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'But who ever asked us for a pardon? Pardoning died in the death camps.'¹

audioscript on the Persecution and Annihilation of the Jews in Dresden 1933 to 1945

At the end of 1945, and the beginning of 1946 one survivor from the Riga concentration camp did return to Dresden. At the entrance to the Brühl's Terrace found that the sign 'No admittance to Jews' was still there. He tore it down, only to find himself being shouted at by a passer-by, asking who had given him the right to do so.²

From the very beginning, the engagement with the National Socialist past in Dresden has been characterized by suppression and deflection of guilt. Only a flagrant lack of consciousness of guilt and injustice can explain why the prohibition sign had not been removed more than nine months after the crushing and break up of National Socialism. Does this not speak volumes about the depth of internalization of National Socialist ideology within Dresden society? Had the 'Innocent Beauty' overslept the end of the Third Reich? Or was it merely due to the city's incompetence to keep pace with change? The belief in both the legitimacy of the persecution of the Jewish people and in one's own innocence was apparently so self-evident that there was no hurry to erase evidence of the social exclusion of the Jews.

The 'No Admittance to Jews' sign bears revealing witness to the deprivation of rights which Jews suffered and which heralded the beginning of their persecution and annihilation in Dresden just as it did in all other German cities. And yet the assumption that Dresden was an innocent city has endured for decades right up to the present day. Hence one event, part of the *Verstummte Stimmen* [Silenced Voices] exhibition in July 2011 was titled 'Dresden, Unblemished Metropolis of Culture?'³ Even framed as a question, the chain of the terms 'Dresden', 'unblemished', 'metropolis' and 'culture' is outrageous and, in light of the historical facts, leaves one speechless. Not only is Dresden indisputably one of the

1 Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Should We Pardon Them?* in: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Spring, 1996), translated by Ann Hobart, 1996, 567.

2 *audioscript*, track 4: '... a passably picturesque image! Stigmatization and exclusion from public space, www.audioscript.net/en, 2008, in: Michael Böttger/Una Giesecke/Nora Goldenbogen/Susanne Hahn/Günther Kirsch/Ingrid Liebsch/Heike Kirsch/Erik Lindner/Hildegart Stellmacher/Klaus Thiele, *Spurensuche – Juden in Dresden: Ein Begleiter durch die Stadt*, Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1996, 35.

3 Exhibition: *Silenced Voices - The Expulsion of the 'Jews' and 'political untouchables' from Dresden Theatres in 1933 to 1945*, Schauspielhaus and Semperoper, May 15 to July 13, 2011.

innumerable sites from which the persecution and extermination of the Jews was organized, the city actually took a leading role. Here, one is compelled to recall the first book burning in the Reich – in March 1933 – and the *Entartete Kunst* [Degenerate Art] exhibition that was shown in Dresden beginning in September 1933. The show subsequently went on tour going on to become the most important predecessor for the eponymous exhibition shown in Munich in 1937 and nationwide thereafter. As for bans on the use of parks, gardens, public swimming pools and movie theaters, the Aryanzation of Jewish property, the enforced separation of the 'Jew Houses', forced labor and the deportation to the concentration and death camps no distinction can be drawn between Dresden and any other German cities. The famished and maltreated inmates from the Eastern European camps were driven through the city center of Dresden on death marches.

And yet the narration of the innocent and senselessly destroyed city maintains its dominance. The relationship between victims and culprits has been (and still is) systematically turned upside down. This way was paved for by the decades-long memorial politics centered on February 13 with its public, confessionesque mourning ceremonies for the victims of the Allied bombings. This ignored the historical and social context: the war of extermination in Eastern Europe, eliminatory anti-Semitism, industrialized annihilation. Anyone who calls this to mind must find the identification with the German collective as expressed in the commemorations of February 13 (and its eagerly accepted outgrowths) more than suspicious.

