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Bulletin of the International Federation of Resistance Fighters (FIR) – Association of Antifascists

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75 years ago:

End of World War II in East Asia - Liberation from Japanese militarism

In the euro-centered view of history, 1 September 1939 and 8 May 1945 are considered the beginning and end of the Second World War. In the Asian region, two other dates stand for this: 7 July 1937 and 2 and 9 September 1945 respectively.

Already in December 1936, the Japanese Empire had clearly shown its geopolitical orientation directed against the USSR in the “Anti-Comintern-Pact” with fascist Germany. However, Japanese expansionism was aimed at the Asian mainland.

It began in 1937 with the provoked incident at the Marco Polo Bridge, which the Japanese army used to attack Chinese territory. Beijing capitulated on 29 July and Tianjin one day later. The Japanese continued their advance in the north and south of China. The Kuomintang national government under Chiang Kai-shek declared war on Japan on August 7. However, the Communist People’s Liberation Army achieved its first spectacular success in the Battle of Pingxingguan on September 25, when Marshal Lin Biao fled with hand grenades and rifle fire alone, capturing 10,000 Japanese, trucks, weapons and ammunition.

However, this did not stop the Japanese advance. In early December, the Japanese troops reached Nanking, the capital of the Kuomintang. On 13 December, the Japanese troops occupied the city. In the following three weeks’ massacre in Nanking, more than 300,000 Chinese civilians were probably murdered and about 20,000 women raped.

However, the war in the Pacific did not come into the world’s attention until four years later, with the spectacular attack by the Japanese Air Force on the US base at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Following the Japanese forces advanced further south as planned and, under the ideology of Asia for Asian, occupied European and American colonies such as Hong Kong, the Philippines and Dutch India. Within four months, Japanese troops had the whole of Southeast Asia and a large part of the Pacific Ocean with about 450 million people under their control.

Despite Japan’s military successes, the Pacific and mainland Asia remained a permanently contested region. On the one hand, the USA, with the support of Australia, Great Britain and New Zealand, tried to regain control of various strategic islands, while on the other hand, units of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army fought against the occupying power in a form of partisan struggle.

The American landing on the island of Iwojima on February 19, 1945 was certainly symbolic in character. The fighting on the island lasted five weeks and cost about 20,800 lives on the Japanese side and about 7,000 on the American side.

At the Yalta Conference, the Soviet Union had promised that no later than three months after the end of the fights in Europe, it would intervene in the war in the East. After the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan on August 8 and marched into Manchuria. The Red Army was joined by the 4th and 8th Chinese Revolutionary Army, which occupied some cities. Soviet soldiers with some units occupied South Sakhalin from August 16 and the northern Kuriles from August 19.

On September 2, the Japanese military signed the instrument of surrender on the US battleship Missouri to US General Douglas MacArthur. This formally ended the Pacific War, but fighting continued on the mainland. The Red Army liberated the north of Korea and on September 8, American units landed in the south of the peninsula. On the American proposal, the Japanese military personnel north of the 38th parallel had to surrender to the Red Army, and south of it to the US Army. It was not until September 9 that the surrender treaty of the Japanese troops was signed in Nanking on the Chinese mainland.

The result of this war is dramatic. In China alone, four Mio soldiers died and the civilian casualties, among which the Japanese caused several massacres, amounted to some 10 Mio people. The Japanese lost about 1,2 Mio soldiers and about 500,000 civilians, most of them in the two atomic bombings and the conventional bombing of Tokyo on 9 March 1945, while the losses among the Western Allies (British, Australians, New Zealanders, and Dutch) were only about 150,000 dead. The USA lost about 130,000 men in the Pacific region.

Today, the political memory of this war is once again contested. While China and Korea remember this war as a liberation struggle against the occupation and the serious war crimes committed by the Japanese militarism, in Japan members of the Japanese military are increasingly honored. A symbol of this revision of history is the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. Peace forces at home and abroad sharply criticize the fact that officers sentenced to death at the war crimes trials in Tokyo and members of the infamous Unit 731, which conducted experiments with biological weapons on prisoners of war and Chinese civilians during the war in Manchuria, are also venerated here. In 2013, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe also officially visited the shrine again for the first time.

The FIR expresses its solidarity with all veterans of the liberation fight and condemns such forms of rehabilitation of war criminals and the revision of history.

Ulrich Schneider

News from the work of the FIR

Despite Corona restrictions, the work of the FIR and its leading committee continues. Unfortunately since beginning of March all attempts to organize a real meeting of the newly elected executive committee were in vain. The accommodation was organized, flights were booked, but the ever-faster coming travel restrictions prevented the meeting.

Nevertheless, the elected members of the EA continued to work actively in their countries and in their place in the sense of the FIR, as we could already document pictorially in the past edition of the FIR-Bulletin. Between them, an intensive electronic exchange took place. In addition, members of the EA took part in different international consultations by video conference or as Webinars, so that the planning for political events in the second half of the year could take place together with the FIR.

Now it seems finally again possible to hold a real **meeting of the Executive Committee in Budapest** at the end of September. There we will also evaluate the experiences of the work of the member federations in these months and prepare the political work planning for the second half of the year as well as for 2021.

“Train of Thousand”

As is well known, an important project had to be postponed because of the Corona restrictions - the **international youth meeting “Train of Thousand” from Brussels to Auschwitz**. The bans on youth group trips until the end of 2020 in various European countries have meant that a new date had to be sought again. It is a great challenge for our friends in the “War Heritage Institute” to keep looking for new opportunities with the operator of the special train, the hotels in Krakow and the support networks in Belgium and Poland. As a **new date, the last week of March 2021** is taken into consideration. After the summer holidays, appropriate talks will be started with schools and educational institutions.

