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President of IC MEMO

"WHAT IS IC MEMO?"

"And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull …" (The Holy Bible, the New Testament, Mathew 27, 33)

Who thinks of museums when they hear names such as Oshwiecim (Auschwitz) in Poland, Terezin (Theresienstadt) in the Czech Republic, or Perm (the site of biggest complex of camps of the Soviet GULAG) in Russia? Although these centres – unlike the Louvre or the Prado – are not autonomous museums they nevertheless also perform this function.

Organisation and Structure

IC MEMO is the abbreviation for the "International Committee of Memorial Museums for the Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes". The committee is one of thirty international committees that make up ICOM, the international museum organisation. Museum experts are organised in these international committees[1] in accordance with their special fields: archaeology, design, documentation, security, personnel training, marketing, etc. ICOM, the "International Council of Museums", regards itself as "an international organisation of museums and museum professionals which is committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible"[2]. ICOM has approximately 17,000 members in 143 countries. In addition to their activities in the international committees, they work together in 108 national and 7 regional committees as well as in 13 affiliated organisations.[3] Every three years, its members gather for a general conference. "ICOM was founded in 1946. It is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation which has formal links with UNESCO."[4] ICOM's head office is in Paris.

In summer 2004, when the last survey of members was conducted, IC MEMO had 49 voting members and 3 non-voting members. Its members came from 18 countries, the majority of whom are in Germany (20), the United States (5) and Israel (4). The other countries are Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It has no members in Latin America, Africa or Australia, which is a weakness in some respects. When the committee came into being, its members' work focused

1 At the time of the general conference in Seoul in 2004.

2 Flyer: "The museum is an institution in the service of society and of its development", 2004.

3 At the time of the general conference in Seoul in 2004.

4 Flyer (see footnote 2).

on the fates of those persecuted during the Holocaust and the Second World War. I shall return to this point later. Representatives of memorial museums of international and national importance in Germany that are organised in IC MEMO are at the following locations: in Buchenwald, Dachau, the Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten (which is responsible for Sachsenhausen and Ravensbruck), Neuengamme, the Topography of Terror and the House of the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, as well as the Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten. IC MEMO also includes important museums located in the German Laender such as Wewelsburg District Museum, which has a high international standing, the Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Dusseldorf and the historical site Villa ten Hompel Münster in North-Rhine-Westphalia. Another member worthy of mention here is the Verein Aktives Museum in Berlin, which has produced internationally acclaimed exhibitions and publications on European Jews in exile during the Third Reich, for example. The following well-known European institutions are also represented: Terezin Memorial in the Czech Republic, the Centre de la Mémoire d'Oradour in France, Herinnerigscentrum Kamp Westerborg, and the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and the Guernica Peace Museum in Spain. The committee is also represented at the most important memorial museums in Israel: at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in Western Galilee, and Beit Theresienstadt Kibbutz Givat Chaym Ichud. It does not include important memorial museums from Poland, other Eastern European countries or the USA. Two developments have led to memorial museum staff joining the committee, whose work is not exclusively focused on the victims of National Socialism. The specific historical conditions have led some German memorial museums to present exhibitions on Soviet Special Camps in addition to those dealing with the victims of Nazi persecution. After 1945, the Soviet Military Administration interned real or alleged opponents of the new Socialist order in these camps under appalling conditions. Other organisations, such as the Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten, are responsible for detention centres dating from the time of the state socialist dictatorship in Eastern Germany. Representatives working in other countries at museums dealing with other persecution histories have also joined our ranks. These include the Kistler-Ritso Estonian Foundation in Tallinn (Estonia), which focuses on working through the consequences of Soviet rule, the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, and the War Memorial Museum of Korea in Seoul. The struggle for international humanitarian standards in military conflicts is the theme of the Musée international de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant Rouge in Geneva, Switzerland. The International Human Rights Museum Initiative in London has set itself an even more ambitious goal: the establishment of a global network of human rights' initiatives. IC MEMO's membership reflects the origins and programme that led to the foundation of the International Committee of Memorial Museums for the Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes. I shall now turn to this point.

Origins and Programme

It is no coincidence that the initiative to found the committee came from Germany.[5] During the 20th century, Germany experienced two dictatorships: National Socialism and state socialism.

5 See Wulff E. Brebeck, Plea for the creation of an International Committee for Memorial Museums for Public Crimes against Humanity within the scope of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), pp. 4-5, in: http://141.35.114.211:8080/icom/index.htm. (also published in German, French and Spanish).

In Eastern Germany (the German Democratic Republic, a member of the socialist Warsaw Pact), the main former concentration camps were decreed memorial museums by the state. In Western Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany, a member of the pro-western North Atlantic Treaty Organization) public debate began in the late sixties, after a period in which court prosecution of the Nazis had largely failed and public discussion of Germany's National Socialist past had been a rare occurrence. Subsequently, following what were frequently heated local disputes, memorial museums arose at the sites of some of the former concentration camps, as well as at former synagogues, 'euthanasia' clinics (where patients were killed), police detention centres, Nazi command headquarters, etc. There are now approximately 120 memorial centres and museums of varying size dedicated to the victims of National Socialism. Following German reunification in 1990, the areas of interest grew. Since then, attention has shifted to include the scenes of persecution by the Soviet secret police during the late forties (at sites where some of the former concentration camps stood) and by the East German state security forces from 1949 to 1989. In addition to the sites already mentioned, there are now others, e. g. the old border checkpoints, serving as memorials commemorating the decades-long division of the country.