Under Headphones

audioscript: The Persecution and Annihilation of the Jews in Dresden 1933 - 1945

The fact-and-argument resistant citizens of Dresden, the hegemonic narration of the destruction of the city and the post-war absence of the voices of Jewish victims in, and from Dresden were grounds for us to seek new forms of intervention and to turn our backs on the commemorative spectacle. To us, the story(ies) mattered most, those ignored by the garrulity of the silent commemoration. In the end we developed an audio walking tour of the city round those stories. The medium offers enough space for both the voices of the victims and for us to appropriately express our criticism. In the audioscript we address the hardly known and unknown (or ignored) facts of the National Socialist history, the (survival) stories of Dresden Jews, discourses around the politics of memory and a political mindset based on critical philosophy. 13 tracks tell the history of anti-Semitic persecution and annihilation using exemplary sites

in the city of Dresden. These sites are marked on an accompanying city map. The tracks can be downloaded from www.audioscript.net⁴ onto an MP3 player or players can be borrowed from a lending station.

Some of the audioscript tracks consist of three levels that complement and support each other: fictionalized dialogues reflecting contemporary discourse about National Socialism, historical facts about the respective locations, each with a thematic priority and quotations from survivors from Dresden and Europe in general. There are also contributions by Jean Améry, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Ruth Klüger, Raymond Federman, Detlev Claussen, Claude Lanzmann, Raoul Hilberg, Giorgio Agamben, Henny Brenner, Olga Horak, Gerda Klein and Victor Klemperer. Some tracks were composed in the form of essays or montages.

In the audioscript we focus on various aspects of National Socialism, the Shoah and post-Nazi German society after 1945: anti-Semitic beliefs⁵, the co-optation of the Jewish Community by Dresden civil society⁶, bearing testimony and its absence⁷, memorial policy and the politics of memory⁸, comparisons with National Socialism and the new anti-Semitism⁹. Further important issues concern forced labor and lack of compensation¹⁰ as well as Aryanization and *Volkswohlstand* [prosperity of the nation]¹¹ because these convey the message that German society has not even accepted economic responsibility for its crimes. It has hidden behind moralized debates about the impossibility of paying indemnity or worked outrightly and aggressively to undermine reclamations. 'We don't understand all the fuss being made about the matter; we gave them food, we gave them clothes and accommodation, and the very fact that they survived is a testament to how well they were treated.'¹² As Rudy Kennedy – a

4 The numbers of visitors oscillates between 2,000 and 3,000 per month.

5 audioscript, track 7: *Technische Universität/Enlightenment and Antisemitism. The dialectic of anti-Semitic belief and reason.*

6 audioscript, track 2: *A New Synagogue.*

7 audioscript, track 11: *Deportation and Extermination - Unwitnessed Events?*

8 audioscript, track 13: *'Geländebewahrer' – Das Judenlager am Hellerberg.*

9 audioscript, track 5: *Particles of resentment. The SS school for mullahs in Dresden and Islamic anti-Semitism.*

10 audioscript, track 9: *'We are still trying to find a company that didn't use forced labour'. Jewish forced labour at the Adolf Bauer cardboard box factory* and track 12: *Jewish forced labour in the armaments industry – the Goehlewerk of Zeiss Ikon AG.*

11 audioscript, track 8: *'Auschwitz was their best deal ever': Henriettenstift* [Former Jewish Old People's Home].

12 A member of the German delegation at the negotiations on compensation, cf. audioscript, track 9, from: Gruppe 3, *Vom Täter zum Wohltäter – Deutschland beschließt seine Vergangenheit*, diskus – Frankfurter StudentInnen Zeitschrift, 1/2000, <http://copyriot.com/diskus> (accessed November 10, 2012).

former forced laborer at I.G. Farben said this German refusal to pay compensation really does deserve to be put in the category of the 'final insult'.¹³

'Well-Considered Malice'