Membership fees 2020

An important note about the **finances**. At this point, we would like to thank all associations who have already transferred their membership fee for the year 2020. Of course we know how complicated it is under the current conditions to keep the daily life of an organization - including the cashing and accounting - alive. Also for the work of the FIR, the membership fees are existential, even if we had to spend only few costs for meetings of the EA and other meetings this year. However, the cost share of the FIR for the successful congress in Reggio Emilia was partly paid from the contributions for 2020. In addition, the production and the dispatch of the FIR bulletin must be paid.

Please clarify in your federations that the **membership fees 2020** have to be transferred to our account (**account connection: Postbank Berlin (BLZ 10010010), account number: 543 054 107, account holder FIR, IBAN DE 04 1001 0010 0543 0541 07 SWIFT-BIC: PBNKDEFF**) by the end of October 2020 at the latest.

President Hanti presented a new photo exhibition

In the city of Esztergom, the place where the Hungarian state was founded centuries ago, a new photo exhibition by Vilmos Hanti was opened by a catholic bishop and remains visited until the end of August in a local pub for cultural events.

The poster announcing the exhibition contains, among others, the following:

“The choice for the title of this event is particular: Quo vadis ...

The expression known from the Bible / Where do you go / refers not only to the fact that the photographer has been to many place in the world where he passionately preserved the every days of those living there, but it does imply that people today are again at a crossing point. During the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, our earlier lives have stopped, our social contacts have considerably diminished and we basically locked ourselves in.

In this situation, Vilmos Hanti's hope is that, in the present circumstances, acceptance of people with various cultural backgrounds and solidarity with all those who found themselves in more difficult situations will be given a much more important place. And though today, perhaps we do not have to accept martyrdom for our faith or conviction, but we will be able, in the present conditions, to represent them with decency.”

The opening of the exhibition was well attended.

A KALEIDOSZKÓP HÁZ SZERETETTEL MEGHÍVJA
2020. JÚLIUS 24-ÉN, 16:00 ÓRÁRA

HANTI VILMOS QUO VADIS ...

CÍMŰ KIÁLLÍTÁSÁNAK MEGNYITÓJÁRA

MEGNYITJA: BEER MIKLÓS PÜSPÖK
KÖZREMŰKÖDIK: BAKAI MÁRTON (HEGEDŰ)



Memorial stone of the FIR in Saxony was stolen

In different places of the former GDR there are monuments with the FIR symbol on cemeteries, in memorial places and in the public area. They are maintained and honoured by the anti-fascists.

At the end of April, however the FIR had to file a criminal complaint because of the theft of a memorial plaque for prisoners of the former KZ Königstein. In addition the FIR sees in this theft an offence against the Saxonian law for the protection of historical monuments (§ 35), because thereby a cultural monument was destroyed.

The stone monument of the FIR at the nature friend house Königstein-Halbestadt, which reminds of prisoners of the early concentration camp Königstein, was not only damaged in the surrounding field of the 20 April 2020, but also completely dismantled and stolen.

The FIR understands itself as moral owner of this memorial plate, since it is provided - like a set of further memorial signs in Saxonia - with the association logo introduced since 1951.

The FIR expects from the police stations that they clear up this monument desecration with large seriousness and do not dismiss this Nazi action as “regional folklore”.



Neofascists and secret services - a dangerous mixture

Thoughts on the occasion of the neo-fascist bomb attack 40 years ago in Bologna

Forty years ago, on 2 August 1980, a bomb attack in the Bologna railway station shook the Italian public and the world. With a professionally manufactured bomb weighing almost 25 kilograms, 85 people were killed, over 200 other passers-by were injured and the station building was badly damaged. The bomb had been placed in a suitcase in the 2nd class waiting room under a retaining wall to maximize the effect of the explosive device.

The nature of the attack made it clear that the people behind the attack did not want to meet any particular “enemies”, but rather intended to increase social tensions through violent terror. As ANPI and the FIR explained already immediately after the attack, such a murder was characteristic for the violent neo-fascist spectrum.

After the Italian secret service had tried several times to obstruct the investigations, neo-fascist offenders were nevertheless arrested and sentenced in November 1995. Giuseppe Valerio Fioravanti and Francesco Mambro, two members of the neo-fascist NAR (Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari) were sentenced to life imprisonment, and Luigi Ciavardini, who was not yet 18 years old at the time of the crime, received 30 years in prison.

A special feature of these proceedings was that Licio Gelli, then head of the P2 secret lodge, and three agents of the military secret service, Sismi, were also sentenced to several years' imprisonment for trying to throw the public prosecutor's office off the scent. For the same reason, two right-wing extremists and another Sismi agent were also sentenced in 2000.

According to the published lists, the right-wing secret lodge P2 included numerous politicians (including Silvio Berlusconi), journalists, captains of industry, judges and, last but not least, influential members of the security forces and secret services. P2 also had close contact with American intelligence services and was part of the secret organization Gladio, the Italian version of the “stay-behind structures” created by NATO in other countries during the Cold War.

