

"Bei uns ist immer was los!"

der 20. Juli—German Resistance Day July 20: Commemorating Resistance Against Hitler

Each year on July 20, Germany pauses to remember the men and women who stood up for freedom and human dignity in the face of the Nazi regime, often at the risk of death.



Visitor views exhibit
in German Resistance
Memorial Center



Chancellor Merkel talks to Petra Rau, the vice president of the German Parliament, in front of a photo of the German resistance fighters Graf von Stauffenberg, left, and Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim as she visits the opening of the newly designed permanent exhibition at the German Resistance Memorial Center.

The year 2014 marks the 70th anniversary of the 1944 Hitler assassination plot centered around Colonel Claus Schenk von Graf Stauffenberg and including military and civilian conspirators. Federal President Joachim Gauck will be the keynote speaker at the main commemoration, to be held in the Bendlerblock courtyard where von Stauffenberg and a number of co-conspirators were summarily executed when the July 20 assassination attempt was unsuccessful.

Earlier this month, Chancellor Angela Merkel opened a new permanent exhibit at the German Resistance Memorial Center, which documents not only the July 20 plot but also a wide range of resistance against National Socialism in Germany. Recognizing these men and women was not always welcomed, she said.

"It was and is therefore even more important to remember every year on July 20 those who during the darkest years in German history did not participate, did not look away, did not remain silent, but who resisted and thereby risked their lives and as the ultimate consequent also lost them," Merkel said at the exhibit opening on July 1.

Germany commemorates not only the protagonists of the July 20 assassination attempt, but all those who have given their lives in the fight against Hitler and for the quest of liberty. In fact, resistance to the Nazi regime was not only military but stemmed from all parts of society. Some of the more prominent figures were Hans and Sophie Scholl, university students from Munich ("White Rose"), or Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the social-democrat Julius Leber, the centrist politician Eugen Bolz, or individual plotters like Johann Georg Elser. Clearly, the diverse forms of resistance to the Nazi regime were unsuccessful and the debate about the magnitude and impact is still ongoing in Germany.

Nevertheless, the anniversary of the July 20 plot has been a day of national commemoration since 1954 when Theodor Heuss, the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany, started the tradition on the 10th anniversary of the plot.