When one speaks to the perverse about Auschwitz, they counter with the suffering of the Germans during the war: the destruction of their cities, the exodus of their inhabitants before the victorious Russian army. To each his own martyrs, no? The mere idea of comparing or speaking in the same breath of the unspeakable ordeal of the deportees and the just punishment of their torturers, this idea is a calculated piece of treachery, if it is not a true perversion of the moral sense. Perversion or treachery, this unbelievable twisting of evidence, this scandalous reversal of roles, makes one wish to answer, It is your turn now. [...] Those who are moved by neither the slaughter at Lidice, nor the massacre at Oradour, nor the hangings at Tulle, nor the shootings at Mont-Valérien, Châteaubriant, Cascade and Chatou reserve their indignation for the bombing of Dresden by the English, as if in this domain the Germans had not taken the initiative, as if the destruction of Rotterdam, Warsaw and Coventry by an implacable adversary had not preceded the Anglo-American air raids.¹⁴

It is alleged that, for one thing, by February 1945 World War II was finished and, for another, that the Dresden bombing made no sense.¹⁵ However, this postulated end to the war corresponded neither with the military situation¹⁶ nor with that of the persecuted. 'Reasonableness' is used here to propagate a notion of rationality applicable to the air strikes towards the end of the war. This neglects the fact that reason was murdered in Auschwitz.

The collective commemorative mourning on February 13 therefore undertakes a de-contextualization while at the same time shifting National Socialism, its ideology and the course of the war onto ahistorical terrain. It ignores the social constitution of mainstream German society. The debates bear witness to the ignorance and denial of the pivotal ideologemes of National Socialism and thereby deny the Shoah. On the other hand, the various audioscript tracks discuss precisely these societal precon-

13 gruppe offene rechnungen (eds.), *The final insult – Das Diktat gegen die Überlebenden. Deutsche Erinnerungsabwehr und Nichtentschädigung der NS-Sklavenarbeit*, Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2003.

14 Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Should We Pardon Them?*, loc. cit., 563.

15 Most recently Gerhart Baum (politician of the Free Democratic Party, FDP) at the panel discussion *Dresden, an Unblemished Metropolis of Culture? The Destruction of the Staatstheater in 1933 and the Imperative to Remember*, part of the Silenced Voices exhibition, June 26, 2011: 'I find the quintessential or the harrowing about Dresden lies in a unique convergence of facts: the destruction of a wonderful city and extermination of many of its citizens in a single night despite the war already being over.' (Source: audio recording by Irmgard Lumpini)

16 The *Wehrmacht* surrendered unconditionally on May 8, 1945.

ditions in relation to the murder of European Jews and try to convey the dimensions of what those persecuted were forced to suffer.

Mourning for the destroyed city is based upon an ability to distinguish sense from nonsense – a distinction that National Socialism destroyed entirely. When Hannah Arendt was faced with the news about the mass extermination for the first time in 1943, she refused to countenance it because it was contradictory to ‘all military imperatives and necessities. [...] Six months later we came to believe it after all because it had been proven to us. That was the actual shock.’¹⁷ This acting in contravention of all military and economic interests during National Socialism stands in contradiction to the very foundations of social action in modernity which had been grounded on ‘actions being based on a presumption of rationality’.¹⁸ The mass extermination removed any rational basis for survival – specifically it destroyed any belief in the logic that even perpetrators were guided by principles of self-preservation. Dan Diner described the shattering of such a basic trust as the ‘rupture of civilization’. He does not mean the violations of the norms of civilization, but the breach of something he conceptualizes as a feeling of ‘ontological safety’.¹⁹ Both the Jews and the Allies underestimated the situation as the Germans set about implementing the unthinkable – the persecution and annihilation of the Jews. This was not only beyond the bounds of conflict, antagonism or political hostility²⁰, it acted against their very own interest in self-preservation. Vladimir Jankélévitch emphasizes these reflections from a survivor’s point of view: ‘Anti-Semitism is a grave offense against human beings in general. The Jews were persecuted because it was them, and not at all because of their opinions or their faith. It was existence itself that was denied them; [...] they were reproached for being.’²¹

Aspects of Time and Space

Each February 13, German mourners remember and commemorate a society that did not wave the white flag and did not surrender but continued with racist and anti-Semitic extermination. Unlike Dachau or Weimar, Dresden has never been associated with the history of concentration camps but considered instead as city without a camp and without murder. Yet as the Red Army advanced, Jews, having first been abducted to Eastern Europe then began to arrive back in German cities – on death marches. As of 1944, pressed by the advancing Allies, the National Socialists cleared the concentration

17 Ursula Ludz (ed.), Hannah Arendt, Fernsehgespräch mit Günter Gaus, *Ich will verstehen. Selbstauskünfte zu Leben und Werk*, München: Piper Verlag, 2005 61.