The German judicial authorities were also less successful in their investigations 40 years ago, after a bomb attack at the main entrance to the Oktoberfest grounds on 26 September 1980 also killed 13 people and injured over 200, some of them seriously. The neo-Nazi Gundolf Köhler, a member of the Hoffmann military sports group, who himself died in the attack, was identified as the perpetrator. Unlike in Italy, the police and judiciary investigated mainly in the direction of the “single perpetrator thesis”. All connections of Köhler in the neo-fascist networks and to V-man leaders in the secret services were consistently faded out. Until today, there is no clarity about this.

Such an investigative strategy coincides with the behavior of the judiciary in the case of the “NSU” (National Socialist Underground) murders, a terrorist network which murdered nine migrants and one policewoman in Germany between 2000 and 2007.

Here, too, the work of the domestic secret service can be clearly traced. The Thuringian Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz) was already closely involved in setting up the group. Moreover, when Halit Yozgat, an Internet café owner from Kassel, was shot dead, the informant leader Andreas Temme was directly at the scene of the crime. In this case, too, the domestic secret service obstructed the police investigations, but this had no consequences for the secret service and its then superior, Hesse's Minister President Bouffier.

These examples are only the tip of an iceberg. They show how neo-fascist violence in various European countries, backed up by the domestic secret services, is used for political destabilization. The aim is not to establish fascist rule, but to enforce anti-democratic regulations for the state apparatus. Therefore, the clearing up of such connections is not only a contribution to the protection against neo-fascist violence, but also to the defense of democratic rights and liberties.

Bernd Kant



PEAEA: Pandemic, social economic crisis and the way for people

This year we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Great Anti-Fascist Victory of the Peoples. All federations have organized a varied program of events, overcoming the difficulties of these special circumstances. This period gives us great conclusions according to the situation in our country and in Europe a year after the EC elections. The pandemic caused a health crisis. The difficulty of health systems in dealing with the situation has become apparent everywhere. The imposition of restrictive measures accelerated the economic crisis, which was pre-existing. The tragic events that people have experienced in the countries of the modern capitalist world are the result of the degradation and privatization of public health systems, the large cuts in state budgets. The situation in Europe with thousands of deaths, with tragic shortages and the suspension of hospital operations in the United States, the Mecca of capitalism, with far more than 100,000 dead, with huge boom in unemployment and poverty, with racist crimes, has sparked massive outrage poured into the streets of cities.

The system has shown its limits. It turns out that this system kills the working masses with both poverty and violence. It turns out that capitalism means barbarism, it means "I can't breathe." EU policy, in the face of a deep crisis, is intervening in support of monopolies, sectors such as aviation, "green growth" and the "digital economy". It promotes anti-popular reforms, which burden people with wage cuts, leveling of labor relations, layoffs and state repression ready to crush popular struggles (f.e. the new law draft for the demonstrations in Greece which is based on a Dictatorship law and essentially prohibits them). It is a joint attack by the EU governments, both neoliberal and social democrats, North and South, against the workers, the people. It is confirmed that the capitalistic EU is a reactionary alliance of the bourgeoisie of the Member States concerned only for the health of capital and not for the health of the popular rights. Managing the crisis with greater state intervention, which is preferred at this stage, is simply a different anti-popular way of managing thus to pay the people again, to ensure cheaper labor force, with limited rights for the capitalists.

It is confirmed that capitalist growth brings the crisis that manifests itself as an imbalance between the states and the various sectors of the economy and exacerbates the contradictions. Competitions are intensifying internationally. The US is concerned that it may lose its leadership over China. The divergence of interests between the bourgeoisies in the Eurozone is growing. NATO's presence and co-operation with the EU are being strengthened. The imperialist centers are facing the control of wealth-producing resources, energy pipelines and markets, armaments, G5 networks, new technologies in general. In the context of the competition, the escalation of the Turkish aggression is also included, with the challenge of the borders. There are bargains for the co-management of hydrocarbons in the Aegean, Eastern Mediterranean, with the support of NATO's killing machine.

The participation of the bourgeoisie of the states of the region in the imperialist plans, triggers tensions and carries deadly dangers for all peoples. It is necessary to be vigilant and ready for the workers' popular movements in every country. The correlation in Europe is negative for people, we live in counter-revolutionary conditions. But history teaches that correlation is not static, unchanging. Capitalism is not invulnerable, it cannot overcome crises, it cannot resolve its contradictions, it cannot offer solutions to the peoples, it has become reactionary, disgusting and rotten. The popular forces, which are mobilizing today all over the world, show that history is not over. The deterioration of all living conditions of the peoples form preconditions for the mobilization of the working masses. 75 years after the Great Anti-Fascist Victory, we do not forget the lessons of the resistance movement in Europe and in our country, in the great decade of 1940. It turned out that the concept of national unity, in conditions of great escalation of class wrestling, proved to be the damage of the peoples' struggle. It was a fictitious unity, since the interests of the working class and the bourgeoisie have always been diametrically opposed, during and after the end of the II WW. This unity disarmed the popular movement, subduing it to bourgeois politics. Today, as evidenced by the economic crisis management measures, it is not possible "to be all united", employers and workers to overcome it at the same cost, as bourgeoisie propaganda claims. After all, governments are accelerating the implementation of new anti-popular reforms. Capitalism cannot be humanized. It can only be overthrown and replaced by the higher socio-economic system, socialism, whose purpose is not the capitalist profit but to fulfill the human needs. This is the requirement of history in our time. Today, workers, the people's forces must channel their anger, their protests into a subversive struggle for a different path of development that will take into account public health and safety and put research, science and technology at their service. PEAEA-DSE intervenes and resolutely supports the development of initiatives for the protection of people's rights and income. So that people does not pay the burdens of the system crisis again. Let the big capital pay. We fight against imperialist war, the monopolies that give birth to and reproduce racism and fascism. Against NATO and the EU thus to prevent imperialist plans in our region, which endanger our people.

