

03 The History of the Documentation Center

On 4 November, 2001, the then Federal President, Johannes Rau, opened the Documentation Center Former Nazi Party Rally Grounds on the site of the Rally Grounds, which still comprise four square kilometres today.

The permanent exhibition, "Fascination & Terror", in the north wing of the Congress Hall, the unfinished NSDAP congress centre, planned to accommodate up to 50,000 people, explains the Nazi Party Rallies and the fascination they held for people. It focuses on the topic of the propaganda motivation machinery, as well as on the causes and repercussions of the criminal abuse of power by the Nazi state.

The Documentation Center's second main element, supplementing the permanent exhibition, is the Study Forum. In its seminar rooms on the roof of the north wing, in the cinema and lecture theatre, the Documentation Center, in co-operation with various partners, offers an in-depth educational programme for groups of school students, youth and adult groups (see press text 06).

The investment of 10.75 million Euros (21.5 million DM) was shared between the Federal Republic of Germany, the Free State of Bavaria, the Region of Middle Franconia and the City of Nuremberg. The commitment both by the Federal Republic and the Free State underlines the high national importance of this task. The City of Nuremberg bears the running costs.

The creation of the permanent exhibition, "Fascination & Terror", was sponsored by Bruno Schnell, publisher of the Nuremberg dailies "Nürnberger Nachrichten/Nürnberger Zeitung", by the Cultural Foundation of Sparkasse Nürnberg, the cultural foundation of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, both in Nuremberg and Middle Franconia, the Bavarian State Bank (Study Forum) and the Bavarian State Foundation.

Even after 2001, the Documentation Center received sustained financial support from the Foundation for the Support of the Documentation Center, the Future Foundation of Sparkasse Nürnberg, The Bavarian Savings Banks Foundation and the Lions Club Nürnberg-Noris e.V.

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A Long Journey

It was forty years after the end of World War II, on 24 July, **1985**, when a small provisional exhibition entitled "Fascination and Terror" was opened in the Zeppelin Grandstand of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds, and the city officially and publicly started to deal with its architectural heritage from the Nazi era. Three years later, the symposium "The Heritage – Dealing with Nazi Architecture", initiated by the city's culture department, gave further impetus.

In **1988**, the CSU party group, in a paper concerning further action on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds, recommended an extension of the exhibition "Fascination and Terror" and a revival of the grounds as a sports and recreation park. In **1989**, the SPD party group demanded that a museum for modern history should be established, financed by a public law foundation. In autumn **1991**, an "Initiative Group Congress Hall" made recommendations for the establishment of an "Information Center Former Nazi Party Rally Grounds" in the rooms of the north wing of the Congress Hall, to supplement the exhibition "Fascination and Terror".

In **1994**, the then director of Nuremberg Municipal Museums, Dr. Franz Sonnenberger, in the context of his plan for modernising all of Nuremberg's museums, also introduced the idea of a Documentation Center on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds. The "Nürnberger Nachrichten" on 21 October, 1994 commented: " ... a vision, which must seem utopian for the time being". The City Council adopted the plans for the future, but did not grant any finances.

In **1997**, things got moving. The previous year, a "pavilion solution" including the north wing of the Congress Hall had been developed and put forward with the City's Building Department. Prof. Dr. Gregor Schöllgen, historian at Erlangen University was commissioned by Nuremberg Municipal Museums to produce an "expert report on the future use of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds as a museum". The publisher of the "Nürnberger Nachrichten", Bruno Schnell, made the first concrete contribution to the project, with an initial subsidy of 250,000 DM. This was followed by grants from the cultural committee of the Middle Franconian Regional Council and the Culture Foundation of Stadtparkasse Nürnberg.

In **1998**, Austrian architect, Günther Domenig, won the international design competition for the Documentation Center and was commissioned to draw up initial plans. After some discussion concerning the reduction of the additional costs caused by the new design, in autumn **1999**, finances were finally secured, with the Federal Republic of Germany and the Free State of Bavaria contributing 6 million DM each, and thanks to grants from additional public and private sponsors, and by the City of Nuremberg.

On 28 January, **2000**, building works for the Documentation Center officially started in the north wing of the unfinished Congress Hall –

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not by turning the first turf, but by breaking out a stone from the existing façade. The topping-out ceremony was held in November of the same year. One year later, on 4 November, 2001, Federal President, Johannes Rau, handed the institution over to the public.

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