UNITED FOR INTERCULTURAL ACTION
ÖSTERREICHISCHER AUSLANDSDIENST

The Austrian Service Abroad (in German "Österreichischer Auslandsdienst") is a non-profit organisation founded in 1998 by Andreas Maislinger and Andreas Hörtngl. The organisation sends volunteers (aged 18-28) to around 60 partner institutions in 32 countries all over the world to work in one of three fields: the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service, the Austrian Social Service or the Austrian Peace Service. There, volunteers complete a 12-month internship that counts as an alternative to the Austrian Military Service and the Civilian Service.

The aim of the Austrian Service Abroad is to establish cross-cultural communication between the Austrian volunteers and the population of their assigned countries focusing on victims of persecution and minority issues. The exchange seeks to further understanding among nations by virtue of commemoration and reconciliation with the tragedies of the 20th century, aid for social and economic development or by easing tensions in conflict areas.

Volunteers at UNITED for Intercultural Action

Volunteers from the Austrian Service Abroad have supported the UNITED office in Amsterdam since 2003. Overall, the Austrian volunteer at UNITED coordinates the two big campaigns “the International Day Against Fascism & Antisemitism” and the “European-wide Action Week Against Racism”. Furthermore, she or he is responsible for organising conferences, administering databases, publishing reports and preparing future projects.

History of the Holocaust Memorial Service

Andreas Maislinger began advocating the Holocaust Memorial Service (Gedenkdiensst) at the end of the seventies as an alternative to the mandatory civil service, aiming to promote education and raise awareness about the Holocaust. In 1980, the former president Rudolf Kirchschläger refused his concept as the political stand of the time presented Austria as the first victim of nazi Germany and therefore Austrians did not have to take responsibility by reconciling with the victims of the Holocaust. Later Kirchschläger accredited the “positive achievement” of the “accomplished holocaust memorial service”.

Finally, in May 1991 the former Interior Minister Franz Lischak informed Maislinger that the Austrian Government had approved the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service as an alternative service. Thus, in September 1991 the first young Austrian could begin his work at the Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau through the organisation “Verein Gedenkdiensst”. Due to conflicting ideas with members of the Verein Gedenkdiensst, Andreas Maislinger and Andreas Hörtngl founded the Austrian Service Abroad in 1998, which comprised of not only the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service, but also two new programs: the Austrian Social Service and the Austrian Peace Service.

Fields of Activity of the Volunteers

Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service volunteers work with Holocaust survivors, memorial sites, museums and research facilities such as the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles, the Jewish Museum Berlin, the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest or Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. At these institutions AHMS volunteers study and preserve the history of the Holocaust, organise seminars and record testimonies of survivors to ensure that the Holocaust is not forgotten and that future generations can learn from the past and develop greater tolerance. In total, since 1992, about 500 young Austrians have memorialised the history of the Holocaust in 22 countries worldwide and have made an important contribution to Austria’s accounting for the past.

Austrian Social Service & Austrian Peace Service

The Austrian Service Abroad within the Austrian Social Service Abroad works with development projects around the world, mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It aims to support the social and economic development in the countries of assignment. Due to various circumstances and needs in the different regions, the program includes a wide range of duties such as educational programs, environmental projects and the care of orphans. The Austrian Peace Service, situated for example in Hiroshima, Japan, and Nanjing, China, is concerned with ensuring safety in conflict areas. By organising workshops with the conflicting partners, giving tours through memorial places and translation work the volunteers support dialogue and understanding that helps reduce conflicts.

Austrian Service Abroad

Austrian Social Service & Austrian Peace Service

Website: www.auslandsdienst.at
E-mail: info@auslandsdienst.at

Every Survivor Has a Story to Tell

Austrian Service Abroad

Austrian Peace Service

ÖSTERREICHISCHER AUSLANDSDIENST

Austrian Service Abroad

The Holocaust is one of the darkest chapters in all human history. Through Holocaust education young people discover what discrimination and exclusion can trigger. It is their task to prevent all forms of anti-Semitism, racism and any other forms of discrimination that led to such a devastating event as the Holocaust.

