

# Sharing Memories of Protest and Resistance

## Young Europeans Confront History Anew



in collaboration with

**GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT  
EUROPA**

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# Sharing Memories of Protest and Resistance

## Young Europeans Confront History Anew

A project of EUSTORY – History Network for Young Europeans  
in collaboration with the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA

## Foreword

“Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe” – this is the theme of a joint European history project of EUSTORY, the history network for young Europeans, and the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA (History Workshop Europe), a research program of the fund “Erinnerung und Zukunft” (Remembrance and Future) and the Robert Bosch Foundation. The project directs itself to alumni from the EUSTORY network and to former scholarship winners of the “Remembrance and Future” Fund. Between September 2006 and March 2007, 24 young Europeans from 12 different countries – all between 17 and 28 years old – joined in the adventure of researching and discussing, both together and comparatively, how protest, resistance and civil disobedience are remembered in Europe today.

Why a project on this subject and why now? For the European self-image, the years 2006 and 2007 were of central importance. The first marked the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising of 1956. And in March 2007, the European Union commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, with which – on March 25, 1957 – the foundation stone of the future European Community was laid. At first glance, the two events do not seem directly related. And yet they are closely connected – at least in terms of the official remembrance politics of contemporary Europe. To this very day, the Hungarian uprising is seen as a central symbol of Eastern European resistance to communism and to the post-war division of Europe into political spheres of influence. However, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that many Hungarians felt downright abandoned by the Western governments’ passive stance in 1956 and later. They felt similarly about the Treaties of Rome, which laid the foundation for the consolidation of Western Europe only a half year after the failure of the uprising. From the Hungarian point of view, these treaties betrayed the idea of a unified Europe, because they high-

lighted the beginning of a forced uncoupling of Western Europe in terms of economic and defence policy. On the occasion of the jubilee celebrations in the spring of 2007, the EU states rediscovered the Hungarian uprising as a precursor to European unification – a component of the modern European self-image in the 21st century. This interpretation, which also masks the anti-capitalist motives of the insurgents of 1956, very clearly shows the political dimensions of remembrance. It also shows that we Europeans must get to know our varied historical images and patterns of remembrance, continually scrutinize them and discuss them together. Above all, young Europeans should play an active role in this dialogue, never losing an opportunity to grapple critically with the Europe of yesterday and today and to take an active part in building the Europe of tomorrow.

As partners in the project, the European history network EUSTORY and the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA share the goal of giving young Europeans room for an independent and critical confrontation with European past, present and future. EUSTORY grew out of the Federal President’s History Competition, an initiative of the Körber Foundation. It reflects nearly 35 years of experience in pioneering research: Since 1973, this competition has encouraged pupils and students in Germany to actively take part in grass-roots, local remembrance work. With its impressive resonance among both pupils and teachers, the competition proved that – given the chance – young people are more than capable of immersing themselves actively and independently in historical themes and conducting exceptional research.

With EUSTORY, the Körber Foundation has successfully internationalized this German history-competition model over the past few years. By now, civil-society partner organizations from 19 European countries have joined

the EUSTORY network and under this common roof have regularly carried out independent national history competitions for pupils and young people.

From Wales to Vladivostok, from the North Pole to Sicily: Since the founding of EUSTORY in the autumn of 2001, more than 90,000 young Europeans have authored more than 40,000 studies of local and regional history. This makes EUSTORY the largest grass-roots movement related to European history. It also is a central platform for trans-border dialogue between youth across Europe, about secret, undiscovered, controversial or simply forgotten aspects of history.

But EUSTORY wants more than just confrontation with the past; young researchers should learn – by examining their own history in an unbiased manner – how to scrutinize the present critically and develop their own democratic approaches to provide for a peaceful future.

With its GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA, the foundation “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft”, which directs the “Remembrance and Future” Fund, wants to contribute to a European understanding of history by remembering the Holocaust and other crimes of National Socialism. It paid more than 4.4 billion euros in compensation to over 1.6 million former forced labourers and other victims of National Socialism worldwide from 2001 to 2007. In addition to its commitment to highlighting Jewish contributions to European history, the foundation especially wants its GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA to encourage youth to discover European dimensions of history through a critical confrontation with national historical interpretations.

Since 2005, the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA has sponsored 30 international

project groups. Participants, armed with research methods, have confronted historical representations in schoolbooks, memorials and exhibitions, and investigated the past made solid – whether through street names, monuments, myths and legends, whether in the Kashubian region, in Galicia, Lublin, on the Solovetsky Islands, in Volgograd, Minsk, Sighet, Batak, in the Isonzo valley or in Munster and Buchenwald. The results are not just intercultural travel guides, suggestions for new exhibition concepts or textbook additions; in fact, the project participants become ambassadors for a mature approach to history.

“Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe” proved to be an especially effective theme vis-à-vis the goals of EUSTORY and GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA – to encourage the questioning of established historical images, the development of a European perspective on history and the creation of connections between past and present. The Nazi period and its results have played a central role in many previous projects of the EUSTORY network and the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA. The invitation to youth to address themselves this time to a pan-European comparison of protest, resistance and civil disobedience in general was also a conscious request to transcend the thematic boundaries of the “catastrophic 20th century” and its two great wars. The project deliberately offered participants a chance to bring in personal experiences related to this theme. Many already had actively confronted

the theme of protest and resistance, whether through experiences in school or university or through the recounted experiences of parents and grandparents (who took part in, for example, student revolts, the environmental movement or the peaceful revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989/1990). Almost all the project’s participants recognized the connection between history and their own lives. And they saw first-hand how involvement with a theme like protest, resistance and civil disobedience suddenly begins to affect their opinions and actions. “The project showed me that there were always people in the past who stood up bravely for their own rights and for the rights of others. That got to me. I also want to be braver in the future and to stand up much more for the interests of others and also for my own rights,” said one participant during the final workshop in Hamburg.

There can be no greater compliment for the joint project, and there can be no better confirmation that it achieved its main goal of raising awareness and promoting democratic values among youth. Such results encourage EUSTORY and the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA to continue to pursue, with unflinching commitment, a trans-border dialogue over what makes Europe *Europe*.

  
Gabriele Woidelko

  
Dr. Ralf Possekel

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# Remembering

## Young Europeans Confront History Anew



# Together

European historical awareness is not ordained “from above,” but rather develops through exchange and discussion about conflicting experiences and national truths. Together, 24 pupils and students from 12 countries have put this to the test. They examined concepts of national history and explored their European dimensions.



## Why remember protest, resistance and civil disobedience?

Silent marches and catcalls, pamphlets and protest letters, street battles with the police, sabotage or guerrilla fighting: In 20th-century Europe, people standing up for democracy, human rights and freedom for others used various forms of protest and resistance in the struggle against authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Also typical during the 20th century were mass social movements that sought changes within an existing political order and society.

However, it was not just protest, resistance and civil disobedience that characterised Europe at this time. The memory of such activities also played and still plays a major role in the evolution of national pride and national historical imagery. But the history of protest is often more multilayered and contradictory than the politics of remembrance would have us believe.

After 1945, all the post-war European states used the reference to their national battles against Nazi terror and fascist occupational policies to lend historical legitimacy to the establishment of new political orders. Resistance fighters and partisans were presented as national martyrs, whose heroic deaths should place young people under a moral obligation to build up the new order. Such national resistance myths allowed people to forget that many citizens did not oppose fascism but instead remained silent or collaborated. Aspects of the wartime resistance whose political goals did not conform to the post-war European order were often just as ignored as were the xenophobic and anti-Semitic motives of nationalist freedom movements.

The subject of anti-communist protest and resistance, on the other hand, is still largely



restricted to academic debates. Unfortunately, among the greater public, deserving opposition figures and dissidents scarcely receive appropriate and distinctive appreciation. Perhaps people do not wish to remind themselves about the persecution and surveillance of dissidents in socialist and communist systems because it would force them to confront their own opportunistic behaviour.

In most cases, no public form of remembrance has yet been found for the large protest movements and civil disobedience that took place in liberal democracies during the second half of the 20th century. This is primarily because the goals and meaning of these protests remain controversial today. When they are discussed, it is often only for partisan or current political reasons, for example in the controversy over the future of nuclear energy or in debates over the role of the 1968ers.

When addressing the question of how protest, resistance or civil disobedience in Eu-

rope is remembered, what especially stands out is the fact that public memory remains predominantly restricted to a national perspective. This is even the case when trans-national cooperation existed between resistance movements and social movements and when European dimensions are apparent. Thus the history of Europe is still far from being remembered in a European, as opposed to a national, manner.

Moreover, the question remains as to whether and how to fashion a European remembrance of events that normally bear a strong national stamp. And finally, the matter of purpose should not be forgotten: Which goal should a European remembrance serve? If one looks back at the autumn 2006 celebrations with which European political leaders memorialized the Hungarian revolt of 1956, an important objective becomes clear: The remembrance of anti-totalitarian resistance and protest should be developed into a positive foundation for the European structure. But is it actually possible to reconcile the wish for such a unifying historical image and its concomitant "European identity" with the con-

## Why I joined the project

### From: Liliana, Romania

When I read the topic of the project, I thought of the Romanian resistance against communism. I know we don't have historical moments as famous as Budapest 1956 or Prague 1968, but in Romania resistance movements also took place. This project will give me the opportunity to understand better the phenomenon and to compare the situation in Romania with similar experiences in other countries. Different points of view will open new perspectives. It will be a good chance to meet old friends and make some new ones.

### From: Michou, The Netherlands

Frankly, I was worried about my own knowledge. The only things I could think of were examples of protest in the Netherlands. Like the resistance against the Germans in the Second World War or the resistance against Spanish occupation in the 16th century. Was this all I knew about the subject? What about protest or resistance in the rest of Europe?

### From: Ivan, Russia

Remembering protest, resistance and civil disobedience in Europe – this is a topic of current importance. What gave people the spirit to resist something or somebody? How did actions of civil disobedience affect societies? To study history and remembrance in a European context is a great possibility that is given by this project.

### From: Lesia, Ukraine

I suppose you have heard about the small revolution one year ago in my country, and to tell the truth it has never ended. Even after it, the situation is not much better. And now most people of Ukraine don't know their aims, and they don't even reflect on what preceded the present. The cause of it is the indifference and irresponsibility of the Ukrainian nation. To my mind, the establishment of a mutual understanding with other European countries can teach us a lot. I would like to get acquainted with a foreign culture and thereby to recognize the unique features of my own culture during investigations for this project.

### From: Milena, Serbia

During the last 15 years, my country has been exposed to characteristic cases of civil disobedience and protests. In some way, my whole childhood and growing up was marked by these events. When the first major event started, I was very young, but it had a great influence on me, my family and all Serbian people. In October 2000 there were massive strikes and demonstrations. Schools and universities were striking. Citizens, my family, my friends and I spent many days on the street, demanding our rights. I believe that my people would still live under repression if there had not been civil disobedience. With this new project, I hope to discover and learn about ways in which citizens can legally fight for their rights and defend general interests.

tradictory resistance and protest experiences that often divide nations and ethnicities from one another?

## Variety of memories – future of memory?

These reflections have inspired the European history network EUSTORY and the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA of the “Remembrance and Future” Fund to implement a joint project titled “Remembering Pro-

test, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe. An International Research Project on Politics of Memory.” Alumni of the EUSTORY network and former scholarship winners of the “Remembrance and Future” Fund were invited to explore, together and comparatively, questions of how protest, resistance and civil disobedience in 20th-century Europe will be remembered today.

Ultimately, 24 participants from 12 countries had the opportunity to take part in this European dialogue about history and memory. The countries represented were Bulgaria, Ger-

many, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and the Ukraine. The participants were born between 1978 and 1989 and have different vocations: seven are high-school students, two are teachers and the rest are university students studying a wide variety of subjects: art history, education science, environmental science, European studies, history, international relations, language science, law, media science, philosophy, physics, political science and sociology. Despite everything that divides these young Europeans, they share at least

“To study history and remembrance in a European context is a great possibility that is given by this project.” (Ivan)

three qualities essential to the project. They have a strong interest in history and politics, they are curious about questions of current national and European politics and – most important – they seek exchange with international contemporaries on these subjects.

At the same time, for all participants, the challenges of such a dialogue were not inconsiderable. It meant scrutinizing one’s own view of history and both recognizing the others’ perspectives and taking them seriously. Part of what was required was listening carefully, allowing historical contexts and details to be explained or adopting them independently. Mutual trust was necessary so that in the final

stage, the exchange between one’s own point of view and that of the others could continue even when difficult themes were being discussed. Finally, there were language hurdles to be overcome: English was the project’s *lingua franca*.

Because protest and resistance are remembered mostly from a national perspective, the young Europeans were supposed to do their research where they live and work. In their own country, they easily could find concrete objects and forms of remembrance as well as archival materials, contemporary witnesses and cooperation partners. They communicated the results of their individual research via a modern Internet platform, through which

discussion with the other participants also took place. Content-wise, the Internet seminar presented four thematic foci, which dovetailed with one another: an agreement over the history of the basic concepts; the European memory of the Hungarian revolt in 1956; the analysis of a concrete example of remembrance from one’s native land dedicated to protest or resistance in the 20th century; and, finally, personal remembrance of protest in one’s family. The task of compiling a “Protest Chronology” encompassed the entire project. All participants were called upon to track media coverage of local, regional or national protests in their native country and to use the

## Internet forum as a communication experience

This was the first time that I worked on an Internet platform. I liked the idea of E-learning and having a permanent possibility of communication. Everything was really exciting for me: the way we put together everyone’s work, comparing, looking for conclusions. I liked the assignments as well; in fact, this is what I call pleasant work.

Working on the net allowed us exchange which hardly could have been realized by other means – though I sometimes missed talking face-to-face.

I really liked the diversity of ideas, opinions and presentation formats, all present in one place.

The Internet platform gave us the opportunity to evaluate discussions, add pictures or even sound / video files – I think we didn’t use the latter as we could have, but still there’s a great chance to “see the whole picture” while communicating through the platform. Besides, we could exchange links and dig in whenever we found something more interesting for us.

The thoughts could be written down in a manner that’s totally different than talking because one could look up words and make oneself more clear.

I’m a person that works a lot with eyes and gestures to support my ideas and intentions. Without that, it was sometimes not clear to me if the people got what I wanted to say.

For an effective dialogue, I need to hear a person – maybe in the future we can use Skype for communication?

I liked the fact that it was quite an open conversation, which was – despite some breaks in communication – surprisingly lively and stimulating across borders.

I especially liked our discussions. I think it was a very good idea to create smaller groups and let people discuss the details of each and every paper. The fact that people were able to reread most of the papers many times and react to them carefully and in detail was a positive aspect of this kind of communication.



Ultimate concentration: In Hamburg, Agnieszka (Poland) and Tina (Slovenia) prepare the closing presentation for the project "Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe," based on their work in the Internet forum.



Internet platform to document news that appeared especially interesting or relevant. In order to prepare for this five-month-long virtual work phase, all participants met for two days in Berlin in September 2006. The Internet communication and the entire project were capped by a four-day workshop in Hamburg in March 2007.