18 Dan Diner, *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1988, 8.

19 Dan Diner, *Gegenläufige Gedächtnisse. Über Geltung und Wirkung des Holocaust*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007, 11.

20 *Ibid.*, 15.

21 Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Should we Pardon them?*, 1996, loc. cit., 555.

camps. Over 700,000 people were forced to walk enormous distances or were transported in goods- or cattle cars under the worst possible conditions. Weakened by the camp conditions, these death marches added ordeal to ordeal for the prisoners. 200,000 to 350,000 people did not survive them. They were guarded by SS-Totenkopfverbände [death head units of the SS], Wehrmacht [army] soldiers, local police, members of the Volkssturm [people's militia] and the Hitler Youth. They shot fugitive prisoners, murdered the sick and massacred whole convoys of prisoners. These crimes were committed not only before entering or after leaving the cities and villages that the marches went through but also at their very centers. It was a case of dying in public – being murdered in public.²²

The track *Auschwitz on the Streets*²³ discusses the suffering of those who were transported through Dresden by foot or train during the death marches of February 1945. It was at that point that genocide moved into the urban centers of the German society and into Dresden, too. At least three death marches were escorted through Dresden during the final months of the war.

In January 1945 the administration of the concentration camp at Groß-Rosen near Wrocław (Breslau, in Silesia, at the time) wound it up along with its satellite camps. Many groups of inmates, some which numbered more than 1,000 prisoners, were sent on escorted death marches. This prevented their liberation by the Red Army. The first group arrived in Dresden as early as January 16, 1945 and was entrained there.²⁴ A further 1,300 Jewish women were encamped on Dresdner Heide [Dresden Heath] from February 14 to 16 just outside the bombed city. During the morning of February 17, 1945 they were driven over the Carolabrücke [Carola Bridge] and across the whole city. A third group who were in the city center directly experienced the air raids of February 13, 1945.

'We realized from the street signs that we were approaching Dresden; a beautiful city -- as I remembered from history books. We had to have marched about 250 kilometers from Grünberg [German for Zielona Góra, translator's notice]. Obviously the SS aimed at reaching the city before nightfall. When it was already darkening, a truck convoy coming our way forced us to evade and thereby slowed down our pace.

Approaching the outskirts of Dresden we heard air-raid sirens blowing warnings, and soon hundreds of planes roared through the skies. We were standing on a bridge across the Elbe with the SS

²² Cf. Barbara Distel, *Öffentliches Sterben – Vom Umgang der Öffentlichkeit mit den Todesmärschen*, Dachauer Heft, 20, 2004, 39–46.

²³ audioscript, track 10: *Auschwitz on the streets. Death marches in Dresden*.

²⁴ audioscript, track 10: Ibid.: Olga Horak, *Von Auschwitz nach Australien. Erinnerungen einer Holocaust-Überlebenden an ihre Kindheit in Bratislava, die Deportation nach Auschwitz, den Todesmarsch von Kurzbach nach Dresden und an die Befreiung in Bergen-Belsen*, Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 2007, 61f., cf. also the chapter: 'During the attack we watched the bombs dropping from heaven like Manna. Interview with Olga Horak' in this book.

watching us from the banks. They probably felt the bridge was a likely target and this would be an easy way to get rid of us.

