

UNITED Conference

Never Again!
European Conference Against Racism and Fascism
November 19-23, 2003 Poland

CONTENTS

1 Introduction - why this Conference?

2 Working Groups - action must be the priority...

2.1 International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism

2.2 European-wide Action Week Against Racism

2.3 Support of Refugees

2.4 Ad Hoc Campaign

3 Lectures and Presentations - serious issues...

3.1 Antisemitism: Past and Present

3.2 Roma and Minority Migration and the Rise of the Extreme Right

3.2.1 in Great Britain

3.2.2 in Slovakia

4 Thematic Working Groups - analyzing the problem...

4.1 Migrants & Refugees and 'Fortress Europe'

4.2 Situation of Minorities in Europe

4.3 The Danger of the Extreme Right in Europe: Democracy Development to
Combat

Right-wing Extremism

4.4 Learning from the Past - Education

5 Presentations in Working Groups - sharing information...

5.1 Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia and Antisemitism in Latvia

5.2 Dalits and the Caste System in the Contemporary British Society

6 Discussion Groups - the danger of words...

7 Practical Presentations - think globally, act locally!

7.1 European Co-operation and Challenges for the Anti-racist Anti-fascist
Movement

7.2 The Situation of Minorities in Europe - Legal Dimensions

7.3 Monitoring International Commitments to Combat Racism at Local Level

[8 Open Forum - an opportunity for everybody...](#)

[9 Social Events and More - enjoying the experience...](#)

[10 After the Conference - the participants say...](#)

[11 Thanks to - they made it possible...](#)

[12 UNITED for Intercultural Action](#)

[1 Introduction - Why this Conference](#)

The Holocaust was a human tragedy that shows what racism and hatred can lead to. In today's multiethnic and multicultural society the overcoming of xenophobia and teaching tolerance and respect become a condition for the survival of modern civilization. We need to remember the Holocaust not only in the form of a discourse about the past. In many respects it is also relevant for the present and the future. We need to share this important message with future generations, make the parallels with the present in order to prevent humankind from repeating such cruelty.

UNITED for Intercultural Action is the biggest European network which unites and coordinates over 560 grassroots organizations fighting against racism, fascism and nationalism and supporting refugees and migrants.

The UNITED Conference "Never Again!" took place in a country that suffered a lot during World War II and is one of the current EU accession states, that is why the choice of the Conference venue was symbolic. Nowadays in Poland, as in other European states, the local neo-nazi groups are active, they speak and act against minorities, and today here one can openly buy books of the Holocaust-revisionist David Irving not so far, just several kilometers away from memorial places. The anti-fascist 'Never Again' Association (Poland) which was a local co-organizer of the Conference received an SMS message which read: "Thank you for hosting this meeting in Krakow. We are coming." The text message was sent by the Polish neo-nazi group NOP just when the Conference ended. It proved that 'Never Again' Association and the local Anti-Nazi Group (GAN) were right to have taken adequate security precautions when preparing the Conference.

Why racism and xenophobia continue to present a major challenge to our European societies? Where does it come from? Dissatisfaction with life circumstances, the fear of unemployment, insecurity about the future and the low level of confidence in the authorities and the political establishment lead

people to adopt racist views and accept negative stereotypes on immigrants and minorities?

The UNITED Conference "Never Again!" which was held in Krakow (Poland) gathered 77 activists from 36 European countries. They came to the conference to express their solidarity with the ideas of anti-racism and anti-fascism, to find out and analyze the implications of the new situation in Europe for minority rights as well as for migration and refugee issues.

The Conference was mainly focused on current challenges for anti-racist/anti-fascist work in Eastern and Western Europe, the EU enlargement and its impact on human rights, border and asylum policy and racist activities, antisemitism and anti-Roma racism, educational methods used in anti-racism/anti-fascism activity and the utilization of international instruments to combat racism.

Also, on the last day the participants visited one of the most tragic places in Europe - Auschwitz, the largest Nazi concentration and death camp that has become a universally recognized symbol of genocide. The crimes committed at Auschwitz unmasked the darker aspects of contemporary civilization. It opened the eyes of humanity to the fact that if such massive genocide could take place in one location, then it could happen anywhere, because it lies within the capabilities of mankind. The participants visited the Jewish Centre in Oswiecim, located in a former synagogue, and met with members of the local branch of the 'Never Again' Association who conduct difficult but important anti-racist educational work in the area.

Usually UNITED conferences become not only a good platform for political discussions and for an exchange of opinions, but also inspire concrete initiatives against racism and xenophobia. One of the concrete accomplishments of this Conference was an ad hoc campaign in support of an African refugee who has been in detention in Poland for over two years without a fair trial.

Numerous reports on the Conference appeared in the press, on the radio and on many Internet info-websites. Sarabjit Singh ("Searchlight", Great Britain) and Jacek Purski (Anti-Nazi Group, Poland) in particular contributed to the media coverage.

This Conference was prepared by the Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland - ARASI, ASLIR/FTMB (Romania), 'Never Again' Association (Poland), People Against Racism (Slovakia), Polish Humanitarian Organization (Poland), Norwegian Peoples Aid, Verein für Dienste im Ausland (Austria) and UNITED for Intercultural Action.

