

NEWS



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

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Greetings to all delegates and guests of World Veterans Federation-congress

In the name of FIR, we greet all delegations and guests of the regular congress of the World Veterans Federation from 7 to 10 March 2023 in Belgrade. We know us in good relations to all thus veterans, they stand for remembrance and peace as we do it too

We wish you a successful congress and constructive debates. As „Ambassadors of peace“ of the United Nations we are standing together for peace, freedom, human and social rights and diplomatic solutions of all wars in the world.

Vilmos Hanti,
President of FIR

Dr Ulrich Schneider
Secretary General of FIR

Winning the peace - not the war! **Statement of FIR one year after the beginning of the war in Ukraine**

“On 24 February 2022, Russian troops invaded Ukraine in a major escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The invasion has caused tens of thousands of deaths on both sides and has exacerbated the role of NATO in the area.

As a direct outcome of the Russian decision, not only about 16 million Ukrainians had to flee the country, but other hundreds million people must bear the consequences of an economic war, where energy costs have risen extremely, fertilizer and grain have become almost unaffordable for the poorer countries of the world and speculators are using this war to increase their profits.”

We are witnessing that this war is increasingly taking on the character of a proxy war between Russia and the NATO states through massive deliveries of offensive weapons from the NATO arsenal and logistical support. Also the European Union is involved in this war, instead of following the way of negotiations, which started years ago with the Minsk treaties.

Now we can hear more and more voices of reason around the world, even former military officers and diplomats, calling for an immediate ceasefire without preconditions and for the start of negotiations between the warring parties. The November 2022 appeal of the World Veterans Federation (WVF) and the International Federation of Resistance Fighters (FIR) therefore states:

“Weapons will never bring peace, diplomacy and negotiations are the only way. This is necessary above all to save the lives of the civilian population on both sides.

In this, we also see ourselves in agreement with Pope Francis, who has urgently warned of the danger of nuclear war, which will have catastrophic consequences not only on the battlefield, but also for all European countries and definitely for all humanity.”

The international peace forces therefore call on Russia and Ukraine to accept the offers of mediation and dialogue made by the United Nations and various states. This is the only way to stop the war and save human lives. We welcome the position taken by Latin American leaders at the CELAC summit in Argentina, who reaffirmed the principle of “No to war and yes to dialogue and cooperation” - that means no arms deliveries and no sanctions. We call the people in all countries to strengthen their public activities for peace. If the voice of the people will be louder, the governments will react on it.

FIR has already appealed in the spring of 2022 to the veterans of the Great Patriotic War in the various European countries and Israel to use their social and political influence and work for the immediate cessation of hostilities in this war.

“Turn to the leaders of your countries. Ask them to bring about an immediate cessation of all hostilities through dialogue with political leaders in Russia and Ukraine, as well as with representatives of the military on both sides, and to ensure that the delivery of offensive weapons does not prolong these hostilities. An immediate cease-fire is necessary to protect the civilian population, which includes many former Soviet veterans and their families. They know better than anyone that the weapons must remain silent. Arms supplies will not bring peace, only a cessation of fighting and serious negotiations between the warring parties.”

This is the way of peoples and life, the dream of a better, more peaceful world. This is the way of today's partisans. **Partisans of peace, partisans of humanity!**

Athens - Meeting of the Executive Committee

In mid-February, invited by the Greek comrades of PEAEA-DSE, the Executive Committee of FIR met for its regular meeting in Athens. Unfortunately, the Russian friends could not attend due to travel restrictions. However, they sent their position in a written statement, which was included in the debate. The meeting opened with a brief overview of important activities during the last months. It became clear that despite Corona and the Ukraine war, FIR has again been publicly visible and present. An impressive video recalled once again the Belgrade conference.

In detail, the positions to the Ukraine war were discussed. The declaration printed in this Bulletin was accepted together. To clarify the different perspectives, it was decided that divergent statements would be brought to the attention of all member federations.

The problems of the vacancy in the position of financial secretary became very apparent last year. For 2023, thereupon suggestions for the stabilization of the financial situation of the FIR were submitted.

