

Report about the 7th International Meeting from May 15th – 17th, 2009 in Plauen

Our 7th *International Meeting* in May 2009 was marked again by understanding among nations and the memory of the Plauen Corvette Captain Werner Hartenstein who went down in history by the allies because of his humanity and compassion towards survivors. This subject is again and again taken by TV stations which are engaged in historical events.

David and Edwina Jones as well as Helen Charles from Great Britain arrived a few days before the meeting in order to present English speeches at high schools. Time witnesses of WW II become naturally less and less. Therefore, these speeches in classes with advanced English and history courses are very welcomed. This time there was a very interesting program. Both the speakers, David Jones and Helen Charles, spoke one lesson in front of each class plus following discussions. In the high school of Greiz four speeches were given for the classes, two speeches at the Diesterweg high school in Plauen and finally because of time reasons one speech at the high school in Auerbach. The newspaper of East Thuringia of May 15th, 2009 reported about it as follows:

Saved the Life of an Enemy

Captain David Jones reports about a humanitarian act of a Submarine Commander

Greiz (OTZ Freund/Schmidt)

The terrible events during WW II are in its actual significance hardly imaginable as we have grown up in a peaceful world. To make experienced history accessible to the students of the 11th grade having pronounced English and history courses was the reason for the invitation of Captain David Jones, who of course introduced in English language his book about the no doubt unique story of the Corvette Captain Werner Hartenstein.



On September 19th, 1942 the British 10 000 tons freighter “Quebec City” was traveling in the South Atlantic on its way from Alexandra to Great Britain and is attacked at 3.00 p. m. from the U-boat 156 “Plauen” under the command of Captain Werner Hartenstein and sunk. This is during a war a “normal event”.

However the following actions did not at all comply (correspond) with a strategy of a war. Corvette Captain Hartenstein gave an order to his crew men to help the survivors and secure their life boats and directed them to the save West African coast. He wished them a good journey and a save landing. “We hope to see you again in a better more peaceful world”.

Unfortunately Hartenstein’s wish did not come true; his boat has been sunk with all hands at the South American coast West of Barbados by American aircraft bombs on March 8th, 1943.

This U-boat commander who saved the lives of the survivors of the “Quebec City” as well as of the “Laconia” has received a monument??? at his birth place of Plauen for his most humanitarian action.

This extraordinary action did not only deeply impress the at that time sea cadet David C. Jones from Swansea/Wales, who was on board the “Quebec City” and who finally thanked his life to Hartenstein. He went even one step further and undertook extensive researches and wrote a book about Hartenstein’s exceptional actions.

After the political change he contacted the home town of the former U-boat commander.

In 2002 an association was founded carrying the name “International Submarine Connection U 156 Plauen e. V.” with 41 members of seven countries, which devoted the understanding among nations and the keeping of peace as the greatest good.

The today 85 years old Captain David Jones, his wife Edwina and a survivor of the ship catastrophe Helen Charles, at that time baby Helen, undertook again and again the difficulties to tell the students in Germany and Great Britain about the heroic deed of Hartenstein to build a bridge of understanding among nation and humanity.

For this unique history lesson the music teacher Mrs. Poenitz was also engaged, whose father is a member of the Plauen U-boat association ISCP. It is a pity that such authentic history lessons become less and less possible as a theme even if it seems to be very far away becomes for a student from a mouth or an eye witness a very personal and understandable experience which can characterize for a long lasting time the thinking and acting of a young person. Captain David Jones was impressed about the great interest of the students of the Gymnasium who will keep this story not only in their minds but they will also continue to tell about it.

On Friday May 15th, the Mayor of Plauen Ralf Oberdorfer invited the guests from Great Britain and members of the circle of friendship U 156 to a reception in the city hall. The Plauen press reported: “Adventure on high seas”.



In the afternoon of the same day we followed an invitation of the Navy Society 1899 Plauen in their club facilities. After the welcoming speeches, the Shanty Choir contributed with their program to a very pleasant stay among friends.

At the festive evening on Saturday May 16th at the Hotel "Alexandra" we enjoyed guests from the District Council Office, the Town Hall, the Navy Society and public representatives as well as five new club members.

In the presentations of the President David Jones and Wilfried Pönitz, the activities of the club were emphasized regarding understanding among nations. During the after dinner speech David Jones presented his nautical career in an interesting speech. After the official part, one was able to hear incredible experiences during individual discussions.

On Sunday May 17th, we made an excursion to Meissen and visited the Meissen Porcelain Museum and the Show Manufacturing as well as the "Albrechtsburg" castle of King Allbrecht. After returning to Plauen we finished our *International Meeting* traditionally with a "good-bye-party" at the Hotel "Alexandra". On Monday, our friends returned to their homes in Great Britain and Germany accompanied with all the good wishes and the hope for a healthy reunion in the year to come.