[2 Working Groups - action must be the priority](#)

For over ten years UNITED has been coordinating action campaigns around the dates of 9th November (International Day against Fascism and Antisemitism), 21st March (International Day against Racial Discrimination) and 20th June (International Refugee Day). As a rule, during the UNITED conferences

participants discuss their valuable experience of campaign activities on the local level and exchange concrete ideas for the future. The examples of the most widespread campaign activities include: media work, marches and street actions, people-to-people discussions, work with young people (different contests, lectures, seminars at schools, colleges, etc.), artistic performances, petitions, removal of racist slogans from walls, poster and sticker campaigns, etc. The UNITED secretariat publishes campaign reports covering the activities on all levels (for past reports see: www.unitedagainstracism.org or contact the UNITED secretariat).

2.1 International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism - November 9

Group facilitator: Rafal Pankowski, 'Never Again' Association, Poland

rapporteur: Sorana Radu, Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania

The International Day against Fascism and Antisemitism commemorates the 'Kristallnacht' ('night of broken glass') pogrom that took place on 9 November 1938 in Nazi Germany, when Jewish stores and shops were destroyed and many Jews were arrested or killed. It is often seen as the symbolic beginning of the Holocaust.

The group concluded with some general points which need be taken into account during the next November campaign: There should be a balance between positive and negative elements, e.g. in using campaign slogans which are for/pro (respect, tolerance, peace), and not only against. The participants decided that more joint events at the European level should be organized on this date, e.g. demonstrations at the same time in many cities and countries, international broadcasting, etc. This European-wide campaign must not only be a Memorial Day commemorating 'Kristallnacht' pogrom, but it should also focus on contemporary xenophobia and racism.

It was also mentioned that Holocaust education is not enough and there is a need for permanent anti-racist and anti-fascist education. The delegate from Hungary underlined the importance of avoiding certain vocabulary from the past which has a negative historical burden.

The participants mentioned the necessity to encourage the Jewish community itself to be more active on this date.

2.2 European-wide Action Week Against Racism - 21-28th March 2004

Group facilitator: Anca Sirbu, ASLIR, Romania

rapporteur: Markus Pinter, Football Against Racism in Europe, Austria

The European-wide Action Week takes place each year around 21st March, the UN Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was declared as a reaction to the murder of 70 demonstrators against apartheid in South Africa in 1960.

This year's UNITED anti-racist campaign is named "Racism: spot it and stop it!" and aims to raise awareness about racism in everyday-life. In addition, anti-racist education is necessary to enable people to resist racist propaganda.

The campaign aims to make racism visible in order for it to be erased. This includes our own prejudice towards others. If we want to fight against silent and 'hidden' racism, we have to spot it and stop the passive acceptance of prejudice and stereotypes.

Through the method of brainstorming the participants found new slogans for future anti-racist campaigns, e.g. Wake up! Stop passive tolerance!; Smash the border within your mind; Break the silence!; Do not close your eyes; Do not do nothing!; Is there a racist inside you? (Image: a face looking into a mirror); A person with a T-shirt "racist" gets an injection with "anti-racism"; boxes named "racism, xenophobia" with the message "Hatred is harmful for your health."

2.3 Support of Refugees

Group facilitator: John Tambwe, Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland

The United Nations has proclaimed the International Refugee Day (20 June) after it had become good practice already in many countries. On this day organizations draw attention to the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

The major discussion centered around the issue of how to inform local communities about the real lives of refugees and asylum seekers and about the problems they face. Two good examples came from Slovenia and Poland, where in the framework of NGO projects a film festival and a concert about/ in support of refugees were organized for students and young people. The group summed up that it is necessary to work, first, with the younger generation, as young people are more flexible and open-minded.

2.4 Ad Hoc Campaign

Group facilitator: Saskia Daru, project DIVA, the Netherlands

rapporteur: Ilze Garoza, European Youth Human Rights Network, Latvia

During the ad hoc campaign Working Group it was agreed to put knowledge into practice through the true case of a refugee who has been in detention for over two years without a trial. Two key strategies were adopted in an attempt to resolve the situation, namely, to lobby for a speedy trial through international mechanisms, e.g. in to bring it to the attention of such institutions like the UNHCR and International Red Cross that are responsible for the protection of refugees; secondly, the group decided a good strategy would be to raise funds in order to pay for a private defense lawyer for the accused. By the end of the Conference over 190 USD were raised.

Details of the case can be found at: www.republica.pl/assref.

While organizing the ad hoc campaign it is necessary to attract politicians, journalists (and provide an interesting story for them), international NGOs, intellectuals/VIPs, to reach the Red Cross, UN, and European Court of Human Rights.

By way of brainstorming the participants analyzed the characteristics of ad hoc campaigning: intensive action that is limited in time, lobbying, mobilization, media involvement, and public awareness raising.

Organizing a picket line could be one way of raising awareness. Such an action needs notifying the police, sending letters to the institutions to be addressed, guaranteeing publicity, obtaining permission from authorities. An ad hoc campaign also needs funding. Fundraising means opening a bank account, linking with communities that are potentially concerned, collecting money, preparing an Internet strategy, and using cultural events to raise money.