“Pastasciutta Antifascist” - a “culinary” antifascism

How much anti-fascism has to do with culture and everyday life, the Italian anti-fascists of ANPI have proven repeatedly. Thus - under the conditions of the Corona restrictions - the national holiday on 25 April, on which the final victory over Mussolini fascism is celebrated, was celebrated this year with a nationwide action. In the afternoon, the partisan song “Bella Ciao” was sung on balconies, in gardens and other places, and spread worldwide through Facebook and other electronic channels. It was an impressive testimony of the vitality of anti-fascist work under Corona restrictions.

Now, when it is again possible in Italy to meet publicly in groups, another event connected with the end of Mussolini’s rule in Rome in the summer of 1943 took place as a real meeting - the “Pastasciutta Antifascista”. On the last weekend in July, the local ANPI sections organized pasta lunches in public squares in over 50 Italian towns and cities. Even the ANPI regional groups in Berlin and Frankfurt took part in this action.

The historical background of this tradition is as simple as it is impressive. When on 25 July 1943 the news spread of the fall of Fascism through the deposition and arrest of the criminal Benito Mussolini, the Cervi family in Reggio Emilia had a great idea. They decided to celebrate the event in public: they bought flour, took butter and cheese on credit and prepared kilos of pasta. When the food was ready, they loaded a horse cart and took the pasta to the square in Campegine to distribute the food to the villagers. This was “the most beautiful funeral of fascism”, as Alcide explained to “Papa” Cervi.

On the website “Storia della Resistenza” you can find the following about the fate of the Cervi family:

The Cervi family, who ran a leased farm in Gattatico, had seven sons, all of whom were involved in different forms of struggle against fascism. Aldo Cervi served three years in prison for disobeying orders in the military. His brother Gerlindo Cervi was arrested several times for illegal work. In 1943 Ferdinando and Massimo Cervi carried out their first act of sabotage, they interrupted an important power supply for the fascists.

After the fall of Mussolini, Cervis’ farm became the place to go for the many refugees. Italian soldiers as well as political prisoners and Italian prisoners of war who were able to escape from the prisons after the fall of Mussolini. Here they were given a hiding place, food, clothing and information to go into hiding.

After the German occupation of Italy on September 8, 1943, Cervis organized armed resistance. At the beginning of October, the seven Cervi brothers and others went to the mountains. At the end of October, they raided a police station to obtain weapons. They then retreated to the mountains. They were supported by the priest Don Pasquino Borghi, who gave shelter to the partisans.

The attempt to kidnap and liquidate a high fascist functionary from Reggio Emilia failed, but caused a stir and sympathy among the population. On 25 November 1943, the occupying forces counterattacked. The house of the Cervis was surrounded by the fascist military, all the men were arrested, the women and children were driven into the street and the house was set on fire. Alcide “Papa” Cervi, the seven brothers and one of their comrades were taken to the “Servi” prison for political prisoners in Reggio Emilia. While Alcide was released, the seven brothers remained in prison. When in December 1943 other partisans killed two high fascist military officers, the fascist rulers of Reggio Emilia set an example. The seven brothers were shot together with their comrade on 28 December 1943 at 6.30 am. Don Pasquino Borghi was also executed shortly after them.

The memory of the “Fratelli Cervi” is still present in Italy today. It is connected with the knowledge of the anti-fascist tradition of the country, as the director of the memorial and the “Institut Alcide Cervi” emphasized: “On Saturday, July 25th we will renew the joy about the fallen regime by eating pasta in many places. And ideally, we will breathe life into one single place: Italy, which rejects fascism and racism and says a strong, unanimous and widespread YES to the Constitution and to the democracy born from resistance”.

Ulrich Schneider



Honorary Chairman of the VVN-BdA Prof. Heinrich Fink deceased at the age of 85

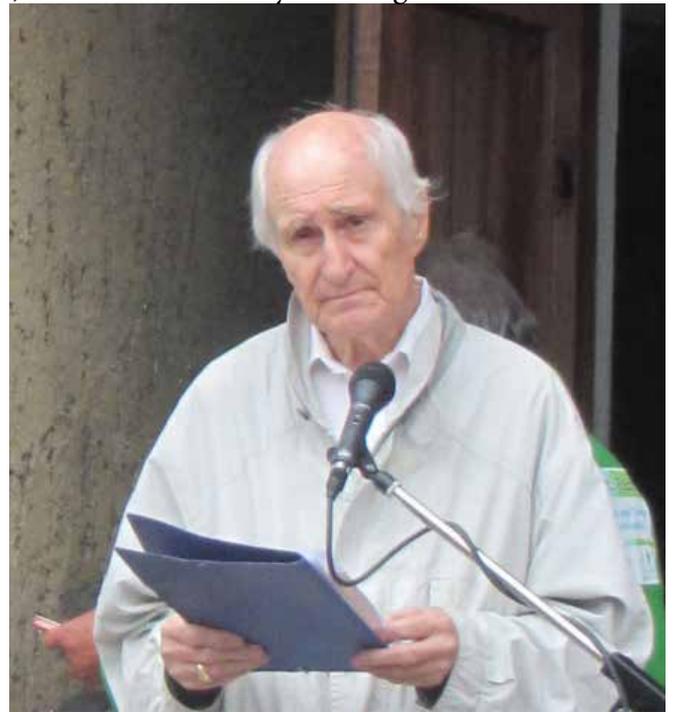
It is with deep sadness that we have received the news from the German member association VVN-BdA of the death of their honorary Chairman Heinrich Fink. He was closely connected with the work of the FIR since the FIR Congress 2004 in Berlin.