During the five months that the project communication took place over the Internet platform, each participant was involved with daily tasks for school, university or job. But the virtual learning setting allowed all to read and comment on the others' contributions at any time or from any place. The project's moderator, the historian Axel Doßmann, gave the participants work assignments, advice on methodology and stimuli for discussion. However, the interactive learning setting also made

it possible for each participant to open up new work and discussion areas and to invite other participants to join them in debate.

Most participants were working in a virtual environment for the first time. They learned first-hand how team spirit, continuity and transparency are fundamental to the success of such a work community. Participants who didn't log on to the platform often enough were overwhelmed by the flood of new information and were in danger of losing track of the project. If a participant agreed with the others, he or she could not simply nod at the computer but had to openly explain his or her position by writing a message. But despite some difficulties, the high-school and university students experienced above all the advantages of using the Internet for a trans-border collaboration. A European dialogue of this length and inten-

sity would not have been possible without the World Wide Web.

The variety of representations and interpretations of protest stories that participants researched in the course of the project made one point especially clear: When dealing with history, it makes no sense to search for a single truth. Instead, different perspectives on past events and developments must be identified, discussed and weighed: How and why do these points of view arise? Where do their differences lie? Are they plausible? What function do these images of history have today for individuals and for society? It was no less than these questions that high-school and university students involved in this project tried to ask and debate. The following chapters offer insight into the young Europeans' research and discussions.

# To Define, or

## Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience



# Be Defined?

Agreement is needed on a project's basic terms. For starters, how about dry theory? A look at old and new encyclopaedias reveals something fascinating: tangible examples of how language can be political.





Freedom of opinion, in practice: Seminar participants demonstrate at the Port of Hamburg.

“My parents decided to boycott the tourism in France and that’s why they went to Italy. It looks like my parents have protested on a small scale.” (Michou)

## Definitions put to the test

If one wants to analyse the way protest, resistance and civil disobedience are remembered, one first has to understand what these terms mean. For participants in the project “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience,” this was the first step of their Internet forum. Dutch history teacher Michou related the following story from her childhood, as an example of what protest could be:

*As a child, we always spent the holidays in France. It was great; my sisters, my parents and I spent some good times there, but suddenly, my parents decided to go to Italy. Why was that? Then I remembered my father once telling me it was because of a nuclear testing in 1995 in France. On 5th September 1995 France performed an underground nuclear test on the atoll Mururoa in the Pacific Ocean. My parents disagreed with this and decided to spend their holidays in Italy. Could this be some form of protest? I asked my parents. My father explained to me it was indeed a form*

*of protest against the government of France. My parents decided to boycott the tourism in France and that’s why they went to Italy. It looks like my parents have protested on a small scale.*

As Michou sees it, her parents’ boycott was a form of protest. Social scientists would ask whether there were others taking part. The mere fact that the family did not go to France on vacation does not make their action “protest.” It lacks an important dimension: Protest is first and foremost defined by the fact that your own act of opposition aims specifically for publicity, in order to attract additional sympathizers.

Presumably, her parents were reacting to one of the worldwide campaigns by peace and environmental activist groups like Greenpeace, which at the time called on tourists to boycott French goods and tourism. Given those circumstances, Michou’s parents in fact took part in a protest. They and thousands of others made it clear to the French government that they disapproved of their policies and thus

“Resistance is something  
 really irritating for the state.  
 The authorities know it is there.  
 But it is hidden and that’s why it is  
 even more difficult to stop it.”  
 (Liliana)

were intentionally withholding financial support. It was a purposeful, collective act of protest, arising from a feeling of political and ecological responsibility to improve the world.

In order to illuminate such connections, participants looked into the way the terms “protest,” “resistance” and “civil disobedience” are defined in current national encyclopaedias. These entries were compared with definitions from older editions. These forays into the national history of terminology clearly showed that every encyclopaedia placed a different emphasis on the words, depending on the country and the publication date. The participants were much more likely to find political commentary than neutral, “objective” definitions. Some articles were disappointingly limited, and in some encyclopaedias, even in the newest editions, these terms were not even included. That is not always proof of political censorship, but it is an indicator of the development of the democratic culture in a particular country, and shows that supposedly authoritative publications like encyclopaedias are “products of the times,” tinged with the ideologies, propaganda and theoretical preferences of their authors.

## Resistance

In many encyclopaedias, according to several participants, “resistance” was defined in physical or even electro-technical terms. That definition seemed at first to be useless for the purposes of an historical project. But at second glance, a connection becomes evident on the socio-political level. This is because – as in nature and technology – social resistance hinders or lessens the force of the adversary in question.

German pupil Guido quotes the “Little Encyclopaedia of Politics” from 2002: *Resistance can be aimed at an outer or inner threat of political*

*communities, can be directed at an inner oppressor or at the directives of an external power, can be violent or non-violent, active or passive.* This definition is on the one hand quite general, but in fact it clearly defines the two lines of attack: “resistance” aims at overthrowing a government or occupational power, or at the very least at major changes in existing power relationships. So demands for higher pay, for example, or for better working conditions were not considered resistance.

Historian Thomas Lindenberger, an expert on the history of protest from the Centre for Research in Contemporary History in Potsdam, commented occasionally on the work of participants, and added the explanation:

*“Resistance” more often than not is attributed not just to a single instance of resistant behaviour but rather to a whole bundle of events which took place at different moments and at different places involving people from different backgrounds, which were however united by a common goal, namely to impede or bring down a given power structure.*

Given this background, it is clear why the encyclopaedia that Guido consulted characterises “civil disobedience” as a “form of resistance in a constitutional state.” For example, proponents of the anti-atomic energy movement deliberately break laws and norms for the protection of public security, in order to defend higher laws of human rights with their sit-ins or by chaining themselves to fences. They want to hinder or delay the building of atomic-energy plants or the stationing of missiles, and thus their acts amount to resistance against huge national or supra-national power structures like the military-industrial complex.

But political opponents of a dictatorship usually have to go into the underground and

organize militarily for sabotage and illegal propaganda purposes, in order to effectively shake up the powers that be. That is because public space and the media are occupied and controlled by the “leading party” and its ideology. Romanian history student Liliana commented on the disturbing effect that such resistance groups still have on the state:

*Resistance is something really irritating for the state. The authorities know it is there. But it is hidden and that’s why it is even more difficult to stop it.*

So much for the current understanding of the term “resistance.” But what did the participants find out through their research into



Human barriers: Demonstrators chain themselves to train tracks, to halt the progress of a Castor transport (Germany 2003).

**“The dictionary does  
not mention the resistance against  
the Soviets in Poland. I would classify  
such an omission as a way of falsifying  
the history.” (Agnieszka)**

the older editions of reference

books? Anete, who is studying po-

litical science in Riga, looked at Soviet encyclopaedias from the 1930s and 1950s. She writes:

*The only justification of resistance against the state was connected to communist ideology: the fight for the foundation of a communist system in a country or against fascism or Nazism. This definition reflected Stalin’s dominance over the Soviet Union, where critics had no chance and were relentlessly persecuted. Resistance against the communist government was supposed to be unthinkable – and accordingly was delegitimized and presented as a political offence in the encyclopaedia.*

The fact that reference books published in socialist states defined resistance solely as resistance against non-communist systems was confirmed by Agnieszka of Poland, who used a dictionary from 1963. In this connection, she criticizes the one-sided selection of historical examples:

*The dictionary underlines that the resistance against the Nazis existed in all occupied countries and gives some examples of the term “resistance” used in that sense. It does not mention the resistance against the Soviets in Poland. Although the definition does not contain any clearly false information, I would classify such an omission as a way of falsifying the history.*

Has there been any change in this one-sided interpretation of the term in former socialist countries? Jakub, a student in Szczecin, was disappointed: In a Polish reference book from 2006 he still found only the example of Polish armed resistance in World War II. Other encyclopaedias cited no historical examples at all. Ukrainian physics student Lesija even found that the term “resistance” never comes up in her “Encyclopaedia of Law and Policy” for students of the natural and technical sciences. Is this a relic from the Soviet period? Why did the encyclopaedia editors of the 1990s not want to confront their readers with such important political questions?

And how do Western European encyclopaedias look? In a Swiss encyclopaedia from 1998 that Andrea consulted, the authors did differentiate between various kinds of resistance (symbolic, polemic, passive and active resistance), but only chose examples from World War II. Similarly, a newer Dutch encyclopaedia only mentioned the struggle against the German occupation during World War II. Michou commented:

*The fact that this example is mentioned is very typical of the definition of the word resistance in the Netherlands, because this example of “resistance” is one of the most recent ones. When you ask a randomly picked Dutch person to give an example of resistance, most of them will give you an example of the resistance during WWII against the German domination.*

Clearly, when it comes to the term “resistance,” definitions are similar across Europe. Encyclopaedias in the East as in the West usually cling to national perspectives, and most mention resistance against National Socialism as their only historical example. For the West, the history of anti-communist resistance clearly is not important to the definition of resistance, even many years after the fall of communism. Paradoxically, in the post-communist states, remembrance of the anti-fascist struggle seems to be more vivid than the resistance that contributed to the end of communism less than two decades ago.

## Protest

*An action which is taken secretly is not a protest,* concluded Agnieszka after researching the term “protest” and thus joined the other participants in separating this word from the term “resistance.” Ivan, from Russia, compiled additional criteria from a current political dictionary: *Protest always reflects a strong demand;*

*it always doubts or calls in question political power (in all forms and manifestations), rituals, customs, bureaucracy. In contrast to revolt or rebellion, protest usually does not use constraint or force, but may use it; protest should win the recognition of people: It should be visible, people should hear about protest. In short, information about protest should spread over society.*

But the law student from Astrachan did not accept one point of the recommended definition: *I do not share the author’s opinion: “Protest is combined only with democracy.” The 20th century shows us examples of successful protests in societies devoid of democracy. However, protest can be more effective and less dangerous under democracy, because of legitimation of different forms of protest.*

Through the course of the project, Ivan demonstrated that many Soviet citizens openly sympathized with the Prague Spring in 1968. One demonstrator, Tatjana Garbo-nevskaja, took down her memories of this protest to share with the world, as eyewitness testimony:

On 25 August 1968, shortly after Soviet troops marched into Czechoslovakia, eight dissidents gathered on Red Square in Moscow. The men and women had prepared banners: “For your and our freedom” and “Long live free and independent Czechoslovakia.” No sooner had these eight taken out their banners and a Czech national flag, than a crowd of curious onlookers gathered around them on Red Square. A few seconds later, men stormed into the crowd, destroyed the posters, berated the demonstrators as “Jews” and “anti-Bolsheviks,” beat them and jailed them. The dissidents were punished for their peaceful demonstration with prison terms, or were isolated in psychiatric wards.

In liberal democracies, unlike dictatorships or authoritarian states, public space is actually open to the expression of dissident ideas. Here every citizen can call upon his or her right to freedom of thought, expression and assembly,

**“I do not share the author’s opinion: ‘Protest is combined only with democracy.’ The 20th century shows us examples of successful protests in societies devoid of democracy.” (Ivan)**

and demand equal treatment from the state. The state is bound to protect the rights of its citizen – not vice versa. Certainly there is also a learning process between demonstrating citizens, police and the courts, which has developed to differing extents in European countries and reflects experience with protest by both sides. In developed democracies, this relationship of the citizens to their state yields protest almost daily. That can turn protest into a game, sport or adventure for some people. The goals of protest threaten to become of secondary importance. These kinds of experiences made some participants sceptical – as

Lotta, a high-school graduate from Germany, explains:

*Among the students of my age in my school it became sort of “cool” to be against something and demonstrate against it. A lot of them joined the punk movement that exists in our town: They went to concerts, which often ended up in violent arguments with the police, and were proud of “having fought against the cops.” When the Iraq War started, there were some demonstrations against it, organized by the punks. But I did not participate in it, because I wanted to protest against the war in a peaceful way and not in the partly violent way they liked.*

Anyone who wants protest to be taken seriously and to have an effect on today’s democracies must try to win a lot of public attention for his or her concerns in advance. If this succeeds, there could be a large “media echo” as a result of the protests. The participants were able to ascertain this dynamic between publicity, protest and media reporting through their work on the chronology of protest.

In particular, the “new media” play a decisive role in protest. Internet or other communication methods such as text messaging offer fast and flexible forms of self-organization for protest movements in Europe or worldwide, such as “Greenpeace,” “Attac” or “NO Lager.” In addition, new forms of protest develop through this evolution of “publicity,” as Thomas Lindenberger stresses:

*The public is created to an extreme extent by virtual representation, that is via media. It is not a predominantly physically present public any longer. Protest can even do without any physical co-presence of protesters, if you think of actions such as blocking mail servers of institutions by sending millions of e-mails at the same time. The free use of public space both in its physical and its virtual representations is the most valuable resource for modern protest.*

## Civil disobedience

Agnieszka, a student of modern languages in Warsaw, found the following explanation of the term “civil disobedience” in a Polish encyclopaedia from 2003:

*Civil disobedience is a conscious and deliberate disobedience of certain regulations which form a part of generally accepted law order and which in the opinion of a citizen violate some fundamental rules of justice, limit his/her freedom and equality in law. The citizens are violating the law regulation on purpose and are aware of the fact that their actions will bring some reaction by the ruling power. They accept the consequences of their actions, but*



Demonstrations as fun? Pupils protest against the Iraq war (Germany 2003).



Protest, resistance or civil disobedience? During the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, a professor holds readings on Maidan Square.

they do not see any other way of convincing the authority about the harmfulness of the decision that it took. A campaign of civil disobedience has to refrain from using violence and its organizers should in their actions obey all the existing law regulations, with the exception of the one that became the reason for the protest.

This explanation helped Agnieszka. But a look at the 1966 edition of the same encyclopaedia yielded no results: the term “civil disobedience” is not there. Agnieszka wondered why the term was not explained to the Polish reader in 1966.

The first explanation which springs to mind may be that “civil disobedience” is not included because the communist government wanted to eliminate the phenomenon altogether by eliminating the word. As in “1984” by George Orwell, where those in power rename the objects and phenomena, they introduced new ones in accordance with their political needs, so that they could control the thoughts and speech of the citizens better. However, I would be cautious about drawing such far-reaching conclusions.

One should not forget that the term “civil disobedience” is young in Poland. The Polish version of the term (*nieposłuszeństwo obywatelskie*) is a

direct translation from English, and the impact of this language was very limited during communism, as a result of limited access to media from abroad and restricted opportunities to travel. The expression “civil disobedience” did not exist in the Polish political and journalistic discourse, even among the opposition. It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s that it came into use.

In fact, the term “civil disobedience” originated in the Western world. Andrea, who studies political science in Zurich, cites the latest German Brockhaus Encyclopedia. There, it is emphasized that the political tactic of “civil disobedience” was most influential for the American civil-rights and peace movements. But other encyclopaedia articles emphasize the influence of Mahatma Gandhi’s teachings on non-violent resistance. There are many references to the influential writings of the American philosopher H. D. Thoreau from the middle of the 19th century. His essays even inspired the French “Résistance” fighters of the 1940s in their struggle against the German occupation.