3 Lectures and Presentations - serious issues...

3.1 Antisemitism: Past and Present

Konstanty Gebert, "Midrasz" magazine, Warsaw, Poland

The opening presentation of the Conference was devoted to the subject of antisemitism. It was appropriate in the context of Polish history and also the rising tide of "new" antisemitism in Europe today. Antisemitism can be seen as a paradigmatic form of prejudice and one should learn from the history of this phenomenon in order to fight other discriminations, too. Konstanty Gebert is a prominent Polish-Jewish journalist and author. He is also a contributor to the anti-fascist magazine "Never Again".

Before Konstanty's speech, which strongly inspired participants throughout the event, a 25 minute video from the museum of Auschwitz was shown.

Looking at the way events are unfolding in recent years, there is no ultimate guarantee that something as horrible as the Holocaust cannot happen again. A recent example is the genocide in Rwanda where almost one million people were killed in a hundred days. And even closer to our doorstep is the case of former Yugoslavia (Kosovo). Hence the campaign to remind us that these things happened as recently as yesterday should be relentless. The most recent events that constitute a warning are the serious terrorist acts in Turkey that happened on the same day as the opening of the Conference. According to opinion polls, a growing number of people "do not believe" in Shoah, that is why we need to preserve true history.

By the end of Konstanty's speech participants expressed their opinions and told about situations in their own countries. Yes, we need to preserve the memory and remember every genocide that happened in the past, the Armenian genocide, for example, and only in such a way we can avoid this danger in the future.

3.2 Roma and Minority Migration and the Rise of the Extreme Right

The issue can be analyzed both from a Western as well as an Eastern perspective. This is why the presentation consisted of two parts, taking one Western and one East-Central European country as examples.

3.2.1 in Great Britain

Kate Taylor, 'Searchlight' magazine, London, Great Britain

Today Britain is in political crisis. The failing health service, the growth of poverty related diseases, the decline of industry, and the risk of terrorism are not problems that will just disappear with the removal of asylum seekers, but they are being used as an excuse to attack the most vulnerable in the country, because people are afraid. Asylum and immigration is probably the key issue in British politics at the moment.

It is upon this platform that the British National Party (BNP), the largest far right party in Britain, is gaining support. The BNP like to build up fear, because fear allows fascism to flourish. Without doubt, the problem surrounding immigration in Britain has allowed the far right to gain ground.

Come next year, there will be more reason for the BNP to focus on the Roma. The European Union has now set a date (May 2004) for its largest expansion to date. Many of future member states have large Roma population alongside a history of abuse and racism towards this group. Prime Minister Tony Blair also alluded to the idea that his attempts to crack down on immigration were a response to the growth of the far right in the EU. But it is wrong to conclude that the BNP is setting the political agenda in Britain. According to Kate, while they may fuel the debate on asylum in a limited sense, it would be far more accurate to describe them as feeding off it.

Most Roma refugees in Britain are considered to be 'bogus' because the countries from which they are fleeing are considered by the British government to be safe countries. The case of Roma from Czechia provides a good illustration of the arbitrariness of British asylum policy. This is mainly because the UK wishes to aid Czech entry into the EU, so has to maintain that Czechia does not discriminate against its citizens. Canada accepts 70 per cent of Czech Roma who enter its borders, because it does accept the situation in their country as real.

For more information:

editor@searchlightmagazine.com, or visit: www.searchlightmagazine.com

3.2.2 in Slovakia

Elena Kliglerova and Martina Juraskova, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovakia

500,000 Roma live in Slovakia, and they face discrimination in almost every area of their lives, in social services, labour market (especially among private employers), education system, etc. Despite the existence of a legislative framework of anti-discrimination law, the Roma are still unprotected by the government. The Slovak body of law contains only isolated regulations dealing with discrimination, some of which (especially the Slovak Constitution) prohibit discrimination, but without defining discrimination.

Roma often become victims of the extreme right. The country has 14 well-established and active groups that are composed of some 5,000 members and supporters of racist extremism. The most visible extremist movement in Slovakia is the nazi-skinhead movement existing there since 1990. The Roma are the main targets of racial attacks. There is massive migration of Roma to the European Union today. It started in 1995-1997, especially to the UK (and also Finland, Belgium, Sweden), in 2001 to the Netherlands and Belgium. Roma leave their

countries because of several reasons: racially motivated violence and the feeling of being unprotected, the social structure of the Roma community; the desire to escape ethnic stigmatization. Recommended measures to be taken include: improving security for the Roma community, the elimination of discrimination through public awareness campaigns, tolerance promotion, the emancipation of the Roma and development of Roma identity in cultural and social aspects.

For more information visit: www.ivo.sk

4 Thematic Working Groups - analyzing the problem

Four thematic Working Groups went through three different stages - after the introduction to the subjects, the participants took part in political discussions and shared good practices.

