

## **Ian Maloy (Wales): Project Report**



### **Protestant Church of Reconciliation**

In writing about my work here, it is useful to reflect on what it was that I came here with: what expectations, hopes, opinions and perspectives that served as my ground in which I understood and absorbed things in my earliest time here. In doing this, it is clear from me to see how much things have changed in terms of how I now see and do things.

One of the key things that have changed is that of respect: Here I shall demonstrate why.

Various people misunderstood my coming to Dachau to work here, thinking that I had some sort of 'religious motivation', seeing as I am Christian. Actually I came here not out of some religious duty, or because of something written in the bible; rather simply because I wished to learn more about the work of this Church, to see how it engaged with the past and how it educates people about modern-day situations.

#### **Respect for the victims**

Respect requires me to research what happened, especially in listening to and reading from those who were themselves persecuted: victims of injustice are clear to see, despite the attempts at propaganda to show otherwise. Our task therefore is to focus on who the victims are, seeing through various propagandas where perpetrators project themselves as victims, in order to see the humanity of those who are labelled.

The biggest development in terms of my tours here is my increased use of biographies, concentrating on particular people who were in the concentration camp. I found it greatly rewarding to go to the Archive and research former prisoners; reading their reports and seeing them on videos giving interviews. I found it moving to go beyond the statistics to actually see the people who were persecuted. Most of them have not been able to speak for themselves; hopefully my use of their words and testimonies is one way of honouring them.

Respect for the victims also required me to learn about other nationalities, I found it very useful to learn about the prisoners from Greece, Luxemburg, Norway, Austria, Germany, and the Ukraine as well as from Wales. There are thousands of histories about the victims which aren't known. Our lessons about Nazi Germany tend otherwise to focus on the perpetrators.



Another way of showing respect for the victims that I was, for a short time, involved with, was the co-ordination of interviews for former prisoners from the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. As I speak very little Russian there were very few possibilities for me to be involved with them; therefore working with the interviews was something I found rewarding. I was amazed by their willingness to come up to me and start to tell me their biographies, and was moved by their giving me of small presents. These are people whose ability to tell of their past was massively suppressed.

### **Respect for visitors and youth**

The use of materials and information gained from survivors is, as a consequence, bound up with that of respect for visitors.

I think that I could say that the work of tours has been the most rewarding parts of my work here, firstly in my role as a tour guide. The majority of my tours have been in German, a great surprise for me! Doing tours can be challenging; physically tiring, working in adverse weather conditions, dealing with people whose attention span can be poor. I have however almost preferred the more 'difficult' tours. There flexibility was required of me.

Hence the words 'respect for visitors'. I had already known from GB that it can be difficult in teaching both boys and girls. I have had to learn many new methods in making tours interesting for them; anticipating interests that boys are more likely to have, or that girls are more likely to have; as well as being responsive to questions, particular interests and problems.

'Respect for visitors' is further bound up with that of the victims in that I have tried to make my tours somewhat more international, in being responsive to children whose forefathers



leading a theatre group in preparation for an official evening

have immigrated to Germany, leaving them therefore with an interest in, say, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Greece. The notion of nationality is however something which I have had to be careful with, as many people are keen to downplay any notion of 'non-German ness'.

I can understand that. While the situation is very different in varying ways, I have faced something similar, that of people being confused about my nationality: I am Welsh, many people have not understood that, thinking that I am English. Some continue to do so.....

The Dachau international youth meeting [www.jugendbegegnung-dachau.de](http://www.jugendbegegnung-dachau.de) was also a vital part of my work here. I have valued greatly the hard work taken by people of different nationalities who give up their free-time to do the work of the Youth Meeting without getting paid. It takes the work of the tours to a much deeper level: through workshops, mini-workshops, talks by survivors, tours through Munich and Nuremberg, as well as simply bringing people together from many different countries.



leading a creative workshop

Another key area of my work was that of co-ordinating tours for the Förderverein. It is wholly office work, something that could seem boring. However, I have found it greatly rewarding in speaking with teachers and tour leaders over the phone, or interacting with them through emails and faxes. I have organised hundreds of tours in my time here, with around 30 people being in each group. Simple things like making sure I have typed in the correct date, time and day make a big difference to the tours!

### **Respect for communication**

My work with co-ordinating tours is therefore another sign of respect that I have endeavoured to do. People get anxious when they are not sure if a tour is to happen, or confused as to when I shall be in the office!

Therefore I have had to improve my communication skills, the area which was my biggest problem here in Germany: not really in terms of my listening to others, more that of giving my opinion. People tend to label any problems that exist between Germanic people and the British as being a 'cultural problem'. I would say that problems with

communication lay not in the culture of different countries themselves: it is simply a matter of respecting that one needs to develop beyond what one normally does. Abilities of listening, talking, and respecting differences go beyond cultural expectations.

I have learned organised ways of administration here: Preparation, Evaluation, regular Team Meetings, and various teaching methods. I shall use these things in my future.

A predisposition to being open to conversations is something which I have tried to propagate. This has not always been successful however, when I have led tours, when I have been more focused on what I have wanted to say. The role of language however can be minimal in effective communication. This is shown in the people who attend the services in the Church with whom I managed to get on with right from the start: they took an interest in me, in my country. That made a very big difference to my start here, as well as when they were ready to talk with me and invite Ola and me to dinner.

Ola, my fellow volunteer, is also someone with whom I have communicated well with. We both share an interest in the theme of our work, and both share being a 'foreigner' in Germany, with its subsequent impact on our lives here.

Ola and I in a puppet Museum in Salzburg, Austria



### Respect for now and the future

Propaganda, hatred, anti-Semitism, right-wing extremism, the labelling of people as being 'asocial', racism, sexism against Men and Women, homophobia, prejudice against Sinti and Romany peoples, I could go on: all these things were featured of the Nazi Ideology, an Ideology which created the concentration camp here in Dachau. All these things are however things still in existence now. I hope very much that my work here has served to go against such things. I imagine that the my learning about the past, coupled with methods of teaching and communicating will be used in the future, whatever I shall be doing.

