



## **IBZ – SCHLOSS GIMBORN SEMINAR 13/14: LEGAL AND ILLEGAL DRUGS - METHODS AND APPROACHES TO PREVENT AND PROSECUTE DRUG ABUSE IN EUROPE**

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It was a Sunday morning in December 2012 when I checked my e-mails, and I distinctly remember having to read the e-mail twice just to make sure that I comprehended what I had read. I have been awarded the Arthur Troop Scholarship. It is amazing how a seemingly ordinary day can become extraordinary in a matter of seconds.

The seminar I chose to attend was about legal and illegal drugs. The reason for me choosing this topic is because South Africa is experiencing a drug epidemic. I jumped at the opportunity to be able to become more educated on the topic.

I arrived at Frankfurt Airport during the early morning of 12 May 2013. I left the warm Cape Town weather for weather unknown. I then boarded an ICE train to Cologne. Travelling at blistering fast speed, I arrived at Cologne station. When I took my first steps outside of the station, I was met with icy cold temperatures and freezing rain. Yet the warm and welcoming smiles of the local people quickly made the cold disappear.

From Cologne station I travelled to Gimborn. I stared out of the vehicle window in absolute amazement and my surroundings turned to green. Upon my arrival at Gimborn castle, Heidi allocated me a room. I walked up the flights of stairs ... slowly, as my luggage was heavy.

I reached my room, room number 15 (Aachen), opened the door and entered the room which was to be mine for the week ahead. My mind filled with excitement and anticipation.



On Monday, the week finally arrived and all the participants met for a hearty breakfast and afterwards we made our way to the seminar room. We started off the seminar with introductions. There were participants from Ireland, England, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Sri Lanka, Luxembourg, Estonia and myself from South Africa.



The week was filled with guest speakers. These guests spoke to us about topics relevant to the seminar and as each guest spoke, we all became captivated in the words. During the week the seminar leader decided that we would play a game which would emphasise team work. We were divided into two groups and each group was given a long piece of rope. We were then instructed that we were to form shapes with the piece of rope and that the shapes were predetermined by the seminar leader. I thoroughly enjoyed this game because all the participants started laughing more and more as the shapes created did not quite resemble the shapes asked for.

On the Wednesday we all went to Cologne and went to "Notel". There the guest speaker informed us about the importance of this institution and how the institution is run. Afterwards we were allowed to roam around Cologne and later we all met for dinner after which we travelled back to Gimborn.



The week continued, admittedly it continued faster than I would have liked, because I met amazing people and I knew that come Friday, I will probably never see them again as we all went our separate ways again.

On Friday we all sat down together for the last time in the seminar room and completed all the admin for the week. We all said our goodbyes and by 13:30 all the participants had left Gimborn.



I extended my trip to Germany with an extra week. IPA Cologne arranged my accommodation and I was picked up by Gunter. Gunter and his wife, Mara, took me out to dinner and then drop me off safely at my accommodation, St. Pantaleonkloster which is situated at Am Pantaleonberg 10, Cologne. Sister Herlinde welcomed me and even though I did not understand German, and she did not understand English, we understood each other.

On Saturday, Udo and Lilly, came to fetch me and we took a trip to Aachen. I visited Aachen Cathedral and we then took a trip over the border to Netherlands and visited Vaals and Maastricht. We then returned to Germany and went to a suburb of Cologne, named Stommeln, where we went to an Irish folk band concert.

On Sunday, Mara took me on a drive along the Rhein River to an area known as "Little Tuscany" and we visited Linz, Koblenz and Boppard.

The following day I went on a guided tour of Cologne with IPA friend, Fritz. I visited the Cologne Cathedral and Treasury and Lindt Chocolate museum. I also went on a little trip over the river in what we would call, a cable car.



On Tuesday I went to the city of Bonn with Gunter. I went to the German History Museum, after which we were met by another IPA friend, Christian, and we went to the Bonn Water Police. I was fortunate to go on a trip down the river in the police boat, while the officers conducted their river patrol.

On Wednesday, Volker, took me to the police training facilities in Bruhl. I was astonished with the magnitude of this facility. It houses three in-door shooting ranges and other areas which accommodates various types of training. I was invited to test the shooting range with my shooting skills and was handed two training weapons, which are replicas of the P6 firearm. I was then handed the real firearm, a German police issued P6 9mm weapon. I immediately noticed the differences between this firearm and the firearm which is issued in South Africa.

After the shooting range, I was shown another area of the facility where officers are trained in closed quarters. I was also handed a battering ram, something which I have never handled before, but after a few demonstrations from the instructor, I was handling it like a pro. After training, I had lunch in the canteen and then Volker and I left and visited the police headquarters in Cologne.

At Polizei Headquarters, IPA friend Dietmar, explained what his work as a crime analysis entails, and introduced me to some of his colleagues. Volker took me to the radio control room and to the command centre.

With some time to spare before the end of the day, Volker took me to what is known as the "love locks" bridge. A beautiful sight to behold and the bridge is decorated in thousands of locks, in different colours. The story goes that two lovers engrave their names in the lock and then fasten the lock against the bridge fence and then throw the key into the river flowing below. This is done to signify eternal love.



Thursday I had all to myself. I spent my day wandering the streets of Cologne. Walking in and out of the shops in the Schidergrasse and exploring Altstadt. Later that afternoon I met Christian and his family and friends by the Cathedral and I was fortunate to be invited to go on a "roof-top" tour of this magnificent cathedral. Afterwards we met Gunter and Maria for a farewell dinner. This was my last night in Cologne.

Friday I awoke with mixed feelings. Feelings of excitement because I was going home, back to my beloved South Africa, back to my family. But simultaneously I felt sad, as I knew I was leaving Germany, leaving Cologne and leaving all my new friends, who welcomed me with open arms.

As I sat down in my aeroplane seat, I bid farewell to Germany with fond and cherished memories. Farewell Cologne, farewell Germany, farewell all my friends...until I see you again...very soon I predict.

I would like to that thank everyone who made this opportunity possible. Special thanks to: IPA South Africa, IPA Cologne, Schloss Gimborn, Gunter & Maria Rammel, Udo & Lilly, Volker, Dietmar, Christian, Friedrich, officers of Bonn Water Police : Siggie, Joe and Torsten, and Sister Herlinde of St. Pantaleon.

