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Press Office

Press release

Chemnitz, 11 December 2018

Stefan and Inge Heym working library coming to Chemnitz

The City Council has today unanimously decided to establish a Stefan Heym Centre in the city, with the Stefan and Inge Heym working library as its centrepiece. It is proposed to house the facility at the Tietz, where it can be visited by school pupils, students, researchers and other interested parties. The plans were recently announced by Mayor Barbara Ludwig, together with Dr Ulrike Uhlig, Chairman of the Stefan Heym Society, and Ferenc Csák, Head of the Chemnitz Department of Culture.

Mayor Barbara Ludwig said, "In becoming home to the Stefan and Inge Heym working library, Chemnitz will not only be honouring and remembering one of our city's greatest sons. We will also be acquiring a contemporary history space, where residents, pupils, students and academics can gain an insight into the life and works of Stefan Heym. I would like to thank Stefan Heym's widow, Inge Heym, for this valuable donation, and I look forward to seeing these historical rooms in the Tietz before long."

Inge Heym said, "Books that he wrote himself, books that he kept with him throughout his life – they all reflect the life and times of Stefan Heym. The library will enable us to follow in his footsteps, and the contemporaneous documents it holds will provide information on Stefan Heym as a writer, and on his convictions and attitudes in contradictory times. For me, it represents 30 years of living together and working together; it is part of my life. The library brings Stefan Heym back to his home town, which he was forced to leave as a young man, when it was a matter of life or death. I am sure this donation is what he would have wished in our contradictory times."

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Dr Ulrike Uhlig, Chairman of the Stefan Heym Association, said “When I visited the home of Stefan and Inge Heym in Berlin-Grünau for the first time 8 years ago, I was both fascinated and impressed. There were books everywhere, from the cellar to the loft. The great writer had died, but he remained an almost physical presence in those rooms. First editions of his works, books by colleagues and friends, and the collected works of Shakespeare and Heine, whom he so admired. I could never have dreamed back then that Inge Heym would one day be so generous as to donate her husband’s working library, his own books and many personal items, to Chemnitz. It means a great deal to the International Stefan Heym Society that the dream has come true. We want the Stefan Heym Forum and the working library to become a lively meeting place for readers, and also a place for Heym research and academic discussion.”

The room will certainly make an impression, with its furnishings and an almost 2,000-strong collection of works. The working library is to be housed in the former TIETZ Café on the third floor, and will be open to school pupils, students, researchers and other interested parties.

The initial idea came from the International Stefan-Heym Association, which was founded in Chemnitz in 2009, when members became familiar with the working library during visits to the house of the writer’s widow, Inge Heym. The project to set up the working library in Stefan Heym’s native city was developed in conjunction with the City.

TIETZ will make an attractive setting in which to present the working library to the public; it will be kept safe by means of a glass room-within-a-room system. In addition to the presentation of the working library and a multifunctional events space, it is planned to cover the following main topics: Zone 1 will comprise biographies in the political context – Stefan Heym the man of letters, as a witness of his time and a journalist. Zone 2 will deal with Heym’s life and work, research and secondary literature. Zone 3 will be dedicated to the winners of the International Stefan Heym prize, and Zone 4 will introduce the International Stefan-Heym-Gesellschaft e.V. (The International Stefan Heym Society).

The exhibition space will also include a training and events area with around 30 seats, which will be used for school lessons, study, etc.

Costs for converting and setting up the library are currently running at around EUR 250,000. The draft two-year budget earmarks an initial EUR 100,000 for the project in 2019. It is planned to raise the remaining sum through subsidies and other third-party funds. Once financing has

been secured and the agreement of the City Council gained, the ambitious goal is for the library to be opened in time for the next International Stefan Heym Prize awards, in spring 2020.

The aim is for the Stefan Heym Centre to become a focal point for researchers. There are also plans for a research facility at the Department of Contemporary German and Comparative Literature at TU Chemnitz, which should further consolidate the city's position as a centre for Heym research. In addition to interdisciplinary academic conferences and symposiums, previously unpublished works by Heym may be brought out, as may a critical historical edition of his collected works.

Stefan Heym (1913-2001) is one of the most important German writers of the 20th century. His literary works, including novels, essays, stories and speeches, dealt with the major social conflicts of his times and also provoked opposition.

The project is a collaboration between the City, the International Stefan Heym Association and TU Chemnitz.

Workroom designs and floor plan: ATELIER n.4, Barbara Graupner, Flöha / 2017