Both the social experience of the historical impact of political systems that were involved in crimes on such a vast scale and the transformation of places and things that evoke the most horrific memories in the victims into museums and memorial museums triggered a nation-wide debate about the self-conception and importance of memorial museums in the 1990s.

Previously, society had committed itself to commemorating the victims of National Socialism. It now had to extend this commitment to include other persecuted groups as well. Furthermore, the number of memorial museums had meanwhile grown to such a degree that co-operation between them was becoming increasingly difficult. Whereas the large memorial museums, which are supported by the Laender, joined forces to create a permanent working group, the smaller memorial museums continued to work together on an informal basis, organised by the *Gedenkstättenreferat* of the Topography of Terror in Berlin. They meet twice a year for a conference, run a communications forum on the Internet (www.topographie.de/gedenkstaettenforum) and publish an informative magazine, the Gedenkstättenrundbrief (memorial museum circular). This network is organised by Thomas Lutz, who is now Vice-President of IC MEMO. As early as the 1980s, when internal discussions began on the historicisation of Nazi crimes, some argued that memorial museums would have to start redefining themselves as museums for contemporary history. This role definition was rejected by most of those memorial museums that had been founded by members of the population or were inspired by socially critical ideas. It was only after people began to discuss a new conception of memorial museums for Nazi victims in the new German Laender (formerly East Germany) that there was a shift in perspective that effected memorial centres in the old Laender (formerly West Germany) too. Over the past few years, memorial museums have been placed in a position – with respect to both their financing and staff – to extend the scope of their activities. Factors such as the greater distance to the experience of Nazi persecution and the transition from a "communicative" to a "cultural" memory called for the establishment of cultural institutions that would serve as the social bearers of these memories in future too. Memorial museums are increasingly becoming "classical" museums. Therefore, expert advice from colleagues working at museums is becoming

essential, whether they specialise in (contemporary) archaeology, the design of open spaces, material culture, restoration questions, or the adoption of uniform standards for databases. All these different areas serve as bases for a professional exchange of information.

Although discussions on new forms of co-operation came to nothing at a national level, the lack of international associations of memorial museums on the one hand, and an analysis of how German memorial museums might internationalise their work on the other, finally gave birth to a new organisation: IC MEMO. Many memorial museums have bilateral contacts with similar institutions abroad. New communications technologies such as the Internet foster contact on a more regular and intense basis. The only realistic way to enhance memorial museums' professional competence, to move towards multilateral communication and to provide them with a basic organisational structure was to join an existing organisation.

The goal of the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, founded in 1999, is very close to ours. It is also composed of similar institutions. It is made up of nine institutions: the Terezin Memorial, the Project To Remember in Argentina, the Gulag Museum Perm 36 in Russia, the former slave prisons on the Ile de Gorée, Senegal, the District Six Museum (recalling a multi-ethnic district from which the residents were forcibly evacuated under the apartheid system) in Cape Town, South Africa, the Liberation War Museum (thematising the war of independence against Pakistan) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the Workhouse (where old, sick and homeless people performed forced labour in the 19th century) in Nottinghamshire, England, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (a residential building in New York that accommodated immigrants for seventy years), and the National Park Service in Philadelphia, USA (an umbrella organisation for centres devoted to the American independence movement).

Proceeding from our historical experience, we concentrated our activities on state and societal crimes committed during the 20th century: on the transformation in the nature of war brought about by developments in weapons and societal organisation, which made mass crimes possible and also created the framework for mass extermination and genocide, as well as on state and socially organised campaigns to stigmatise and victimise social groups. We addressed these historical processes, the conditions underlying them and their consequences. These included a culture of remembrance that gradually came into being under changed political conditions after the violent events had passed and the focus shifted to the victims. In societies in which perpetrators prevail, remembrance is only possible against the will of the majority. For the majority, or for significant social groups, remembrance is viewed as "negative memory". New forms of remembrance become necessary that differ from the traditional forms which were religious in character, and – from the 19th century on – were inspired by wars waged by powers generally organised as nation states and fought by conscripted soldiers. The ritual of commemorating the "fallen sons of the nation" after peace had been concluded found its counterpart in the "reconciliation across the graves" between governments of countries that had been enemies not long before. This ritual symbolised the return to and mutual acknowledgement of shared values after a war in which each side had honourably fought for their nation's goals. The colonial wars had already called into question these value systems. However, such rituals continue to play a role even today, although they take on a different form and content in societies that have emerged from dictatorships. Here, too, the victims need rituals. They expect the state to acknowledge the tragedy of the senseless sacrifice they have endured and to recognise

its momentous implications for the future. However, these rituals have shortcomings for the victims of state-organised crimes: because inasmuch as the persecuted groups fought, it was not for the nation; they did not suffer for the sake of the nation, but meaninglessly; and their adversary was not an "honourable" enemy, but their "own" fellow citizens and state organs. Under such circumstances, sites of persecution become especially important as focal points for "negative remembrance". Furthermore, they must be openly discussed as scenes of state-perpetrated mass crimes – and not so much for the victims as for all other social groups. This is the background, then, to the appearance of exhibitions and museums. I refer to these as "historical museums of a new type"[6]