Heinrich Fink unites in his personal and professional biography central caesuras of German history. Born in 1935 in a German settlement in Bessarabia his family was brought “home to the Reich” by the Nazis, first settled in occupied Poland, the end of the war, which was for him the liberation, he experienced in Brandenburg. He studied theology at the Humboldt University of Berlin, where he received his doctorate in 1966 and his habilitation in 1978 with the anti-fascist topic “Karl Barth and the Movement of Free Germany in Switzerland”. He saw himself as a citizen of the socialist GDR, and in autumn 1989, he advocated a better GDR. His high esteem at the university and in society led him to be the first free elected Rector of Humboldt University in April 1990.

However, this contradicted the ideas of the “liquidators of the GDR”. Fink was dismissed without notice in 1991 on the charge of being an unofficial collaborator (IM) of the State Security. Although neither the Gauck authorities nor the instances called upon in the trial were able to provide evidence, Heinrich Fink fought in vain against these slanders.

Despite all the hostility and hate campaigns, he remained socially committed. From 1998 to 2001 he was a non-party member of the PDS in the German Bundestag, where he supported anti-fascist cultural and commemorative work. From 2003 on, his work focused on the VVN-BdA. He was the chairman until 2014. He stressed repeatedly that anti-fascism has very different biographical perspectives and political approaches. At the same time, he opened up new opportunities for the VVN-BdA through his various social contacts. In 2014, he was unanimously elected honorary chairman of the VVN-BdA.

He was intensive associated with the remembrance work at the CC Buchenwald Memorial. He spoke at different events of the International Committee Buchenwald-Dora and Commando and welcomed the participants of the International Youth Meeting 2008 of the FIR.



The FIR and its member federations mourn for this respectable humanist and anti-fascist. Our sympathy is with his wife, his relatives and his German comrades.

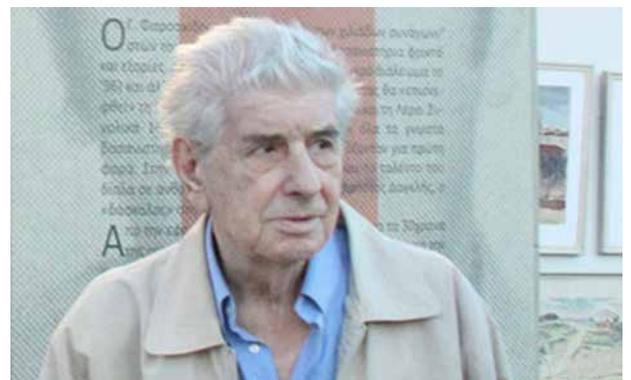
Obituary for Giorgos Farsakidis

In 2013, FIR honored Giorgos Farsakidis, the Greek veteran and painter by handing over to him the Michel Vanderborght Award. When the Greek comrades proposed him for the award, we did not know him. However, the Greek comrades presented a book with paintings of Farsakidis and we have been ashamed not mentioned him before, because he integrated in his biography two important aspects of anti-fascism and the tasks of FIR.

First, he has been an active fighter of the resistance movement in Greece. He fought in the ranks of the ELAS against the fascist occupation; he has been wounded and later imprisoned in the camp Makronisos, which is mentioned as Greek Dachau. Because he was a Communist, the post-war monarcho-fascist regime ousted him also, exiled him and imprisoned him for many years.

Beginning in this time, he started painting. This is the second aspect of his life. He made his historical experience to the subject of his pictures. Not only by telling his story repeatedly, but by integration the historical truth in various aspects of his work. Therefore he was very famous in Greece and he reached with his pictures and paintings not only the veterans but the today's generations too.

At his funeral, the good-bye said him the General Secretary of the KKE, Dimitri Koutsoumbas. FIR will not forget Giorgos Farsakidis.



France: Wrong world? Against the political abuse of the memory of Walter Benjamin

Anyone currently looking to Perpignan will be astounded to learn that an important representative of the extreme right, Louis Aliot, newly elected mayor of the city, former partner of Marine LePen and vice president of the Rassemblement National (RN), wants to reopen the currently closed Walter Benjamin Center for Contemporary Art as soon as possible. What connects Louis Aliot and the RN with the German-Jewish writer and emigrant Walter Benjamin? In short: nothing!

Walter Benjamin, who as a German Jew and anti-fascist had to flee to France as early as 1933, was able to survive in France thanks to the support of anti-Nazi emigration. When German fascism invaded Poland, he and several thousand German emigrants were interned in France for almost three months by the conservative government as “enemy foreigners”. Released from the internment camp in November 1939, Benjamin fled to Lourdes, from where he travelled on to Marseille before attempting to flee to Portugal via Spain in September 1940, after the German invasion of France and the establishment of the Vichy regime in the “unoccupied part”, and from there he tried to leave on a USA visa. With the help of French antifascists, he managed to cross the border into Spain near Portbou. However, out of fear of being handed over to the Germans, he took his own life in the night of September 26/27, 1940.

