

2nd International Conference of Holocaust Museums Riga/Latvia
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organized by Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum

CTF –Collective Trauma Film Collections
by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne

While I presented SFC _Shoah Film Collection on the 1st conference in 2012 as a part of the pilot project “**A Virtual Memorial Riga 2013**” – a collaboration between the Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum, Culture and Art Project NOASS and artvideoKOELN which received a very late **Patronage by the European Parliament** due to the delay of the forwarded letter, so not all of the conference participants were informed about this extraordinary status, Riga was the starting point for a very successful further development, because still being in Riga I was invited to present **SFC - Shoah Film Collection** only shortly afterwards in July 2012 in Phnom Penh dedicated to the Cambodian genocide 1975-1979, and in collaboration with META House Phnom Penh and the Royal University of Phnom Penh a collection of films by young Cambodian film makers was initiated dealing with the Cambodian Holocaust and the post-genocide era until these days encompassing more than 40 short documentaries, which are released these days online on <http://cambodia.engad.org>

Both collections, **Cambodia 1975-1979** and **SFC _Shoah Film Collection** dealing with genocides taking place on different continents at different times, different historical, cultural, ethnic, religious, social and economical conditions, can actually not be compared with each other, at all. Even if the ideological background of the NAZISM and Fascism and the Communist Khmer Rouge are really different, the totalitarian structures behind and the degrees and dimension of inhumanity are the same, they express themselves only in different ways according to the different mentality and traditions.

While the historical Holocaust was finally not fulfilling Hitler’s goal to erase all Jews, and the post-Holocaust era was marked by a complete re-construction of Europe and the foundation of a Jewish state, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia succeeded in killing the entire intellectual elite catapulting Cambodia into the Stone-Age, where the whole country is still in agony these days suffering from the loss of this invaluable human capital and will not be able to recover for the coming decades. Cambodia survives nowadays as a nation only due to countless international NGOs which care for the essential for daily survival. In the eyes of a tourist, it may look like a kind of exotic, but for an initiated it is just shocking.

While looking to other continents like Africa, which is hosting actually only totalitarian regimes, nobody is caring, at all, about all the smaller or larger genocides which happen these days, they are not even worth to be mentioned in the media, because there are no commercial interests which have to be defended. Without any education like in most African countries, there is also no chance for developing awareness for history, the need and the necessity to keep vivid the memory and commemorate one’s own identity, or the all-destructing colonialism which actually is representing still the cause for the genocides today.

In these terms even South Africa is not really different, even if the country was liberating itself from the Fascist Apartheid system, but nowadays different kind of ideologies prevent an awareness for the historical dimension of the Apartheid while historical facts are ideologically falsified.

Concerning Latin America which has a long list of dictatorships and endless colonialism until these days where only in 20th century hundred thousands of people were killed, the situation is partially different, especially in Argentina and Chile, where the political ideology in power is dealing with the memory of the countless victims of the military dictatorships and develop a kind of commemorating culture which can be compared with the one in Germany after World War II. The large number of museums and social structures dealing with this memory give evidence.

Returning again to Europe, while Stalinism was dominating Eastern European and Asian countries, where in Southern Europe during the post-war era in Portugal, Spain, Greece and other countries were remaining dictatorships persecuting and killing many, many people, it becomes obvious totalitarianism is present anywhere, there is no place which would be not affected, neither in History or Present, and what about FUTURE?

While facing the dimension of collective trauma, it was just consequent to take these exceptional film collections dedicated to the Holocaust and the Cambodian genocide, and make them a basis for an expanded project entitled **CTF – Collective Trauma Film Collections**, dealing with collective trauma caused by totalitarianism **worldwide**.

It is sad to see how Holocaust meanwhile shranked to a mere historical phenomenon and simultaneously the understanding for the Holocaust is decreasing to nearly zero, whereby I can only speak for those Western European countries which were living in peace after World War II; while there are many geographical areas on the globe where war, totalitarianism and persecution represent the daily reality.

So, there are good reasons, why I will travel in November 2013 to Latin America e.g. Argentina, Peru and Mexico where I will realise together with local partners and artists “**A Virtual Memorial Buenos Aires 2013, A Virtual Memorial Lima 2013 and A Virtual Memorial Mexico City 2013**”, in order to develop and establish the new collection of Latin American art videos, entitled. “**Nunca Mas!**” (Never More), for **CTF – Collective Trauma Film Collections**, which means in fact placing the Holocaust in the global context of all the other genocides and crimes against humanity in order to encourage and enforce a better understanding for the subject matter, and give the message to this world” **All this must not happen again, wherever on the globe! - CTF _ Collective Trauma Film Collections becomes this way a real peace initiative!**

CTF – Collective Trauma Film Collections invites artists and film makers from all parts on the globe to make collective trauma (caused by totalitarianism) at least once a topic of their artwork by using new technologies and contemporary approaches in order to sensitize the audience via art, as well.

In the development of human civilization, art had from the beginning also the function to transport individual and collective memory to next following generations. This initiative will be already successful if people start reflecting, become active and do not remain in a passive consuming and refusing position.

The next following event “**A Virtual Memorial Vilnius 2013**”, 23 September – 06 October 2013 - a collaboration with the Jewish Culture and Information Center Vilnius, the Regional Museum of Kedainiai (*and hopefully also Museum Fort VII in Kaunas*) standing under the Patronage of the **European Parliament**, will give evidence of this activating process.

About the author

Wilfried Agricola de Cologne is a German media artist, media art curator, founder and director of **Cologne Art & Moving Images Awards** – the international platform for “art & moving images” and CTF –Collective Trauma Film Collections.

<http://www.agricola-de-cologne.de>
<http://www.agricola-de-cologne.de/blog/>

Links

CTF – Collective Trauma Film Collections – <http://ctf.engad.org>

SFC – Shoah Film Collection – <http://sfc.engad.org>

Cambodia 1975-1979 – <http://cambodia.engad.org>

A Virtual Memorial – Commemorative Interventions – <http://avmci.a-virtual-memorial.org>

A Virtual Memorial Vilnius 2013 – <http://vilnius2013.a-virtual-memorial.org>

A Virtual Memorial Riga 2012 – <http://riga2012.a-virtual-memorial.org>
<http://ateamartistsforchange.wordpress.com/category/latvian-category/>