The planning of the Michel Vanderborcht Award in the fall of 2023 was discussed in detail. It is now planned that the ceremony will be held in connection with the regular congress of the FIR, which - due to Corona - can only take place in autumn 2023. We are currently in discussion with the comrades in Barcelona to have the congress there at the end of October 2023. As soon as we have a confirmation for this, all member federations will be informed.

The Belgian comrades presented the plans for a large international youth meeting in the concentration camp memorial Buchenwald in April 2025. The FIR supports this project with all forces.

On the second day of the meeting, the members of the executive committee together with over 100 Greek anti-fascists laid a wreath at the memorial place for the Shooting Range (Skopectirio) in Kaisariani, where over 200 communist resistance fighters were murdered by the fascist occupiers.





Budapest Liberation

MEASZ (Association of Hungarian Resistance and Anti-Fascists - Unity for Democracy) held a memorial service on February 13, 2023 in Budapest. At the Martyrs' Memorial on the Danube in the XIII district, invited by MEASZ the ceremony was held in honor of the 78th anniversary of Budapest's liberation from fascism. After the opening words of the president of the MEASZ and the FIR, Vilmos Hanti, the mayor of Zugló Csaba Horváth, gave a commemorative speech. Further speakers were Slavo Hrivnak, the president of the Slovak sister organization Zelíz, and Gyula Szonderik, the president of the Kispest MEASZ Organization, who lived through the liberation at the age of 9. At the end of this celebration, the commemorators laid wreaths on behalf of fourteen organizations.

While anti-fascists remember the liberation, neo-fascists of the "Legio Hungaria" provoked again this year with a "Day of Honor" in memory of SS and Hungarian collaborators. For years, anti-fascists from Germany and Austria have supported actions against this in Budapest under the slogan "Stop Nazi glorification".

This year, the neo-fascists had to move their provocation from the castle in Budapest to a forest outside the city. The Budapest city government had banned the right-wing march. However, the police reacted mainly to the anti-fascist protest. As neo-Nazis hunted down antifascists unchallenged on Saturday evening, police surrounded groups of antifascists.



UN ANTI-RASSISMUS-TAG

Internationale Proteste am 18. März 2023

18M 2023



**Gemeinsam gegen alle Formen von Rassismus, gegen
Islamfeindlichkeit und Antisemitismus ·
Gemeinsam gegen den Aufstieg des Faschismus**

WORLD AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM

International unity against racism and the far right on 18 March 2023

On Saturday 18 March 2023, we will be on the streets again as part of an international day of mass protests opposing racism and fascism.

In the face of the growing economic crisis, governments are using racism to divide and rule, to weaken opposition to their policies. Refugees and migrants are being scapegoated: Islamophobia, antisemitism, Sinophobia, racism against South East Asian people, and racism against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, are all on the rise internationally.

The reality exposed by the international Black Lives Matter Movement is denied by governments, who try to hide the brutal truth of institutional racism.

Refugees die in their thousands in the sea and on land routes, blocked in Europe by FRONTEX and by their equivalents in other parts of the world. Barriers of all types and pushbacks mean that the right of asylum for refugees and of legalization for migrants has been severely undermined by governments, thus breaching international law. Thousands suffer imprisonment in detention centers and isolation in camps outside the cities, on Aegean islands or in the deserts of Africa. Just on 24 June, up to 77 people were killed while trying to cross the frontier at Melilla, in an action on EU territory by Spanish and Moroccan security forces. Against this state racism, we demand save passage, and asylum and papers for refugees and migrants.

The use of systematic state racism is giving space to the racist and fascist right to grow as we have seen in France with Le Pen's National Rally, the Swedish Democrats and now crucially in Italy where Meloni and the fascist Brothers of Italy are in power.

But there can be mass opposition to racism and fascism. Meloni was stopped by a solidarity movement when she tried to prevent the disembarking of refugees in Italian ports, in Greece neo-Nazi Golden Dawn leaders are in prison, and there are more examples.

In the face of a massive cost of living crisis internationally we have to oppose racism, the politics of divide and rule and the growth of the racist and fascist right.