The term Holocaust describes the systematic persecution and murder of approximately 6 million Jews and 5.5 million “enemies of the German state” who were identified as homosexuals, criminals, “asocials”, Roma and Sinti and other minorities, Jehovah’s Witnesses and members of diverse religious communities, people with mental disabilities, political “enemies” such as communists, socialists and Spanish republican refugees.

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UNITED for Intercultural Action is the European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees. UNITED for Intercultural Action is an alternative to political parties, organisations and states, that seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe. Information is received from more than 2500 organisations and mailings go out to about 2300 groups in Europe. Let us know if you want to get involved! And added UNITED to your mailing list.

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Hate crimes and online hate speech are turning into regular realities, extreme right-wing groups are elected in local municipalities and national parliaments and xenophobic propaganda is becoming legitimate in societies. A society that is fractured, where its people are disconnected from one another, is neither healthy nor will it be effective. Intolerant, hateful movements that can gain ground in uncertain political times. As a civil society we have to respond to these challenges.

We can act and should act against fascism and all forms of hate. This starts at a very local level: our schools and workplaces, our neighbourhoods and streets. Here we have the power to really make a difference and shape society.

Based on the experience of the UNITED network, in its long struggle against hate and injustice, we have developed a short guide that can help you make a real difference. In this leaflet we explain examples of teaching methods that can be used for group work and group projects.

1 RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

Righteous Among the Nations is an honorary title awarded by Yad Vashem to describe non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis.

The main forms of help given by the Righteous were hiding Jews at home or on their property, providing them with false papers and false identity documents, smuggling and assisting Jews to escape and the rescuing of children.

You can use the stories of the Righteous as an educational approach to teach historical content and religious and moral values while personalizing the Holocaust. The stories of each honoured person represents what prompted and motivated some individuals (a tiny minority) to risk their lives on behalf of Jewish people under the umbrella of the Nazis.

One possible activity that can be organised is a story telling day under the title “Whoever saved a single life, saves an entire universe”. Volunteers take the role of a story teller and local artists can also be involved. The stories are told with the help of photos, movies, early surviving documents (such as postcards, pictures, films, posters) as propaganda? How is it used here and what effect? How is the role of the cartoon using anti-semitic stereotypes? Why do you think he uses these stereotypes? Do you think that this cartoon is effective? Are stereotypes still used today?

The naiss used different types of propaganda to convey their message to the people. What are the benefits of such material (like this cartoon, pictures, images, photos)? How is the content of this cartoon being perceived by the people of the time? And about debate and discussion within National Socialism?

After the participants have answered the questions, the whole group should come together to discuss their outcomes.

Some examples for questions:

1. How does this cartoon tell us about the attitude of the nazis concerning the freedom of expression? What do the images suggest about the role of the individual? And about debate and resistance within National Socialism?

2. The book can be a helpful tool to teach people about the Holocaust. A workshop can be designed to develop an insight into the conditions under which people lived during the Holocaust as well as how survivors and their families coped afterwards.

3. The workshop and a few copies of the handout, and prepared resources (see first link below).

First step:

Introduce the whole group to the participants. In small groups read the book for 45 minutes and then summarise peoples’ impressions. Absorb a graphic novel to gain further impressions about the book but do not present any information yet.

Second step:

Give handouts with a maximum of 30 questions that should be answered in half an hour. After that, the participants should discuss their answers in small groups (max. 4) for another half an hour.

Third step:

Finally, the small groups present their answers to the whole group. Afterwards you could use the storyboards that they learned during the workshop. Discuss what they can do against discrimination in their personal life.

Some examples for questions:

1. Why did Spiegelman write this book? Why did he think it was important?

2. “Maus” portrays the Holocaust or in general a genocide. Do you know of any recent genocides?

3. How is this graphic novel similar to the Holocaust? How are they different?

4. What would you have done if you were a jew living in Poland during the Second World War? What would you have done if you were a Pole?