These institutions function as museums with stocks of original historical objects, which generally includes buildings, and are involved in all the classical fields of museum work (collecting, preserving, exhibiting, doing research, providing education). Their purpose is to commemorate the victims of state and socially determined, ideologically motivated crimes. They are frequently located at the original historical sites, or at places chosen by the victims of such crimes for the purpose of commemoration. They are conceived as memorials admonishing visitors to safeguard basic human rights. As these institutions cooperate with the victims and other contemporary witnesses, their work also assumes a psycho-social character. Their endeavours to convey information about historical events are morally grounded and aim to establish a definite relationship to the present, without abandoning a historical perspective.

A logical consequence of this comprehensive definition was for our museums to join forces with an international organisation of museums that could support the most diversified aspects of our work. We therefore decided to try to establish an organisation within the framework of ICOM. A number of informal preliminary talks were held, such as those in Oranienburg on 10 April 2000 with Wesley A. Fisher and David Marwell (then at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington), Hans-Martin Hinz (then President of ICOM Germany), Avner Shalev (Yad Vashem in Jerusalem), Tereza Swiebocka (Memorial Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau), and Günther Morsch (Museum und Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen). In May and June 2000 we also came into contact with Manus Brinkmann (then ICOM's General Secretary), among others. In addition to the Topography of Terror in Berlin, which actively participated in the preparations in the person of Thomas Lutz, our endeavours were also supported by Volkhard Knigge and Jan Munk, the directors of Buchenwald and Terezin respectively. On the basis of policy papers formulated by the present author, the project was presented for the first time at a major international forum in Berlin on 31 January 2001. Twenty colleagues from seven countries attended. The lively discussion that ensued reflected the participants' great commitment. It focused on two points: the definition of "Memorial Museums for Public Crimes against Humanity" (the title we proposed at the time) and the danger of an international committee of this nature being misused politically. The participants were afraid that this definition would exclude certain institutions, such as Jewish museums which are not primarily concerned with documenting the Holocaust, or that the inclusion of the most diverse memorial museums from the most different historical contexts would hinder smaller establishments in articulating their specific interests. One participant

6 Ibid. p. 3 f.

pointed out that discussion on the concept of memorial museums and the organisation's statues was still in progress in Germany, and mentioned that the invitation to this preparatory meeting had come as a great surprise. The same speaker argued that the concept of a "memorial museum" was inappropriate; criticism was voiced against historicising National Socialism and treating memorial museums as museums in the classical sense. A number of participants pointed out that unrestricted access to the section might turn it into a forum for states that did not share the common principles of "Public Crimes against Humanity".

Although this reservation could not be dismissed out of hand, because colleagues who recognise ICOM's statutes cannot be excluded from an international committee, the majority of those present voted for the founding of such a committee. At the end of the meeting, a working group was formed to revise the statement of principles, to prepare statutes and to enter into formal negotiations with ICOM. The group comprised Suzanne Bardgett (Imperial War Museum, London), Bettina Bouresh, (Archiv des Landschaftsverbandes Rheinland in Puhlheim, Germany), Wesly A. Fisher, Thomas Lutz and Avner Shalev, and the author of this text[7]. The group prepared the statutory preconditions for membership. On 20th April 2001, it presented to the ICOM General Secretary the application (which was supported by 10 ICOM members) to found the new organisation. During ICOM's general conference in Barcelona, the new committee came together at a founding conference after the decision-making committee had announced its approval on 3 July 2001. The statement of principles and the statutes were accepted. In compliance with the recommendations of the ICOM Executive Councils, the name of the committee was changed during the following months to its present form.

The following members were elected to the board for an interim period: Wulff E. Brebeck (Director of Wewelsburg District Museum, Chairman), Jan Munk (Director of the Terezin Memorial) and Thomas Lutz (Memorial Museum Co-ordinator at the Topography of Terror, Berlin) as deputy, Jan Erik Schulte (Wewelsburg District Museum) as secretary and treasurer, as well as Bettina Bouresh and Klaus Müller (U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington) as board members. The new committee set itself the following goals: to co-operate on developing the theoretical conception of this new type of museum through pertinent publications; to organise events and long-term communication among the members; to lobby at public debates – wherever possible – to promote the social interests of these museums; to organise an international exchange of young colleagues between the institutions; and – to achieve these goals – to enlist as many members as possible and procure funds to implement these goals. Funds are not available from ICOM, as the latter, being associated with UNESCO, itself suffers from a chronic shortage of funds[8].

