

Declaration of Dresden on the "Reconstruction of Monuments Destroyed by War" (1982)

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— At the invitation of the ICOMOS National Committee of the German Democratic Republic, participants from 11 countries held a symposium in Dresden from November 15th to 19th, 1982 on the subject of the "Reconstruction of Monuments Destroyed by War".

The meeting:

- has observed once again in Dresden with profound shock, what terrible suffering and losses war causes for people and their cultural property,
- recognized the achievement of the government and people of the German Democratic Republic, in reclaiming a substantial part of their treasures that had been damaged or believed lost, and in particular, architectural monuments,
- against this background gives its full support to the recommendation (No. 308) of the 2nd World Conference of Unesco (Mexico, August 1982), concerning the prevention of wars,
- and agrees also with the resolution concerning the same subject, adopted by the VIth General Assembly of ICOMOS in 1981 in Rome.

The meeting summarizes the results of its discussions in the following basic assessment:

1. The task of social development after the war, the reconstruction of towns and villages, and the resulting task of the protection of monuments constitutes a single entity. The spiritual values of monuments and the desire to acknowledge them both intellectually and politically were the reasons for initiating their reconstruction.
2. The objective and the practical efforts of governments and peoples in the restoration of monuments and the preservation of the character of towns and villages which has evolved over time have been, and will remain to be of great importance for the bond between peoples and their native lands and for their participation in social progress in their country.
3. A great cultural effect has been and will be achieved in such places where protection and meticulous preservation of monuments go hand in hand with efforts to restore their impact and to promote the understanding of them, and where existing monuments have been harmoniously complemented by new works of architecture, respecting and enhancing typical urban ensembles including their natural setting.
4. Since men have been influenced by the wartime destruction and by reconstruction work after the war to regard monuments with increasing interest, in particular as providing evidence of history, fresh emphasis has been placed on the demand to preserve the original substance of the monument. By this is meant that substance which, in all those components which make it worthy of being recognized as a monument, has grown through the ages, and which, by virtue of its authenticity, confirms the origins of the monument and its historical evolution up to the present day.
5. Reconstruction gave fresh impetus to basic studies and to intensive research by means of archaeology, for new modes of documenting results in monument protection. Completion of the documentation of individual monuments and of the stock of monuments is also recognized as an urgent task for the protection of monuments from the consequences of armed conflicts and catastrophes.
6. The new interest in the intellectual acknowledgement of monuments has frequently given rise to the wish to restore a monument by reason of its meaning and impact, in addition to mere preservation. The type and scope of restoration have been and continue to be dependent on the significance and specific character of the monument, on the extent of destruction, and of the cultural and political function attached to it.
7. In reconstructing monuments destroyed by war various techniques have been developed. A multiplicity of factors have to be taken into account in each individual case. These range from the conservation of a monument for its symbolic value to the restoration of a townscape condition which cannot be abandoned.
8. In the restoration of monuments destroyed by war special care should be taken that the historic development up to the present time can be traced. This applies to the elements of monuments from different periods as well as other evidence of its fate. This might include modern elements which have been added in a responsible manner. The complete reconstruction of severely damaged monuments must be regarded as an exceptional circumstance which is justified only for special reasons resulting from the destruction of a monument of great significance by war. Such a reconstruction must be based on reliable documentation of its condition before destruction.
9. The need to continue the traditional use of a building has frequently accelerated the restoration of destroyed architectural monuments. Increasing awareness of the spiritual value of monuments has further encouraged this trend. This concerns to a large extent residential houses in towns and villages as well as town-halls, churches, and other historic buildings.
10. The destruction of a monument frequently results in completely new objectives for social use and their understanding after its reconstruction being established. This may range from the efforts to find a use of great public significance to residential use.
11. In the task of reconstructing monuments, a highly meticulous scientific methodology has evolved, as well as skills in technology, artistry and craftsmanship. Arising from the legitimate desire of peoples to restore damaged monuments as completely as possible to their national significance, necessary restoration work, going beyond conservation, has attained a high professional level and thereby a new cultural dimension as well.
12. More and more clearly, peoples combine pride in monuments of their own history with interest in monuments of other countries and with respect for cultural achievements, both past and present, of the peoples represented by these monuments. Worldwide exchange of knowledge and experience on characteristic features, historical evidence, and the beauty of the cultural heritage, especially the monuments of every people and each ethnic and social group, plays a constructive role in assuring equitable, peaceful co-existence between peoples.

Our experience working in the field of monuments protection, in seeing the terrible loss of human life and the destruction of cultural treasures by wars, our experience in the beautiful and responsible work of restoring and newly understanding these monuments, place an obligation on all of us to make every effort for a more secure peace in the world on the basis of assiduous international cooperation and disarmament.

Dresden, November 18th, 1982
