

**Forced Labour during World War II as a Transnational Phenomenon: German-South Korean Seminar for Educators**

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The seminar 'Forced Labour during World War II as a Transnational Phenomenon. German-South Korean Seminar for Educators' was organised by the International Youth Meeting Centre of the Nazi Forced Labour Documentation Centre, Berlin, in cooperation with the Critical Global Studies Institute at the Sogang University, Seoul. The seminar comprised two parts: the first part took place at the Nazi Forced Labour Documentation Centre in August 2016; the second part at the Sogang University in April 2017.

The seminar, conducted in English, brought together 17 German and South Korean educators: museum professionals, history teachers, Doctor of Philosophy and Master Students.

During World War II over 20 million men, women, and children were forced labourers in the German Reich and the occupied territories. Especially in Europe the non-European history of forced labour during WWII is even less well-known. For many years, South Korea has silenced the topic of „comfort women“ – thousands of women and girls who were forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army before and during the war. The issue of WWII war crimes in the Japanese empire is still a controversial political topic that influences Japanese-South Korean relations up to this day.

The purpose of the seminar was to bring together these two different aspects of forced labour during the same period and compare aspects of commemoration, available historical sources and educational concepts that aim

to reach students on secondary school and university level.

After an introduction by the organisers TANJA VAITULEVICH (Berlin) and Professor JIE-HYUN LIM (Seoul) the first day was dedicated to familiarising with the topic and the workshop venue - the Nazi Forced Labour Documentation Centre, through a self-guided tour in small groups.

On the second day, the group explored historical sites in Berlin through a 'forced labour' app created by the Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt (The Historical Workshop Berlin). The afternoon commenced with an introduction to the International Youth Centre and other educational and research facilities of the Nazi Forced Labour Documentation Centre. During the rest of the workshop the participants gave presentations on topics related to the seminar theme.

HYUN-GYUNG KIM (Seoul) spoke about „Trajectories of Comfort Women in the media, 1980-2000“ focusing on the TV miniseries 'Eyes of Dawn' from 1992. After the series was aired a public debate within South Korean and Japanese society started which played an important role in the historical reappraisal of the topic. Among other subjects a comparison with the miniseries „Holocaust“ from 1978 and its role in the public debate in Western Germany was discussed.

WOO JONG LEE's (Seoul) presentation „Transnational perceptions of South Korean high schoolers on the issue of Forced labour in WWII“ gave a detailed overview of the images and ideas Korean students have when they think about the topic. He argued that students often have a very positive image of Germany as a land that takes full responsibility for its actions during the war whereas Japan is perceived as a country that still struggles with its responsibilities during that period. He also pointed out that most students are not fully aware of the full spectrum of German atrocities during the Third Reich. Once they become aware many of them change their initial assessment.

The first German contribution came from ANJA KRUSE (Leipzig) who presented her work institution, the Leipzig Memorial for Forced Labour. The memorial place is located on the grounds of the former arma-

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ment factory HASAG. The company was the biggest arms manufacturer in Saxony and one of the main beneficiaries of forced labour during WWII. Kruse emphasized lack of funding for the museum which is partly explained by the lack of attention to the topic in comparison to victims of the GDR persecution.

VERENA MEIER (Heidelberg) presented the Dokumentationsstelle Pulverfabrik e.V. (Documentation Centre Powder Factory Liebenau). At the factory several thousand forced labourers from Germany and the occupied territories had to produce supplies for the German military. The territory was used to produce ammunition even decades after the war. Only at the turn of the century research- and educational projects started. Meier gave an informative overview of the permanent exhibition and the educational work that is being conducted at Dokumentationsstelle.

The third day started with an introduction to the International Tracing Service (ITS) by AKIM JAH (Bad Arolsen). The main tasks of the institution are the determination of the fate of the victims of NS persecution and the search for family members as well as research, education and remembrance, preservation and making documents accessible for research. The participants of the workshop were divided into five groups and worked with primary sources provided by ITS.

In the afternoon, SEBASTIAN GERHARDT (Berlin) gave a presentation about photography as a source in historical and political education. He addressed questions about the role of images in history and politics and thus enabled a deeper understanding of how to use images in educational work.

PAULA OPPERMANN (Berlin) completed the day with her presentation „Photographs of Violence in the Exhibition ‘Mass Shootings. The Holocaust from the Baltic to the Black Sea 1941–1944’“. A central element of the exhibition curated by Oppermann are five drastic photographs taken before and after a mass shooting of Jewish children, women and men in a town in Eastern Poland in 1942. A discussion emerged among the participants on how and whether to show photographs of extreme violence in exhibitions.

On Thursday INGRID BETTWEISER

(Berlin) gave a presentation on the Memorial Sachsenhausen. She focused on different approaches in the educational work which are reflected in the different methods the guides use in their daily work. One of the problematic topics which sometimes tends to be avoided is how to deal with the history of the concentration camp brothel which was located within the camp.

MAREIKE OTTERS (Oberhausen) presented on the Memorial Place in Oberhausen. Because of its location in a building with no connection to the „Third Reich“ and the museum’s small size, one of the current main goals is to gain more recognition within the museum landscape of Oberhausen as well as in German memorial culture in general. Otters highlighted the impressive range of publications the museum produced in recent years.

AERI KIM’s (Seoul) presentation „A museum study of Forced Labourers in South Korea“ focused on the Museum of Forced Labour in Busan. She emphasised that even though the construction of the museum cost several million dollars, the museum is almost unknown, even in South Korea. She underlined the differences between the usually very factual approach undertaken by German memorial places and the much more emotional way history is displayed in South Korean museums which are bigger and are organised, and funded by the government.