7 See Schulte Jan Erik, Vorbereitende Sitzung zur Gründung einer Fachgruppe für Gedenkstätten im Internationalen Council of Museums. Ein Kurzbericht, in: GedenkstättenRundbrief Nr. 99 (2/2001), pp. 33 f.

8 On the process of founding IC MEMO and the programme see Gründungsprozess und der Programmatik von IC MEMO see Bouresh, Bettina / Brebeck,
Wulff E. / Lutz, Thomas, IC MEMO (Memorial Museums im Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes), in: ICOM-Deutschland Mitteilungen 2001/2, pp. 20-22, and: Schulte, Jan Erik, Internationales Gedenkstättenkomitee (IC MEMO) – Die ersten neun Monate: Ein Zwischenbericht, in: ibid. 2002/1, p.18 f.

Developing a theoretical basis

The committee has adopted a variety of approaches for developing the theoretical conception of memorial museums as a new type of historical museum. One way is to issue publications. Its main approach, however, involves co-organising meetings. A modest contribution towards a theoretical basis for our work appeared in the new committee newsletter under the heading "Reflections"[9]. Attempts to define positions also appeared in other ICOM publications.[10]

International meetings provide an important forum. The first in which IC MEMO played an important role as co-organiser took place from 12th – 15th March 2003 in Berlin. It was entitled "Learning and Remembering: The Holocaust, Genocide and State Organized Crime in the Twentieth Century"[11]. IC MEMO's ideas on the subject largely coincided with those of the "Georg-Eckert-Institut für Schulbuchforschung" in Brunswick. Through contacts maintained by Thomas Lutz and the Topography of Terror in Berlin with the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, we were able to secure funds to cover the greater part of the substantial costs. The large number of speakers (33 in all), who were all experts in their fields, and the approximately 150 participants from Europe, Asia, Africa as well as North and South America, and – last but not least – the wide range of topics opened up truly international perspectives. With speakers presenting new, comparative views on genocide and violent crimes, the great diversity of fields in which the participants are involved (as scholars, teachers, journalists, museum and memorial museum staff, and human rights activists), as well as the presentation of a wide variety of scenes of terror, the meeting was "a breakthrough" (Erick Weitz, Minnesota, USA).

Discussion on the various aspects of the subject took place in five sections. Following an introductory lecture by Dan Diner (Leipzig, Germany) entitled "Research on Genocide – a Comparative Approach", the first section examined this topic in the light of case studies (Armenia, Cambodia, Rwanda). The second section was devoted to "Public Remembrance of Genocide and State Crimes of Violence", focusing on "Places of Remembrance and Learning" (Auschwitz in Poland and Villa Grimaldi in Santiago de Chile) and school teaching (case studies from Rwanda, South Africa and Europe). The third section consisted of workshops. The first of these took place in the villa in Wannsee where the authorities met in 1942 for the conference that decided on the extermination of the European Jews. The villa is now the Memorial and

9 See Stuby, Gerhard, Some Remarks on the Statutory Definition of Crimes Against International Law: Crimes Against Humanity, / Quelques remarques concernants les éléments constitutifs selon le droit pénal international : crimes contre l´ humanité, in : Memorial Museums / Musée commémoratifs. Newsletter of the Committee of Memorial Museums for the Rememberance of victims of Public Crimes / Lettre du Comité international des musées à la mémoire de victimes de crimes public, ed. Jan Erik Schulte on behalf of IC MEMO, vol. 1 (2002), pp. 18-23. Higashi, Julie, The Two Faces of War Memorials in Japan / Les deux aspects des Musées de la mémoire consacrés à la guerre au Japon, in: ibid., vol. 2 (2005).

10 See Brebeck, Wulff E., Genocide– a Subject for Museums? in: ICOM News. Newsletter of the International Council of Museums 57 (2004), Nr. 3, p. 12 (also in French and Spanish).

11 See the conference preview: Brebeck Wulff E., IC MEMO realisiert erste Vorhaben, in: ICOM-Deutschland Mitteilungen 2002/2, pp. 46-48.

Educational Centre of the House of the Wannsee Conference. Section participants discussed the centre's educational concept (teaching the history of specific occupational groups to those particular groups) and reconciliation work with young people in Uganda. The second workshop in the Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum in Oranienburg, to the north of Berlin, presented the work at this complex memorial centre. From 1936 to 1945, Sachsenhausen was a Nazi concentration camp; from 1945 to 1950 it served the Soviet occupying forces as a Special Camp – a tabooed subject in the German Democratic Republic until the country ceased to exist in 1990. Discussion also centred on Trostenec Concentration Camp in Minsk (White Russia) and the camp in Jasenovac, Croatia. The history of these camps is very controversial in both countries. A third workshop examined examples of both teaching and teaching material. Its participants visited two Berlin schools, joined in classroom debates and discussed a textbook on genocide (published by Lehrmittelverlag, Canton Zurich, Switzerland) as well as approaches to the Holocaust that are suitable for children. The Sophie-Scholl-Oberschule, a secondary school named after a German resistance fighter, maintains a small memorial museum, created by the pupils, which commemorates the labour camp that existed on the school grounds from 1943-45. A fourth workshop was entitled "The Media", and discussed the role played by the media while violent crimes are being committed and afterwards. It focused primarily on the former Yugoslavia.

