

## UNLOCK LTTA Berlin

**Tuesday, 20/07/21**

**- Where we are: Gethsemane church, a lutheranian protestant parish,**

- \* constructed between 1891-93, neo-gothic style,
- \* Area where many workers lived and poverty was unimaginable,
- \* Motto: »Wachet und betet« - “Watch and pray” : 1989
- \* historic place: 1989 important role; church was full, full, full of people who wanted a change towards democracy, peace, freedom, justice
- \* before I explain a bit about the church, about 1989, Berlin, museums in Berlin and museums linked to civic education, we ask you to give a short

**- 1989 and the democratic change of the GDR**

- \* Associations to 1989?????

- \* More than a wall opening

\_On 7<sup>th</sup> May 1989 took communal elections part. In all over the GDR. Some engaged people organised themselves in various cities and observed the countings of the results. They then brought their results together and could so proof the electoral fraud. (I took part in Jena, a smaller city.)

\_This was the starting point for demonstrations every 7<sup>th</sup> of a month. There were smaller ones and quickly stricken down,

\_In summer 1989, however, things changed dramatically. More and more people fled the country and went to Western Germany. At the same time, people from the former opposition groups, mostly under the roof of the protestant church, started going into public.

\_In **September 1989**, several organisations, later new and independent political parties were founded. For example, the **New Forum**, an open platform for citizens to allow and enable a democratic change of the GDR.

\_In September also started the **bigger demonstrations** in Leipzig. They took part each Monday after peace meditations in a church. More and more people participated, in the beginning of October they were already 35.000 demonstrators in Leipzig.

\_On 7<sup>th</sup> **October** was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR. Mr. Gorbatschow came to Berlin. There was an official celebration of the “ancien régime” in the Palace of Republic. At the same time, there was a demonstration from Alexanderplatz to the Palace of Republic. The police stopped the march so that people went to Prenzlauer Berg, direction Gethsemane church. During the march, the police were very violent.

\_The demonstrators went to Gethsemane church and could flee insight.

\_Some days before, in the beginning of October, came here people to gather for **solemn vigils**

\_What is a **solemn vigil**? People come together and remember publicly to a person or an issue which they want to see changing, e.g. currently at the Brandenburg gate take solemn vigils for Julian Assange place; in 1989 for peace, democracy and a

state under the government of the law:

\_ In 1989 this "method" appeared more as a religious practice: with candle lights, prayals etc.

\_ In this way could **religious practices** be combined with **political claims** for changes towards democracy.

\_ In the beginning of October also started a **lent action** to support all those who were emprisoned in September 1989,

\_ a lent action means: several people, appr. 10, later more, did not eat anymore;

\_ they could gain a lot of attention by the **Western media**

\_ so on **7<sup>th</sup> October** could demonstrators **flee** in the church, but it was with 2.000 people almost full because of the various actions which took place here.

\_ The demonstrators outside remained peaceful but the police not. Appr. 1.200 people were arrested (for 24 hours).

\_ And then came the **9<sup>th</sup> October 1989**. It was in Leipzig. I was there and took part. 70.000 people went in the street. People who were expected that the police would shoot on them. However, I thought, it is my right to go in the street and to stand for democracy and a human socialism.

\_ It was the miracle of the century that all was peaceful at the end.

\_ Afterwards started an amazing process of society's opening, of direct contact between citizens came into reality. The 9<sup>th</sup> October was the door-opener towards democracy in the GDR, not the 9<sup>th</sup> November.

\_ That message also arrived in the Gethsemane church and all actions later were peaceful.

\* Me personally, I was then the co-founder of a women's initiative in Leipzig and the Federation of Independent Women and have held a seat of the Round Table of the Leipzig region.

\* In general, WOMEN played an important role in the democratic change of 1989:

"There is no revolution to make without women": They were involved as co-founders, initiators of actions and demonstrations, as (co-)authors of appeals, as printers of flyers, as courageous people who positioned themselves publicly when this was still dangerous, as supporters, as organisers and contact persons.

\_ It was on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1989 that two women unrolled the poster "For an open country with free people" in front of the Nikolai church in Leipzig.

\_ The New Forum was registered on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1989 by two women.