4.1 Migrants & Refugees and 'Fortress Europe'

Working Group facilitators: John Tambwe, Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland and Saskia Daru, project DIVA, Netherlands

rappporteur: Oksana Chelysheva, the Society of Russian-Chechen Friendship, Russia

Refugees face different problems in different countries and different steps are being taken by NGOs to assist them in overcoming these problems.

In Norway there exists a problem of refugee integration into the local society that is caused by the fact that refugees' children attend separate schools and thus do not mix with the local population. In Russia and Chechnya the tense situation is explained by the ongoing war and the refusal of the Russian authorities to recognize people who have had to flee from Chechnya as refugees. As for Italy it is the housing problem, whereas in Ukraine the main reason for refugee problems is the complexity of the local law that results in the shocking fact that only two people got the status of a refugee this year. As far as Azerbaijan is concerned, a large number of refugees (approximately one million) came to the country after the military conflict in Nagorno-Karabach and now live in poverty. Albania, on the contrary, is a country of emigration through which a flow of migrants to the Western European countries pass. But in order to get a desirable status in the West migrants have to overcome a lot of obstacles, as legislation in the majority of these countries is becoming more and more restrictive. The same refers to the Czech Republic where migrants try to settle down, but it takes them much time to get permission. No matter how diverse all these problems are, they lead to the same consequences: poverty, lack of education and health care; increasing tension between migrants and local communities and almost complete lack of

integration policies. To overcome these problems, the NGOs need to work at different levels. First, their activities must be aimed at offering people in need some support, both financial and moral. Then they need to work with local/majority communities to break the existing negative stereotypes so that they could accept newcomers. The group was critical about the current policy of many countries towards complicating the procedure of getting permission to

stay. The NGOs must exert political pressure on their governments, as the international laws must be adopted at the national levels. The group discussed some conceptual confusion. Migration can be of different types and is caused by different reasons. It is in fact impossible to draw clear boundaries between "economic migration" and forced migration.

And as there is no common way to deal with migrants, there is no single way to integrate people into the life of the countries where they try to settle.

The group agreed that the NGOs need to help refugees and local people to find common language through increased communication (organization of different joint events, e.g. cultural performances, summer camps, etc). It is most important to reach young people. Young people are more open to new information. It is also important to work with teachers and to provide intercultural learning tools.

Media is an important avenue to follow. It should be provided with precise and accurate information.

In short:

Major problems: poverty, lack of education and health care; growing tension between migrants and local communities and lack of integration policies

Steps to overcome them: NGOs work on communication between local communities and asylum seekers, educational work with young people, media work, pressure on governments.

4.2 [Situation of Minorities in Europe](#)

Working Group facilitators: Anca Sirbu, ASLIR, Romania and Florian

Niederndorfer, Verein fur Dienste im Ausland, Austria

rapporteur: Geeta Bandi-Phillips, Dalit Solidarity Network, Great Britain

Europe consists of various minority groups, there is no ethnically homogenous country. In times of political, economic or social crisis, minorities are mostly the first to suffer and to be used as scapegoats by representatives of majority groups; in many countries they face problems such as segregation, rejection, denied access to social services, employment, health care, education, etc. There are various types of minorities including ethnic, religious, linguistic, disabled, sexual, etc. They include refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, too. The Working Group discussed some of the ethnic/national minorities in Europe such as Roma, Dalits, Africans, Jews, Russians in post-Soviet republics, etc. The group had an interesting discussion how can a minority in one place be in a majority position in other places (like Russians in post-Soviet Republics, Hungarians in Romania, etc). The group mentioned the low level of awareness on legal rights and the absence of legal rights monitoring mechanisms as the main reasons for the discrimination of minorities. Concrete actions and programs must go hand in hand with the implementation of legislation on minorities. The group criticized the idea of electronic tagging and ID cards for minorities and raised concern about increasing polarization of minorities and majorities. The group analyzed the socio-political and economic situation of minorities and shared their experiences on good and bad practices both of NGOs and governments.

In short:

Major problems: segregation, rejection, problems in access to social services, education, health care, etc. Low level of awareness on legal rights and absence of legal rights monitoring mechanisms

Steps to overcome them: influence/lobbying the governments to see the minorities' problems, to make anti-discrimination legislation work.

4.3 [The Danger of the Extreme Right in Europe:](#)

Democracy Development to Combat Right-wing Extremism

Working Group facilitator: Daniel Milo, People against Racism, Slovakia

rapporteur: Mark Ellis, Tyne & Wear Anti-fascist Association, GB

The participants identified many characteristics of extreme-right groups in Europe and many strategies for combating them. Different tendencies apply in different countries, so the best responses will also be different. The most common features are racism, nationalism, xenophobia, aggressiveness, homophobia, populism, and white supremacy. The current trends are Internet/SMS, community politics, and asylum issue/islamophobia, populist issues (immigration, drugs), infiltrating or influencing mainstream politics. Why the extreme right has success on the political level? Because of the "decline of traditional values", manipulation of the protest vote, unemployment/social deprivation/industrial decline and opposition to globalization.

Fighting the extreme right, therefore, requires broad, long-term anti-racist educational activities and programs to combat prejudice, intolerance, ignorance and isolationism, which lead to support for extremist groups.