It's time to mobilize the antiracist majority. We must stand up together against racism and fascism.

The undersigned organizations are calling for broad and united protests against racism and the far-right on Saturday 18 March 2023, to mark UN antiracism day – a day inaugurated to mark the massacre of young people opposing the racist apartheid South African state in 1960.

See you on the streets

Fascist rule was established in Germany in 1933

With numerous events, German anti-fascists commemorated the transfer of power to Hitler's government on January 30, 1933, and thus the beginning of fascist rule in Germany, at the end of January/beginning of February 2023.

While the Holocaust Memorial Day is celebrated worldwide, the VVN-BdA emphasized: "Whoever commemorates January 27, 1945, must also remember January 30, 1933. Causes and origin of fascism are necessary components of each memory work. ... The commemoration of the victims must be connected with the memory of who the perpetrators were. That means naming the guilty parties and the beneficiaries in the establishment of Nazi rule in Germany and in the unleashing of the war."

For a long time, Hitler was readily regarded as an "operational accident of history," and the term "seizure of power" signalled that January 30, 1933 had come "fatefully" upon the country. This suppressed the realization of which social forces had an interest in the establishment of fascist rule. In fact, it was influential groups among the social elites, right-wing parties, big businessmen and bankers, big landowners, academics, churches, representatives of the military who had an interest in transforming the Weimar Republic along the lines of an authoritarian, anti-parliamentary system of rule. These power groups had opted for the most reactionary variant of bourgeois rule, which was to be implemented with the establishment of Hitler's government on January 30, 1933.

This transfer of power set the stage for the establishment of a terrorist regime. Reich President Paul von Hindenburg issued emergency decrees that cleared the way for assembly bans, newspaper bans and arrests of political opponents. On February 4, the Reichstag was dissolved. Until new elections, already held under illegal conditions, Hitler's government operated without parliamentary control. SA, SS and "Stahlhelm" were used as "auxiliary police." The expansion of the state's persecution apparatus in the first weeks of Hitler's government created the instruments for terror and persecution of political dissidents.

In particular, the labor movement - its parties, unions and cultural organizations - was persecuted. Mass arrests of more than 10,000 political opponents of the Nazi regime after the staged Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933, were the visible expression of the establishment of a terrorist rule in Germany. On April 1, the first state-organized boycott actions against Jewish people took place.

It is one of the glories in German history that anti-fascists actively resisted the advance of the Nazi movement even before 1933. While the right-wing elites favored a fascist solution to the crisis, supporters of the workers' parties and trade unions in particular opposed the rise of the NSDAP with their options. The fact that the workers' movement was politically and ideologically divided was one reason for its defeat in 1933. The unity of the anti-fascists emerged - unfortunately - only in the fascist prisons and camps.

Ulrich Schneider



FIR - Delegation to Cuba

MARABANA, the Peace Marathon, is one of the 20 marathons in the world. It took place today in Havana, where we delivered the peace message of FIR and MEASZ. Although we did not run, we received a plaque from the organizers, because the organizers said that as representatives of peace, we are also marathon runners.

The MEASZ delegation also presented a solidarity package to the Cubans, and on Friday we met the ICAP leaders.

Two other examples of our varied program so far: we visited the Fidel Castro Ruz Centre, which opened last year, and a family that cherishes the memory of Che Guevara. We received an invitation to a peace conference next year, which we would like to attend.

Our visit was also mentioned in the online newspaper of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Spain: Commemoration of murdered fighters of PSUC

February 2023 the "Associació Catalana d'Ex-presos Politics del Franquisme" (ACEPF) invited at the Fossar de la Pedrera in Montjuïc Cemetery to the tribute to the men and women of the PSUC who died in the struggle against Franco.

This year, Otili Alba Polo and Tomàs Pons Albesa were remembered. Tomàs Pons Albesa was born in Barcelona in 1912 and executed there on May 14, 1941, along with Otili Alba Polo, at the age of 29, by a squad of Guardia Civil in Camp de la Bota. He was a member of the PSUC and general secretary of Socoros Roig Internacional (SRI), the organization dedicated to helping communist prisoners and refugees and their families.

