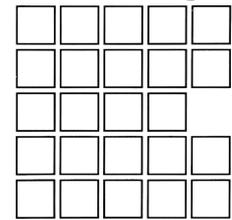


Stadt Erlangen



Grußwort

von Oberbürgermeister Dr. Siegfried Balleis

aus Anlass der Verleihung

des Jakob-Herz-Preises der FAU an

Prof. Dr. Peter J. Ratcliffe, FRS

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now almost 200 years that Jakob Herz was born in Bayreuth. He graduated with a first and came to Erlangen to study medicine and finally wrote his doctoral thesis about a research on anatomical distortion of the feet.

At that time, according to a law of 1711, it was still not officially allowed to Jewish people to take residence in Erlangen. The law was only abolished in 1861.

Herz worked at the medical faculty and his expert skills were beyond doubt – nevertheless it was only 2 years before his death in 1869 that he was promoted to professor.

In addition to his excellent research work and brilliant teaching skills, Jakob Herz was also known as “the ambassador of charity”. He put his main focus on the support of socially deprived patients. He gained merit

for treating the wounded people in Erlangen during the wars in 1866 und 1870/71 and was then awarded the Knight's cross.

Being a dedicated citizen of Erlangen, Jakob Herz was elected city councillor in 1867. City councillors at that time were the highly-taxed citizens who elected the municipal authorities and had the right to consult them on various decisions. In 1867, respecting his altruism and unselfishness, the city authorities appointed Herz honorary citizen of Erlangen. He was so the first Jewish person to receive this title.

Herz died at only 55 on 27th Sept. 1871. His funeral was on 1st October after a memorial service at the Protestant cemetery of the New City and at the Jewish cemetery in Baiersdorf. On 5th May 1875 Erlangen posthumously honoured Jakob Herz by erecting a monumental bronze statue on the Huguenot Square, depicting Herz modestly standing on a high base, wearing a simple coat, his eyes lowered and his hands folded.

The high value and importance attributed to this statue can be seen in the fact that the city of Erlangen had commissioned the then best known artist Kaspar Clemens von Zumbusch from Vienna to create the monument. He had also designed the bronze statues of King Maximilian II of Bavaria in Munich and of the Empress Maria Theresia in Vienna. The cast iron for the Herz statue was prepared by the well-known artist Christoph Lenz from Nuremberg.

Furthermore, the monument itself reflected the importance ascribed to it: the figure was almost double life size – in the christian-occidental art the highest form of honour. To emphasize the respect for this great man the monument was placed on the most central Huguenot Square in Erlangen, opposite the Huguenot Church and parallel to the statue of Markgraf Friedrich, founder of the university, on the Castle Square. These facts and the inscription "The first monument for a Jew in Bavaria" reflected the attitude free of any prejudice and the gratitude towards Jakob Herz.

In 1933, however, the statue was destroyed during an anti-Semitic campaign. The honorary citizenship, though couldn't be touched by the National Socialists.

After 1945 the city of Erlangen strove to commemorate its Jewish citizens by mounting plaques and naming streets and buildings after them. Since 1971, the late Ilse Sponzel, was officially in charge of keeping up contact with the surviving Jewish people or their families. Following the murder of the Jewish publisher Shlomo Lewin and his friend Frida Poeschke in 1980, the initiative was taken to erect a pillar with the inscription "we remember Jakob Herz who citizens of this town honoured with a monument and later destroyed it". Years later, this pillar was soiled with anti-Semitic signs. This has to be a reminder for us to never forget that sad part of German history and to turn a watchful eye to any signs of racism.

In 2010 a street between Henkestraße and Hartmannstraße was named after Jakob Herz. And within the frame of an art event designed by Isi Kunath, where 15 historical sites were marked with huge pins, the original location of the Herz-Monument on Huguenot Square was also commemorated by the positioning of one of these pins.

Jakob Herz with his life's work and his nomination to honorary citizen of Erlangen, whose monument was destroyed by the National Socialists, has become a symbol of the history of Jews in this city. In memory of this extraordinary person the medical faculty of Erlangen awards every second year the Jakob Herz prize to an extraordinary scientist.

Dr. Siegfried Balleis

Oberbürgermeister