



Internationale Gesellschaft  
für Menschenrechte (IGFM)

## EUROPE



### **Germany: 30 years after the peaceful revolution in the GDR and Eastern Europe**

#### **The contribution of Stasi and KGB memorials to the culture of remembrance**

This was the theme of a conference of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) in Frankfurt am Main on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.



Prof. Dr. Valters Nollendorfs, Latvia, Raimo Tõnissoo, Estonia, IGFM Chairman Edgar Lamm (from left to right) © ISHR Germany

30 years after the fall of communism in East Germany and Eastern Europe, the retrospective transfiguration and trivialization of this totalitarian ideology is once again widespread. In the curricula for teaching history at schools, in science, research and teaching at universities, in literature and in the media, there is largely no critical examination of communism.

Those who are 45 years old or younger today already have no personal memories of the communist tyranny in Europe.

In 2018, on the occasion of his 200th birthday, Karl Marx was paid homage in a shockingly uncritical and trivial way. That would have been unthinkable shortly after the “fall of the wall” in 1989/1990. This example makes clear which tasks and at the same time which deficits political- historical education has.



The Black Book of Communism - first published in France in 1997 on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the October Revolution - lists 100 million victims of communism to date, including 20 million in the Soviet Union, 65 million in China and 2 million each in North Korea and Cambodia.

Today, memorials and museums in Eastern Germany and Eastern Europe commemorate the communist tyranny. Most of them are located in the former prisons of the Stasi and the KGB, i.e. in original locations. You make an indispensable contribution to political and historical education. During our visits to Eastern Europe in recent years we have visited the KGB museums in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Hungary. Unfortunately, reality also includes the fact that in Germany and most Eastern European countries one can speak of an open culture of remembrance, whereas in Russia one's own past or that of the former Soviet Union is glorified.

30 years after the peaceful revolution, a critical view of communism is an indispensable task of political education. In this way, a contribution is made to preventing political extremism from both the left and the right, including current extremism.



Norbert Altenkamp MdB © ISHR Germany

Norbert Altenkamp, Member of the Bundestag, Member of the Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of the German Bundestag, gave a welcome address at the conference.

The Occupation Museum in Riga, Latvia, was presented Prof. Dr. Valters Nollendorfs. He has been Chairman of the Board of the Latvian Occupation Museum since 1996. From 1961 to 1995 he taught as a professor at the University of Wisconsin/USA. 1988-1989 he was director of the Latvian Grammar School in Münster.

Raimo Tõnissoo presented on the Occupation Museum (KGB Museum) in Tallinn, Estonia.

The Cottbus prison memorial was presented by Sylvia Wähling, director of the memorial.

Prof. Dr. Lajos Gecsényi from Imre Nagy Memorial House in Budapest, Hungary, and former General



Director of the Hungarian National Archives, sent a  
greeting.

*Edgar Lamm, ISHR Germany*