

Freigabe ab Freitag, 22. September 2017, 18:00 Uhr

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

**Verleihung „Rebellinnen gegen den Krieg – Anita Augspurg - Preis der Internationalen Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit“
Rathaus in Verden**

Welcome Adress Gesine Ahlers

My name is Gesine Ahlers. As a former councillor and ally in the fight for the recognition and meaning of Anita Augspurg in her birth city Verden, I welcome you all warmly.

In relation to the exhibition at the foyer, I would like to tell you something about the history of the city Verden from the 1980s and 1990s.

At that time, groups of women and female politicians all over Germany stood up for naming streets and public squares after important women. A women's initiative from Verden had the idea to acknowledge Anita Augspurg by naming a square, close to her birthplace, after her. This square was called Von-Einem square before.

From what we know, General Von Einem was a former war minister from Prussia (1903-1909) who paved the way for National Socialism. It is written down in his memoirs: „The hope for the eternal power of Germany, which we see in the national movement, made me fight for the Germany of tomorrow: The Third Reich.“ Von Einem's connection to Verden is reduced to the years 1873 to 1876, when he was regimental adjutant and the year 1933, when he opened the racecourse of Verden as Colonel-General.

Until 1985 Anita Augspurg was hardly known in Verden. That is why her story became topic of the first women's week in Verden. Articles and symbolic name changes during the international women's day were the first actions for a Anita Augspurg Square in Verden. Several events and articles followed, to make the meaning of her feminist politics known to the public.

In 1988 the association „Frauen für ein Frauenzentrum e.V.“ collected signatures in the context of the second women's week, supported by the Green Party and the Social Democrats. Representatives of the city council were invited to a public panel discussion. In the end of this discussion, the petition for renaming the square was officially handed to the participating politicians.

Ensuing, lots of letters were sent to the local newspapers (as you can see in the exhibition).

The critics were not focussed on the feminist and radical pacifist position of Anita Augspurg, but the position of General Von Einem: the advocates declared it as an important step towards coming to terms with the past of Verden. The opponents wanted to uphold Verden's tradition of being an equestrian and garrison city by keeping the name of Von Einem and ignoring his national socialist disposition.

In 1990, at the 16th of January, after two years of public discussions and somehow battles between reader's letters, the city council of Verden decided to rename the Von Einem square with a majority of only one vote. The changing of the street signs needed more than one year. At first, the signs showed the wrong name, because Anita Augspurg was confused with the city of Augsburg. At the 8th of March in 1991 the Anita Augspurg square officially got its new name. The renaming was celebrated with pacifist texts of Anita Augspurg, because at this time the gulf war was determining the political world.

Regarding feminist politics, this success was very important for the women's movement in Verden. At the same time, the same women were engaged by founding a women's centre in Verden. It was furnished in 1988. Furthermore, today there is an advice centre for women and a centre for advice and intervention in case of domestic violence called BISS. In general, projects for women, and at the moment especially for refugee women, do have a high value in Verden.

A great success was, that Verden became the first „place for women“ in lower saxony because of Anita Augspurg.

And another thing, the decision for this award ceremony got a majority from all parties in the city council of Verden.

I wish that today, Anita Augspurg would not describe the town life of Verden as „cramped and with a lack of interests“.

It is definitely worth it to continue fighting for that.

Gesine Ahlers ©

Übersetzung: Marieke Eilers ©