The PSUC was formed on July 23, 1936, through the merger of four leftist groups: the small Catalan Federation of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), the Partit Comunista de Catalunya (the Catalan branch of the Spanish Communist Party, PCE), the Unió Socialista de Catalunya (Catalan Socialist Union), and the Partit Català Proletari (Proletarian Catalan Party, a Catalan separatist leftist party). This new organization had about 2,500 members when it united. Nine months later, the party's ranks had grown to 50,000 members. PSUC participated actively in the political and military resistance to the Franco coup d'état.

During the war, the party participated in the struggle against fascism under the slogan of anti-fascist unity and, after the initial veto of the CNT, participated in the government of the Generalitat de Catalunya with several ministries.

At the beginning of the war, the PSUC organized the "Carles Marx" column, composed of activists from the party and the UGT union, led by Del Barrio and Trueba, who went to the Aragon front in the first days of the struggle.

Otili Alba Polo and Tomàs Pons Albesa were the first to be shot as fighters in the ranks of the PSUC.

Italy: The strikes of 1943

The Italian Resistance was a great plural and multiple event. Plural, due to the merging of many different experiences and cultures, values and ideals, mutually acknowledged and driven towards a common purpose. Multiple, because it was made up of different choices, methods of commitment, behaviours, based on different social strata and groups, and combatants were both armed and unarmed. But the former would never have been able to resist without solidarity and support (if only psychological) from the latter.

Most important of all, the Resistance was in daily life and not only in the exceptional choice of going underground and fighting. This is why the strikes of 1943 were a turning point. Beginning with the last part of 1942, the threads of history tangle up: defeat at Stalingrad, the collapse of the African front at El-Alamein and the bombing of Italian cities reveal the tragic face of the Nazi-fascist war, and make living conditions unsustainable. Alongside with the political scenario (the regime does not hold, proves to be inefficient and ineffective) and the military one, in daily life conflicts and contrasts appear, affecting the authority and structure of power. Popular movements calling for interventions in support of material and daily life, promoted in particular by women, and unrest on the workplace mark the new phase. But it is the strikes in the large factories of Northern Italy that reopen the dynamics of social conflict and corrode the regime's consensus base.

In Milan, from 1941-42 protest writings had been appearing on the city walls, with scattered episodes of agitation over the high cost of living in some factories. In May 1942, a demonstration by women in Sesto San Giovanni asked for bread; a few months later, protests spread from the Alfa Romeo factory, demanding better meals at the Company's canteens. The platform of the 1943 strikes, which began on March 5, asked for an extraordinary allowance of 192 hours (a month's work) for everyone.

In Turin, with the show of force of sirens kept silent at 10 o'clock, workers ask FIAT for an expensive living allowance, an increase in the rations of bread, fat and pasta. The fascist regime reacts by arresting 872 workers, but few young people are among them as these are best sent to the front; the regime does not dare arrest women, who are even feistier. Milan moves on March 18, at first at the Pirelli, Breda and Falck factories. Progressively, 78 strikes are carried out in 59 companies, involving around 35,000 workers.

Throughout Northern Italy, including Genoa and the Veneto, more than 100,000 workers are mobilised. These are strikes largely due to the autonomous push of the workers, who build the necessary platforms and connections, in some cases even using the structures of the fascist trade unions and turning them upside down against the regime. These characteristics, and a crucial impulse from women, show in an exemplary way that the balance of power is changing in society. Change is also being transmitted to politics and institutions at all levels. Thus begins the process that would lead, within a few months, to the dismissal and arrest of Mussolini. Alas, the process would be long, it would require Italian defeat in the war and cost almost two very hard years of Nazi occupation, the people's war of Liberation and the progress of the allied armies up the peninsula. But in those days the process of rebuilding the dignity of a new Italy began.