Music, football, involvement of community, use of media, education, public actions, celebrity endorsement, social work with racist perpetrators, advocacy/empowerment of young people, software, humor are also effective in fighting the extreme right.

In short: Major problems: today's success of extreme right

Steps to overcome them: broad, long-term anti-racist education.

4.4 [Learning from the Past - Education](#)

Working Group facilitators: Birgit Misfjord, Norwegian Peoples Aid and Marcin

Wojtalik, Polish Humanitarian Organization

rapporteur: Angie Pohja, Red Cross, Finland

A group of Norwegian students went to Auschwitz to learn more deeply about the Holocaust. Upon their return they discovered the following letter: "We refer to your trip to the so-called death camp Auschwitz, where the lies live on. There were never gas chambers in the concentration camps. The whole story is a fraud by the Zionist Jews to get money and power and to establish the state terror of Israel. More and more people listen to us. The future is ours." Today society especially feels the necessity of Holocaust teaching and anti-racist education.

The participants agreed on the following:

1. The best tool in the fight against racism is education, starting even as early as at the age of two.

2. Different target groups require different methods (if in your area the method being used is not effective, try something new).
3. It is important to teach about the roots of hate: human nature, socio-economic conditions, for example.
4. In teaching about anti-racism and especially the Holocaust know your facts. To give wrong information is to discredit your lesson.
5. Give hope. After a discussion of racism and hate, it is easy to feel hopeless. Never leave it at that!

Even in today's progressive educational system, there is a risk of hateful rhetoric being allowed to influence young and vulnerable minds. Such cases must be identified and opposed.

In short:

Major problems: forgotten past, raise of extreme right ideas among young people

Steps to overcome them: creative work with children and young people.

5 Presentations in Working Groups - sharing information...

Some of the numerous presentations in the Working Groups attracted special interest from Conference participants, that is why their summaries are presented below.

5.1 Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia and Antisemitism in Latvia

Anna Kaleri, Latvian Human Rights Committee, (WG Situation of Minorities in Europe)

Latvia is one of the EU accession countries and it has a large number of Russian-speakers (approximately 40 per cent of population) facing discrimination. Today it attracts the attention of the European community.

Based on the principle of "legal continuity", the citizenship of the restored independent Latvia was granted only to those who had had Latvian citizenship at the time of the forced annexation by the Soviet Union in 1940, and to their direct descendants. Thus, the Russian-speaking people who came to Latvia after 1945, as well as their children and grandchildren born in Latvia, turned out to be foreigners who were deprived of political rights, as well as of a number of economic and property rights (for example, the right to own land). This way the share of the Russian-speaking minority among the citizens of Latvia was reduced to 20 per cent. Naturally, under the given circumstances, the legislation on the state language, education, mass media, etc. adopted at the beginning of the 1990s did not take into account interests of this sizeable linguistic minority. Moreover, a long-term problem appeared related to the exclusion of a significant part of the population from the political life: they had no access to developing mechanisms of democracy. Democracy in Latvia did not become "democracy for everybody". Anna also presented some cases of antisemitism and anti-Roma racism in Latvian media, where it is possible to read that "Jews rule the world" ("Kapitals", #8, 2000) and find journalistic recommendations "not to look into eyes of Roma" in order not to be hypnotized (national TV). Despite protests of human rights organizations criminal cases for inciting hatred were not started.

The results of a study of the Latvian Center for Human Rights on the situation of the Roma minority in Latvia show that racism and discrimination against the Roma are widespread in Latvian society. For up to 60 per cent of the Latvian Roma their education level is four classes or lower and only up to 5 per cent of the Roma are officially employed.

For more information: kgm@junik.lv

5.2 Dalits and the Caste System in the Contemporary British Society

Geeta Bandi-Phillips, Dalit Solidarity Network, UK (WG Situation of minorities in Europe)

India's caste system divides its population into thousands of social groups, placing Dalits at the bottom of the social hierarchy. According to 'Vedas' - the Hindu scriptures, God created four castes: the Brahmin (priestly caste) from His head, the Kshatriya (warrior caste) from His arms, the Vaishya (business caste) from His thighs and the Shudra (service caste) from His feet. Dalits do not fall under any of the above Castes and often they are referred to as the fifth class 'panchamas'. Ghandi called them Harijans (children of God) and today they call themselves Dalits, which means the oppressed. The people who are engaged in work like collecting human excreta were kept at a distance because they were seen as sources of infection. They were not considered good enough to do other things or to be touched. In 1950 the Constitution of India abolished "Untouchability" and established certain occupational and electoral protective measures for the Dalits. However, despite these efforts the extensive evidence of the failure of the state of India is overwhelming. People who perform the least desirable jobs are often victims of double discrimination, suffering first from the nature of the work they must perform and suffering again by the denial of their rights. Victims of discrimination based on descent are singled out, not because of a difference in physical appearance or race, but rather by their membership in a social group that has been isolated socially and occupationally from other groups in the society.