\_ The fasten campaign in the Gethsemane church in Berlin from the beginning of October 1989 was initiated by a women.

\_ On 15<sup>th</sup> October 1989, a meeting of around 800 theatre people took place in the Deutsches Theater (German Theatre). The occasion was the attacks around the Gethsemane church on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October. An actress had invited.

\_ Another actress proposed at this meeting to register a demonstration for a democratic GDR.

\_ The demonstration took place on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1989 in Berlin and was the biggest one during the democratic change of 1989.

\_ From December 1989 we had a lot of Round Tables in all over the republic.

\_ One lady raised very precise and sharp questions to those who were responsible for the

attacks here around the Gethsemane church.

\_The first storming of a Stasi headquarter, in Erfurt, was a concerted action undertaken by women and initiated by a women.

\_And so on.

\_ These were the crucial points in 1989:

**1. public sphere** – real transparency and thus freedom of speech, freedom of an own opinion, plurality of opinions,

**2. “Attempt to live in the Truth”** - book title by Vaclav Havel,

→ there was a high ambition to follow universal right; in the beginning of the 1980s it was a peace movement, after 1985 the focus layed on human rights.

→ **I would like that you learn:**

1. The demonstrations before the opening of the Wall made the 'Revolution of 1989', the unification with Western Germany was not intended at all (until December 1989), but about the German **Democratic** Republic,

2. The role of the churches: only 10% opened the doors for the opposition groups,

3. The role of the Western media! No success without them.

4. Success of people's upheaval needs both a historically favourable situation and an existing movement in which people develop their concepts.

= > **Democracy is nothing which can be just consumed.** There are always struggles for democracy. In the past. Today.

## - Back to the Gethsemane church

\_ I studied protestant theology during GDR times. Exactly 30 years ago, I have made my internship here.

\_This was during the war of the USA in Iraque in 1991. We had each evening peace meditations.

\_Even today, the church is open for peace meditations for political prisoners in the world.

→ 1989 was a positive example for a democratic change. Such events do not occur that often in history.

\_A complex analysis is important. Among others, it should include a critical research on the support given by the Western media.

## - Capital of Ideology and Hotbed of Diversity

\* You may ask what is the spirit of Berlin.

\_Any ideas?

\_often said the diversity.

\_Yes.

\_Also.

\_I would like to characterise it as “capital of ideology and hotbed of diversity”.

\_Why?

\_Ideology: German fascism – two world wars // stalinism and the more soft dictatorship in the 1980s

\_Diversity: cultures – Turkish, Kurdish, Polish, Russian (Jews, German roots), and many others, social differences, various lifestyles: gay, lesbian, middle class attitudes and its distinctions, different political opinions, etc.

## - Polarisation

\* key word: gentrification – see Prenzlauer Berg, more than 80% of the population changed

\* rents are raising – 84% of the Berlin inhabitants rent a flat,

\* precarious working conditions, low wages,

\* when you are retired, you get such low pensions that you need either to eat less or to leave the own social context and to move to the peripherie → strong problem;

\* flat is a commodity/private good versus fundamental right

→ that's the context

## - Museum and Civic Education

### \* Civic Education?

\_after 1945 in Western part: Democracy education

\_Institutions: bpb (BMI, not Ministry for education), lpb → public bodies, evening schools but as houses for education where groups can spend for example one week for a seminar; trade unions, associations → number reduced

\_Beutelsbacher Konsens

1. no indoctrination,

2. when various opinions / interpretations on a topic exist, they should be mentioned => plurality,

3. foster student's understanding of their own interests

4. encourage active participation / emancipation

### \* Civic Education and museum

→ new initiative, since October 2020

\_How can a museum gain relevance for society?

*“The **aim** of political education is to accompany people in recognising, analysing and using their individual scope for shaping society - and possibly expanding it in the process. The museum offers fantastic conditions for this process, as it has a wide variety of objects that provide information about the relationship between people and society. They hold great potential for political education. The collections of the National Museums, for example, contain testimonies of human experience from many ages and from different cultural contexts: they and their object biographies*

*must be examined to see what they can give us as a society for answering the urgent questions of our time. But this also means that museums must question their practices of collecting, preserving, researching, exhibiting and communicating in order to create the conditions for successful political education in the museum itself."*

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