9 NOVEMBER INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST FASCISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

RESISTANCE

Berlin anti-fascists and Jewish survivors remind their fellow citizens of whereto intolerance can lead, by holding this commemoration meeting on 9 November 2000. Although the scale of this action is small, it reaches the general public, passing by in the street.

Historically, resistance has taken different forms and shapes, depending on historical circumstances, ranging from armed struggles against fascist forces to education projects on issues of discrimination. It is important to understand that groups and individuals taking part in resistance have always been very different and their methods differed accordingly. The best results were obtained, however, when a degree of mutual understanding, co-operation and solidarity between different groups was achieved. Anti-racist and anti-fascist resistance has never been a monopoly of any single political current.

The Swedish Network Against Racism organised a demonstration in Göteborg on 9 November 2000. They bring together groups from a variety of different backgrounds; anti-fascists, anti-racists, trade unioninsts, disability rights activists, gay rights activists, Roma groups, etc.

9 November 1938 the "Kristallnacht" pogrom a short history

In Germany on November 9th 1938, the Nazis started a pogrom against the Jews. After the Nazis came to power in 1933, Jews were subjected to harsh laws against them - being forced to hand over their businesses to 'Aryans' only being allowed to shop in Jewish-owned shops, children only allowed to go to Jewish schools etc. This was accompanied by much organised violence against Jews in the streets and elsewhere. But, until November 9th 1938, these attacks had the appearance of being unplanned and not sanctioned by the leadership of the Nazi Party, the government of Germany. On November 6th, a young Jew living in Paris, Herschel Grynszpan, received a postcard from his father Zindel who had been deported, along with 18.000 other German Jews, on October 27th to the Polish frontier. The postcard described the terrible conditions that the deportees were living under. Herschel Grynszpan was so angered by what he read that he went to the German Embassy in Paris and shot the first German official that he saw, Erns vom Rath, a diplomatic assistant. Vom Rath died of his injuries on November 8th and the news of his death reached Germany the next day. The Nazis and Hitler denounced the killing as part of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy against Germany. The pogrom started in Berlin on November 9th 1938, organised unofficially by Hitler's SA storm troops. Hitler never officially commented on the pogrom, but he must have given his approval. Goebbels certainly ordered the violence to begin. Synagogues were set on fire. Jewish shops had their windows smashed across the country, which gave rise to the name "Kristallnacht", which freely translated means the Night of Broken Glass. Many Jews were physically attacked too. More than 7000 Jewish businesses across the country were attacked. Fires were lit in every Jewish area and the Nazis burned religious books. Around 200 synagogues were destroyed. The violence lasted 24 hours and 91 Jews were killed. More than 30.000 were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Many of them were killed in the following two months. The "Kristallnacht" pogrom is usually seen as the symbolic beginning of the Holocaust. In addition to the approximately 6 million Jews who were the targets of a complete annihilation policy, were an estimated 5,5 million "enemies of the German state", criminals and 'asocials', people with mental disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, political offenders such as communists and socialists, and Roma and Sinti. Estimates of the number of so-called "Gypsies" murdered are between

Burning synagoge in Germany, 9 November 1938

200.000 and 1.500.000. The estimated number of homosexuals killed in the camps varies from 10.000 to 15.000. Around 100.000 men and women were arrested of the German homosexual community of around 1.500.000 men and women. The word "Kristallnacht" was given to the event by the Nazis themselves, because it mocked what had happened. German anti-fascists today prefer to describe the pogrom as "Reichspogromnacht", although in most other countries the term "Kristallnacht" is used as it is more well-known.

As long as there are survivors of the Holocaust alive in our midst, we can directly ask them about history and their experiences during World War II. On this picture a Romanian television crew interviews a survivor at a 9 November 2000 action.

.... and now?

After World War II the European peoples decided that they would never let anything like the Holocaust happen again. Despite this, intolerance has continued to fester in the heart of Europe. We have only to take a look at the history of the Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities in Europe to see that racism and discrimination did not disappear.