The Cold War made it difficult for such Western political discourse to penetrate the “Iron Curtain” into Eastern Europe. Partici-

pants from Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania and Russia emphasized this point. The term “civil disobedience” is still rarely used there, or has no corresponding term in the local language. Anna, a student from Bratislava, confirmed this, referring to a Slovakian reference book published before 1990:

*There was NO definition of civil disobedience. But that speaks for itself. It tells us that the communist regime didn't have the guts to let people know about the concept of civil disobedience. At the same time, it is also possible that those who were putting the political dictionaries together at that time did not consider it important.*

This thesis is at least partly contradicted by the fact that Milena of Belgrade found a thoroughly sophisticated and detailed explanation of the concept of “civil disobedience” in a political encyclopaedia from 1975. This definition, in addition to mentioning the current Polish situation, also emphasized that the goals of civil disobedience are not to gain personal advantage but to produce change for the public good.

So “civil disobedience” was not completely unknown in communist states. Of course there were considerable differences from country to country: Political censorship was practiced to varying degrees, and local intellectual traditions were carried over from the pre-war days. The post-war political culture also depended on how influential Stalinism was in the individual countries. Yugoslavia under Tito distanced itself from the dictates of Stalin early on and pursued its own path under communism, not cutting itself off so dramatically from the West. This resulted in greater freedom for reflecting on political theory.

This made it even more remarkable that the Serbian participants found no more entries under “civil disobedience” in reference books between 1988 and 2002. But of course a country’s political culture cannot be measured solely by what is – or is not – in its encyclopaedias. That is why Katarina cites essays by

## Does language create realities? A debate

### From: Anete

I cannot fully agree with Anna's statement that the communist regime was afraid to explain the aims and ideas of civil disobedience or protest. I think they used the concept in their own propaganda – if we remember the demonstrations of 1st of May and the slogans that participation of every citizen is crucial for achieving communism. So communists did not expel the idea of protest at all. They just used it for their own propaganda aims. At least I got that impression from my textbooks and encyclopaedia.

### From: Anna

I agree with Anete that communists explained all the concepts in terms of propaganda. Therefore, we have to conclude that it was not the real interpretation of civil disobedience. As to my findings, none of the communist language, political or law dictionaries included the term "civil disobedience." They did include the term "protest." This term was not properly explained though. Just to make myself absolutely clear then: I am not saying that communists completely ignored the term "protest," but the problem is that they did not explain it properly. And they did ignore "civil disobedience." Hence, my conclusion: "Communists did not have the guts to let people know about civil disobedience." And I could add: They did not have the guts to let people know about resistance or protest – in the way they really are.

### From: Rebecca

If a certain group of people or one person has a different opinion and wants to protest, they also have got their own definition of protest, and they won't necessarily look up the UNIVERSAL definition in a dictionary, so they may define it differently. The cultures may seem similar but they aren't. That's why there are many definitions; they are all right in their own way – valid for the ideology and culture they are written for. If there is no definition, it was just not important to the author / government / ... to educate the reader about it, even if the reader knows about it and has his/her own opinion. This is what we are trying to find out about – how the different countries remember protest. If the definition is different, remembrance has to be different, too. We can only learn to realize the differences and widen our perspective to see other countries differently, but we can't find truth, as usually in dealing with history.

### From: Anete

I liked very much Rebecca's definition of *definition* as the summary of the ideas, concepts and worldviews of a specific time – as definitions largely tell us not the universal idea of a thing or process, but our perception at an exact time of what this thing or process means to us. But recently I started to think that although we all think of protest and resistance as civic society's deep expression of its will, sometimes the protests are used to [distract people] about something else, and are not about more meaningful problems. Could protest be used as the tool of manipulation, and what could be the bad sides of protest or resistance?

intellectuals in Serbian magazines from 2002, to show that the debate over ethical and legal questions about civil disobedience continues in Serbia today.

Their research made it clear to participants that while the term "civil disobedience" was scarcely well known in Eastern Europe under communist rule, civil disobedience was practiced by dissidents in Eastern Europe, often in spectacular fashion, as a non-violent means to force the state to uphold its constitution and laws.

## Language is policy

If you look back again at all the attempts to define the three terms, it becomes obvious that the boundaries between them are fuzzy. That is a product of political reality: Anyone who says "no" or "stop" in front of an audience, and in so

doing stands up publicly for a better world, is combining – knowingly or unknowingly – different forms of social protest.

Katarina of Belgrade found a vivid example of this blending: She recalled how the activists of "Otpor" became a worldwide sensation and drew support with their imaginative campaign against the Milošević regime. "Otpor" practiced protest in its most popular form: with peaceful demonstrations. The restrictive laws of the Milošević regime prompted conscious defiance, because the government controlled public space. So the demonstrators fully expected political persecution. Otpor supporters also employed the tactics of civil disobedience in their protests. Katarina mentioned that Otpor was inspired by the writings of American political scientist and protest expert Gene Sharp on non-violent action. But the overarching goal of all the actions was also no secret: to overthrow Milošević. So the name "Otpor" was

important, because the Serbian word "otpor" means, purely and simply, "resistance."

Through their individual research and discussion, every participant in the project could envision just how politicized these terms could be. They recognized that, both today and in the past, no place is free from the influence of ideology and motives. There are always perspectives involved, perspectives that one can identify and evaluate in terms of their inner logic and their applicability to others. Instead of searching for a universal and thus abstract truth, it is better to access and interpret the historical contexts as concretely as possible. The German pupil and student Christina summed up the point of this assignment: *This little trip into the history of deviant behaviour (to put it neutrally) at least showed that we have to think about the words, the language we use as it may unwittingly transmit associations. Language also has got (a) history.*

# How Are Protest, Resistance and Civil Disobedience Remembered in Europe?

**An Investigation by  
Young Europeans  
from Twelve Countries**



How are acts of protest, resistance and civil disobedience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century remembered in Europe? Participants in the project analysed monuments, memorials, exhibits, museums, websites and films – and together with their grandparents and parents they recalled personal experiences in the fight for human rights and democracy.

“Switzerland’s history is very much focused on its prestigious Middle Ages and earlier. Nothing quite recent is displayed in public.” (Andrea)

## 24 researchers in twelve European countries, four topics, many motivations

Using an example from your environment, show how protest, resistance and civil disobedience in the 20th century are remembered in your country. This task in the Internet forum consciously left the concrete theme and purpose open. For this investigation into the national culture of remembrance, everyone was to choose a protest-related story that they found particularly appealing.



Voting rights for women – is it up to men to decide? In 1969, 57 percent of male voters in Switzerland approved the cantonal right of co-determination for women.

### From: Andrea

I'll write something about the protest of women in Switzerland. The problem at the moment is that I hadn't time to check out any streets or squares dedicated to women protesters ... have to do that desperately. It's quite difficult to do that, because Switzerland's history is very much focused on its prestigious Middle Ages and earlier. Nothing quite recent is displayed in public. The evidence is that Switzerland just hadn't any big protest leader, so you won't find any statue ... apart from Wilhelm Tell (but this guy wasn't even real ...)

### From: Mihails

Why have you chosen to do research on women's protest? I am asking because I haven't heard anything about women's protests happening in my country. My research is dedicated to the resistance movement in Latvia during WW II. I will focus on the Occupation Museum in Riga. I want to find out how successful the resistance movement was and which goal its members had. Was it to end the war or rather to get rid of the government? Moreover, I would like to find out the reasons why Latvians were so taken with the idea that Germans coming to Latvia would improve the country's situation. For me it looks like one more occupation, but people then didn't understand that.

### From: Amélie

It is interesting, Mihails, that there have not been any women's protests and suffragettes in Latvia. My fourth assignment deals with the issue of squatting and how it is remembered in Germany. I want to check out an exhibition in a museum of Berlin Kreuzberg that deals with this aspect of German history, and also a TV broadcast dealing with the violent death of one of the protesters. In the early '80s some adolescent Germans did not agree with the cultural, moral and economic norms of their parents' generation. One of their demands was for free living space. For this reason they started to squat in vacant houses. It was their goal to conceptualize a new form of common living. In this regard it came to a lot of violent demonstrations and street fights with the police. Meanwhile the illegal inhabitants bought or rented the houses and arranged an alternative way of living. But: Some of the houses are still squats.

### From: Milena

Thank you, Andrea, for opening the discussion. When you say women's protests, what kind of protest do you mean: for the right to vote or for equality between men and women in general? Amélie, do you know if those who squatted in the houses in Berlin still believe in that concept of free living space and common living? It would be really interesting to hear something from those who witnessed these events.

Okay, now something about my topic! I'll focus my research on a documentary about 27 March 1941 – the day when Serbian people demonstrated against the Serbian government under Prime Minister Ljotic, who had begun official collaboration with Nazi Germany. There is a famous slogan that people were shouting on that day (and which probably every single person in Serbia knows): “Better war than a treaty!” This documentary was made on this very day in 1941, but was rediscovered only 65 years later, in the very beginning of 2006, by a Serbian movie historian. On 27 March 2006, the 65th anniversary of that day, it was broadcast on national television. In March 2006, there was also a special TV show dedicated to this event. So I'll research how this day in 1941 is remembered today. And why this documentary was lost for such a long time. So greetings to everybody ... and good luck with your papers ...

**“Remembrance is very much a matter of present-day politics and of the way in which powerful institutions function to select particular values from the past and to mobilize them in contemporary practices.” (Kalina)**

Mihails, Amélie and Milena found what they were looking for on the first try. Andrea, on the other hand, was forced to abandon her search for memorials or streets in Zurich dedicated to Swiss women’s-rights activists. There still is no such form of remembrance in her city. So participants in the project already were able to recognize, through their search for appropriate objects of analysis, that not all historical acts of protest and resistance are anchored in the national culture of remembrance. Public acts of remembrance presuppose that the societal groups involved have enough access to political power, or are otherwise in a position to mobilize enough people for their cause, and are able to arrange compromises with competing interpretations of the past. Kalina and Christina discussed the interrelationship of politics, collective and individual remembrance and thus were able to raise important issues:

**KALINA:** *Remembrance is very much a matter of present-day politics and of the way in which powerful institutions function to select particular values from the past and to mobilize them in contemporary practices. Through such mechanisms of cultural reproduction, a particular version of collective memory and thus a particular sense of national and cultural identity are produced.*

**CHRISTINA:** *I wondered a little whether your view of remembrance isn’t a little “pessimistic.” Sure, the influence of politics on memory exists – to a greater degree than people normally realise. But a “collective memory” still can only “remember” in terms of the individuals’ memory. And individual memory can never be totally determined by collective powers but is fundamentally based on personal experiences.*

*Very interesting, in this context, are the ideas of Jan and Aleida Assmann, the “leading” couple in German memory research. They suggest (inter alia) the terms of “cultural*

*and “communicative memory” to describe the different degrees of fixation and “collectivisation” of remembrance. “Cultural memory” is similar to what you outlined above – the national “myths” and master narratives constituting the nation’s beginning, already formed into a celebrative tradition with fixed rituals ensuring that they are handed down. “Communicative memory,” in contrast, is rather unshaped, in other words personal experiences that are traded in a familiar, “unofficial” way. Nevertheless each memory – even the most personal – has somehow to fit into the cadre social (social frame) and the existing discourses. Here again, I have to stress that every remembrance is indeed influenced (also but not exclusively by politics) but never totally “collectivized.”*

Because the conflict over “cultural memory” is scarcely possible to understand if one does not also examine the “communicative memory” more closely, every participant was called upon as a follow-up to the investigation of public forms of remembrance to ask their own relatives about their personal memories of protest and resistance. In this way the participants could learn, in a very personal way, not only how private and public thoughts relate to each other but also how some aspects of the past always are factored out and forgotten.

Participants posted 24 multifaceted contributions to public remembrance on the Internet platform – in the form of images, film and musical documents. The historical events and contexts that most galvanized the participants fell into four categories:

1. Resistance and protest against National Socialism/fascism and German occupation
2. Resistance and civil disobedience against communist dictatorships and Soviet rule
3. Protest movements and civil disobedience in established liberal democracies

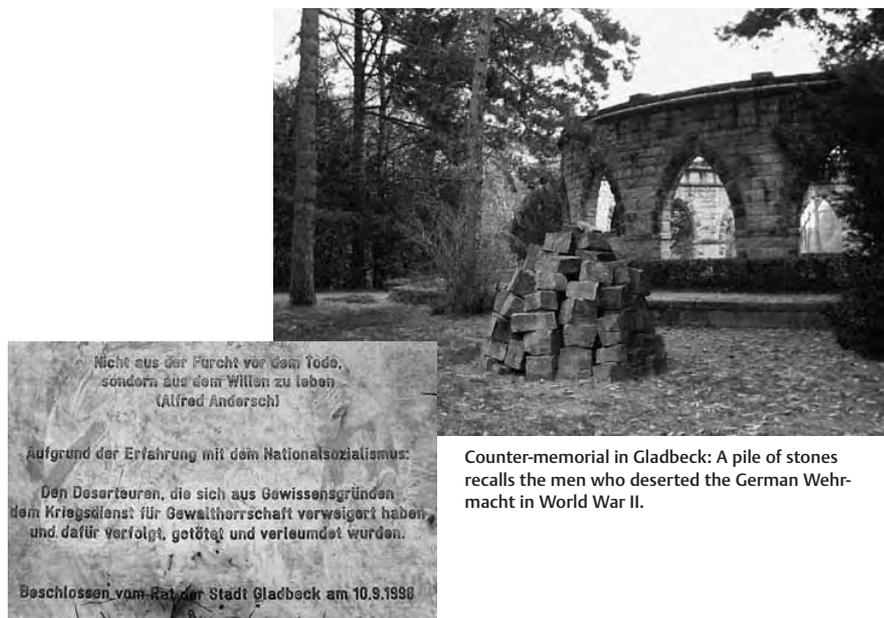
**“But a ‘collective memory’ still can only ‘remember’ in terms of the individuals’ memory. And individual memory can never be totally determined by collective powers but is fundamentally based on personal experiences.” (Christina)**

#### 4. Protest and resistance in transformation societies

In the following sections, some of these projects and discussions on these four themes will be presented more closely.

### A. Resistance and protest against fascism and German occupation

Almost half of the participants dealt with resistance and protest against the National Socialists and the German occupation. Clearly, family history is one reason for this interest in this brutal history of the Second World War. Almost every European family was touched by this war in some way; many suffered under the German occupation policy. So what attracts the 20-year-old to resistance? Is it the drama of action in the underground? Is it the courage of the resistance fighter that explains the emotional interest of pupils and students? Do



Counter-memorial in Gladbeck: A pile of stones recalls the men who deserted the German Wehrmacht in World War II.

“The two counter-memorials provoke very visible reactions. These vandalising practices can tell us that, today, there are still different cultures of remembrance – and opposition.”  
(Christina)

they find moral role models in these actors of the past who became national heroes?