5. How did people survive in Poland during the Second World War?

6. How do you think these survivors felt after the war?
Hate crimes and online hate speech are turning into regular realities, extreme right-wing parties are elected in local municipalities and national parliaments and xenophobic propaganda is becoming legitimised in societies.

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6 EXAMPLES OF TEACHING METHODS

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The main forms of help given by the Righteous were hiding Jews at home or in their property, providing false papers and false identity smuggling and assisting Jews to escape and the rescuing of children.

Organisations can use the stories of the Righteous as an educational approach to teach historical content and religious and moral values while personalising the facts that so many people allowed this, or can allow again, genocide, to occur by failing to either resist or protest. This history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behaviour.

Online resources:
- www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/plistories/
- adl.org/children_holocaust/children_main.asp

3 STUMBLING STONES

A stumbling stone makes you stop and think. They are memorial plaques placed outside the former homes or workplaces of Jewish victims of the Holocaust. They consist of a brass plate with an inscription of the victim’s name, date of birth, deportation place and the date of deportation fixed to the ground in the middle of pedestrian pathways. Stumbling stones in front of buildings aim to stop passerby and make them reflect on the memory of the people who once lived there.

In addition to many local similar initiatives, there are two well-known projects. “Stolpersteine” (Stumbling Stones) is an initiative by the German artist Gunter Demnig. The Vienna-based 54-year-old has been laying down “Stolpersteine” in the thousands for many years. “Stolpersteine” (Stumbling Stones) is an initiative by the German artist Gunter Demnig. The Vienna-based 54-year-old has been laying down “Stolpersteine” in the thousands for many years.

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Online resources:
- www.yadvashem.org/en/education/lesson_plans/germany_sculptor.asp

5 PROPAGANDA MATERIAL

Propaganda is biased information designed to shape the beliefs and opinions of individuals. Propaganda can occur in many forms such as movies, cartoons, sculptures or photos. In his name, Spiegelman is a great number of channels to influence public opinion.

Asi propagaadon stretched through all areas of life, for example, in art. Hitler gave the public a sense of authenticity to the lessons. He enjoyed the power of media and art for his purpose. Nazi proacaadon was supported by the public. How did Spiegelman write this book? Why did he use this stereotype? Why do you think he uses these stereotypes? Do you think this is effective? Are stereotypes still used today?

The Nazis used different types of propaganda to convey their message to the people. What are the benefits of such material (like this cartoon, pictures, films, posters) as propaganda? How is it used and what effect? What is the role of the artist? How is a picture worth a thousand words?

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Online resources:
- www.ushmm.org/tooldoc/project/plaques/shevet/73077/propaand驸orioplono/propaganda_material

6 GRAPHIC NOVEL “MAUS”

“Maus” [the German word for mouse] is a graphic novel completed in 1995 by the American cartoonist Art Spiegelman. The book depicts Spiegelman’s interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor. The book has been translated into 18 languages. The book works with different depictions of characters and animals with Jews as mice, Germans as cats and non-Jewish Poles as pigs. His choice to use pigs to symbolize non-Jewish people in many cultures piggies are viewed as disgusting, vile and uncultured.

Analyzing these images with young people, however, may help them gain a better understanding of how the Nazis used Spiegelman’s artistic purposes. Though the national comparisons may not always flatten, it is fascinating for the students how the nazi’s such as Aesop’s, or allegories such as George Orwell’s Animal Farm. The book can be a helpful tool to teach people about the Holocaust. A workshop can be designed to develop an insight into the conditions under which people lived during the Holocaust as well as how survivors and their families coped afterwards.

First step: give out handouts to the book to the participants. In small groups read the book for 45 minutes and then summarise peoples’ impressions on the book. After that, discuss the group the impressions about the book but do not introduce the graphic from graphic yet.

Second step: Give handouts with a maximum of 30 questions that should be answered in half an hour. After that, the participants should discuss their answers in small groups (max. 4) for another half an hour.

Third step: Finally, the small groups present their answers to the whole group. Afterwards give the participants a worksheet that they learned during the workshop. Discuss what they can do against discrimination in their everyday lives.