Walter Benjamin thus represents the exact opposite of the political and cultural positions and historical images for which French rights in the form of the Rassemblement National (RN) still stand today. Louis Aliot announced in full voice that the cultural centre was to become a documentation centre on flight and expulsion. Jewish refugee fates were to be described here in the same way as those of the Spanish Republicans who fought against Franco and had to flee to France. The Sinti and Roma should also be remembered. What sounds so respectable has only one purpose: the RN should become presentable and get rid of the “right-wing extremist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic stink”, as Jürgen Ritte, literary scholar at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle, points out.

The International Federation of Resistance fighters (FIR) – association of anti-fascists, the umbrella organization of organizations of former resistance fighters, partisans, members of the anti-Hitler coalition, persecutes of the Nazi regime and anti-fascists of today’s generations from more than twenty countries of Europe and Israel condemns this unworthy spectacle of the RN and the instrumentalization of Walter Benjamin.

The FIR with its member federations in France and other countries is engaged for decades for an appropriate memory of all anti-fascist fighters and pursued of the fascist terror regimes. It demands of the French government to ensure a worthy memory of Walter Benjamin. In doing so, it supports the appeal of French intellectuals who, in an open letter in the daily newspaper “Le Monde”, have positioned themselves against the plans of Louis Aliot and the RN.

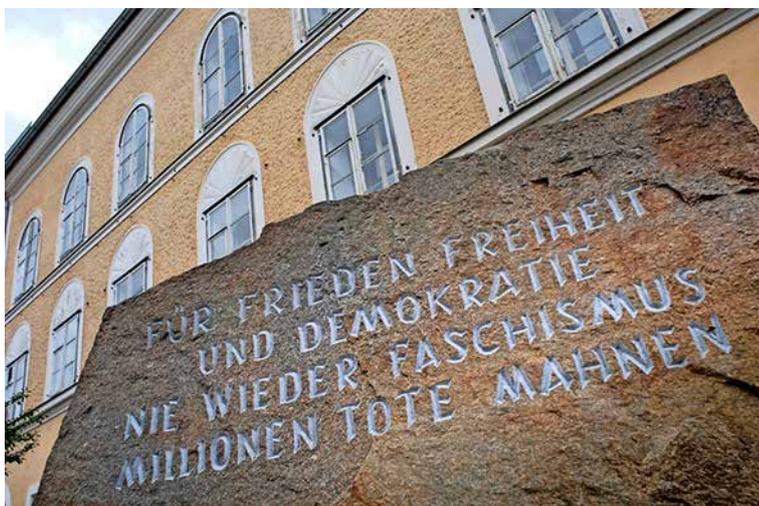
Austria: Building plans for the Hitler House in Braunau/Inn

Informed by our partner federation, the Austrian KZ Verband, the FIR in a letter to the Austrian Minister of the Interior Karl Nehammer clearly positioned itself to the transformation plans at the birth house of Adolf Hitler. In the letter, it says:

With surprise and at the same time incomprehension we heard about your announcements about the transformation of the historical birth house of Adolf Hitler in Braunau. We have been dealing with this issue for many decades and, a good twenty years ago, we ourselves had brought into play the proposal to demolish the building and create a parking lot, if there was no other way to prevent a brown pilgrimage site. Your presentation of a “neutralization” of the site is the worst of all possible decisions, because on the one hand the building itself is to be preserved, and on the other hand the memorial stone “For peace, freedom and democracy - Never again fascism - Remind millions of dead”, erected after many years of civil society involvement, is to be removed.

No, Mr. Minister of the Interior, this is no way to “dispose” of NS history!

We support the protests of the concentration camp association, the Austrian Mauthausen committee and the Upper Austrian network against racism and right-wing extremism. Because with the removal of the memorial stone all efforts of a careful handling of the history and the processing of the NS-fascism of the city Braunau am Inn are destroyed with one blow, as it is rightly said in the declaration of the KZ-Verband.



Portugal

Portuguese Parliament honours Aristides de Sousa Mendes in the National Pantheon

The Portuguese anti-fascist association URAP welcomes the fact that the Assembly of the Republic unanimously decided on 9th June to award the national Pantheon Honours to Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux who saved the lives of thousands of Jews during the Second World War. The aim is to honour the former Portuguese Consul, using a burial site without a corpse, so that the municipality of Carregal do Sal, the country where Aristides de Sousa Mendes was born and lived, does not have to transfer the bones to the Pantheon.

Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who was born in Cabanas de Viriato on 19 July 1885 and died in Lisbon on 3 April 1954, granted some thirty thousand visas to refugees against the will of the dictator Salazar, ten thousand of them for Jewish refugees.

After a long diplomatic career in Zanzibar (Brazil), the United States and Antwerp (Belgium), Aristides de Sousa Mendes was appointed Consul of Bordeaux by the Foreign Minister at the beginning of the Second World War, when Nazi troops were advancing on France.

Salazar instructed Portuguese consuls around the world to refuse visas to the following categories of persons: "foreigners of indeterminate nationality, controversial or in dispute; stateless persons; Jews, whether they have been expelled from their country of origin or the country of which they are nationals".

Tens of thousands of refugees flee the Nazi advance and go to Bordeaux. Many of them turn to the Portuguese consulate to obtain a visa to enter Portugal.

Sousa Mendes defied the government's instructions and issued visas at the end of 1939. One year later, in 1940, he decides to grant visas to all refugees who ask for them: "From now on I will give visas to everyone, there are no more nationalities, races or religions". With the help of his sons and nephews and Rabbi Krüger, he stamps passports, signs visas and uses all available sheets of paper.