Certainly, these themes influenced the choices made by the participants. But that assumes that they already were somewhat familiar with the history. More decisive is certainly the fact that national resistance during World War II has been remembered publicly since 1945. In all European societies, the question was raised at the time as to how to preserve the memory of anti-fascist resistance. On the personal side, many partisans and resistance fighters wanted to honour the memory of their dead comrades. Officially, remembrance was connected to power politics and the aims of parties and governments. In particular, remembrance of *national* uprisings and resistance movements influenced the new order of Eastern as well as Western European post-war societies in the Cold War – victims became national martyrs. This form of remembrance left its mark on the historical image of World War II in the East as in the West, agrees historian Thomas Lindenberger: *In all formerly occupied countries, East and West, “resistance” became a keystone of national identity to be symbolized through monuments and documented in “official” exhibitions, museums and books.* Thus the preponderant interest of the participants in the

history of anti-fascist resistance can also be seen as a result of national politics of remembrance.

What is noticeable about the theme of resistance against National Socialist rule and occupation is that the remembrance of this past is often already literally carved into stone. Here it is already evident how much institutional and financial expense the authorities have invested in establishing conclusive public interpretations of resistance. Often this relates to great national uprisings, famous resistance movements or individual actions, which by now belong to the canon of the respective national history.

Through her archival research, Christina from Germany reconstructed an especially multi-faceted case of dealing with monumental remembrance. In the 1980s and 1990s, citizens of Gladbeck protested against a war memorial dating back to the end of the Weimar Republic. Ultimately, two opposing memorials were set up, both of which questioned the death cult associated with “love of the fatherland” and “Loyalty to death” of the old memorial. One stele from 1987 remembered the “Victims of war and tyranny.” The second memorial, a pile of stones, was set up in 1999, in memory of soldiers who deserted the German Wehrmacht.

There is still much disagreement with the notion of publicly recognizing the desertion of soldiers as resistance – rather than condemning it outright as betrayal of the fatherland, as has been the rule. Through the reactions to the two memorials, Christina also could observe this: *The two counter-memorials provoke very visible reactions – the stele frequently gets sprayed and “adorned” with rightist slogans, the heap of stones is overthrown and disrupted. These vandalising practices are, though, only the most visible part of the ensemble’s reception. Therefore one has to be careful about generalizing a thesis. But at least these practices can tell us that, today, there are still different cultures of remembrance – and opposition.*

Agnieszka chose the Monument of the Little Insurgent for her analysis of the remembrance of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Some 200,000 Poles died in this hopeless struggle against the superior force of the German occupiers. The uprising “symbolizes all the best of patriotism,” emphasized Agnieszka, not least because some survivors of the uprising later stood up for a free Poland. The memorial shows a young armed fighter standing on a pedestal. In her summary, Agnieszka expounded on the patriotic view of victims in “Polish memory”: *The Little Insurgent Monument exposes the rea-*

“The experience of the common tragedy is a strong unifying factor.” (Agnieszka)



Fighting the occupiers: the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 (left to right: German assault gun, Polish resistance fighter, “Monument of the Little Insurgent”).



sons why the memory of the Warsaw Uprising is so vivid. By portraying a child, the monument emphasizes the tragedy to which the Poles fighting in the uprising fell victim. The experience of the common tragedy is a strong unifying factor. In the words of Aleida Assmann: “The historical trauma of the common victim experience (Opfererfahrung) sets itself as an indestructible trace in the collective memory and produces an especially strong solidarity in the group that experienced it.”

The historical self-definition – the tragedy of the Polish Uprising is its indispensable element – did have and continues to have a very strong hold on Polish society. This is demonstrated by the reactions to attempts to question its validity through emphasizing information that contradicts this image of Polish history.

A few years ago, there was a heated debate about the tragedy in Jedwabne. The tragedy occurred in 1941, when more than a thousand Jewish citizens of the town in northeast Poland were burnt in a big shed. The investigation led by the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Naro-

dowej, IPN), confirmed that the crime was committed by Poles, about 40 men, citizens of Jedwabne, instigated by German soldiers.

I am not in a position to judge what occurred in Jedwabne. However, it seems to me that the heated debate in Poland that accompanied the investigation proves the strength of the Polish self-image based on the history of patriotic struggle. There were people – a tiny minority, but still – who fiercely rejected the possibility of Polish collaboration in the crime. I suppose they protested because such a vision of history – in which Poles (even if only 40 of them) are aggressors – constituted a radical breach with the traditional perception of their nation.

Kalina of Bulgaria chose exhibits and museums as the objects of her investigation. She knows a lot about “her” protest, since it contributes so much to Bulgarian national pride today: the rescue of Bulgarian Jews. A pre-2001 schoolbook proclaims: Bulgaria is the sole European country that had a greater Jewish population at the end of the Second World War than at its beginning.

In 1943, intellectuals, the Catholic Church and members of the government in Bulgaria fought against the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews and by their protest managed to save most Bulgarian Jews from certain death. But remembrance of this after the war also led to confusion and demands:

It seems that any newly inaugurated political apparatus in the past has saturated the historical truth, if not completely concealed it, with the proper propagandistic mythology, thus defacing it beyond recognition. From the 1950s until the 1970s, Bulgarian historiography emphasized the significant role that the Communist Party had played in the process of protecting the Jewish population in Bulgaria. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, however, the Bulgarian historical community seemingly revealed a more impartial interpretation of the line of events by bringing into focus the involvement of the Bulgarian Orthodox church, that of some political and social activists as well as the sympathetic stand of Bulgaria’s entire intellectual elite. The outcome of

**“Although communists aren’t in power anymore, there still has been no correction of their story about 27 March. Even I didn’t think of it: I always looked at it as a communist national holiday – the celebration of demonstrations in 1941.” (Milena)**



The National Museum of History in Sofia.

*this suppression or rather “disfigurement” of the truth, in my opinion, manifests itself in the fact that two generations of Bulgarians were left in a state of ignorance about the historical truth revolving around the social attitudes and moral concern about the fate of the Bulgarian Jews.*

For her analysis, Kalina visited the National Museum of History and the Museum of the History of the Bulgarian Jews in Sofia. According to her evaluation, the results of the protests are no longer presented with an ideological bias, though each museum has its own emphases. The National Museum showed the actions of Bulgaria schematically, in the order of the most important political leaders, while the Jewish Museum stressed the efforts of Bulgarian Jews to warn Bulgaria of the impending deportations. *The historians try to explain not only the facts, but also the spirit with which the rescue of the entire Jewish population within Bulgarian territory was undertaken. The reasons are to be found within the overall character of the opposition, within the variety of actions undertaken, within the impressive variety of protesters.*

One fact is often missed in view of the rescue of 48,000 Bulgarian Jews: not all Bulgarian Jews were saved. In Macedonia and Thrace, the local people willingly handed over 12,000 Jews to the German authorities. But though these facts are presented today in both museums, this does not answer all of Kalina’s questions: *According to me, this is the weak point on which much remains to be said. Why didn’t the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Thrace react against the deportation process? Why did the society, which raised its voice in May 1943, not react so spontaneously to the cargo trains full of Jews from the Thrace region?*

Remembrance of this collaboration contradicts the Bulgarian self-image as a “nation of rescuers of the Jews,” just as the fact that there were Polish perpetrators and collaborators is difficult for many Poles to reconcile with their self-image as a “victimized nation.”

Milena, from Serbia, dealt with a case comparable to the Bulgarian one, regarding the way the Communist Party viewed protests. On 25 March 1941 and in the days that followed, many Serbs and other ethnic groups within what was then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia protested in the streets against the government’s collaboration with Germany. On 27 March there was finally a coup d’état in Belgrade; the new government annulled the pact with Hitler. Remembrance of these protests “represents the myth about the courage of the Serbian people who ‘bravely stood against Nazi enemies.’”

After 1945, the Yugoslavian communists claimed these mass protests by the entire population as solely their own contribution, setting them up as a symbol of the traditional communist fight for freedom. This claim was used to legitimize the young state and to this day functions as their historical image: *Although communists aren’t in power anymore, there still has been no correction of their story about 27 March. Even I didn’t think of it: I always looked at it as a communist national holiday – the celebration of demonstrations in 1941.*

Only with a film document of these protests, which was rediscovered in 2006, could it be unequivocally shown that it was not communists who had led these protests, but rather that they were carried out by all parts of the Yugoslavian population. The screening of the twelve-minute-long film on a Serbian TV channel on the 65th anniversary of the protests finally corrected the previously one-sided view of the event. For Milena, working on this case made it clear: *The more I research, the more I am convinced that you can never know a universal truth, and that you must always look for more evidence and try to look at every event, opinion, story from as many different sides as you can.*

In the course of her research Milena learned that her own grandmother had participated in the protests. For the first time, Milena asked questions that prompted her grandmother to share her memories with her granddaughter. The grandmother even thought she recognized in the film the lorry on which she rode during the 1941 demonstration. Milena writes: *I guess that in this case she can’t be very objective, but anyway it was interesting to hear her eyewitness story.*

In the research that Anna from Slovakia and Tina from Slovenia undertook, the role of the communists in how the anti-fascist resistance is remembered also was important. The Slovak communists, after assuming power in 1948, lay claim to the main role in the Slovak National Uprising against the Germans in 1945 – similarly to the case of anti-German protests in Yugoslavia. In Slovenia, the communists excised the nationalist resistance movement TIGR from the official remembrance of history, as if there had never been this armed struggle against the Italian occupiers between the wars. In both cases, remembrance of armed communist resistance against the external enemy was used to legitimize the young communist power from within.

In the Federal Republic of Germany the civil resistance against National Socialism was

## Anti-fascist resistance in Slovenia and Slovakia

### From: Anna

I am going to do research on the Slovak National Uprising, which is still quite a controversial topic in Slovakia. Slovakia, as you might know, was collaborating with Hitler's Germany during WW II. In fact, it was a clerical fascist state since the president, Jozef Tiso, was a Catholic priest. Some people still see him as a hero because by cooperating with Hitler he "saved independent Slovakia." In other words, instead of letting Hitler make Slovakia part of Hungary, he managed to maintain "independent" status for Slovakia. But this is a rather demagogic view. The truth of the matter is that Tiso sent thousands of Jews to concentration camps, and he was sometimes even harsher than Hitler in this respect. While there were many people who supported Tiso's regime, there were also people who didn't. Slovaks are especially proud of the Slovak National Uprising of 1945 since it was an armed protest against Nazi Germany. Yet this uprising is controversial as well ... or at least it was made controversial in the course of time. The reason is simple: When communists, who also took part in this uprising, came into power in 1948, they claimed the Slovak National Uprising for themselves, i. e. the Slovak National Uprising became a "protest of the communists against Nazi Germany." This is clearly not so, and in my paper I hope to touch upon this subject as well. At the same time, I would also like to talk about the Square of the Slovak National Uprising, which is located in the centre

of Bratislava. This square has an interesting history, and actually, the current version – with the monument of the partisans – was a compromise from the 1970s. There was a statue of Stalin in this square before.

### From: Tina

I am writing about the anti-fascist organization TIGR, which functioned between WW I and WW II in my part of the country, which was occupied by Italy in that period; thus it was under Mussolini's rule from 1922 on. For some reason, after WW II the Communist Party didn't recognize the members of TIGR as fighters against fascism. So many people didn't even know it had existed. In the last few years, however, it has become a hot topic and I am going to represent two different views on this organization. Surprisingly, dear Anna, I can see similarities between our two topics: Both are still controversial, and similarly to Slovakia, communists in Slovenia didn't want to admit that they were not the only ones who had fought against fascism. Yet they acted differently, as I already wrote above.

### From: Anna

It seems as if our topics reveal that obviously not only communists pretend to be the only liberators, but, as you rightly pointed out, nowadays politicians still like to misinterpret history and use it for their own benefit. But what interests me even more is the fact that in your Museum of Contemporary History,

TIGR is not even mentioned. Why do you think this is so?

### From: Tina

In the Museum of Contemporary History there are two rooms dealing with the period 1918 – 1941, and the title of that part of the exhibition is "Slovenians in First Yugoslavia." We could say that there isn't enough room to include the Western part, and that the exhibition wouldn't be as coherent if they did that. But we could also say that in Ljubljana they don't really care about other parts of the country. You may call this centralism, or ignorance, or whatever you wish.

### From: Anna

You mentioned that one of the aims of TIGR was to fight Italianization of the Slovenian population, especially in schools. To what extent would you say that TIGR was inspired by nationalist ideology? Once again, I can see a bit of a similarity – the resistance movements in Slovakia were also fighting for Czechoslovakia ...

### From: Tina

I think I could say TIGR was entirely inspired by nationalism. People fought for the Slovenian language, for Slovenian schools, their culture ... They were not allowed to speak Slovenian in public: Even little children had to speak Italian in schools and many people were imprisoned for singing Slovenian songs ... This was, as far as I know, the main reason. There surely were also members with communist

ideas, who later (in WW II) also joined the partisans, but this was not that important.

### From: Anna

What is politically at stake if both sides of the Slovenian Parliament try to exploit the TIGR history? Why do some people try to downplay its importance? Perhaps there were also diplomatic reasons, because this resistance movement was not just anti-fascist, but also anti-Italian (which could be embarrassing in relations with Italy today)?

### From: Tina

The right-wing coalition accentuates the meaning of TIGR as a non-communist organization that fought against fascism. They blame the Liberation Front of Slovenian people for exploiting their military success to gain political power after the end of WW II. At that time the Liberation Front was turned into a communist organization, and thus in Yugoslavia it was represented as the only fighter against the occupation. The left-wing opposition, on the other hand, blames the government for trying to diminish the importance of the Liberation Front while highlighting the TIGR movement. I wouldn't agree that they do this for diplomatic reasons, as there has been so much arguing about our common history between Slovenians and Italians that it is clear that neither of them cares about being diplomatic in this respect. Why do you think there isn't a public debate on the



Controversial remembrance of the partisans' struggle in World War II: memorializing the Slovak National Uprising in Bratislava.



“I think it is ALWAYS good to be critical, especially towards one’s own nation – in fact, I would applaud any nation’s/country’s honest attempt to deal with its (especially controversial) history.” (Anna)

suitability of the monument in Bratislava? I mean, it is, of course, not easy to simply remove the monument, but for example in Slovenia people often talk about the monuments that are left over from Yugoslavia, and many people thought that the current right-wing government would remove at least some of them, but this didn’t happen. What about Slovakia?

#### From: Anna

I think most people who pass this monument day by day don’t even know what’s written on it, and honestly don’t care. They got used to the fact that there is a monument there and many homeless people hang out around it. I agree with you that there should be a discussion about it – about whether or not it is appropriate ... just as there should be a discussion about

the Slovak state during WW II. But so far there hasn’t really been anything so substantial ... You know, there is a saying that Slovaks get used to new things very easily, without questioning them too much. I think there was an attempt to discuss the relevance of the monument and maybe do something about it, but it has never gotten off the ground.