Some examples for questions:
- Why did Spiegelman write this book? Why did he use this stereotype?
- “Maus” portrays the Holocaust in or in general a genocide. Do you know of any recent genocides?
- How does the book compare to other books about the Holocaust? How are they different?
- What if you would have done if you were a Jew living in Poland during the Second World War? What would you have done if you were a Pole?
- How did you think these survivors felt after the war?
- How did people survive in Poland during the Second World War?
- How do you think these survivors felt after the war?

Online resources:
- www.shc.edu/images/pdfs/maus_guide.pdf
- www.holocaustcenter.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcone/classes/332/350/lect/maus/MausResources.htm

The “Sculptor of Germany”

O. Garvens, Kladderadatsch, 1933, volume 46

Using cartoons

The cartoon “Germany’s sculptor” (see picture) was published in a satirical, right-wing German newspaper in 1933, the year Adolf Hitler assumed power. By analysing this cartoon, students will explore a primary document (see first link below), which gives some indication as to how certain art was forced from censorship to completion submission.

During a group workshop participants should examine the cartoon and pay attention to the explanation provided by the teacher. Learners should be informed with the historical background of the propaganda. Then questions should be answered in small groups.

Some examples for questions:
- This cartoon tells a story. What story?
- Hitler is presented as an artist. He is described as “Germany’s sculptor”. What was the role of art in Nazi Germany?
- What is the function of the cartoon using anti-semitic stereotypes? Why do you think he uses these stereotypes? Do you think this is effective? Are stereotypes still used today?
- The nazi’s used different types of propaganda to convey their message to the people. What are the benefits of such material (like this cartoon, pictures, films, posters) as propaganda? How is it used and what effect? What is the role of the artist? How is a picture worth a thousand words?

For further information please visit the website above. Online resources:
- www.stolpersteine.info
- www.stolpersteinemurmang.net

Four OPEN DOORS

All across Europe there are several localities, like houses, schools or factories that were full with Jewish life before the Second World War. These stories were often hidden behind the veil of silence because the war destroyed too much of the rightful history of the occupied (taken over) by new residents that followed the former Jewish owners.

An initiative in the Netherlands called “Open Jewish Houses” offers a chance for a number of Jewish historical sites to the public to commemorate deported Dutch Jews. Online, people could look up if there were Jews deported in the street or neighbourhood they live in. Volunteer speakers present the history of the localities and the people who lived there.

The stories are told with the help of photos, movies, diary entries, poems, literature and music. Everybody is welcome to listen, take a look, spend some time and reflect. This project needs a thorough and lengthy preparation. The examination of the topic includes interviews with possible former residents studying as well as reading historical content. Not to forget that the current history of the area could be very close to the beginning from the so they do not feel overlooked during the whole process.

Online resources:
- www.jta.org/agp/open-house-project-in-the-netherlands/
- www.communityjodenmonument.org/page/252126

6 TRANSFORMATIONS IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Depending on which part of the world you are from, the education of the Holocaust can be a selective or a compulsory subject. It may be not to include teaching the Holocaust as a discipline at all. In many countries the Holocaust is studied in secondary school only. The Holocaust education in Europe began carefully in the second half of the 20th century to break the veil of silence on the topic. In West Germany, for example, Holocaust education only started in the 1960s and played a minor role in the curriculum in the following years. In most Central and Eastern European countries it was only in the mid-1990s that the Holocaust became a topic to be addressed.

The first educational approaches that were used at that time were mostly images and movies of concentration camps as a sort of pedagogical shock therapy.

Recently Holocaust education has shifted to a more personal approach in many countries in Europe and especially in Western Europe. This approach attempts to place individuals at the centre of our understanding of history by using personal accounts of the tragic events that took place.

These personal accounts are told in order to gain a broad social perspective from intimate and personal experiences. Family experiences before, during and after the war should provide a clue as to what was happening in society, and the fact that so many people allowed this, or can allow again, genocide, to occur by failing to either resist or protest.

This history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behaviour.
AUSTRIAN SERVICE ABROAD

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