Alessandro Pollio Salimbeni

Budapest celebration

Budapest Jewish community commemorated the liberation of the Budapest ghetto 78 years ago in the synagogue on Dohany Street. Katalin Sommer, a Holocaust survivor and one of the leaders of the MEASZ, holds a memorial service. National Chief Rabbi Dr. Róbert Frölich remembers the terrible times and learned a serious lesson from them even today. It was an impressive and well attended event. At the end, the participants laid a wreath at the plaque announcing this historical date.

At the picture: The president of the Jewish community MAZSIHISZ with FIR and MEASZ president Vilmos Hanti and further members of the leading body of MEASZ.



Russia - Slovenia: Anti-fascist exhibition “Survival in defiance” opened in Maribor

On January 27, 2023, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, when in 1945 the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz extermination camp, the International World War II Research Center in Maribor opened an exhibition dedicated to the prisoners in the fascist camps during World War II.

The exhibition “Survival in Defiance” shows the monstrous crimes of the Nazi regime, the targeted extermination of people in the concentration and death camps, and the triumph of the will to survive and the spirit of the prisoners who fought for their lives and those of their comrades until the very end. The exhibition provides information about the origins of Nazi racial theory and their plans to exterminate people. Paintings and graphics by eyewitnesses and artifacts found on the grounds of the camps provide a vivid picture of the horror of the Nazi extermination system. The exhibition was prepared by experts from the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow in cooperation with the Center for Jewish Cultural Heritage at the Maribor Synagogue and the International World War II Research Center in Maribor.

A video address by Alexander Shkolnik, director of the Victory Museum, was shown at the exhibition opening. “The exhibition is dedicated to one of the most terrible chapters in the history not only of the Great Patriotic War, but also of human history. It is a very difficult subject. The exhibition tells about the inhuman sufferings that people had to endure in the camps and about the work in the death factories.

At the same time, it also shows the strength of the human spirit and the amazing will that the prisoners showed against all odds as they fought for their lives and the lives of their comrades,” said Alexander Shkolnik, director of the Victory Museum and deputy secretary of the Social Chamber of the Russian Federation.

Professor Boris Hajdiniak, director of the Center for Jewish Cultural Heritage at the Maribor Synagogue, gave a fascinating lecture on “The Red Army - Liberators of Auschwitz.”

His presentation included documentary material from the Russian State Archive of Film and Photographic Documents, including footage shot during the liberation of Auschwitz in January 1945. Professor Hajdiniak emphasized that today Internet sites and Western media speak of allies who liberated Auschwitz prisoners. “However, this is only partially true, because the Soviet Union was an ally in the anti-Hitler coalition, but only the Red Army soldiers liberated Auschwitz and no one else.” In the liberation of Auschwitz, more than 200 Red Army soldiers gave their lives to free the prisoners of the horrific Nazi death camp.

Janez Ujčić, Director of the International World War II Research Center in Maribor, said at the opening of the exhibition, “Commemorating the Holocaust and remembering all victims of Nazi crimes with the opening of the exhibition, prepared in cooperation with experts from the Victory Museum from Moscow and the Maribor Synagogue Cultural Center, is a continuation of the efforts of the Maribor MRC for the continuous preservation of the truth about World War II and the fight against the rise of neo-Nazism in the world.

The President of the Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Slovenia, Piotr Ryzhkov, in his speech formulated the importance of the exhibition opened in Maribor:

“I am sure that the exhibition “Survival in Defiance” opened today, which tells the story of the inhuman living conditions, resistance and courage of the prisoners of the Nazi regime, will be another milestone in the preservation of memory, with the aim of uniting the efforts of the peoples of Europe so that such a tragedy can never be repeated.”



Documentation of International Antifascist Conference in Belgrade

Shortly after the editorial deadline, we got the information that the planned brochure with all the contributions of the international antifascist conference in Belgrade in October 2022 will go to the printers already in March. The texts will be published in English and Serbian. We would like to thank SUBNOR and all contributors who participated in the preparation of this important documentation of our joint work.

As soon as the finished copies come from the printer, all member federations of the FIR will receive this material for their further political work.