The "Perception and Presentation of Genocide" was the subject of the panel in Section IV. It emphasised the important role played by international publicity in fostering a willingness to act at a national and international level against violent crimes. Section V examined the consequences. The panel discussion's theme was "Dealing with Genocide and State Crimes of Violence". Erich Weitz had the challenging task of summarising the discussions.

The discussions not only produced many interesting results, but also clearly showed the social function of genocide. For all the structural similarities that appear – especially in comparative approaches – the specific role played by genocide in a given society seems to be of particular significance. What needs to be clarified is the nature of this "social project genocide" (Eric Weitz) in which large sections of society are involved in a variety of functions. And this evidently leaves its mark on the next generation too. As Mihran Dabag (Bochum, Germany) demonstrated, genocide is always carried out "for the future" in the name of the next generation. It is therefore of crucial importance whether the next generation denies genocide in order to benefit from its consequences, and thus continues to commit genocide; or whether it refuses to deny genocide and succeeds in acknowledging the guilt of individual representatives of the parents' generation and thereby manages to come to terms with the historical past. Work at memorial museums with both the surviving victims – which can also mean working with their descendants – and the culprits can probably only be done following a generation conflict in those societies that have experienced genocide.[12]

12 A publication of the conference contributions is planned.

A conference held by IC MEMO in conjunction with the International Committee of Museums of Arms and Military History (ICOMAM) within the framework of the general assembly of ICOM in Seoul (Korea) from 4th to 6th October 2004 opened up new perspectives, albeit within a smaller geographical and time frame. The focus there was on Nazi and war crimes and their reception in Europe and East Asia since the Second World War.

Guy M. Wilson, the President of ICOMAM, and former Director of the Royal Armouries Museum at the Tower of London, made it perfectly clear in his welcoming speech that despite all the obvious differences between memorial museums for the victims of state crimes of violence on the one hand, and army and military museums on the other, there are also points in common. Military museums are increasingly looking beyond their own traditional domain and their commitment to commemorating the victims of war to include the socio-historical dimension of the use of weapons and the events intrinsic to war. This shift has also seen greater reflection on the moral aspects of war. Hence, for example, the Imperial War Museum in London has opened a department on the Holocaust, and the Royal Military Museum in Brussels is preparing an exhibition on the same subject.

The first day-and-a-half of the conference was devoted to examining cultures of remembrance in both Germany and – to a certain extent – the European countries occupied by the German armed forces on the one hand, and similar cultures in Japan and Korea on the other.

Thomas Lutz reported on the long and arduous course taken by public discussion in Germany with regard to the form and content of commemorating the victims in the country where the perpetrators lived: first in the west and – with the demise of state-prescribed anti-fascism in East Germany – in the country as a whole.

Jan Munk presented the work of the Terezin Memorial – which is located in buildings and areas that were once part of Theresienstadt (Terezin) Ghetto and the Kleine Festung (Small Fortress) – against the background of the persecution of the European Jews. For him, a decisive turning-point was the collapse of the dictatorship in the Czech Republic in 1990. This event made it possible for the first time to examine the importance of Terezin in relation to the genocide on the European Jews.

Professor Julie Higashi, Ritsumeikan University, Japan, centred her critical presentation of the way war crimes and war victims are treated in Japan on two memorial museums: the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo and the memorial museum of the Province of Okinawa. The Yasukuni Shrine is maintained by a private foundation. Remembrance of the war dead is confined to soldiers (including those conscripted from the populations of the occupied countries). They are all revered as heroes, whether they be high-ranking staff sentenced to death by allied military tribunals for having committed war crimes, or Kamikaze and Kairin pilots who were sent to their deaths against their will. The shrine practises a cult of the Emperor. The remembrance celebrations became directly political in character due to the repeated attendance of Japanese governmental representatives (the last occasion being in 2001), which met with fierce criticism

both in Japan and, above all, in the once-occupied countries, including Korea. Taking the example of the Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum, Ms. Higashi showed that open and genuine forms of commemoration also receive public support in Japan. This particular museum, which is located at the scene of a battle fought when the US military was trying to conquer Okinawa in 1945, presents Japan's role as an aggressor outwardly and as a repressive power internally which itself perpetrated war crimes. Victims on both sides are commemorated, without any attempts to falsely equate them.

Professor Chieko Otsuru of Kansai University, Osaka, Japan, used the example of Hiroshima to show how the city is exploited to present the myth of Japan as a mere victim on the one hand, and how the victims of the atomic bomb are treated in a very contradictory way on the other. Marginalisation and glorification have gone hand in hand, without either having any effect on nuclear armament.

Dong-Hee Rhie, university lecturer in Seoul and adviser to the prime minister on questions of civil society, talked about the colonial and war crimes perpetrated by the Japanese occupying army in Korea. The Japanese government's refusal to recognise the claims of Korean citizens casts a shadow on relations between the two countries.