There are nearly one million Britons of Indian origin and the caste system continues to exert a powerful influence over their everyday lives. There are now an estimated 200,000 Dalits living in the UK. They include second and third generations, many of them do not want to categorize themselves as "Untouchables", but find that others do. Many Dalits in the UK report that they suffer more from caste discrimination than racial discrimination. Since the end of the Second World War the government of the UK has been formally committed to a classless system. But the caste system amongst the South Asian diaspora has become a major hurdle to this. This imported form of social hierarchy has started to take a strong hold in the UK. Hinduism is one of the religions taught as part of the curriculum at secondary schools. The students are given an introduction to the main caste groups within the Hindu tradition and to a hereditary system where birth determines one's place in society. Many Dalits find this extremely uncomfortable. Youth in the UK fight with each other leading to social unrest amongst the Asian diaspora. Caste can be often the main criteria for a friend's selection. Unless the caste prejudice is recognized as a form of discrimination or

as a form of racism, it is impossible to create a class- and caste-less society in the UK.

For more information: dalitsnuk@yahoo.com

6 Discussion Groups - the danger of words...

Does what we say may mean something else to another person from a different community/country? The language is constantly changing. From one year to another the same word means something different. Today the word, more than ever, represents the main means enabling people to live together and co-operate on a local, national and international scale.

The participants were divided in several groups to interpret given concepts (racism, nationalism, and interculturalism) and try to see what is behind each term. Interesting discussions considered the definition of "nationalism". In the opinion of some participants (mostly from Central and Eastern Europe) nationalism sometimes has a positive aspect as, for example, it gave the possibility to the former Soviet Republics to gain independence and save their national identity. The participants also discussed the history of colonialism. Anyway we need not to forget how the extreme nationalism brought to power Hitler, and there is not so big gap between nationalism and extreme nationalism, and nationalism never means democracy. "For me nationalism is a way to secure the nation's needs, demands, interests, freedom and solidarity in a non-democratic way", "It is trying to protect one's own land/country from other people, who are not from the same country and with different background. Another point of nationalism is an attempt to protect the country from any integration to EU, NATO or another union. Nationalism could be violent or non-violent", "It is closing the borders of the country for strangers because 'we are the best'" - these are some of the views expressed in the group discussions. All European societies are to some extent multicultural, but do they promote interculturalism? For many participants interculturalism is the only way for the survival of humanity and a solution to many countries' problems. Discussing the definition of racism, some of the participants gave it a broader meaning that even includes discrimination on the basis of gender. For all participants racism means superiority, exclusion, prejudice, negative stereotypes, segregation, rejection which very often manifests itself in violence, aggression, unequal power relations between groups.

From the UNITED Information Leaflet #13

"The Danger of Words - Defenitions of concepts most used in anti-racist work":

Racism is the belief that some people are superior because they belong to a particular race. Racists define a race as a group of people with common ancestry. They distinguish different races from one another by physical characteristics, such as skin colour and hair texture. In fact, there are no clear differences, and especially no significant differences that matter. Recent research shows that race

is an imagined entity. "Race" has no biological basis. The word "racism" is also used to describe abusive or aggressive behaviour towards members of a so-called "inferior race". Racism takes different forms in different countries, according to history, culture and other social factors. A relatively new form of racism sometimes called "ethnic or cultural differentiation" says that all races or cultures are equal but they should not mix together to keep their originality. There is no scientific proof of the existence of different races. Biology has only determined one race: the human race.

Nationalism is a political ideology that puts interests of one "nation" or national group above the interests of others and above all other relationships, be they to family, friends, gender or humanity. It is often linked with a territorial claim. Nationalism makes a difference between people as a result of a border, which often had nothing to do with the people living in the region but with the king or other authority putting a line on a map. This political idea proclaims citizens of one nation to be superior to others and usually leads to suspicion of other nations. An extreme form of this is chauvinism. Originally the notion of nationalism was not so negative, as it also dealt with the development of citizen's rights and the emancipation of sometimes oppressed minorities. However, when the concept becomes linked to heritage, identity and 'blood' it becomes a dangerous idea.

Interculturalism - This is the belief that we become richer people by knowing and experiencing other cultures. Different people should be able to live together, although they have different cultural backgrounds. Interculturalism is about accepting and respecting differences. People who believe in interculturalism believe they can learn and profit from meeting other cultures.

[7 Practical Presentations - think globally, act locally!](#)

7.1 European Co-operation and Challenges for the Anti-racist Anti-fascist Movement

Saskia Daru, project DIVA, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

The lecture was based on the idea that international co-operation against racism is necessary, possible and inspiring, too.

Why is co-operation in fighting against racism and fascism at the European level necessary? There is a rise of xenophobia and racism in European society today, manifesting itself in physical attacks, but also in institutionalized discrimination against minorities and refugees. Intolerance is present at the international level as well as during decision making process. There exists a Fortress Europe. We need co-operation in order to be able to criticize and put pressure on governments when they commit mistakes or give false information.

Laws can be changed through common efforts of local activist groups and international community. There have been two EU anti-racist directives, in some EU countries they have been implemented, in some still have not. Anti-

discrimination legislation in accession states should also be amended and implemented. International action against racist hate groups is needed, too. International co-operation is necessary when somebody is detained without any trial (there is an example from this Conference where the campaign to support the refugee in Poland was organized).