HEE YUN CHEONG’s (Seoul) topic was „Restitution of the colonial Bones and ‘homecoming nationalism’: Forced Labour in Hokkaido 1939-1945“. A large percentage of the men that were deployed as forced labourers by the Japanese Imperial Army died due to harsh conditions. Their bodies were buried in mass graves on Japanese territory, which still exist today, as some of the bones were never returned to the families of the deceased. Private initiatives in South Korea and Japan today are trying to change that by returning the remains and enabling emotional closure for the families. Political and legal issues aggravate the work of these initiatives. Viewing bones as historical sources, opens a discussion about what is more important – the dignity of the deceased or an additional historical insight.

The Friday commenced with a joint visit to the foundation EVZ (Remembrance, Responsibility, Future). During the meeting with the board member Günter Saathoff and program director Ralf Possekel the participants had the opportunity to gain further insight into the work of the foundation that, among other things, financed the compensation payments for former forced labourers and, in general, plays a very important role in the German memorial culture.

The first speaker on Friday was SANDRA FRANZ (Düsseldorf). The emphasis of her presentation „Time stamps - Forced labour and remembrance at the Düsseldorf Memorial Centre“ was the visitation programme for former forced labourers that took place in Düsseldorf between 2001 and 2011 sponsored by EVZ. The programme was an attempt of a more personalised form of compensation. It also included local schools and was therefore an important part of educational work.

BEOM CHUI PARK (Seoul) spoke about „South Korean high schoolers on the issue of the Comfort Women (Wianbu)“. As an educator at an all-boys high school he encouraged his students to fully engage with the commemoration of comfort women. Among the results he showed during the presentation were examples of processing through social media, visits to memorial sites and videos made by students.

The last panel concluded with the contribution from INTAEK HONG (Seoul) who spoke about „Zainichis (Korean-Japanese) of post WW2 in North Korea“. The term Zainichi refers to long-term Korean residents of Japan with roots in Korea under Japanese rule. The Korean labourers forced to work in Japan between 1939 and 1945 were sometimes unable or unwilling to return to their homeland, due to political, personal or health reasons. Hong presented under which conditions the Zainichi are living today and how politics in Japan as well as in South and North Korea try to gain support from the minority.

After this overview of different aspects of forced labour and commemoration in both countries the practical part of the seminar began. Two groups were formed to develop ideas on how to teach the topic of forced labour to South Korean students in work-

shops. In Seoul the participants wanted to turn their theoretical concepts into practice by conducting workshops with Korean students, teachers, and activists of the civil society.

The second part of the workshop in Seoul focused on forced labour under Japanese occupation and provided a forum for the participants to expand their discussion on the history and memory of forced labour. The participants implemented their workshops in South Korean schools and Universities and discussed the challenges and opportunities of teaching the topic using a transnational approach.

There were two main educational parts of the second half – the first one a visit to the Kyungmoon High School, in which two different workshops were implemented with the high school students. The educational goal was to introduce the students to the history of forced labour in Germany during WWII and to find possible connections, parallels and differences to Korean history in order to approach the topic as a transnational phenomenon. The students worked in teams with historical photographs as primary sources, half of them depicted forced labourers in Germany, half of them in Japan and Korea. Each team chose a photo from the German side and one photo from the Asian side. Their task was to analyse the photos and report to the rest of the group what they can tell from these historical sources. The second half of the workshop was research on their topic (in this case only on the German history). The workshop ended with a discussion round in which the students had a chance to ask questions and comment on the material they had worked with.

The second educational part was a lecture with undergraduate students at Sogang University. This took place as part of the undergraduate course „Memory of the World Wars“. The aim was to initiate a discussion with the students about the topic of forced labour as a transnational phenomenon. An introduction exercise „Mapping of Memories regarding ‘Crimes against Humanity’ in WWII“ was followed by a short lecture about the history of forced labour in Asia and Europe as well as a discussion and introduction of the project.

Summarizing it can be concluded that both

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approaches were a success and the transnational approach could be implemented both in high schools and universities in both Germany and South Korea.

Furthermore, during the time in Seoul the group visited several Korean places of remembrance, for example, the Sungam History Museum in Ansan, located at the site of an 'educational institute' where young boys had to perform forced labour under Japanese occupation. It continued to be used by the South Korean government until 1982. The memorial place is an initiative of local activists, historians, and artists which receives no official support by the national government. Other places of remembrance were the Statue of peace to comfort women in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul and the stepping stones resembling the German initiative „Stolpersteine“.

#### **Conference Overview:**

Tanja Vaitulevich (Berlin), Jie-Hyun Lim (Seoul): Introduction

Hyun-Gyung Kim (Seoul): Trajectories of Comfort Women in the media, 1980–2000

Woo Jong Lee (Seoul): Transnational perception of South Korean high schoolers on the issue of Forced labor in WW2

Anja Kruse (Leipzig): The Leipzig Memorial for Forced Labour

Verena Meier (Heidelberg):The Documentation Centre Powder Factory Liebenau

Paula Oppermann (Berlin): Photographs of Violence in the Exhibition 'Mass Shootings. The Holocaust from the Baltic to the Black Sea 1941-1944'

Ingrid Bettweiser (Berlin): The Memorial Sachsenhausen

Mareike Otters (Oberhausen): The Memorial Oberhausen

Aeri Kim (Seoul): A Museum Study of Forced Laborers in South Korea

Hee Yun Cheong (Seoul): Restitution of the colonial Bones and „homecoming nationalism“ - Forced Laborers in Hokkaido 1939-1945

Sandra Franz (Düsseldorf): Time stamps -

Forced labour and remembrance at the Düsseldorf Memorial Centre

Beom Chul Park (Seoul): South Korean high schoolers on the issue of the Comfort Women (Wianbu)

In-Taek Hong (Seoul): Zainichis (Korean-Japanese) of postWW2 in North Korea

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