It was as if the world were coming to an end. Giant bombers roared over us. Heaven and earth shook. Houses collapsed like dominoes. People screamed and some jumped aflame into the icy river. Germany was being destroyed. I was not afraid for my life, I felt triumphant at the sight of Dresden burning. And yet I had a painful feeling of detachment and utter loneliness.²⁵

The memorial canon does not mention the history of the death marches, even though it was one of the most brutal phases of the Shoah. The crime of the Shoah did not just take place in Poland and Eastern Europe. Many victims were murdered on German doorsteps. Daniel Blatman talks about the 'emergence of a new community of murderers, "local liquidating communities," whose members were veteran killers [...] and others who joined in only when their hometowns, communities, and families were directly affected: Volkssturm, police, local party functionaries, Hitlerjugend members, and other civilians.'²⁶

This heterogeneous perpetrator group killed thousands of captives – irrespective of their camp category or nationality – because they saw the 'Other' in them.

Regarding the timing of the air raids, it can be ascertained that they took place during one of the most intensive phases of the genocide. In addition, because of Dresden's geographic location, more prisoners passed through the city on death marches than passed any of the comparable cities in the western part of the German Reich. After the Eastern European camps had been cleared, death march prisoners were forced to continue their camp lives on the streets of Dresden. Even after the bombings the infrastructure for carrying out the mass murder was maintained. The SS-personnel continued to guard and escort death marches, apparently unhindered by the destruction.²⁷

Some of the Jews still living in 'mixed marriages' in Dresden went into hiding during the air raids. This prevented their deportation which had been set for February 16, 1945. Despite the surrounding destruction, the Gestapo continued to persecute the Jews who had remained in Dresden.

'The doorbell rang. Every noise scared us, but especially the bell, because we always thought: they've come for us now. But it was not the Gestapo, it was Ernst Neumark, a Jewish lawyer [...] He was

25 audioscript, track 10: *Auschwitz on the streets. Death marches in Dresden*, in: Gerda Weissmann-Klein, *Nichts als das nackte Leben*, Reinbeck: Rowohlt Verlag, 2001, 276.

26 Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches. The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide. Translated by Chaya Galai*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2011, 419.

27 Olga Horak was liberated from Bergen-Belsen. Even after the air raids of February 13 and 14 Gerda Weissmann-Klein had to keep walking for several hundreds of kilometers more. American troops freed a small group of surviving women near Volary in the Czech Republic on May 5, 1945.

the representative of the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* [Reich Association of the Jews in Germany]. Because the Gestapo spotted him on the street just after the attacks he was acting in a way that put himself and others in danger. The well-known black limousine had stopped next to him, he had been pulled inside and asked: 'What, you're still alive, you *Judenschwein* [Jewish pig]? Tomorrow you'll bring us the addresses of all surviving Jews'. In his desperation Neumark had turned us. But this endangered us, too. After all, he might have been followed. [...] Nevertheless, we were shocked to understand that even after the attacks, after all that chaos, the Gestapo had nothing better to do than go after the few remaining Jews in Dresden. We realized just how long three months could be.²⁸

The Hellerberg Judenlager: the Fallow Remains Silent

'we walked into the main building, the museum, which used to be, a sign explained, the hospital where experiments on human beings were conducted, but aside from this note everything was well presented, correctly, soberly, and intelligently, Those fucking Germans really pulled it off, I said to Marcowsky, a nice mixture of decorum and hygiene, a perfect sense of the tragic but without the horror, just as it should be, and yet'²⁹

Aware of the critical debates regarding memorial sites we discuss the possibilities and limits of memorial architecture in the track '*Geländebewahrer. Das Judenlager am Hellerberg*. ['Guardians of the Terrain'. The Hellerberg Jewish Camp]³⁰ The – in the meantime – wooded state of the terrain and the absence of any markings such as 'a plaque, a stone, a sculpture – anything at all!'³¹ are expressions of not-remembering. The absence here is not part of a reflection on the inability of memorials or memorial sites to commemorate German victims of the policy of annihilation but show instead an attitude of refusal, the intention not to remember. 'The fallow aligns itself as the accomplice of those, who suppress history, who forget it, who deny it.'³²