It is necessary to address the governments and speak about minorities, to think broadly.

The best example of international co-operation is UNITED for Intercultural Action, which successfully co-ordinates co-operation of 560 grassroots organizations and encourages them to fight racism, fascism and support refugees through regular campaigning. While campaigning on the European level one needs to avoid attempting to speak for everyone. The role of UNITED is to enable other groups to be heard.

Finally, it is important not to limit our outlook to Europe only, although sometimes it may be necessary for practical reasons. It is, nevertheless, beneficial to link with NGOs working on the global level.

For more information: projectdiva@xs4all.nl

7.2 The Situation of Minorities in Europe - Legal Dimensions

Wilberforce Essandor, ETMO project, Espoo, Finland

The participants got an overview of international legislation which protects minorities.

Minorities in general are protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which prohibits all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. The rights of minorities are further strengthened in two human rights Covenants, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition there are various legal instruments on the European level, which also guarantee the protection of minorities, the preservation of their identity and participation and integration of their members into society. Notable among these legal instruments are the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the European Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. The Hague, Oslo and Lund Recommendations also stress the importance of participation, language and education as rights of minorities. These Recommendations could also serve as a reference point for lawmakers in reviewing existing laws and policies or passing new laws relating to minorities in their societies. The EU Charter on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms spells out categorically in Articles 20 and 21 the issues of equality before the law, the prohibition of discrimination on all grounds and calls on the Union in Article 22 to respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. The Copenhagen criteria which was set out in 1993 for new countries who would wish to join the European Union stated as one of the requirements: the achievement of "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of

minorities". In 1992 in Helsinki, the OSCE Summit established the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities. This decision was reaffirmed in 1999 in Istanbul. On the national level, European states have revised their laws in order to take account of minority rights. Reports show that all the newly accepted EU Member States have amended their national laws to conform to EU laws on minorities.

One observation is that either the legislation concerning minorities is not implemented or it is implemented wrongly. More efforts must be made to educate officials who deal with minority issues on the need to respect diversity and discourage prejudices.

For more information: wilberforce.essandor@kio.fi

7.3 Monitoring International Commitments to Combat Racism at Local Level

Daniel Milo, People Against Racism, Slovakia

Daniel gave an overview of the monitoring of human rights by international human rights organizations. Using the example of the Bratislava-based League of Human Rights Advocates he presented the innovative tactics of regional co-ordinators monitoring on the local level and informing the headquarters (responsible for legal representation, investigation, negotiation, and fact-finding). The issues for monitoring could include the participation of the Roma in the political process, employment, education, access to health care, cases of racially motivated violence, etc. The work of the monitors needs ensuring security and legitimacy, as they often face insecurity, false criminal charges, blackmail, death threats, physical harm. The local monitors should preferably be accredited with local (regional/district) authorities.

Further good examples can be found in the activities of such international organizations as Amnesty International, the European Roma Rights Center, Human Rights Watch, which exist in many European countries. They successfully co-ordinate the flow of information on human rights abuses in individual countries and then present them to international bodies, like the United Nations and the Council of Europe, thus exerting influence on the governments.

For more information: www.newtactics.org or contact Daniel info@racizmus.sk

8 Open Forum - an opportunity for everybody...

During this special plenary session the participants shared with each other information about some activities of their organizations and made announcements about different anti-racist and human rights events. The participant from Latvia, for example, used the opportunity to present a campaign which her organization is going to organize on 10 December, International Day of Human Rights, inviting others to join in the campaign. Mirek Prokes (duha@duha.cz) from the Czech Republic briefly presented the results of the European Social Forum held in Paris in November with the participation of many

thousands of people. At the ESF the topics of "Fortress Europe", migrants' and asylum seekers' situation, the discrimination of minorities, etc. were discussed on a large scale.

The ESF is quite debatable event within the anti-racist movement. On the one hand, it promotes social justice and equality in the world, on the other hand, many nationalist and even pro-nazi groups try to join this movement. The antiglobalist (or, how many people prefer to call it, alterglobalist) movement needs to be determined in its resolve to fight discrimination and support minorities and to kick out the racist groups from it. Mirek called upon the Conference participants to become involved and to pay attention to the next ESF, which is going to be held in autumn 2004 in London.

9 Social Events and More - enjoying the experience...

On several evenings participants had a chance to watch videos on anti-racist topics, including this year's MTV documentary on racism and anti-racism in European football "Free Your Mind: Kick Out Racism."

The Conference life was greatly enhanced by the existence of a daily Conference newspaper edited by Florian Niederndorfer, Verein für Dienste im Ausland, Austria. The newspaper consisted of participants' articles, information about the programme and quizzes.

This Conference gathered representatives of experienced anti-racist and anti-fascist organizations who were able to present and exchange a huge amount of their publications - also in English language - during the Info-market.