Ms. Mi-Hyang Yoon, Secretary General of the Korean House for International Solidarity in Seoul addressed the subject of so-called "comfort women", women from the countries occupied by the Japanese, who were forced to work in army brothels. Ever since it was made public by a young film-maker in the early 1990s, this question has been hotly debated in all the countries affected, as well as in Japan. Even so, the Japanese government has not recognised any of their claims to this day.

In contrast to Japan, where the experience of the Second World War resulted in the establishment of a number of peace museums, Korea still has no such tradition. Pastor Hae-Dong Lee from Seoul drafted the concept for the Center for Peace Museum, which was founded in 2003. The centre views itself as an agency for promoting empathy towards war victims (e.g. including the Vietnamese, since the South Korean army fought in Vietnam on the side of the USA) and for establishing "spaces of empathy" in everyday situations. The digital transfer of the material they exhibited will link them as a Cyber Peace Museum.

On the second day of the conference, the participants turned to the question of "intangible heritage", the overriding theme of the ICOM General Conference.

Guy M. Wilson presented the Mass of Peace, a work commissioned by the Royal Armouries for the millennium celebrations in the year 2000. Taking pieces of music played in different military contexts and related to war experiences, Carl Jenkins composed a mass with a traditional structure. His composition is being performed with growing success. Public interest in this work is also reflected in the fact that the CD reached number 8 in the Classic Charts. At the Leeds branch of the museum, people founded a Peace Music Movement and also hold an annual competition entitled Poetry for Peace.

Vojtech Blodig, vice-director of the Terezin Memorial, reported on the rich cultural life organised by the inmates of Terezin Ghetto (and tolerated by the SS) in the face of constant transportations of people to the extermination camps. The children's opera "Brundibar" by Hans Krasa is still frequently performed.

Joseph O'Reilly, director of the aforementioned initiative for an International Human Rights Museum, London, presented his concept of a museum as a forum for the protection and greater recognition of human rights. He sees museums as important co-operation partners in this project. He then gave an introductory presentation on the international legal situation in relation to the protection of intangible heritage. He reported on the long history behind the 2003 UNESCO Convention and on the latter's shortcomings. O' Reilly concluded his exposition with examples demonstrating the significance of intangible heritage for memorial museums. Instances of this include the importance of songs and stories to prisoners, as shown at the exhibition at the departure point for Robben Island in Cape Town.

On the third day of the conference, participants went on an excursion together. We first visited a cemetery and memorial museum to the student uprising of 19 April 1960 which, thanks to popular support, resulted in the resignation of the country's corrupt first post-war president. The centre, which could only be established after a successful struggle for democracy in the early 1990s, shows, in all its monumentality, the belated reinterpretation of this historical event as being of great significance for South Korea's transition from an underdeveloped country to a western-style democracy with a flourishing economy. The next step in our journey was Sodaemun Prison, which is now a memorial museum. The prison was erected by the Japanese (then occupying Korea as a colonial power) in 1908 on the model of German prisons. There the Japanese mainly imprisoned political opponents of both sexes, many of whom were tortured and executed. The last item on the agenda was a visit to the Korea War Memorial. In addition to commemorating fallen US, other allied and South Korean soldiers during the Korean War, this building also presents the glorious role played by the Korean armed forces from the early middle ages to South Korea's intervention in the Vietnam War, when its soldiers fought on the side of the USA.

Generally speaking, any attempts to draw comparisons also reveals some essential differences: whereas East Asia is primarily concerned with coming to terms with war crimes, Europe is having to deal with a situation in which a war was inextricably linked with genocide. It became apparent on a number occasions that the state of knowledge and discussion not only differed between Japan and Korea, but also between these two countries and Europe. Dr. Rhie was sharply criticised by Japanese participants for his one-sided presentation (the use of outdated figures that applied to Korean victims only and his failure to mention Japanese reparations payments to former – dictatorial – governments in Korea, among other things). Ms. Yoon was reproached for her extremely moralistic position. However, nobody dared to raise these points in an open discussion.

For "negative memories" to be accepted by society, it is not only important that a criminal dictatorship be brought down and discredited, but also that an open society can evolve that

examines its taboos. These conditions have been gradually established in the Federal Republic of Germany after decades of heated public debate on questions of contemporary history. Memorial cultures in Europe's state socialist dictatorships, however, were defined by the state, and specific areas deliberately excluded from debate (e.g. the genocide perpetrated on the European Jews, the fact that there were groups of "undesirable victims"). In Japan, the USA's decision not to prosecute the Emperor after the war meant that the "Showa" period (Japanese historiography is periodised according to periods of imperial rule) lasted until Hirohito's death in 1989. In the peaceful decades following the war, in which Japan developed into a leading economic power and the majority of its inhabitants experienced growing prosperity, people cultivated an increasingly positive picture of this era. Critical perspectives were not very welcome. Korea, by contrast, was forced into a war shortly after the first republic was founded. Then it was divided. Until the early 1990s, one dictatorship replaced another. A number of uprisings were bloodily suppressed. The fact that the dictatorships strove for and maintained a close relationship with Japan is evidently expressed in a – partly – unreflected or unilateral critique of the role played by Japan. Hence, for example, it would have been interesting to learn something about the role played by repressive South Korean state organs in Sodaemun Prison, which was used right up to the 1980s.