On November 10, 1942 representatives of the Zeiss Ikon AG, the Gestapo and the NSDAP district committee met to plan the opening of a barrack camp in one of the former sandpits on Dresden Hellerberg. Jews who had remained in Dresden were brought there on November 23, 1942 after they were forced to undergo a degrading disinfection in a facility located on Fabrikstraße 6 during which

28 Henny Brenner, *Das Lied ist aus. Ein jüdisches Schicksal in Dresden*, Dresden: ddp goldenbogen, 2005, 84.

29 Raymond Federman, *The Twofold Vibration*, København, Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2000, 187.

30 audioscript, track 13: '*Geländebewahrer. Das Judenlager am Hellerberg* (English: '*Guardians of terrain. The Hellerberg Judenlager*).

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

they were filmed.³³ Thereafter they were obliged to work in the Goehle plant run by Zeiss Ikon as forced labor.

'Most of my colleagues too were now living in the camp and marched to Zeiss-Ikon each day, among them my aunt and uncle, the Rauchs. All of them there were waiting to be deported. The Hellerberg was a kind of staging post for the 300 Jews who were deported to Auschwitz in March 1943. When the Hellerberg camp was emptied, the only Jews left behind in Dresden were those living in mixed marriages and their children.'³⁴

With the so-called *Fabrikaktion* [Operation Factory], aimed at putting an end to the use of all Jewish forced labor in the arms industry, the Hellerberg camp was also closed down. During the night of 2 to 3 of March, 1945 the Hellerberg camp was cleared. 293 Jews were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp where most of them were murdered in the gas chambers of Bunkers I and II immediately after the selection.³⁵

By November 2004 nothing remained to remind one of the former Hellerberg *Judenlager* nor of the imprisoned Jews. This function was 'fulfilled' by a provisional display case in the bus shelter at St. Pauli Cemetery. Eventually, in April 2009, a vitrine was set in place next to the bus stop as a memorial. The front displays information about the former Hellerberg *Judenlager* and lists prisoners' names. The rear displays a map documenting the sites of National Socialist persecution in Dresden where further memorial signs were being planned. The locations of the so-called Memorial Depots are listed on the map as well.³⁶

The memorial plaque at Hellerberg (and another at the police headquarters at Schießgasse) have their origins in an initiative by the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, HATiKVA – Bildungs- und Begegnungsstätte für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur Sachsen e.V. [Education and Meeting Center for Jewish History and Culture in Saxony], the Jewish Community in Dresden and the Saxon Memorial Foundation. In the context of memorial plaques or remembering Nazi history there is not the sligh-

33 Cf. Norbert Haase/Stefi Jersch-Wenzel/Hermann Simon (eds.), *Die Erinnerung hat ein Gesicht. Fotografien und Dokumente zur nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung in Dresden 1933-1945*, Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1998, 35.

34 Henny Brenner, *Das Lied ist aus*, loc. cit. Dresden: ddp goldenbogen, 2005, 67.

35 Norbert Haase et al. (eds.), loc. cit. 178.

36 *The Scars of War: Memorial Depots in Dresden mark Dresden* commemorative sites of 'National Socialism, War and Destruction'. The markers, stainless-steel capsules containing information about the respective 'location, where misery occurred', have been set into the ground, as described in the city guide issued by the Memorial Depots. It is in no way surprising that the vast majority of the Memorial Depots are dedicated to the experiences of non-Jewish Germans. Taking the Memorial Depots as an example, what characterizes memorial politics in Dresden become easy to see: as a result of the need to create a historical contextualization of the air raids which can be distinguished from neo-Nazi positions, the fates of original, e.g. Jewish victims have had to be acknowledged. There can be no question, however, of this being an emphatic turn to those victims.