Although Salazar has taken action against the consul, he bravely continues his activities in Bayonne in the office of deputy consul. Even after his resignation in July 1940 and on his way to the border, he continued to issue visas to refugees crossing the border and formed a convoy of refugee vehicles.

On his return to Portugal, Salazar deprived him of his diplomatic duties, cut his salary by half and sent him into retirement. He lost his licence to practice law, his driving licence issued abroad was revoked, and he and his family survived thanks to the solidarity of the Jewish community in Lisbon. Aristides de Sousa Mendes died very poor in the Franciscan Hospital in Lisbon. Not wearing his own suit, he was buried in a Franciscan tunic.

In 1987, 17 years after Salazar's death, the Portuguese Republic began the process of rehabilitating Aristides de Sousa Mendes and awarded him the Order of Freedom, and publicly apologized to his family. In 1994, Portuguese President Mário Soares unveiled a bust in honour of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and a plaque at Rua 14 Quai Louis-XVIII, the 1940 address of the Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux. In 1998, as part of the official rehabilitation of the memory of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese Republic posthumously awarded him the Cross of Merit for his work in Bordeaux.



Support the political work of the International Federation of Resistance (FIR) - Association of Antifascist!

The political work of international anti-fascist organization requires large resources. Since civil society organizations do not have national or institutional grants, the organization depends on contributions and donations.

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Portugal/Croatia

The URAP supports the Croatian anti-fascists in their fight for memory.

URAP supports the petition of activists living in the Croatian city Perušić against the decision of the council to remove a monument in honour of the victims of fascism and the resistance fighters who died in World War II and the Spanish Civil War.

The initiative of the antifascists of Perušić was recognized by numerous signatories of an international petition for the preservation of the monument, including the French philosophers Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière, the American linguist Noam Chomsky, the Croatian historian Sanja Horvatinčić, from the Zagreb Institute of Art History, among hundreds of signatures from Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, France, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United States, Brazil, Germany, Austria and several other countries, including Croatia itself.

In 1954, the Council of Perušić established a first memorial, which was expanded in 1980 to include the names of 12 veterans who were victims of the Spanish Civil War, a larger number of resistance fighters and 401 victims of fascism in the region.

The current Council now wants to demolish the monument on the pretext of enlarging the playground where it is located.

For the signatories of the petition, this act is a manoeuvre by the Croatian extreme right and the Balkans to destroy the memory, criminalise politicians and anti-fascist organisations and equate them with fascists, Nazis and their collaborators.

In this small town of about 850 inhabitants, 130 antifascists joined the international republican brigades during the civil war and joined the Yugoslav resistance during the Second World War.



In Croatia, contrary to the contrary opinion of the population, about 3,000 statues, commemorative plaques and symbols dedicated to the anti-fascists have been torn down in the last 30 years, an attitude which is now reinforced by the destruction of monuments in former colonial countries in support of slavery.

Videoconference in the Russian Union of Veterans

On 28 July 2020, a video conference was held at the Russian Union of Veterans. The dialogue was attended by the heads of more than 30 regional offices and a representative of the television station RT TV.

Army General M.A. Moiseev reported to those present on the experiences of the Russian Union of Veterans in the period of complex epidemiological situation and self-isolation and promised that the most interesting and effective experiences would be published. For the completeness of the view, it is necessary to include the experiences of the regional teams. In this connection, it is necessary for the regional organizations to submit reports on the work during the special period. Army General M.A. Moiseev proposed to hold a regular meeting of the Presidium of the Russian Veterans Union in the same online format.

With internal movement, Army General M.A. Moiseev reported to the conference topics on the visit of a group of Russian Veterans Union staff together with organizations of veterans of law enforcement bodies to the memorial complex dedicated to the Battle of Rshhev, in which 1340,000 Soviet soldiers took part, which was of great importance for the further development of the struggle against the Nazi invaders.

<https://soyuzveteranov.ru/content/videokonferenciya-v-rossijskom-soyuze-veteranov>



The Natzweiler-Struthof Memorial

Mourning and commemoration of the deportation in the European Centre of Deported Resistance Fighters on the site of the former concentration camp Natzweiler

The Natzweiler concentration camp was opened in May 1941 at Struthof in annexed Alsace. The reason why the Nazis set up a concentration camp there was a deposit of red granite in the immediate vicinity. This camp was to provide the Third Reich with work slaves. They came from 31 different countries and were 80% prisoners of war. However, there were also deportees, resistance fighters, other deportees, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses who were deported for political and racist reasons (Jews, Gypsies). The main camp at Struthof included about 50 satellite camps, mainly in Germany.

From 1941 to 1945, the ordeal of 52,000 deportees passed through this concentration camp and its commandos. Thousands of them died, most of them from exhaustion, abuse or hunger, others lost their lives in so-called medical experiments. The camp was also the execution site for resistance fighters.

There were numerous initiatives by survivors of the camp to create a worthy memorial at this place. After many years of planning and construction, General Charles de Gaulle inaugurated the national deportation memorial and the Struthof necropolis on 23 July 1960. 2020 marks the 60th anniversary of this event and the special exhibition "Passer-by, do you remember us?", open from 1 July - 23 December 2020, will shed light on the history of these two memorials.