The scandalous handling of the Sachsenburg concentration camp memorial site

The media have already reported on the scandal that, on the instructions of Frankenberg's mayor Firmenich, a retired colonel in the German Armed Forces, still existing historical building fabric of the former Sachsenburg concentration camp was deliberately destroyed. Despite public protests, petitions and submissions of the preservation of historical monuments, despite statements of survivors' associations and memorial initiatives, the historic commandant's house was demolished at the end of October 2022. On the occasion of a lecture tour through various Saxon cities, Ulrich Schneider, VVN-BdA Federal Spokesman and Secretary General of FIR, met with the Chairwoman of the LAG KZ Sachsenburg e.V. Gisela Heiden at the historic site to take a look at the state of development and to discuss further action.

The first thing that caught the eye was the tactics used by the town of Frankenberg to disguise its barbarism. Georg Orwell with the invention of "neo-speak" was a bloody beginner compared to the banner on the construction fence surrounding the remains of the foundation of the former commandant's villa. There, the city writes of the demolition of a "former factory owner's villa" without mentioning the building's function as the headquarters of the concentration camp commandant. The building had been part of the Sachsenburg spinning mill. Although in the immediate vicinity there are panels of the "Path of Remembrance" to the concentration camp, the banner "forgets" to mention that this abandoned factory building was used as the Sachsenburg concentration camp. Particularly perfidious is the paraphrasing of this act of barbarism as "brownfield revitalization," as if there had been no suggestions from the camp working group and other historians as to how the historic building should be used as the centerpiece of the future concentration camp memorial.

Also significant is the reference to the fact that the measure was co-financed from tax funds based on the Saxon budget. Reading this, the question arises why the state government and the responsible minister could always explain to inquiries that they had nothing to do with this matter.

Gisela Heiden not only drew attention to this destruction, but also underlined her great concern about the perspective of the historic site. During the tour of the site, she pointed out the dramatic condition of important remains of the concentration camp area. Thus, the building with the detention cells and the laundry shortage is seriously

endangered in its structural fabric. The roof is broken, windows and their frames are only insufficiently able to keep out rain and snow. Although there is a construction plan, but since - as the city emphasized this time - the state funds have not yet been released, nothing would happen here. "Should we wait until the historic half-timbered house can even be cleared with an excavator?" she asked sarcastically. For her, the events surrounding the Sachsenburg memorial are a total failure on the part of all those with political responsibility, all the way up to Saxony's Prime Minister Kretschmar.

Gisela Heiden/ Ulrich Schneider



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.

Bank-account: Postbank Berlin IBAN DE 04 1001 0010 0543 0541 07, Owner: FIR
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Obituary General Mikhail A. Moiseev (1939-2023)

It is with deep sadness that we bid farewell today to the Chairman of the Russian Union of Veterans, General Mikhail Alexeyevich Moiseev. He died a few weeks before his 84th birthday.

Mikhail A. Moiseev was in the army all his life. Marked by the experience of the Nazi-German invasion and the Great Patriotic War, which also tore gaps in his family, he decided to join the ranks of the Soviet Army. At the end of his career, he was Inspector General of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. When he retired from active service, he remained socially active, was elected as a constituency deputy to the State Duma of the Russian Federation, and assumed responsibility as chairman of the Russian Veterans Union. He participated active in the reorganization of the federation in recent years. The Russian Union of Veterans paid tribute to him as a great son of the USSR and Russia, a true patriot who devoted his entire life to the service of the Fatherland.

As Chairman of the Russian Union of Veterans, he also assumed responsibilities in the FIR. In 2013, the 16th FIR Congress in Sofia elected him vice-president of the organization. He was one of the engines of the “international anti-fascist conferences” and represented the Russian Union of Veterans and the FIR at various commemorative events. When he had to step down for health reasons in 2019, the delegates appointed him a member of the honorary presidium. Also in this function, he took over further tasks in the sense of the common anti-fascist work, by maintaining the contacts to the successor federations of the former Soviet war veterans’ federation.

The Russian Veterans Association proposed Mikhail A. Moiseev as an laureate of the Michel Vanderborcht Award. Since the ceremony had to be moved to 2023, he could not see in live this tribute.

The FIR expresses its deepest sympathy to his family and comrades in arms in the Russian Union of Veterans. The FIR and its member federations will keep an honorable memory of him.