test presence of all those 'commemorative participants' who annually overexert themselves organizing events, concerts, readings, exhibitions and conversations with contemporary witnesses to keep the memory of the air raids of February 13 alive. Naturally, Dresden, the capital city, takes no responsibility for this. Yet the city did issue a press release about the inauguration of the memorial plaque at the police headquarters in February 2008: 'A poster about the Hellerberg *Judenlager* will shortly be hung in the vitrine at Radeburger Straße/Hammerweg. Further memorial plaques are planned. This will include making a compendium of all memorial plaques in a thematic city map that will be available in the internet'.³⁷ After that nothing happened for four years. Eventually, two more memorial plaques were inaugurated in April 2012.³⁸

Not only was the removal of the 'No Admittance to Jews' sign at Brühl's Terrace loaded onto the shoulders of a Shoah survivor but reminders at the sites of crimes – such as the installation of memorial plaques – have always been organized by survivors, their descendants and their sympathizers, too.

Despite the obvious lack of 'set-in-stone' memorials at the sites, we decided in favor of an audio format in order to address issues of the National Socialist history of Dresden and the persecution and annihilation of its Jewish residents. The city tour gives the locations visibility and the listeners themselves become present in the urban landscape when they wear big head phones. By spending time at the locations they become markers for the sites for as long as the tracks last they are listening to. This makes for a visual irritation in the cityscape, a sort of mobile memorial. However, the audioscript is in no way monumental. The tracks do not merge to form a single memorial site. Listeners remain alone under their headphones. This enables a focused involvement with the topics. The audioscript does promote remembrance at specific locations though this is bound up with the physical presence of the listeners and is thus temporary.

It never happened

Katharina Morawek and Nora Sternfeld researched the effectiveness of interventions into 'existing problematic manifestations of history'³⁹ – and the Dresden silent remembrance (including the

37 *Denkzeichen zur Erinnerung an die Verfolgung jüdischer Einwohner*, press release dated February 2, 2008, www.dresden.de/de/02/035/01/2008/02/pm_023.php (accessed 14.06.2012).

38 One of the memorial plaques recalls the former department store Fangers – Aryanized in 1938 – in the Pieschen area of Dresden. The Auerbachs had to live in the 'Jew house' in Bautzner Straße 20 from 1941. They were later taken to the Hellerberg Judenlager and, when the camp was closed, deported to Auschwitz and probably murdered on arrival. A second memorial plaque marks the Zeiss Ikon AG Goehle plant in which Jews from Dresden were forced to work producing armaments. See also www.cj-dresden.de/index.php?id=97 (accessed June 1, 2012).

39 Katharina Morawek/Nora Sternfeld, *Visuelle Geschichtspolitik im öffentlichen Raum. Eine Reflexion über künstlerische Strategien der Erinnerung im Postnazismus*, Bildpunkt, spring 2011, www.igbildendekunst.at/bildpunkt/2011/smrt-postnazismus/morawek-sternfeld.htm (accessed June 14, 2012).

silence about National Socialist crimes) must be regarded as such a problematic manifestation.⁴⁰ As participants in artistic historico-political discussions in Vienna, Morawek and Sternfeld concluded:⁴¹ memorial projects are only welcome under certain conditions. They must treat the building structure with great respect. A memorial plaque of acrylic glass is most welcome. As the authors criticize this makes it easy to remove. Furthermore, temporary interventions meet with the greatest approval. Morawek and Sternfeld conclude from this that the signature characteristic of contemporary memory may well lie in its reversibility. As a result they argue in favor of 'historico-political strategies that force a critical examination of the Nazi crimes (including the continuities of Nazism) and demand consequences that cannot be easily reversed.'⁴²

We met similar concerns when presenting the audioscript at a series of events with the title 'Reports on Monument Preservation: Memorial Sites – Memorial and Commemoration' at Dresden Technical University. In the follow-up discussion the effectiveness of the audioscript was called into question because of its non-physical nature. It was regarded as too defensive, especially in the context of the political struggles in the city about memorials. Instead, many people argued for classic, permanent memorial plaques. Interestingly, the memorial plaques were not approved without a proviso to built them into the facade of the building and to not simply affix them to it. The reason given for this demand was that a memorial plaque like this could not be removed without public discussion.