On 3 November 2005, the European Centre of the Deported Resistance Fighter opened its doors just a few meters from the former entrance to KL-Natzweiler, in order to make the memory of the Resistance fighters known to the public. The permanent exhibition traces the emergence and rise of fascism and National Socialism in Europe and the development of the concentration camp system. It also shows how resistance gradually took root in order to fight for democracy and freedom. Information about the 14 largest Nazi concentration camps in Europe can be accessed at interactive information terminals. The aim is to encourage visitors to follow paths of remembrance outside France. The CERD also allows deported resistance fighters to speak out in films and testimonies.

This site of major importance for national memory is part of the major task of passing on the memories and historical heritage of the wars of our time, which has been entrusted to the Ministry of Defense. Struthof, in the heart of Europe, is thus becoming the central meeting place for generations, countries and their interwoven history.

Since the entire site of the former Natzweiler concentration camp was declared a historic monument in 2011, the State has taken several measures to protect and restore the existing buildings. The memorial, inaugurated in 1960, had suffered considerably over the years from storms and the weather. Many stone blocks of the outer shell had to be removed and reinstalled or replaced. Various repairs were also made to the concrete core of the building.

After a complete cleaning, the outer shell of the memorial could shine again in its old glory. On the cemetery all floors were renewed, the graves were planted and new nameplates were attached.

Since 2017, further conservation and restoration projects have been underway. The guardhouse at the entrance gate and the watchtowers are currently being renovated, followed by the restoration of the gas chamber and the kitchen hut. All this work is part of a major project to ensure the continued existence of this memorial, which will last for 16 years.

The restoration work on the necropolis provided an opportunity for a more detailed study of the tombs, following numerous requests for the correction of names, birthdays or places of death. Months of research were necessary to examine each individual case of the buried deportees. Thanks to a large number of sources of various kinds, hundreds of entries could be corrected.

This research also revealed that members of the same family rested in different parts of the necropolis. In 2019, the French War Graves Commission in Colmar had 11 bodies exhumed and reburied so that, after more than 60 years, father, sons and brothers could finally rest side by side.



Based on the material of the memorial

Exhibition on the anti-Hitler coalition

In an article of the US magazine "National Interest" the Russian president Vladimir Putin had warned on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the victory over German fascism "Historical revisionism, the manifestations of which we are now observing in the West, especially with regard to the Second World War and its outcome, is dangerous because it grossly and cynically distorts the understanding of the principles of peaceful development established at the Yalta and San Francisco conferences in 1945.

A positive counter-example to this is offered by a worth seeing special exhibition, opened in April 2020 in the German-Russian Museum in Berlin-Karlshorst under the title "From Casablanca to Karlshorst". The historical framework was defined not only by the conference of Roosevelt and Churchill with French representatives, but especially by the world-historical victory of the Soviet armed forces in Stalingrad in February 1943. This victory, combined with the fall of the 6th German army, showed the vincibility of German fascism, which at that time had occupied most of Europe. Although no representative of the USSR was present in Casablanca. Nevertheless, these two events marked the beginning of the anti-Hitler coalition, which was able to successfully smash German fascism.

The exhibition follows two narrative strands: the first documents the anti-Hitler coalition's allied efforts to defeat National Socialist Germany. The second narrative strand deals with the National Socialist crimes committed during the final phase of the war. These so-called final phase crimes claimed a total of several hundred thousand victims. This was the result of the "scorched earth" strategy during the military withdrawal, crimes against forced laborers, prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates and, finally, crimes against civilians and battle-weary German soldiers.

The exhibition deals with these narrative strands in ten chapters. The English historian Richard Overy describes the development of the anti-Hitler coalition, which came from being an alliance of convenience with diametrically opposed interests to an effective instrument for the destruction of fascist barbarism.

The Russian historian Oleg Budnizku provides detailed evidence of the great achievement of the Soviet forces in military liberation. These successes were achieved with very great sacrifices; in 1945, alone 800,000 Soviet soldiers died and over 2.2 million were seriously wounded in the fighting.

The Potsdam military historian Peter Lieb classified the "Mission Overlord" in this fight. He makes it clear that the "second front" came much later than expected by the USSR. It was only when the advance of the Western Allies over the southern flank was too slow and at the same time the military successes of the Soviet forces caused concern among politicians in the West that it was decided to intervene directly in Normandy.

Six contributions trace the trail of German war crimes - especially in the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union - as well as the crimes of retreat and attempts to erase the traces. Before the Allied troops on their military advance were able to liberate the concentration camps, thousands of prisoners were sent on death marches so that they would not fall into the hands of the Allies alive. But the German war crimes were also directed against their own soldiers. Critical remarks or the unauthorized removal from the troops were negotiated in summary trials and usually punished with death.

Jörg Morré concludes by explaining why the capitulation of the German army to the Western Allies in Reims on 7 May 1945 could not be the end of the war. "Only the Berlin Capitulation Document represented all four victorious powers," the text says. This document in English, Russian and German marks the final point of the catalogue.

The exhibition takes position in the best sense of the word - it takes position with pictures and commentaries for the side of the military liberators from all Allied groups and for the victims of fascist crimes.

Ulrich Schneider

Bibliography:

From Casablanca to Karlshorst, accompanying volume to the special exhibition on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, trilingual edition, 303 p., Wallstein-Verlag Göttingen 2020, ISBN 978-3-8353-3693-3

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The International Federation of Resistant fighters (FIR) has been designated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as a «Peace Messenger». The Federation is accepted as NGO at the UNESCO, Paris, at the UN standing committee of disarmament, Geneva and the European council, Strasbourg.

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