists, the Second World War resulting from it, the spreading by terror, fright, destruction, genocide and expulsion in whole Europe, the end of the war, the division of Germany and Europe up to the peaceful reunion and the establishment to this so important epoch of our history of reminding monument „European freedom bell“.

The bell hangs on a big cross which is "drawn" by barbed wire and 137 smaller crosses. The barbed wire stands symbolically for the former „iron curtain“. The crosses remind of many people who came on the former internal border to death or which were arrested than politically persecutees.

The unity monument European freedom bell stands only few kilometres of the former internal border removes in the former "border area" and forms for the following generations together with the neighbouring bell palace an important memorial and site of information to the younger German and European history.