Thanks of the Russian Union of Veterans

Dear friends!

Please accept the words of sincere gratitude for the condolences addressed to the Russian Union of Veterans on the untimely death of its chairman army general Mikhail Alekseevich Moiseev.

We express our deep gratitude to all the member organizations of the Federation and their leaders who shared with us all the bitterness of the irreparable loss.

We are convinced that the grief that has befallen us will further unite our ranks in the common cause of opposing all forms of emerging neo-fascism and neo-nazism.

deputy chairman of the Russian Union of Veterans, vice-president of FIR Executive committee
major-general J V. Romanenko

Obituary Odhise Porodini (1930-2023)

We sadly announce that our Chairman of the National Committee of the Veterans and Descendants Organization of the Albanian People “Honor of the Nation”, Odhise Porodini departed this life on December 30th, 2022. Mr. Porodini was born on August 20th, 1930. He was a LANÇ veteran – participator of LANÇ in the ranks of the DEBATIK organization.

After the liberation of Albania, Mr. Porodini studied Law and performed on important state positions. In the Veterans Organization, he has held functional positions, as well. Whereas, in the year 2021 till the end, Mr. Porodini was chairman of this Organization.

Throughout his life, Mr. Porodini has been characterized by the high sense of responsibility, correctness, honesty and dedication in the fulfilment of the Organization’s mission in defence of the freedom and antifascist values, in defence of patriotism.

Our organization has deeply experienced this loss!

We will always stay united in accomplishment of the ideals and duties in the footsteps and example of our chairman, Odhise Porodini.

Veli Myftari, General Secretary of the National Committee
Elidiana Canaj, vice-Chairman to the Department of Foreign Affairs

Obituary Aage Staffe (1925 - 2022)

Aage Staffe was a working-class boy who grew up in poor conditions and was for a time a member of the Danish Communist Party. He joined the resistance in 1942 at the age of 17. It began with pistol thefts from German officers and simple acts of sabotage in the form of arson attacks. At some point, with the support of some work colleagues, he began illegally making weapons in the smithy where he was apprenticed. In the autumn of 1943, Staffe, then 18, decided to join the resistance. For a year and a half he fought in the ranks of the saboteurs. He survived because of his strict conspiracy. No one knew where he spent the night. He himself avoided knowing the whereabouts of his friends. He justified his concern by the fact that larger groups in the Danish police were prepared to fight saboteurs.

After Denmark was liberated from fascist occupation, Aage Staffe stood up for his political convictions and became involved in the work of veterans' associations. As a contemporary witness, he shared his experiences of the resistance. His most important book was: "En smededreng går til modstand". For many years he was active in the ranks of the FIR associations in Denmark.

The FIR and its member federations will keep an honourable memory to him and his work.

"Stolpersteine" in Italy

Guido Lorenzetti, member of the FIR Executive Committee and representative of the Italian persecuted organization ANED, and Gunter Demnig, German action artist, laid in mid-January in Sesto San Giovanni "Stolpersteine" (remembrance stones) for Italian deportees.

Since the mid-1990s, artist Gunter Demnig has dedicated himself to the "Stolpersteine" project. In the spring of 2023, around 100,000 "Stolpersteine" will have been laid in memory of victims of Nazism in what is now more than 20 countries.

The cubes, measuring just under ten centimetres by ten centimetres, can be found on the sidewalks in front of the last homes of people who were deported, murdered or driven to suicide by the Nazism. Brass plaques on the stones are engraved with the names and fates of the victims.

"There is a difference between young people opening a book and reading about six million murdered Jews and learning about a family fate on site," the artist is convinced.



Joint initiative of antifascist associations on the Adriatic Sea

Gianfranco Pagliarulo, Marijan Križman and Franjo Habulin, the presidents of the largest Italian, Slovenian and Croatian partisan associations respectively (ANPI-Italy, ZZB NOB-Slovenia, Saba HR-Croatia), sent to the Presidents of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, of the Slovenian Republic, Nataša Pirc Musar, and of the Republic of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, a joint letter which states, among other things:

"Only through cooperation, mutual understanding and full acceptance of responsibilities can a positive and constructive relationship between our three countries fully develop for the benefit of the peoples."