Polish Humanitarian Organization (PAH) - Krakow organized an evening sightseeing tour of the city and a nice meal in a Polish peasant-style restaurant. In addition the social programme consisted of an intercultural evening. Its main aim was to express anti-racist ideas of interculturalism through artistic performance and also to show the cultural diversity among the participants: Romanian songs, Polish and Ukrainian dances, African music etc. The intercultural evening was followed by a successful performance of Massala Sound System, one of the most fashionable live and DJ music acts on the Polish scene today. They blend various ethno and oriental styles with a modern beat. They are also committed to social and political causes and they have been at the forefront of the musical struggle against racism, not least through their involvement with the Music Against Racism campaign initiated by the 'Never Again' Association. The performance was received enthusiastically by the Conference participants.

10 After the Conference - the participants say...

Oxana Chelysheva, Society of Russian-Chechen Friendship, Russian Federation:
The Society of Russian-Chechen Friendship was eager to participate in the UNITED Conference as we think that the only way to overcome problems is to unite our efforts and to ask for support of the international community. It refers

to the tragic situation of Chechnya. We think that one of the reasons that the conflict is still developing is the shortage or even lack of information coming from the war area. Thus, it is important for us to use any opportunity to attract the attention of the international community to what is going on in the Russian Federation.

Anthony Achno Ebua, Action for Equality, Support Anti-Racism, Cyprus:

I am a member of the youth section of my organization. I attended the Conference and participated in the Working Group "Situation of minorities in Europe". I learnt about the situation in some countries, e.g. the Dalits in the UK, Russians in Latvia, minorities in Belgium.

I have learnt about how organizations in some countries are fighting for minorities to have the right to participate in activities at the local level, e.g. the right to vote and to contest local elections. So, what I am taking back home is that my organization should also fight for minorities rights in my country, to help them to get integrated into the society and to be given the right to vote and contest local elections.

Julio Alberto Bosque, International Cultural and Youth Exchange, Switzerland:

I collected a lot of information concerning different organizations. Thanks to that information and the excellent methodology used in different Working Groups I can share these ideas with other organizations back home. Personally I had the chance to meet great people trying to bring some changes, and this experience has a great value for keeping contacts and communication open between us, for developing new strategies to make this change even more significant.

Sorana Radu, Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania:

I learnt how to "think locally and act globally". I got very attracted by the idea of working with refugees; I learnt new approaches to different subjects, e.g. how to teach about the Holocaust. My main goal was to share my experience in informal education (trips, what works and what does not work; how to educate when you have sensitive subjects). Together with the anti-fascist campaigning group we decided to have an international common action on 9 November, where we decided to act differently: instead of using anti, no, against slogans to be more pro: peace, respect, tolerance, communication.

Marsela Hoxhaj, Associazione Rieti Immigrant-Provincia, Italy:

At this Conference and during the discussions which were held concerning migration and "Fortress Europe", I felt that I would take back with me a great fear, fear that humanity is making and will make, more errors; the European policy on immigration has demonstrated this. I feel that all of us should take home the sense that we should change the situation.

Geeta Bandi Philips, Dalit Solidarity Network, Great Britain:

Thank you so much for inviting me to 'Never Again' conference. It has been a great fun and a good learning experience.

11 Thanks to - they made it possible...

The Conference was a collective effort. It would not have been possible without the involvement and support of numerous individuals and organizations, in particular the local branches of Polish Humanitarian Organization (PAH), the 'Never Again' Association and the Anti-Nazi Group (GAN) in Krakow and Oswiecim, Urszula Sienczak and Dorota Starowicz of ASF-Poland, Fundacja im.ks.Siemaszki, Jewish Centre in Oswiecim, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Katarzyna Nowak, Mariusz Nowak, Artur Szyndler, UPS Polska, EYF-Strasbourg, LNU-Norway. Thanks to everybody who contributed to the success of the Conference.

12 UNITED for Intercultural Action

UNITED for Intercultural Action

European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees

Racism, nationalism, fascism, discrimination, asylum policies... all of them have a European dimension even though they often look like pure national issues. Reports from all over Europe demonstrate the increasing dangers facing migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. Often these dangers are increased by undemocratic intergovernmental decisions like the Schengen Treaty. Strangely enough, racist and fascist organisations have strong European links from Portugal to Russia, from Sweden to Italy. Fortress Europe needs to be fought at local, regional and European levels - it cannot be fought on one level alone.

Linked through UNITED, hundreds of organisations from a wide variety of backgrounds, from all European countries, work together on a voluntary basis. They base their cooperation on common actions and shared activities on a mutual respect.

UNITED is and will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe.

Through the UNITED network organisations meet each other, work on common actions and share information. Europe-wide action weeks, campaigns and such are planned and discussed on UNITED conferences. Like-minded organisations find each other on such conferences and work together on specific projects on specific topics. The workers in the secretariat are in constant contact with the network organisations, ensuring that information and proposals for action are transmitted rapidly. Information is received from more than 2300 organisations and mailings are sent out to about 2500 groups in Europe.

If you want to get involved... Discuss the ideas and aims of the UNITED network within your organisation. Let us know that you would like to join or receive information. And add us to your mailing list!

More information you can find at www.unitedagainstracism.org or write to info@unitedagainstracism.org

Report: Natalia Sineaeva, Youth Helsinki Citizens Assembly, Moldova

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