#### From: Tina

Although you are very sceptical towards young Slovaks’ abilities to remember and commemorate even important and meaningful events of history, the peoples’ gathering after winning the Hockey World Championship shows that most Slovaks still remember – if not facts or years, at least the importance, affection and mass feelings (which I think can be passed

from generation to generation). So my question could be more philosophical – what exactly do people (especially masses) remember and why?

#### From: Anna

Unfortunately, it is my conviction that young generations tend to forget the common past, and many young people are not even interested in remembering it. I don’t know if it is just because of the well-known *carpe diem* motto, but it is so. On the other hand, the older generations tend to forget. I have just watched a political discussion on TV, in which one of the female politicians (there still aren’t that many here in Slovakia) from the Slovak National Party even asked people to stop talking about the wartime Slovak state as fascist. She said that Slovaks have “tortured” themselves

(i.e. they have been cruel to themselves) long enough in respect to this issue, and that there are issues of far greater importance that ought to be discussed. This is, in my opinion, just belittling the problem. I think it is ALWAYS good to be critical, especially towards one’s own nation ... in fact, I would applaud any nation’s/country’s honest attempt to deal with its (especially controversial) history. So, to get back to your question, I think it could be answered in two ways. Maybe young people assemble at that square because it is one of the bigger squares in Bratislava, and they care less about what happened there a couple of years ago. On the other hand, maybe (especially when talking about the older generation) they have something that’s subconsciously making them aware of the big historical events that took place there ...

and is a central point of reference for national self-reflection, while in the GDR it was the communist resistance that was supposed to provide historical legitimacy to the founding of the state.

So it isn't any wonder that in addition to Lotta, Verena also chose to focus on the remembrance of the well-known "White Rose" resistance group: The "White Rose" was a group of Munich students led by Sophie Scholl and her brother Hans. Between June 1942 and February 1943, they prepared and distributed six different leaflets, in which they called for an end to Nazi oppression and tyranny through active opposition of the German people. While distributing flyers on 18 February 1943 at the University of Munich, Hans and Sophie Scholl were arrested – other members were caught later – and eventually were executed as "traitors."

Verena examined the exhibit on the "White Rose," which is part of the "Remembrance Site for Freedom Movements in German History" in Rastatt. Verena was disappointed by this exhibition, since many of her questions remained unanswered. The deficits sparked this German law student to generate, through her criticism, new questions and recommendations:

*Often the members of the "White Rose" are presented as apolitical heroic moralists – romantics. Nowadays it's stressed that they were academic intellectuals. I thought the truth might have been somewhere in the middle – and so I had hoped that this exhibition would reveal something about these controversial points of view and finally present its own view. But the exhibition says nothing about this question of contextualisation and motivation.*

*The main and fundamental idea of the "White Rose" was that the fight against the Nazi system has to have its start in the social area of the bourgeoisie, because it was the educated elite that failed in 1933. This main idea – which was the reason why they addressed their first leaflets to these members of a certain social class and not to the whole country – seems to me to be based on politi-*

*cal reflections. The exhibition nevertheless doesn't take this into consideration, doesn't even name this fact. Rather, their strong Christian belief is stressed – and other motivations are disregarded.*

*The White Rose Foundation presents one-dimensional heroes who believed in God and had no fear – at least not concerning themselves. I don't know why this exhibition doesn't dare to draw another picture, one that offers some additional dimensions. The last entries Sophie wrote in her diary show her as a person full of desperation and thinking of death – why not present this fact too? It would make her more human, more understandable. And it wouldn't reduce their merit – on the contrary!*

*My conclusion: The exhibition wants you to get an impression about the members of the "White Rose" that is based on heroism but doesn't try to explain further motivations and the social context. The exhibition doesn't dare to deal with other ideas about the "White Rose" – and any form of critical reflection seems to be forbidden. Not long ago an historian accused the members of the "White Rose" of being anti-Semitic. In the museum's entrance hall you can find a lot of newspaper articles and sometimes statements concerning the other exhibitions – so why not publish this article, too?*

*So all in all you can get a good introduction to the "White Rose" here – but from an exhibition that is created by the White Rose Foundation I expected a lot more.*

## B. Resistance and civil disobedience against communist dictatorships and Soviet rule

For a long time, remembrance of resistance and protest in communist societies was limited to private and secret thoughts. Anti-communist movements were considered criminal, and therefore were persecuted. If protests took place despite such repressions, the communist parties either declared them to be products of Western manipulation or remained silent about them. Generally speaking, public remembrance of anti-communist resistance therefore could only take place after the fall of communism. Anyone who wishes to focus on this resistance thus will be investigating relatively recent, initial instances of memorialization in post-communist societies.



Exhibit about the "White Rose" in Rastatt.

**“Two weeks ago, I was in Sighet for the first time at the Memorial for the Victims of Communism and of Resistance. All those things we didn’t talk about in school were there. I couldn’t believe something like that was actually in Romania.” (Liliana)**

Seven participants were curious enough to undertake this. In the course of their research, the two Romanian students, Liliana and Diana, travelled together from their hometown of Cluj-Napoca to Sighet, to visit the city’s “Museum for the Victims of Communism and the Resistance in Romania.” On the second floor of the building, in room 59, Liliana found the part of the exhibition dedicated to “their” event, which took place during the end phase of Romanian socialism under the dictator Ceauşescu: the Brasov workers’ protests in 1987. In her work, the history student conveys not only insights into the dynamics of this historical event and the ways in which the mu-

seum in Sighet recalled it, but also describes what particularly moved and touched her about this aspect of history.

This example, like those in contributions by other participants, makes palpable the great respect that these young people felt for those whose sense of justice, human rights and self-worth was greater than their fear of persecution and terror. But they also were aware that these people usually were exceptions within a silent majority. And that is one reason why the participants are convinced that the remembrance of such protests will remain important for the future.



## Remembrance of Romanian workers’ protests at the Sighet memorial

Two weeks ago, I was in Sighet for the first time. Sighet is a small town in the north of Romania, famous for its political prison during the 1950s. This is where important Romanian political leaders died, like Iuliu Maniu and Gheorghe Bratianu. On the initiative of the Civic Alliance and with the support of the Council of Europe, this prison was turned into a museum – The Memorial for the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance. Every prison cell was arranged as an exhibition room representing parts of the history of the Romanian and European resistance against communism.

I was very much impressed by what I saw there. All those things we didn’t talk about in school were there. The hideous face of communism was so close to us: lots of texts, documents, pictures and testimonies. The museum itself was a pleasant surprise. I couldn’t believe something like that was actually in Romania.

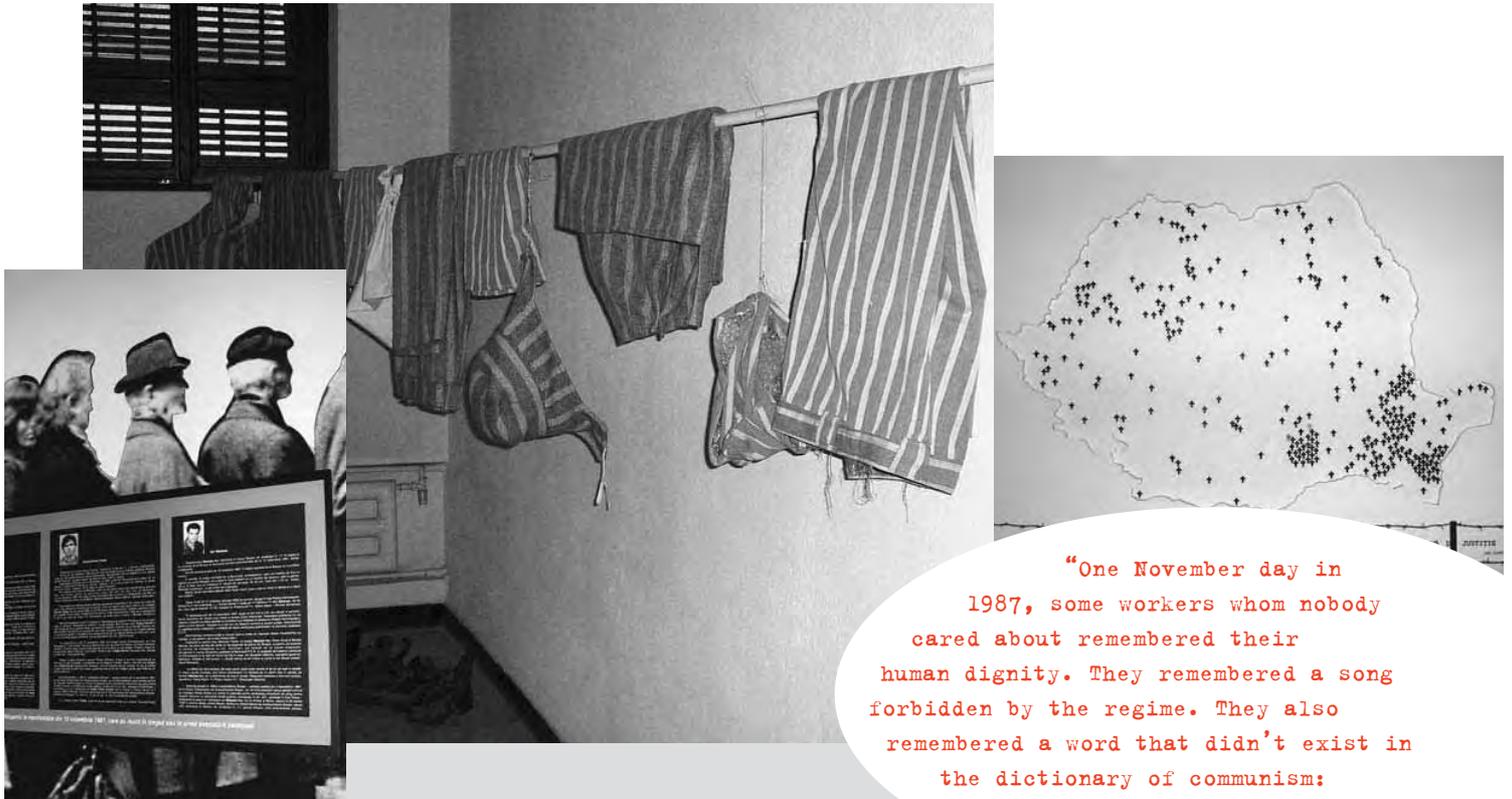
There are, of course, many things missing, and others that could be improved. But the point of this museum isn’t the history of communism. It just tries to be a form of justice for those who suffered because of the way communists understood the meaning and the purpose of justice. I took all that I have seen there as an invitation to read more and to become more informed.

### FACTS ...

14 November 1987, The Red Flag Factory, Brasov: Workers in the night shift at the truck factory received only half their salaries, without any explanation. They refused to start working.

15 November 1987, early in the morning: The first shift, which was supposed to start working, joined the others and asked for explanations. At 10 o’clock, workers were in front of the administrative building, shouting: “Thieves! Thieves!” When nobody answered, about 400 workers started a spontaneous protest and walked toward the centre of the city. It was the beginning of something that nobody believed could happen: a protest against communism begun by those who were supposed to be represented by this regime – the working class.

The protesters arrived in front of the Communist Party building in the centre of the city. From a few hundred, they had grown to a few thousand, because people on the street saw them and joined the protest. They started shouting again: “We want food for our children!” “We want light!” “We want our Sunday back!” Still, nobody answered. On 15 November it was an election day, and the authorities must have been occupied with that. People were searching for those responsible for this unbearable situation. Somebody in the crowd started to sing a song forbidden by the Communist Party, called “Desteapta-te romane,” a song that after 1989 became the national anthem of Romania. The others could hardly remember the lyrics or the music. But everybody was so enthusiastic. The song was coming to life.



“One November day in 1987, some workers whom nobody cared about remembered their human dignity. They remembered a song forbidden by the regime. They also remembered a word that didn't exist in the dictionary of communism: protest.” (Liliana)

Then somebody else shouted: “No more Ceaușescu!” Some of the protesters forced open the main entrance and penetrated the building. There they found Pepsi, cheese, bananas and oranges, products that were impossible to find in Romanian markets. Many offices in the building were destroyed; protesters threw the party's flags out of the windows, and also TVs, computers and files. Ceaușescu's enormous portrait was also thrown out of the window, and the others set it on fire.

Meanwhile, members of the political police, the Securitate, started observing the whole manifestation, taking hundred of pictures and filming. Starting that evening, some of the protesters began to be arrested. The police and Securitate interrogated 83 persons, first in Brasov and then in Bucharest. The methods the investigators used were similar to those from the '50s. Violence was the key word for the next two weeks. A mockery of a trial took place on 3 December 1987, and 61 persons were sentenced to serve between six months and three years in prison, and also were forced to move from Brasov. The personal lives of those who took part in the protests were affected tragically. The Securitate supervised every step they made.

#### ... AND MEMORY

After December 1987, workers organized an association to recall each year the significance of 15 November. But access to the Securitate's files was still denied. The protesters weren't allowed to see their files. No photos or film surfaced. In order to reconstitute those

events, the only source available is the eyewitness. The book *The Day We Won't Forget. 15 November 1987* by Marius Oprea and Stejarel Olaru assembles more than 100 interviews with participants.

The exhibition in Sighet focuses on the voices of eyewitnesses. The message is very clear: Protesters from Brasov are victims of communism. Their protest was spontaneous and as real as could be. The repression was horrible. But there were also Romanians who had the courage to express their support publicly, even though they knew the consequences of their acts of solidarity. People suffered and died because they had the courage to express the suffering of a whole people who couldn't bear it anymore. Their voices are there, in the prison. You can easily integrate all this into the European context because a few rooms earlier you encountered Budapest 1956 and Prague 1968. Of course, there are many more pictures about those protests. In room 59, one senses the emotion – not through images, as it should be, but in texts and audio support. To understand, you have to read and to listen.

One November day, some workers whom nobody cared about remembered their human dignity. They remembered a song forbidden by the regime. They also remembered a word that didn't exist in the dictionary of communism: protest. And, of course, the price for remembering forbidden things was very high. But they were willing to pay it.

“In building the  
‘Three Crosses,’ the workers  
managed to prove that it is not true  
that only those in power write the  
history. It’s not always a one-sided  
account.” (Jakub)

## Remembrance of Polish protest and resistance

In his work, Jakub described the memorial to the fallen shipyard workers of Gdańsk. His contribution made it clear how powerfully this monumental form of remembrance affected the emotions of this student, born in 1983. The “Three Crosses” memorial was built in 1980 within a few months on the initiative of the union workers’ movement “Solidarność,” which enjoyed broad popular support. As a memorial to anti-communist protest that actually was created under a communist government, it represents a great exception in Eastern Europe and clarifies the special relationship of Poles to “their” memorial.

