

Speech by the Headmistress Eva Tappe at the naming ceremony



Dear Hugo Stern's family, dear guests,

I am very happy that you are present at today's naming ceremony and that you want to celebrate with us this day which is of such profound significance for our school. Dr. Bracht has already mentioned that the school board has agreed on the addition of Hugo Stern's name to our school and that Hugo Stern himself represents a further building block of remembrance in Rütten.

The life of and times of Hugo Stern also offer many learning opportunities for school work today. He was a witness of a time rich in history: he not only experienced the First World War, but also the rise of the Nazis; he experienced at first hand the Nazi era with all the atrocities of the Nazi dictatorship.

With reference to Hugo Stern's biography, students are able to understand how quickly seemingly secure social structures can change and how hatred, hate speech and discrimination can threaten people's lives and the lives of their families. It can be shown what extremist right-wing propaganda and ethnic arrogance can do. These are considerations that demonstrate how our democracy is once again endangered today.

Was bedeutet es für einen Menschen, die Heimat zu verlieren?

Was bedeutet es für einen Menschen, Angst um das eigene Leben und um das Leben der Familie zu haben?

Wie fühlt es sich an, lange oder dauerhaft von seiner Familie getrennt zu sein?

Wie schwer ist es, in einem Land neu zu beginnen, die Sprache und die Kultur neu zu erlernen?

Pupils can be made aware of important questions when dealing with the biography of Hugo Stern:

- What does it mean for a person to lose their homeland?
- What does it mean for a person to fear for their own life and for the life of their family?
- How does it feel to be separated from your family and not be able to see or contact your parents or child every day, if at all?
- How difficult is it to start over in a foreign country, to encounter and come to terms with a new language and a new culture?

These questions which were topical during Hugo Stern's life are sadly still being asked all over the world today. We, too, are regularly reminded by the intake of refugees and asylum seekers that not everyone has the chance to live in safety. Currently, people are fleeing from war and destruction in a country in our own continent of Europe. Around 195,000 Ukrainian children and young people are currently attending German schools – some of them in Rüthen.

Gemeinsam sind wir stark und bunt

Gründungsmotto 2014

If we look at our own school community, we find many examples of people leaving their homes and starting over somewhere else. We find these examples among both our students and our teaching staff. Thus our founding motto "Together we are strong and colourful" is now as ever relevant against the background of exile, flight and new beginnings.

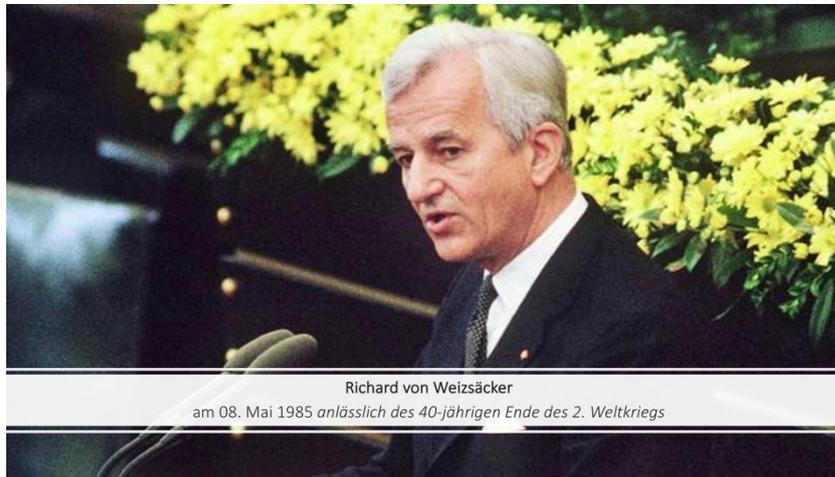


As is anchored in German Education Law, the core task of schools is the education and upbringing of children and young people. School is to accompany and support them in their development towards becoming independent and responsible individuals. This task is to be carried out, among other things, on the basis of our constitution. Article 1 of this fundamental law says:

“Human dignity is inviolable. It is the duty of all state power and authority to respect and protect it.”

This forms the core of our democratic society. On their way to becoming independent and mature, young people also have the right to make mistakes and to learn from their own mistakes. Gaining one's own experiences is of prime importance for the development of one's personality.

However, as a society as a whole, we must not repeat the mistakes we have made in the past; we are rather obliged to learn from them. During the Nazi era, many terrible mistakes were made that must never be repeated because of their inhumanity towards members of society, such as the Jews. That is why an appropriate culture of remembrance is so important today.



The former German President Richard von Weizsäcker said the following words in his widely acclaimed speech at the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II on May 8, 1985:

“Those who close their eyes to the past, become blind to the present. Those who refuse to remember the inhumanity, risk falling prey once again to the dangers of re-infection.”

History - especially that of the Nazi regime - must be made tangible for schoolchildren. The purely intellectual approach that we provide in various subjects is not enough. It needs to be supplemented, because emotions are important for lasting understanding. We need empathic understanding. This works particularly well when specific places are visited and specific individual destinies are taught, for traces of National Socialism cannot only be found in the distant capital of the Reich at that time, Berlin, or in Munich, the seat of the NSDAP Reich Party Conventions, or in Nuremberg, the city of the Nazi party rallies: they can be found in every village, every town and city in Germany. In this context, there are many memorial sites that pursue precisely this goal of making concrete social conditions tangible through stories of everyday life.

Hugo Stern came from Rülhén. Both the house where he was born and his burial place are in Rülhén. This makes him easily accessible to our students. Individual stages of his childhood can be discovered in Rülhén. His life can directly be seen as an example of many other destinies.

Let me give you an example of how we think a culture of remembrance can be conveyed to our students today:



Our Class 10b dealt with the life of Hugo Stern in Rüthen as part of a course in Social Studies. In this context, a biparcours about his life was created. Biparcours is an app published by the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia that enables internet-based exploration of places. The tour "The Life of Hugo Stern" leads through Rüthen. The app guides the user to places in Rüthen with the help of geodata and reports on-site what role this place played in Hugo Stern's life or asks the user to take a photo of certain places. With this modern technology, which is part of the everyday life of our students, you can travel 100 years back into the past. For us, this is a convincing example of a living culture of remembrance. You are welcome to go on this tour whenever you have the opportunity.

PRIVATE SEKUNDARSCHULE

Hugo Stern

We intend to work on these and further examples with our students over the next few years. The fate of Hugo Stern promotes the remembrance of a time in our country's history that must never be repeated, and his fate truly justifies the school board's choice of his name for our school.

Thank you very much.