"In this context, we recall that on the island of Rab, which today belongs to Croatia, thousands of civilians, entire families, were interned by the Italian occupiers. The condition of the internees was below the survival threshold, according to the knowledge of the Italian military authorities. At least 1,500 people died of hunger, maltreatment and diseases. The camp was liberated on September 8, 1943 and in the following days. Those responsible were never punished."

Next year, the letter says, "is the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the island. In order to close this very painful page of recent history with the full assumption of responsibility, we propose that the presidents of the three republics should visit the island of Rab on Sunday, September 10, 2023, to commemorate the many innocent dead, to jointly lay a flower on the graves of the victims, to establish even closer relations between the three states and to oppose any form of nationalism."

Survivors and their associations as an object of historical research

It cannot surprise that a 70-year-old organization with its member federations comes into the focus of the historical interest. A perennial research project deals under the title "Organized Memory" with the FIR and national associations of persecutees. Last year, an online conference on the research results was already held. At the end of 2022, an anthology with nineteen individual studies was now published, which presents work results in depth and beyond the conference.

As is well known, the first organizations of survivors already emerged immediately after the liberation. They formed amicales, committees, camp communities, national interest groups, and from 1945 organized themselves into the international umbrella organization FIAPP. Their aim was to give the voice of the persecuted and resistance fighters an independent political weight in the anti-fascist-democratic new beginning in the various countries. In addition, they saw it as a common task to influence historical memory from the perspective of the persecuted and fighters against Nazism. This second task area is the focus of the anthology.

Where illegal international committees of prisoners had already formed within the camps, as at Buchenwald concentration camp, this cooperation was continued after liberation. The fact that it survived even East-West tensions during the Cold War, as is visible in Neumann-Thein's essay, makes it clear that the common experience of struggle could be more formative than political differences.

How complicated the cooperation could be, however, if not the common persecution experience but the political decision to cooperate was dominant as in the context of FIAPP, the ideological conflicts actually influenced the cooperation, as Maximilian Becker shows in his contribution about the FIR in the Cold War. Also with him the socio-political effectiveness of the FIR did not stand in the focus, but its role in the memory-political work, which had to be converted however quite in the area of conflict with the anti-communist competition foundation FILDİR. Becker notes critically that the historical picture at that time was quite heroically, at the same time he refers to Frederic Manhes, who made clear that from the approach resistance and persecution were seen in its entire political and social breadth. Also the role of the women in the anti-fascist struggle was noticed equally. Altogether the survivors connected in the FIR understood themselves as "fighters", not as "victims". That today's perspectives were not taken into account is certainly true, but has much to do with the social narratives of the time.

Other essays in the volume deal with the German VVN and its competing foundations AvS and BVN, the associations of persecutees in Austria, Poland, Yugoslavia, France and the Netherlands. Even the Soviet Committee of War Veterans is observed through the lens of the GDR press. Four articles deal with victims of the Shoah and Porajmos. The perspective of the mostly younger academics is interesting. Even if some of them are professionally employed in concentration camp memorials, they actually view the associations, i.e., their "object of investigation," "from the outside." The central sources for the reappraisal are written records, association journals, some correspondence and administrative records archived in the respective memorial sites. However, it should be clear to anyone who has been active in this field for a longer period of time that such "printed sources" can only represent part of the reality of the work of the associations of persecutees.

It becomes difficult when today's perspectives on the 1950s clearly influence evaluations and interpretations of the actions of the actors of that time, which is particularly visible in the essay by Zofia Wychicka on "the changing image of former concentration camp prisoners and the Stalinization of Polish memory." It would certainly be worthwhile to compare the development at that time with the current historical-political turnaround in the "national memory of Poland".

All the contributions vividly illustrate the extent to which the social memory of fascist crimes was dependent on the historical-political actions of the survivors and their successors themselves. For that alone, it is worth reading.

Ulrich Schneider

Bibliography:

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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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