In this respect, then, the "learning goals" that different memorial museums strive for also differ. The need to actively support the goal of a democratic, free and open society is now undoubtedly part of Europe's shared heritage. In Japan, the emphasis is far more on preserving peace, whereas in Korea the military struggle for national independence and dispatching soldiers to fight on the side of the USA are accepted as a matter of course. In discussions, human rights' activists were astonished to learn that memorial museums in Europe tend – in their contribution to the establishment of moral values – to emphasise different aspects owing to the divergences in historical experiences at different locations. Most centres and institutions regard themselves neither as human rights' nor as peace museums. Instead they tend to view these tasks on an equal footing with, for instance, educating people to be tolerant and able to formulate criticisms as well as attempting to strengthen their powers of judgement.[13]

Alongside organising conferences, IC MEMO also participated in individual events. Hence, the committee co-organised a conference of German associations instructing teachers in the teaching of history at the District Museum in Wewelsburg. Under the title "Of the 'centre of the world' in Wewelsburg", historians and educators met on 17 July 2004 and discussed the problems arising at a memorial museum for the inmates of Niederhagen concentration camp: for SS symbolism at Wewelsburg Castle, which was to have been extended to create an ideological centre for the SS during the Third Reich, has made it a site of pilgrimage for young Nazis from all over the world.[14]

13 A report on the conference is being prepared for publication.

14 A publication on the conference is being prepared.

Improving Communication

A number of measures have been introduced to improve communication between members and to better publicise memorial museums as historical museums of a new type in the "museum world." Publications on both places and the fields of activities of members and friends are very important. Hence, for example, "The Villa Grimaldi Memorial Museum" in Santiago de Chile and "The State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau" in Oswiecim, Poland were presented in IC MEMO's Newsletter 1. Newsletter 2 will present "The Ghetto Fighters' House Museum" in Galilee (Israel)"[15]. "ICOM News" has recently published short reports on the Villa Grimaldi and on the Terezin Memorial Museum and Wewelsburg District Museum.[16]

IC MEMO was introduced at a number of other conferences. One of these was the first conference of European memorial museums held in Berlin from 14th to 17th November 2001 entitled: "On the Way towards Europe? – Memorial Museums Facing New Challenges". Another opportunity to draw attention to IC MEMO presented itself during ICOM Germany's annual conference in Warsaw from 17th to 20th October 2002, where a large part of the programme was devoted to the occupation and destruction of Warsaw by the German troops during the Second World War and to Poland's experiences with the state socialist dictatorship. Some committee members were able to spread the word thanks to their contacts with other colleagues. Jan Munk's double membership in both associations, for example, has firmly established him as a mediator between IC MEMO and the Coalition of Historic Sites Museums of Conscience.

The committee owes its invitation to Guernica, Spain to another double membership: to that of Ms. Iratxe Momoitio, the director of the Guernica Peace Museum, who is a member of both IC MEMO and the Worldwide Network of Peace Museums. We anticipate fruitful contacts with a group of museums whose areas of activity are very similar to those of memorial museums in many ways. IC MEMO will be holding its annual meeting of members during the conference (3 May). In Guernica, the board will be elected for the second term of office since IC MEMO was founded. For the second time in its history, the committee will be taking an important decision on Spanish soil – thanks to the only Spanish member and her good contacts.

First attempts at lobbying

Probably the most important event in this connection is the position adopted by the board of the committee with regard to a parliamentary initiative by the Christlich Demokratische Union

15 See Matta, Pedro Alejandro and Oleksy, Krystyna (see footnote 9), vol. 1, p. 12 ff. and Rosenberg, Pnina (ibid.), vol. 2.

16 See Matta, Pedro Alejandro, The Villa Grimaldi Memorial Museum, Chile, in: ICOM News. Newsletter of the International Council of Museums 54 (2001), Nr. 4, pp. 2 f. (also in French and Spanish).
Munk, Jan, The Terezin Memorial, Czech Republic, in: ibid., p. 3 (also in French and Spanish).
Schulte, Jan Erik, The District Museum and Concentration Camp Memorial Wewelsburg, Germany, in: ibid., p.3 (also in French and Spanish).

and the Christlich Soziale Union (CDU/CSU) parties in the German Bundestag, the parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany, in January and again in May 2004. Their motion aimed to change the existing practice in Germany, whereby memorial museums are supported by the central government. The main criticism expressed in their draft was that the memorial museums dealing with the injustices and persecution perpetrated by the organs of the Soviet occupying forces from 1945-1949 and the Socialist Unity Party dictatorship from 1949-1989 were – ostensibly – receiving too little support. As things stand, every memorial museum of national importance is, in principle, entitled to funds if it fulfils certain objective criteria, and provided the funds are guaranteed to an amount covering 50 per cent of the costs by the German Land where it is located. The CDU/CSU draft argues that funds ought to be granted to fewer museums, which are to be listed in a catalogue containing a disproportionately high number of memorial centres concentrating on the "Communist Dictatorship". Virtually no distinction is made between the dictatorships.