Seeing the monument to the shipyard workers from a wider perspective, first of all, I have to admit that it makes me very emotional. It is entirely a child of its times – full of sadness, sorrow and the feeling that we have lost something irretrievably. Even today, while admiring the results, I find it difficult to imagine how the workers actually managed to start and finish this project. It is hard to imagine how brave they had to be. Moreover, they managed to prove that it is not true that only those in power write the history. It’s not always a one-sided account. Actually, the moment writes history, and they used their moment fully. For many, Gdańsk’s “Three Crosses” is considered the first post-World War II monument to be built entirely by the nation. The people, and not the authorities, decided how it should look, and they didn’t spare funds, effort or ... guilty ones. It seems that in building the monument, workers wanted to say that someone had to be the first to go into the streets and maybe even to die. Although some time had passed, people remembered and wanted to continue the mission. It started with price increases in 1980 but ended, in fact, with a demand that the government admit that the victims of the events in 1970 were right and that they deserved a public monument emphasizing that they were

right. I cannot forget the words that shipyard workers wrote in one of their bulletins during the protests of August 1980:

“Every nation, sooner or later, even if it costs many casualties, will gain rights that will guarantee means of solving problems in a peaceful manner, with full respect for responsibility, in accordance with the due tradition of our nation.”

The situation in Poland was strained in those days. Protesters took possible casualties into account and still wanted to raise a monument that would be like a SIGNPOST for generations in an unsure future, to show descendants the protesters’ way, to let the authorities admit that ... we should build it, and by that: plead guilty. That was the primary demand, followed by others: a continuation of 1970. Many had to suffer and some died for the chosen path, the concept of “acting right to fight the evil.” But they succeeded. And one result was the monument to the shipyard workers. It is the first memorial dedicated to the victims of communist rule that was erected in a communist country. And what is even more important for Poles is that it confirms that despite all our flaws, weaknesses and habits, we can unite in the fight for freedom and a good cause.”

Many known and respected people have visited Gdańsk’s “Three Crosses.” And many still do. Today there’s nothing surprising in finding fresh flowers on Solidarity Square. The memorial’s creators remember a story of some honeymooners who saw anchors being transported to the crosses. The young bride placed some flowers on one and later it was lifted to the top. From that time on, a new tradition came into being, an unwritten agreement. Right after their wedding ceremony, honeymooners come and leave their wedding bouquets at the monument. As for today’s citizens, the monument appears to have been there forever. After all, it became a part of the living organism. Many residents of Gdańsk claim that for them “Three Crosses” and





Escalation: In December 1970, the communist regime brutally put down the Gdańsk dockyard workers' strike; three workers were killed.

Solidarity Square are the most important historical places. And I agree with the Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk that places, even if structures are torn down, keep the atmosphere of past events.

I experienced such an atmosphere. When Pope John Paul II died, the ceremony of his funeral was

broadcast on the outdoor screen on Solidarity Square. People gathered together in the rain and stood there in silence. No need to speak. I could feel this special relationship. The unity ... just as in 1980 ... time stopped ... only church bells and sirens were heard.

## Digital remembrance of Soviet dissidents

Ivan, from Russia, demonstrated how remembrance of protest and civil disobedience today can take a virtual form instead of a monumental one. He chose for his analysis a website run by the NGO "Memorial," which is dedicated to the history of Soviet dissidents. The decision for this form of remembrance is no accident – the political conditions in Russia allow for practically no other form of remembrance. "Memorial" had to struggle for many years to create a modest memorial in Moscow in remembrance of victims of Stalinism. Today, increasingly restrictive laws and ambiguous legal clauses limit the educational work of this human-rights organization. In the country's largest newspapers, one searches in vain for reports on the history of Stalinism or dissidents.

So in order to reach an interested audience, "Memorial" chooses to use the Internet. Excerpts from Ivan's paper explain the political relevance that the Internet has won today, especially in countries where a democratic culture has limited opportunities to develop. Ivan considers "Memorial's" Internet site to be an effective and modern form of remembrance. At the same time, it is clear that this communicative form allows the political action that "Memorial" is honouring to be continued. Like Soviet dissidents, "Memorial" finds legal ways to promote and preserve human rights. One of those rights is the right to remember protest.

"Memorial" actively develops information in order to stress the importance of historical memory. One form of this activity is found on the websites of "Memorial" research programs. I focused on the site of the program "History of Soviet dissidents": <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/index.htm>.

This program was started in the end of 1990. During its first ten years, the program's team collected biographical material about dissidents from Eastern Europe. Documents and other archival material, periodicals published by dissidents



Digital remembrance of Soviet dissidents.

(samizdat), material from foreign research centres and interviews with eyewitnesses were used as a basis for the program. It was created as a database of dissidents with more than 5,500 names. It is one of the biggest subject archives in Europe, and it has published proceedings devoted to the topic. In 1999 the website of the program was created and since then it has become one of the most informative representations of the history of dissidence. I chose it for two reasons:

1. "Memorial" is a leader in this kind of research in Russia.

2. A website is a new source of information and representation of history, and it is interesting to analyse it as a modern way to represent historical events (it could link archives, textbooks, exhibitions, museum collections, etc.).

#### CONCLUSION

1. With this site, we deal primarily with the information field. And it is a very specific form of representation of the past, closely connected to books. But it also shares some characteristics with monuments, exhibitions, libraries and archives. Users of the site decide for themselves what kind of sources they want to use: analytic texts or original sources. So the reader has a choice of sources. It is a favourable condition for greater objectivity.

2. To represent dissidence, this site focuses on social history, on the role of people, groups and organizations combating the regime. The compilers of the site concentrate their attention on the lives and activity of dissidents. I suppose that the reason behind it was the fact that "Memorial" is an NGO, and many of its members were personally connected to those times.

3. The site has various "tools" to help the reader understand and somehow feel what dissidence was, i.e. samizdat documents, magazines like "The Chronicle of Current Events", biographical articles, analytic papers from different authors, and papers by former dissidents.

4. The site also offers a definition of dissidence. It is quite broad, but analytic materials contain basic characteristics of dissidence. These characteristics act as a matrix in which we form our view of dissidence.

5. The site has a disadvantage: All materials are in Russian. This limits the numbers of readers; however, this site was created as a means of representation of dissident activity in all of Eastern Europe.

## C. Protest movements and civil disobedience in liberal democracies

Nowadays, many find that protest in established democracies leaves behind a stale aftertaste. Demonstrations are so common in some cities that passers-by often pay them only casual attention. After all, everyone has the right to protest; no one really has to take a great risk – at least that's the general impression. People believe that if it is really important, it will be in tomorrow's newspaper. And when was the last time you protested? On the other hand, shouldn't we be glad that protest is an established and "normal" form of societal criticism today? Isn't that one of the most important results of historical protests for human rights and democracy? Here, too, it's worth taking a look into the past.

There were also times in the Federal Republic of Germany when the police used the force of arms to protect the state from peacefully protesting citizens, instead of guaranteeing

**"This video is not only intended to remind viewers of the movement against nuclear power but also to show**



Atomic energy? No thanks! Local residents protest against construction of a nuclear power plant in Wackersdorf (Germany), 1986.

**how to protest successfully. The video gives examples. Do you really think there would be any change in thinking if you were simply talking to your family or friends?" (Guido)**

the rights of citizens to freedom of opinion and assembly. Through her research into how Benno Ohnesorg is remembered in his hometown of Hanover, Rebecca showed how protest in democracies can be dangerous. Ohnesorg, a student, was shot by a police officer on 2 June 1967 during a demonstration against the visit of the Shah of Iran to West Berlin, and thus became an important symbolic figure for the “1968ers” student movement.

Rebecca crossed the Benno-Ohnesorg Bridge every day on her way to school. Now she learned that it was only in 1992, after a close vote by the city council, that this inconspicuous bridge at the edge of Hanover was named after him. She finds the street sign describing him to be scandalous:

*I think the little sign underneath the street sign is hilarious. It does not say WHY and under what CIRCUMSTANCES Ohnesorg died but simply states that he died in a demonstration. That's sad but it shows the city's attitude towards remembering Benno Ohnesorg. And the city's attitude usually represents the opinion of the majority of its inhabitants, as the members of parliament are elected by the inhabitants and are inhabitants themselves. This is the only explanation I could think of for why there hasn't been a street dedicated to Ohnesorg any sooner. Besides: An historian told me it was this late because by then hard feelings had calmed down a little bit ...*

German pupil Guido was concerned about the question of how the German anti-nuclear energy movement is remembered. He could not study any memorials or museums for his theme. There is no current societal consensus on such “permanent” remembrance. But there are more short-term, yet no less influential presentations of the history of social movements, such as TV movies and videos. The TV documentary that he researched on the protests responding to the construction of a nuclear power plant in Wackersdorf between 1982 and 1989 describes the history from the point of view of individual eyewitnesses:



*“I think the little sign underneath the street sign is hilarious. It does not say WHY and under what CIRCUMSTANCES Ohnesorg died but simply states that he died in a demonstration.” (Rebecca)*

*I think this video is not only intended to remind viewers of the movement against nuclear power but also to show how to protest successfully. The video gives examples. What would happen if there would be only one protester? Quite easy for the police, I think. What would happen if there were more people protesting but they're not persistent? After a few weeks or months they wouldn't stay any longer – in this example it took seven years of protesting. And furthermore – Do you really think there would be any change in thinking if you were simply talking to your family or friends?*

With his thesis, Guido names a very important reason why historical protests and civil disobedience are remembered: because one can learn from them how to achieve certain political goals through protest. Or, to put it more modestly, how one can mobilize others for a cause.

The seven-year protest in Wackersdorf resulted in the dropping of plans for a nuclear reactor in 1989. The protests had begun peacefully, but the violent behaviour of the police and the violent reactions of some demonstrators again led to conditions reminiscent of civil war. Its images are burned into the memory of most Germans. Wackersdorf and another site of protests, Brockdorf – for some, they stand as the very symbol of a “German police state,” but for others they show that “leftist crackpots and rioters” must be kept under control.

Certainly, it is because of this basic disagreement – together with the current disputes over the future of nuclear power – that there is not yet any exhibit on the theme of the anti-nuclear energy movement. But in April 2007 the German press reported on a Green Party initiative for an appropriate form of remembrance. The current idea is for a promenade with information panels in Brokdorf, Wackersdorf or Wyhl.

The designers of these and other forms of remembrance will naturally want to work with historical sources. But official archives often document only the view of police. So the creation of an independent archive or documentation of one's own activities can be an important element in protest- and civil-rights movements – as a counterpoint to official archives.

Andrea's question about how women's suffrage was recalled in Zurich ultimately led her to that city's “Swiss Social Archive,” which had been founded by an association in 1906 on the initiative of a priest. The archive's aim was to document writings on “social questions.” Here research can be conducted that later finds expression in specific forms of remembrance: exhibits, museums, films and books. Therefore institutions like the “Swiss Social Archive” itself can be seen – and studied – as a form of remembrance:

The Social Archive is a unique and well-known institution, and great efforts are made so that more will learn about it. What makes that institution very reliable is the fact that it collects information from all newspapers and magazines, and is not focused on just one interpretation. So everybody can make his own interpretation. If someone wants information about any social movement or social question, this is their first address. The archive's task is set by law: to let people know about social issues. I think that the Social Archive replaces thousands of plaques and street names, because you pass them by without knowing. But if you want to know something, you know where to go. For my topic, the women's suffrage or the women's movement, there were over 500 pictures. Most were pictures of protest and of broadsheets. And from the protest "The March to Bern," five photos were available.



The Orange Revolution: dashed hopes, after mass protests in the Ukraine in the winter of 2004/2005.

"Every patriotic citizen of Ukraine wished to participate in the massive protest. These were ordinary people who gave up their 'normal earnings' and more or less 'normal life' today, in order to be able to face their children and grandchildren tomorrow."  
(Lesia)

## D. Protest and resistance in transformation societies

For some participants, protest is not a theoretical question. Lidija, Milena and Katarina from Serbia and Lesia from the Ukraine have often taken part in protests over issues that determine the future of their homelands. When these young adults grapple with the remembrance of protest, they are doing so in part because they want to learn how others in similar situations stood up for a more just society.

### Maidan – the Ukrainian symbol of justice, freedom, democracy

For Lesia, as for many other Ukrainians, the Maidan – the Independence Square in Kiev – is the symbolic centre of the “Orange Revolution” of the winter of 2004/05, which was greeted enthusiastically around the world. EU-Europe at first expressed solidarity with the forces of reform, but then pulled back from its engagement with Ukraine, primarily due to energy

and geopolitical considerations – to the bitter disappointment of many Ukrainians, who feel betrayed by Western Europe.

Lesia is disappointed and confused by the political developments in her country. This appears to be a typical experience of participants in dynamic mass protests: The phase afterwards is sobering, since life in a parliamentary democracy seldom transmits the feeling of national unity that one senses during the protest phase. But a democracy that protects

**Lesia’s report about her experience on the Maidan reveals the powerful impact the events surrounding the democratization of her homeland had on her life. Her testimony can be considered a building block toward future remembrance of these protests in the Ukraine:**

Our first show of independence in 1991 was a consequence of the break-up of the Soviet Union. And then Kiev gained its “Maidan Nezalezhnosti” (Square of Independence) as a symbol of the great willpower in resisting conquerors.

But thirteen years later, as the fates decreed, it became the field of real protest. In November 2004, the situation was the very opposite of the struggle for independence. As our President Viktor Yushchenko said: “It was a civil war, a fight for true independence and the future of the country without corruption.” But what was it in fact?

I was a demonstrator.

Ignoring exit poll data and vote counts, the administration did not recognize the will of the Ukrainian nation. In response, the nation’s rage flowed into the streets of Kiev. Massive spontaneous protests materialized in Maidan Nezalezhnosti and in other cities in Ukraine, with many protesters arriving in the capital from all directions. Maidan became the symbol of justice, freedom and democracy.

Every patriotic citizen of Ukraine wished to participate in the massive protest, and many joined the rally at Maidan on Khreshchatyk Boulevard, bearing the orange symbols of the movement. These were ordinary people who gave up their “normal earnings” and more or

less “normal life” today, in order to be able to face their children and grandchildren tomorrow. As far as I know, this revolution gathered together all classes of society.

One of the biggest groups of protesters consisted of students who organized in one party called “PORA.” Joining the association (today it is an official political party) could be a reason for expulsion from national universities. But it didn’t stop them from joining ...

Is youth without experience easy to manipulate? Now we have experience. And as a participant I can say that this protest differs in two ways. Ordinary people thought it was a non-violent protest demonstrating for free elections and a country without corruption. The current government had the opposite opinion ... In fact, tanks and other heavy artillery stood near Kiev waiting for the command to attack Maidan, filled with people. Everyone knew it. But nobody went home; moreover there was an organized tent-city where students held lectures, ate, slept ... and got married.

Then it was unusual ... but two years have passed. Our ideals, our claims have changed. We are disappointed again. All those people who stood in the square for two months would not go there anymore. As was mentioned in the Ukrainian forum: Everything that we fought for disappeared. For the second anniversary, there were also tents. But not with orange flags. Instead there were two hostile parties. On the one hand, it is great: at least we gathered together. But during this process we lost something else ... We cannot find truth in all these lies.