We agree with the concerns about temporary, reflexive forms of commemoration. The critique we met reveals the experienced absence in Dresden in connection with the city's National Socialist history. However, this absence is no surprise and we regard it as rather programmatic for Dresden: the whole municipal effort is directed towards restoring the Baroque cityscape. 'If they could, people here would rebuild every single building. They want to completely forget. It never happened.'⁴³

The rebuilding of the Frauenkirche [Church of Our Lady] and the reconstruction of the historic Neumarkt express this desire to completely undo the destruction of the city. The deflection of guilt manifests itself architecturally: only a city that considers itself innocent is capable of mobilizing the amount of energy needed to grasp – as the Gesellschaft Historischer Neumarkt Dresden [Society for the

40 The book *Braune Karrieren. Dresdner Täter und Akteure im Nationalsozialismus*, Christine Pieper, Mike Schmeitzner, Gerhard Naser (Eds.), Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2012, counts as an exception. 2,500 people participated in a tour visiting Täterspuren [Traces of the Perpetrators] organized by Dresden Nazifrei on February 13, 2012.

41 Katharina Morawek takes part in the Politics of History Platform at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. It researches and intervenes in questions of the politics of memory and history. Nora Sternfeld is an art communicator/educator, curator and editor of Bildpunkt as well as being a founding member of trafo.K.

42 Morawek/Sternfeld, *Visuelle Geschichtspolitik*, 2011, loc. cit.

43 George Packer, *Embers – Will a prideful city finally confront its past? Letter from Dresden*, The New Yorker, February 2010, www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/02/01/100201fa_fact_packer (accessed June 1, 2012).

Dresden Historic Neumarkt] puts it – the ‘last chance’ to restore the city’s ‘old identity’ by reconstructing the Neumarkt.⁴⁴

In our view, the Neumarkt is a single gigantic monument, permanently and conspicuously reminding everyone of the ‘catastrophe’, the ‘downfall’, the ‘obliteration’, the ‘extermination’ and the Allied air raids. All other perspectives are excluded. Where is there space for memorial plaque telling a different story here? Even the intention to do so is forced to capitulate in the face of the hegemonic narrative of Dresden’s suffering expressed in the architecture. The biggest memorial plaque in the world could not hope to take on an entire city center.⁴⁵

The audioscript was conceptualized, researched, edited, scripted, recorded and organized by Heike Ehrlich, Thomas Fache, Katrin Förster, Kathrin Krahl, Claudia Pawlowitsch, Anita Ulrich and Katharina Wüstefeld. For many years they have been concerned with the history and the reception of National Socialism and the Shoah as well as with historical revisionism, especially in connection with the local commemorative discourse about February 13.

Translated by Hannah Eitel

Edited by Tim Sharp

44 www.neumarkt-dresden.de (accessed May 2, 2012).

45 Our analysis notwithstanding, we did not want to turn down Roni Pelled’s request to support her efforts for Stolpersteine (literally and figuratively ‘stumbling blocks’ set in the pavement) in memory of her murdered family. Roni Pelled first contacted us from Israel in March 2008 looking for the movie *Die Juden sind weg. Das Lager Dresden-Hellerberg* [The Jews are gone. The Dresden Hellerberg Camp]. She had come across some film stills of restored original footage about the Hellerberg Judenlager on the internet. Her uncle, Zvi Silbermann, recognized his father, Simon Silbermann, in one of these stills. ‘So, this is our grandfather Simon Silbermann. He and his wife Gertrud were sent with the last Jewish from Dresden to the Lager of Hellerberg, and then to Auschwitz for their death. My father and his twin brother (Harry and Sigbart Silbermann) left and went to Israel in 1935.’ [E-Mail from Roni Pelled of March 1, 2008.] Since the end of November 2012 two *Stolpersteine* on Winkelmannstraße commemorate Simon and Gertrud Silbermann and,– in accordance with Zvi Silbermann’s wishes – three further relatives: his Uncle Leo, Aunt Rosa and their daughter Margot Felicitas Silbermann.