The counter argument put forward by IC MEMO was as follows: "Against this background, IC MEMO views the CDU/CSU's motion critically. The planned canonization that would make some of the numerous memorial museums into national memorials suffers from two main drawbacks. It evidently fails to take into account the dynamic civil movement behind the development of memorial museums, which prohibits a closed-shop policy. Furthermore, quite a lot of the memorial museums, which have not been nominated, are of great national – or even greater international – importance. Examples of these are the "Dokumentationszentrum der deutschen Sinti und Roma" (Documentation Centre of the German Sinti and Romanies) in Heidelberg and the STALAG-Memorial in Schloss Holte-Stukenbrock Castle (P.O.W. camp), which gives visual expression to the most terrible memories of many Russian people.

The policy demanded by the motion seems to be an attempt at putting public memory under the control of the central government. This practice is reminiscent of the policy towards public memory which the GDR and other Eastern European countries adopted during the State Socialist period. Its failure is widely known. It resulted in a division into the type of memory forced upon people by the state and the personal experience of history".

This protest, which was one of many in addition to the vehement objection expressed by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der KZ-Gedenkstätten Deutschlands (association of concentration camp memorial museums in Germany), and by Avner Shalev, Jan Munk, Sigurd Syversen (The Norwegian Association of Political Prisoners 1940/45) and others did at least result in the first draft being withdrawn. Furthermore, the second version was not adopted on 2 May. It was merely passed on to a parliamentary committee for further deliberation.

The committee's other activities involved discreet attempts to mediate and offer advice in disputes between institutions working in our field.

International Exchange Programme

We had initially intended to launch an international exchange programme primarily for young academic staff at memorial museums. In order to translate this idea into practice, we first had to find some way of financing this scheme. The response to a number of applications to ICOM showed that no money was available for such schemes. The only funds available, if any, consisted of modest support to fund the announcement of a programme. As we had no funds of our own for this purpose, the committee endeavoured to obtain funds for short monitored stays by staff at German memorial museums. Few of these attempts were fruitful.

There was one case in which we were successful, however. After we had been in contact with Oribe Cures, the director of Montevideo's city museum in Uruguay via the Internet for some time, we finally had an opportunity (in March 2003) to invite him to Germany. He visited several of our German memorial museums together with our board member Bettina Bouresh. His visit was the highlight of a long and fruitful discussion on the problem of coming to terms with the past dictatorships in both Germany and Latin America. We discovered many common interests, based on the similar experiences of a specific generation in both countries. This generation was faced with the problem of working through its experiences and presenting its theses in the face of opposition from a reluctant majority.

Oribe Cures was already seriously ill when we met him in person. In October we received a letter from his wife informing us that he had passed away. In the short time we worked together at ICOM, we had the privilege of learning and appreciating just how valuable international encounters and exchanges charged with curiosity can be. We learned to see the world from a different perspective and to understand it better. The memory of Oribe Cures will always accompany IC MEMO in its work. We posthumously made him an honorary member. It was ultimately intense experiences such as these which strengthened our resolve to find sponsors. As we were well informed about foundations and other donators here in Germany, we approached a number of them. We finally received a positive response from the German foundation "Erinnerung – Verantwortung und Zukunft" ("Remembrance – Responsibility and Future").

With these funds in hand, IC MEMO can now (2005) offer young professional staff members working at memorial museums in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Israel an opportunity to perfect their occupational skills through participation in the exchange programme. IC MEMO plans to fund study stays at German memorial museums for a period of up to two months. IC MEMO will take care of the accommodation, living expenses, and organize the work at the host institution. Participants need only pay their travel expenses. We hope this initial step will allow us to make the international exchange a lively feature of IC MEMO's work and to extend the programme in three years' time.

The condition, stipulated by the foundation, that the exchange must be conducted with memorial museums in Eastern and Central Europe and Israel is in line with our own exchange concept. Particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, where many memorial museums are still

in the process of establishing themselves, there is bound to be a far greater need for support. As we have a good relationship with our colleagues in Israel, we are sure to meet with great interest there.

In this way we hope to contribute to promoting an international exchange of experiences between all participants through memorial museums befits ICOM's character[17]. Jacques Perot, the former president of ICOM feels that IC MEMO, in particular, embodies the basic principles of UNESCO. He expressed this view in his message of greeting at the founding meeting of IC MEMO on 3 July 2001: "International understanding, preserving the peace, creating cultural independence and coming to terms with a history that nobody can escape."[18]

17 See. Bouresh, Bettina, IC MEMO Exchange Program, in: Memorial Museums (see footnote 9), vol. 2.

18 Cited from: ICOM-Deutschland Mitteilungen 2001/2, p. 21.