“Two years have passed. We are disappointed again.

All those people who stood in the Maidan for two months would not go there anymore.” (Lesia)

the rights of citizens offers ways for opposition groups to find a compromise. Their dissent must be viewed, as much as possible, as an essential and productive force on the way to a Ukrainian democracy.

Like Milena and Katarina, Lidija went into the streets of Belgrade with a hundred thousand others in 2000, to force an end to the regime of Slobodan Milošević. Milošević capitulated, writes the law student today, *thanks to all the demonstrators and their patient, extremely strong will to try and make things different – rule of law instead of injustice, no more nepotism, no more corruption, nothing more like the terrifying civil war they witnessed and survived.*

Such statements also indirectly counter suggestions that the downfall of Milošević was due to the massive financial and advisory influence of the USA and European countries. Anyone who stands for hours with friends in the cold on their own initiative, and expresses dissatisfaction with the government using banners and whistles, knows they are not merely puppets of big powers.

The protests against the Milošević regime already had begun in 1992/93 during the Balkan war. The government advanced against demonstrators with soldiers and tanks; there

**“Noise was one means of fighting the evil. The demonstrators made extreme noise, especially during the program of the national TV service – RTS 1. So demonstrators would prevent the rest of the nation from being manipulated by pure lies and false information.” (Lidija)**

was tremendous fear of random police brutality. Nevertheless, more and more people took to the streets. In 1996/97 the protests were strongest. Students, in particular, organized demonstrations under the leadership of

**I'M a STUDENT  
IN PROTEST  
AND I'M PROUD**



Otpor! Students in Belgrade were the driving force behind the fight against the Milošević regime in 1996/97.

“Otpor”. Their protests were imaginative – and very noisy:

*Noise was one means of fighting the evil. In those days the national media were giving false information about the demonstrators, their number, and the way they were treated, and all other consequences. One of the ways to direct the attention to the demonstrators was to make extreme noise, especially during the program of the national TV service – RTS 1. So demonstrators would prevent the rest of the nation from being manipulated by pure lies and false information.*

Noise drowned out state propaganda – an example of how protests relate directly to mass-media propaganda and can counteract it. How are these mass student protests in Serbia recalled today, ten years

later? In the autumn of 2006, Serbia's Democratic Party – which after the 2007 elections would become the country's second strongest party – dedicated an exhibit to the protests, in their tiny offices in Belgrade:



*The Democratic Party, which joined the protest in the early period, considers these events as very important. This exhibition was dedicated to all the people, to increase their awareness that people similar to Milošević, who were loyal to him, must never again be allowed to do certain things. The main message floating in the air is: You can't sacrifice the nation because of your selfishness and future gain. That actually was the message vibrating during the 1990s in Serbia, all the time.*

The exhibit showed many photos of the protests that mostly professionals who sympathized with the movement had taken. The images remain in the exhibit without any explanation – which Lidija can understand: *For me, and my people, I believe those pictures are priceless: They are a part of the identity of every decent person, and they are symbols. That is why there is no accompanying text. Sometimes emotions lose power when they are expressed in words.*

Lidija was upset that the press did not mention the small exhibit, which meant that it could not reach the public. She blames the organizers of the exhibition: *All party members were invited to the opening night, but who else? Who can hear about it except the circle of people (though not small) who already know about these things, who have experienced them and for whom*

*it is hardly imaginable that they could ever forget about them?*

It is truly typical and in no way wrong that the first to deal with remembrance of protest are those who initiated the protest in the first place. This also has an effect on the interpretive power of this history. Serbia's Democratic Party was part of the movement and clearly tries publicly to present its current party politics as being in the tradition of the 1990s protests. The photos in the exhibition that are intended to document the protests thus take on an instrumental character, as a challenge to party supporters to adopt the old fighting spirit.

Katarina observed a similar instrumentalisation of history. She describes in her research that several political parties have used documentary film from the student protests of 1996/97 for their political campaigns and for election propaganda:

*On their CDs, TV commercials and posters it is written: "ENERGY 10 years 1996–2006." Politicians need that energy for votes now, and protests have returned to public attention again. But they don't talk too much about the facts: like only three percent of protesters were members of a political party. People were more motivated by their own will to show their modern, conscious and civilised face than they were by some political leaders.*

Anyone who observes such migration of images can recognize how pictures become symbols and individual photos suddenly turn into icons representing an entire event. This is how photos gain mythical qualities. There is a gap between the historical event and later remembrance through images and retelling. But any citizen can intervene in the societal negotiations about such images of history and their meaning, and protest against their manipulation – for example, by publicising their analysis internationally, through Indy media and other alternative Internet platforms.



# Hungary 1956

## Cornerstone for the Unification of Europe?



**“The 1956 Revolution also laid the foundations for the enlarged European Union of today,” claimed the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising. Young Europeans have their doubts about this thesis: Weren’t the Western powers too passive when the Soviets put down the uprising? How could that have been a foundation for a united Europe?**



**“The 1956 Revolution**

**also laid the foundations for the enlarged European Union of today. The courage of the – often anonymous – heroes of 1956 led to the foundation of new democracies and the reunification of Europe. Az Európai Unió Köszönti a Magyar Hősöket. The European Union salutes the Hungarian heroes. Their sacrifice was not in vain.” (José Manuel Barroso)**

“We learned that Western countries only act when it concerns economic issues and Hungary wasn’t an economic question. When those Russian tanks drove in, you had the feeling that everything was lost. It was almost indescribable. We had the taste of freedom, but it was all for nothing. All those people died for nothing.”

(Jozsef Orban, Hungarian refugee, in a Dutch television documentary from 2006. Cited by Michou)

On October 23, 1956, students in Budapest demonstrated for democracy and for Hungarian independence. Their peaceful demonstrations expanded into an armed insurrection, which was put down bloodily in November by Soviet troops. On the Hungarian side, there were some 2,500 dead and 20,000 wounded. Three hundred Hungarians were executed, 13,000 interned and 35,000 put on trial, while 200,000 left the country. On the Soviet side, at least 700 people died and 1,500 were wounded.

### 1956 and 2006 – experience and memory

In October 2006, throughout Europe, the Hungarian insurgents of 1956 were celebrated and acknowledged as heroes and tragic victims. What remains from an historical event whose duration was short and record so terrible? For the participants in the project “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience,” this anniversary was an opportunity to observe “live” how a major historical protest and resistance event is remembered. The high-school and university students became reporters who described in the Internet forum how the revolt and its suppression by the Soviet Army were memorialized in their country. Not only did they examine press or television reports but also exhibitions, Internet sites and memorials.

Because of the anniversary, the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, travelled to Budapest. His appearance there also was shown on Serbian television. Katarina, from Belgrade, cited the following section of his speech:

*The 1956 Revolution also laid the foundations for the enlarged European Union of today. The courage of the – often anonymous – heroes of 1956 led to the foundation of new democracies and the reunification of Europe. Az Európai Unió Köszönti a Magyar Hősöket. The European Union salutes the Hungarian heroes. Their sacrifice was not in vain.*

With these words, Barroso lends significance to the events in Hungary and attempts to endow them with import for Europe today. But was October 1956 really a revolution that laid the groundwork for the European Union? For which kind of freedom were the Hungarian insurgents rebelling? For freedom within socialism, for freedom from Stalinism, for national freedom, for individual freedom in a Western-style democracy? And finally the assertion: “Their sacrifice was not in vain.” Is this belated reception of the dead by EU politicians legitimate – especially since no such official appreciation of the Hungarian uprising appeared until Hungary’s accession into the EU in 2004?

In the Internet forum, Ivan, from Astrachan, presented the official statement of the current Russian government under President Vladimir Putin and thus gave an example of how Hungary 1956 is perceived outside the EU:

*In the middle of October 2006, the Council of Federation adopted a declaration concerning the Hungarian events of October-November 1956. The declaration contains the following provisions:*

*1. The Council on behalf of all Russian citizens grants honours to all those who suffered from those events.*

*2. Russia is not responsible for actions and decisions of Soviet leaders in 1956. Nevertheless we feel moral responsibility ...*

*3. The lesson of 1956 is very important today. It confirms that totalitarianism rejects the right to choice, while one model of democracy cannot be imposed on all countries.*

These three premises provide the interpretive framework for today’s official Russian

remembrance of the Hungarian events. Ivan commented on these theses for the Internet platform:

*The officials admit the Soviet leaders' guilt, and stress that contemporary Russia is not related to those actions. Moral responsibility is recognized in official positions. But there is still an absence of a clear definition of what the Hungarian events were in 1956. President Vladimir Putin called them the "Problem of 1956." The declaration adopted by the Council of Federation does not only evaluate the "Problem of 1956" but it becomes a political document, which draws an analogy between suppression of democracy in the Soviet camp in the 20th century and forced planting of democracy at the beginning of the 21st century.*

Ivan makes clear that the official Russian remembrance of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 far transcends the historical events themselves. Through analogies with the present, the Russian government attributes new symbolic and political functions to the historical occurrences.

The Serbian student Milena also perceived this difference between event and remembrance caused by current politics. In October 2006, a monument was erected in Palic in northern Serbia near the Hungarian border to memorialize the admission of Hungarian refugees in 1956. The initiative was taken by Vojvodina's Hungarian minority, which, with its approximately fourteen percent, represents the largest national minority in this Serbian region. Milena got the impression *that one thing is stressed most – the friendship and mutual cooperation of the two states, Serbia and Hungary. There was more talk about the relationship between our two countries than actual remembrance of the days of revolution and their meaning for Europe today.* Milena criticizes the fact that the collective remembrance of the Hungarian event is used by Serbian politicians to cover up contemporary conflicts between Serbia and Hungary.



“We want bread” – Polish State Security Service photographed demonstrators for identification purposes, Poznań 1956.

### Poland 1956, Hungary 1956 – rival memories

Barroso's speech on the occasion of the 50th anniversary makes clear which perception of the Hungarian uprising dominates in current European politics: For many, the uprising represented the beginning of the end of communism – “the first brick extracted from the Berlin Wall,” as a major Serbian newspa-

per formulated it. Slovenian newspapers even claimed that the first people's uprising in a socialist state took place in Hungary in 1956. Tina from Slovenia disagreed, remembering June, 17, 1953 in the GDR and the uprising in Poznań, Poland in June 1956. On the Internet forum, Michał also emphasized Poland's leading role in the fight against communism: *Most people know about “Solidarity,” but it's not the only part of Polish history worth being familiar*

**“Our Polish fate could have been so similar to the Hungarian one. The Polish revolution in 1956 was not put down suddenly but died slowly after two, three years. We are jealous about the glory given to the Hungarian insurgents because, although they suffered, history now says that they were right.” (Michał)**

## Hungary 1956: revolution or uprising?

### From: Katarzyna

Joseph Rothschild, an American historian whose focus is eastern and central Europe, said: "These events in Hungary were not a mere rebellion or uprising or insurrection or putsch or general strike, but a genuine and domestic victorious revolution, defeated only by overwhelming foreign force."

### From: Anna

Rothschild called the Hungarian revolution a "genuine and domestic victorious revolution." My question: Why is it called victorious? Or again, more generally: When is a protest victorious? We know that this revolution was bloodily suppressed. Maybe it was victorious in its thoughts? I am not really sure if this is just a nice statement that people like to hear or, if it isn't, how is it meant?

### From: Christina

Anna already questioned the word "victorious" in the expression "victorious revolution." I'd like to concentrate on the latter part: Why is 1956 called a revolution? Is it a common denotation? It also seems to appear, at least, in the Slovak media. In Germany, though, I only found it in the combined term "counter-revolution," derived from former socialist interpretations. In my opinion, "revolution" – whether applied to successful or unsuccessful movements – always implies the aim of total reversal of the present social, economic and cultural value system. Thus, the term "revolution" somehow equalizes the very different aims, attitudes and imaginations of the participants in "Hungary 1956."

### From: Anna

I believe that the reason why the term "revolution" is applied is that this protest movement was able to cause such an upheaval. In fact, it turned the whole society upside down, and it had far-reaching consequences. The society had changed to such an extent that it was not able to go back to its original state. Naturally, it was a "counter-revolution" from the Soviet point of view.

with. I am really curious about how often historians in debates in Germany mention the date of 28 June 1956 in Poznań, if they do so at all. This is the date of the first Polish demonstration against the power based mainly on economic reasons, which turned into riots. At any rate, among Stalinist societies it was (as far as I know) the first visible sign of disagreement with the communist power after the 20th Convention of the Soviet Communist Party and Khrushchev's paper. It was put down after bloody fighting, in which the army used tanks. In July 1956 in Budapest, people became familiar with Khrushchev's paper and started to speak about it, which was called by some Soviet officials ideological "Poznań." Fortunately, it's not a Polish fairy-tale that we inspired Hungarians in some way to rise up; the Hungarians themselves say so.

Such interjections made evident to all participants the real European dimensions of the Hungarian uprising. Michał correctly pointed

out that it was the famous speech by Khrushchev that first gave rise to strong hopes for liberalization and reform of communist societies. In February 1956, the Soviet state and party chief first openly criticized and judged the crimes and personality cult of Stalin. This unexpected signal from Moscow set off governmental crises in Eastern Europe and led to protests and uprisings in Poland and Hungary. In October 1956, after the June uprising in Poznań was put down, the new Polish reform regime under Władysław Gomułka succeeded in deterring the visiting Soviet leader from an expanded military intervention in Poland. The price was the promise to maintain Poland's close ties to the Soviet Union, which soon smothered the initial steps at reform. In contrast to the Polish reform politicians, Hungary's government under Imre Nagy acted far less skilfully toward the Soviet Union in its attempts to prevent a Soviet intervention. In this respect, the lynch

law directed toward Communist Party functionaries and secret-service members, which took place during the days of anarchy that followed the Hungarian uprising, also casts shadows on many of the 15,000 insurgents who are celebrated as heroes in the West.

With this background in mind, Michał described in the forum why at least older Poles still feel great empathy for the Hungarians: *Our (Polish) fate could have been so similar to the Hungarian one. The Polish revolution in 1956 was not put down suddenly but died slowly after two, three years. We are jealous about the glory given to the Hungarian insurgents because, although they suffered, history now says that they were right. What about those involved in the Polish revolution? These questions are hardly present in our debate ...*

With his comparison between Poland and Hungary, Michał refers to the fact that episodes of protest and resistance that resulted in human casualties are apparently easier to anchor

**“Rothschild called the Hungarian revolution a ‘genuine and domestic victorious revolution.’**

**My question: Why is it called victorious? Or again, more generally:**

**When is a protest victorious? We know that this revolution was bloodily suppressed.**

**Maybe it was victorious in its thoughts?” (Anna)**

in the historical memory than events with less dramatic results. In this respect, it is not only the (controversial) success or failure of a protest that decides if it and its actors are retrospectively granted historical significance.