Resistance against fascism and racism

The first cases of resistance against racism can be traced back to the opposition of native people of Africa, the Americas and Asia against the European colonial yoke and to slavery. Revolts and uprisings against racist colonial rule occurred throughout centuries of European colonialism. The 1791 Haitian revolution stands out as a fine example: an army composed of former slaves repeatedly defeated the forces of big colonial powers and laid foundations for an independent black republic. Another example is the struggle of the Chechen people who resisted Russian imperialism for almost a century. Another form of resistance was maintaining the original cultures and identities of oppressed peoples despite attempts at uprooting whole ethnic groups.
The first well-known international effort to combat fascism came in 1936 with the Spanish Civil War. Volunteers from all over Europe and beyond came together to defend democracy against the fascist military putsch led by General Franco. People from different walks of life and with different poltical beliefs joined the International Brigades. There were socialists, liberals, communists, anarchists, and others, among them. Groups all over Europe organised solidarity events to support the Spanish Republic. After three years of fighting the fascist forces in Spain won, supported by Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. But the tradition lives on in the battle-cry of "No Pasaran" or "They Shall Not Pass" and the clenched fist salute, which are both still used by anti-fascist resistance until now.

Resistance in World War II

During World War II forms of resistance in various occupied countries ranged from partisan warfare to underground universities, clandestine newspapers and so-called "small sabotage", i.e. painting anti-Nazi graffiti, secretly removing swastikas from public sites, etc. Thousands of people risked their lives on a daily basis helping those in hiding, primarily Jews. In some countries this "crime of solidarity" was punished by death.
One of the most tenacious myths about World War II is that Jews went to the gas chambers like sheep. They did not. Many resisted and alsmost all paid for it with their lives. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943 is but one example.
The wartime resistance movements still inspire anti-fascists in many countries. Fortunately most of us do not have to fear for our lives because of our involvement in anti-racist or anti-fascist activities.

The Italian organisation ARI used the slogan and logo of the UNITED posters to create their own. 'Mai Più' means 'Never Again'. The posters were displayed all over the city of Rieti around 9 November 1999.

Civil disobedience

A different form of resistance which has had an enormous historical impact was civil disobedience, as practiced by the Indian independence movement led by Mahatma Ghandi and the Black American civil rights movement led by Dr Martin Luther King. The method of non-violent non-cooperation ("satyagraha" in Hindu) was a peaceful and very successful way of mobilising thousands of people deprived of their rights and of resisting injustice. It has been a source of inspiration for worldwide struggles for equal rights.
The so-called "Black Power" movement, which appeared in the USA and spread to other countries, too, put emphasis on empowering minority groups to regain their self-respect and self-confidence. It is strongly reflected today in, for example, hip-hop culture.

The red triangle

The red triangle on this poster is one of a collection of triangle signs in several colours. These triangles signify the groups as they were differentiated in the Nazi concentration camps. It was typical for fascism to divide citizens into categories. Minorities were separated and were blamed for everything that had gone wrong.

Signification of the triangle badges in Nazi concentration camps:

yellow star:	Jew
red triangle:	political prisoners
pink triangle:	homosexuals
lilac triangle:	Jehovah's Witnesses
black triangle:	Roma and Sinti ('gypsies') and 'asocials'
green triangle:	criminals

Anti-fascists now use the red triangle as a badge of honour, signifying their resistance against fascism. Gay groups often use the pink triangle as a sign of being gay and being politically conscious about it.

Many activists use the UNITED texts as a basis for their own material. Here, a Yugoslav activist spreads leaflets in the streets of Kraljevo (YU). By pinning traingle badges on their clothes the anti-fascists provoked discussion with regular passers-by.

Racist violence and institutionalised discrimination

If you are different from the majority, because of the colour of your skin or because your culture is different, you may become the victim of discrimination and even violence. In recent years violence against minorities has cost lives. In Central and Eastern Europe beatings of Roma often go unremarked and unreported, let alone that they are punished. The state, the police and the justice system have shown a lack of willingness to deal with the problems that Roma face. The attitude of the states is largely responsible for the vulnerability of Roma as a group.
Many people in our societies are disadvantaged in different ways. Their quality of life and their opportunities are affected because they are part of a minority group. Racism, sexism and homophobia are an inherent part of our societies. This sort of disadvantage operates within institutions such as the police, justice system and health service - in all parts of the state.

With small means you can create a big effect. In 1999 in Cluj-Napoca (RO) children draw stars of David on the street to mark the places where Jews used to live in the city before World War II. They commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and confront people with the history of their town.

Co-operation against intolerance

When you sit in a train together with your friends and a stranger enters, it feels awkward. The stranger is viewed with suspicion. You don't know why he is in this train and why he dresses, speaks and acts differently. This kind of suspicion may be natural, but it cannot be allowed to become permanent. Organisations have worked on introducing the different groups that work in a country to each other. They have organised cultural events and social events that bring together different groups. Around 9 November many organisations feel the wish to commemorate the past together with other groups. If Jewish groups wish to work with Roma groups and anti-fascists, this may lead to a working cooperation that may continue after the commemorations are over.

Resistance through education

Education can be a form of resistance, schools can be places where intolerance is installed in children's minds or firmly banished. There are different forms of racism to be found in schools. Not all of it comes from classmates. The educational material can be racist. Books on history, geography and religion, but also other books, often contain stereotypes of minorities. Taking a critical look at school material is something pupils, parents and teachers can do together. Taking action against different forms of racism and intolerance is a responsibility that pupils, teachers and parents can and should share. A first step: organising a coalition of the organisations already in place, including teacher's organisations and unions, pupils councils, anti-racist organisations, gay and lesbian organisations, etc. They may well be able to help you in setting up discussion meetings, collect signatures, organising festivals and manifestations etc.

Youth discuss about fascism and intolerance after a lecture in Zaragoza (E) around 9 Novem-ber 1999. Schools are often willing to receive NGOs for lectures or lessons, but long term action is needed as well.

What you can do

Around 9 November the UNITED network organises each year a European-wide campaign to commemorate the past, protest against the present and build the future. Together we:

- motivate and inspire each other
- learn from each other's experience and ideas
- generate more publicity
- mobilise more people

If you would like to take part in this campaign, you can do so by announcing your intentions to the UNITED office and start organising. The variety and creativity of many different simultaneous activities on different levels and all over Europe make the campaign successful. The campaign is linked together by the use of a single date at its centre - 9 November - and the use of a common theme and or slogan. This poster is designed to introduce you to the theme. Special care is taken to bring together groups of different backgrounds, such as anti-fascist groups and Roma groups together with gay and lesbian organisations. The idea behind the campaign is to use the divisions that were made in the past (such as by giving Jews a yellow star, antifascists a red and gays/lesbians a pink triangle) to unite us in our fight for equal rights and equal chances today. We stand together as one big colourful movement.
Some ideas from the past years included: drawing competitions in schools, public discussion meetings, demonstrations in the streets, commemoration meetings, conferences, poster action, media actions, cultural events with minority music groups, etc. etc.

The Tyne and Wear Anti-Fascist Association (GB) organised a public event on 9 November 1999, which included an exhibition of panels with explanations about the use of the different triangle badges in the Nazi concentration camps.

How UNITED can help

UNITED will produce a special calendar of activities taking place all around Europe, which can help you to make contacts and exchange speakers with other groups. It will be updated several times and will be published on our website: www.unitedagainstracism.org
Call UNITED if you cannot find a partner of your activities. We might know of other NGOs in your country who are planning something.
A media release will be sent out to all important European press agencies, newspapers, etc. If you feel that we should include a specific media contact from your country in our list, let us know. Journalists that want to know about specific activities are referred to the organisations involved in local actions.
UNITED will produce a European report after 9 November, including as many of the activities that took place as possible.

How you can help UNITED

We can only do this with your help.
Help us make the media release exciting! Announce your activities to us! Send us your announcements, invitations, leaflets and posters before the activities take place. Help us make the report complete. Make sure your activity is included! Send us reports, newspaper articles, photographs, etc. after the event.

Check out also:
Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe (I CARE) - www.icare.to

Activists organised a round table in Moldova to discuss the racism and intolerance in their country, around 9 November 1999.

UNITED IS SUPPORTED BY:

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RESISTANCE!

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