The participants in this international project tried to understand why one resistance or protest event does become part of a collective memory and another does not. At the same time, this framework gave all participants the chance to bring up aspects of history that were disregarded by the official memory but had personal meaning for them. For Michał, these were his grandfather’s memories of the events during the autumn of 1956:

*My grandfather was a student of economy in his last year at The Poznań University of Economics, in the city that is thought to have started changes in Hungary in 1956: “I remember the debates about*

*the situation in Poland that had taken place since the beginning of October. And after that, about the 20th of October, something new started to happen. Everything went fast. Happiness and mobilization were enormous, everyone was in favour of the Hungarian efforts. When the Soviet Army invaded Hungary, we started to organize blood transfusions for those who might need it because of wounds suffered during the insurrection. Finally, their hopes went away. Totally unexpectedly for us.”*

### The West: between solidarity and passivity

More than 200,000 Hungarians left their native land in the autumn of 1956 in order to escape the brutal persecution and capriciousness of

the communist regime after the uprising. Via refugee camps in Austria, many headed for Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, England or the USA. Fifty years later, the media also is commemorating these people. Other participants also noticed what Andrea observed in Switzerland: *The commemoration-day festivities have been organized by groups and organizations of Hungarians who live in the country. From Zurich, Andrea reported on a special type of commemoration: Because of the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising, the Hungarian community of Zurich has inaugurated a tree of heroes in a city park. The Hungarian flag is attached to that tree.*

Numbers of participants were struck by how much solidarity ordinary citizens in Eastern and Western Europe demonstrated for Hungarian insurgents in 1956, especially when



Support from afar: Hungarian immigrants in Frankfurt show their solidarity with the revolution in their homeland.

“In my opinion, all protesters like to link their own battle with the prior revolutions that have already been ‘sanctified.’ Probably it’s a matter of inspiration? Or they want to provide themselves with more courage or glory?”  
(Katarzyna)

taking in refugees. To be sure, some contemporary perceptions of the Hungarian heroes in Western European cities and municipalities

today reveal how poorly informed people were back then

about the situation in Hungary and the

social origins of the refugees:

**CHRISTINA:** *I found it very interesting to learn from Katarzyna’s assignment about British perspectives on Hungary 1956. Especially fascinating was the report about how Hungarian emigrants were greeted in the UK: “Mr Peter Fargo, one of the interviewed Hungarians, while recalling his memories, said: ‘People were incredibly friendly. I thought it would be horrible but journalism was very different then, and the press was very positive about the migrants. No one made me feel I did not belong here. It was the time of Lords Kaldor and Balogh, two Hungarian economists who advised the Wilson government, and we all benefited from the misconception that Hungarians were all intellectuals.’ Another person said: ‘Students were welcomed into universities – they all wanted to have Hungarian freedom fighters.’ The article stressed the fact that despite the many difficulties – like the language barrier – that Hungarian refugees had to face, most of them found their own way and achieved great success in Great Britain.” (from: *The Guardian*, October 19 and 20, 2006) Here, at least once, “prejudices” led to mostly “good” consequences.*

**ANDREA:** *Yes, all our three countries welcomed the Hungarian refugees with open arms. In Switzerland and the Netherlands, they were seen as heroes that conquered the evil Soviet regime. So, huge SOLIDARITY was shown.*

*There were also huge protests and demonstrations by Westerners for Hungary, unlike anything seen before. Especially in Switzerland. I just read a very touching article*

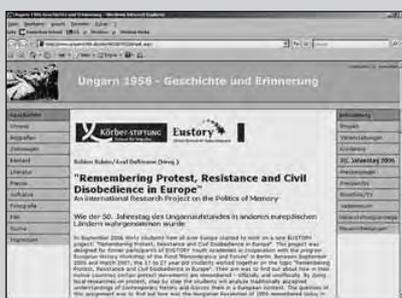
*concerning solidarity. Swiss women started a knitting action for the Hungarian refugees. They knitted thousands of pullovers, scarves, gloves, etc. for the Hungarian children. To show solidarity is somehow a way of joining a protest, isn’t it?*

The Western governments must have known that events in Hungary would have a global impact. But they behaved passively. Andrea describes the situation as a “shipwreck with observers.” How can we explain the passivity of Western diplomacy? Why did the USA, over Radio Free Europe, call for the Hungarian insurgents to hold out and to keep fighting but then fail to send any expected help?

**ANDREA:** *I have noticed that the Western countries actually didn’t protest diplomatically or in another way against the events that happened in Hungary. A metaphor comes to my mind: It’s like when there’s a sinking ship and there’s a big rescue boat. The sailors who could jump into the water are saved with great effort, but none of the lifeguards tries to stop the ship from sinking or to help the people that are still on the ship ... Do you understand what I mean? Do you have the same impression?*

**MICHO:** *I really liked your metaphor, and I did have the same impression of this. I agree with you that showing solidarity is one way of protest. And I certainly don’t mean that other countries should have sent their soldiers to Hungary. But I can’t believe that some larger and stronger countries didn’t help in any other way. For example, the USA. I read Tina’s assignment. She says about articles in Slovenian newspapers: “The ignorance of Western countries, especially the USA, is criticised, but one of the authors justifies it by saying the intervention of Western countries would inevitably have led to a Third World War.”*

*If we remember the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 (indeed, that was six years later), we can see that the world was close to a Third World War but it still didn’t happen. I believe (may-*



### Lay researchers on a par with scholars

The European “correspondents’ network” established for this project attracted the interest of historians at Potsdam’s Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung (Centre for Studies in Contemporary History). The scholars selected thirteen reports and essays from the protest project. This Internet publication was not just a special recognition of the participants’ achievements. It also showed how scholarly research and the work of EUSTORY and the GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT EUROPA were able to complement each other in creating a “public history”:

- “How was the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising remembered in my own country?”, in: *Zeitgeschichte-online*, Themenportal Ungarn 1956 – Geschichte und Erinnerung, March 2007

URL: <http://www.ungarn1956.de/site/40208703/default.aspx>

## Oct. 2006: protest vs. memory – what do people remember?

**From: Rebecca**

Last week I met a boy from Hungary, and he told me that he had taken part in the protests on the commemoration day because he cannot agree with the current government as he sees it as the successor of the communist government. Thus the commemoration seems to have been not only important with respect to the past but also because it symbolized current political problems. The unofficial commemoration was a new protest against the current political problems. I think that's an interesting concept. Using commemoration as protest ...

**From: Katarzyna**

In all our countries, journalists reporting on the 1956 anniversary were concentrating mostly on the current frictions within Hungarian society that are revealed by the divisions in remembering the uprising.

**From: Liliana**

TV showed us images of the protest in Budapest (today). I suppose peaceful demonstrations took place in Hungary, too. Interesting stories about people who participated in the 1956 events could be told. But we only saw the protest. Those images were more powerful than everything else. And I think, later on, people will remember October 2006 in Budapest not as a commemoration day but as a protest.

**From: Katarzyna**

In my opinion, all protesters like to link their own battle with the prior revolutions that have already been "sanctified." Probably it's a matter of inspiration? Or they want to provide themselves with more courage or glory? Surely it's only history that can decide whether such links are justifiable or pointless.

**From: Liliana**

I think in TV we always have to think in terms of what is interesting for people, and thus we have to ask ourselves what we would think is more interesting: peaceful commemoration or protest? To tell the truth, it is really hard to achieve something peacefully or, to put it better, by keeping silent. A peaceful commemoration can last for a few days, for a week, but not forever. It will be really hard to remember.

*be I'm wrong) that the USSR wouldn't have taken the chance to risk a Third World War (just as it pulled back in 1962) if the United States or Western countries had showed more solidarity for the Hungarian revolution in some other way. I know that this all sounds like a conspiracy theory, but I believe nowadays it's important for the memory of some event to see how people react on questions of solidarity, of guilt and of what could be done – and wasn't.*

Michou advocates that we also always keep in view possible alternative decisions and developments when remembering an historic event. This suggestion is presumably based on the perception that 50 years after the Hungarian

uprising Western European media still prints very little of a self-critical nature about the role the West played in the autumn of 1956. Far more attention is paid to the role of the Soviet Union as aggressor in this conflict. The question of how the conduct of the superpowers vis-à-vis Hungary should be judged made the participants understand how closely the meaning of the past is tied to fundamental attitudes and sentiments in the present. Anna recognized that the retrospective interpretations of the events of 1956 also openly reveal anti-American tendencies in present-day Europe:

**ANNA:** *Katarzyna mentioned in her paper discussions about Hungarians betrayed by the Americans and harmed by the Russians.*

*"Americans offered only hope, not help." This is true, by all means. However, it seems to me as if it emphasized more the fact that Americans didn't help than that the Soviets oppressed and occupied Hungary. My question therefore is: To what extent could this be influenced by the current anti-Americanism across Europe, including the United Kingdom? Or, maybe, we could generalize it even more and ask: To what extent are the memories of protest movements influenced by current situations? I am not trying to say that the Americans did the right thing ... I am trying to say that I believe media are able to manipulate the information they present even today.*

## 2006: How important is Hungary '56?

### From: Anete

In Soviet textbooks, the protest in Hungary in 1956 was named the "Hungarian counter-revolutionary mutiny" – an armed mutiny of counter-revolutionaries who, with the support of international imperialists, turned against the people's democratic system in Hungary. I am afraid that such propaganda and manipulations still leave a mark on some parts of society, especially on the pensioners or people over 50, who are not so interested in history and learned it some 30 or 40 years ago from Soviet textbooks.

### From: Milena

I was already at the university when I heard for the first time about the Hungarian revolution in 1956. Because of the lack of information on this topic in Serbian high-school history textbooks, I was kind of afraid about this assignment. So, my surprise was quite great when I noticed how much attention is given by Serbian print and Internet media to this anniversary today.

### From: Guido

In general you might think "Oh, Hungary '56 is very important – we have to remember." But in fact almost everybody would ask "Hungary '56?" If you're lucky, somebody continues and demands "What happened?" – and not only to be polite. My comrades at school think that this event isn't so important for us at this time – and I can understand them. But do we have a possibility to change anything?

### From: Michal

Reality shows that people are, generally, totally unaware of the Hungarian Revolution. What made me really sad was that the friends I interviewed are intelligent people, but obviously they are not interested in history. Although they are not historians, they're in a way entitled to be aware of what took place in 1956, because it's one of the fundamental events that created our social reality. They are to become a kind of elite of Poland. How do they do so without the basic knowledge?

### From: Verena

Michal and Guido asked university students and older pupils about Hungary 1956 and both groups knew nothing aside from some basic facts – and often not even these! In addition, they didn't seem to be very interested in the topic as such. All in all, there seems to be a big contrast between all these TV documentaries and the knowledge and interest of the youth. Maybe our generation takes the "status quo" too much for granted?

## Variety of perspectives = historical truth?

Through the discussion about the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising, it became clear that even in democratic societies history is interpreted in a biased manner for political reasons. The media also manipulate the historical record through the ways that they report about history and remembrance. These observations induced the participants in the project to pose questions about the fundamental reliability of media coverage. What can one depend on in our media world, if anything? To be sure, plurality is generally appreciated, as Lidija, from Belgrade, makes clear: *It's a good thing to have such a diversity. But what in the end offers stability and orientation for one's own view of history and of the present?*

**REBECCA:** *The problem is that most TV watchers do not have their own opinion. I think the me-*



"A lot of people unknown till now were heroes in this

revolution." (Diana, Romania)

Diana, a student of environmental studies in Cluj-Napoca, met the 75-year-old teacher Arpad Deak and interviewed him for the In-

**“As there are so many  
different opinions, I think there  
is no historical truth but the hard facts.  
They are reliable, nobody could change  
them – even though people can deny  
them!” (Rebecca)**

dia are one of the most biased sources, as they are USED to forming public opinion. The diversity of the media guarantees many points of view, so that is the important thing about media: the many differences in the opinions between different media. They are not reliable but give a broad, general overview of the issue as a whole and of the different opinions. Thus they are important, too.

**LILIANA:** What about the relation between history, memory and historical truth? I tried to understand that by “humanizing” all these concepts. Instead of an event, I thought of a person. The people who know this person have different opinions about him/her. Maybe there are similar opinions, but there are still some differences. It’s easier to collect all the similar opinions and say, for example, that this person was a good one. But we should also take into consideration the opinions saying the opposite. What is the historical truth?

The majority’s opinion?

By presenting an event on

TV, the point of view of the one who speaks becomes the point of view of the one who is watching. It’s so easy to manipulate!

**REBECCA:** As there are so many different opinions, I think there is no historical truth but the hard facts. They are reliable, nobody could change them – even though people can deny them! Since many people have witnessed history, they have their own opinion about what happened. So the general hard facts plus personal experience make up a jigsaw puzzle we put together as history. Everybody then judges for him or herself, thus it becomes even more biased ... no truth to be found anywhere ... just an historical opinion ...

Many contributions to the forum were characterised by a tension between the desire for binding, “objective” knowledge and a curiosity about the different historical perspectives

that each found plausible. Many participants were noticeably sceptical toward one-dimensional ways of narrating history. The recognition that historical truth is not easy to find also occasionally gave rise to discontent. But for Rebecca and other participants, it is evident that history and remembrance are retrospective and meaningful constructions. There is a difference between the historical past and history as remembrance. Using new sources, contemporary witnesses’ interventions or new questions, new historical images arise whose validity future generations presumably also will question. Is not this viewpoint, which arose from dialogue, a good point of departure for these and other young people to commit themselves publicly to a history of protest in Europe that transcends national perspectives?

ternet forum. Her report makes clear that there were also brave people in Romania who showed solidarity with the Budapest rebels, among them many Hungarians who lived in Romania. The memory of their actions will be passed along to later generations through conversations such as the one Diana had with Arpad Deak.

This story came from the depth of his memories and heart ... He was just 15 years old, a student at the Faculty of History in Cluj-Napoca, his native town. Back then, his family lived in the famous Hungarian district of gardeners; Romanian neighbours always appreciated their specialities and their gift of gardening.

His 19-year-old brother, Attila, a student at the Faculty of Theology in Cluj-Napoca, was in Budapest when the Hungarian Revolution started on October 23. At the beginning, Arpad was jealous of his brother’s chance to visit their relatives, their ancestor’s country, but later on he was more preoccupied with Attila’s safety. Both the Hungarian and Romanian borders were closed, and the information was limited. But after November 4, when the family had almost no hope left that Attila was still alive, he returned home safely. He was asked by the Romanian Information Service (called the “Securitatea”) not to say any word about what he had seen in Budapest, and for a couple of months he kept all of this in his mind just to assure his family’s protection.

Arpad Deak does not know so many things about the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. Or maybe he does not want to remember what his brother used to say about it. He does remember his brother mentioning the night when the revolutionaries were protesting near Stalin’s statue. Attila and his cousin were at the National Opera, and they were not allowed to go outside until 12 pm when the protesters were gone. Later, on November 1, the Day of the Dead, Hungarian people were searching for their dead on the streets of Budapest. When he returned home by train, the Hungarian locomotive did not have permission to leave the country. The Romanian passengers (mostly injured) had to push the train all the way to the Romanian customs house.

Arpad Deak remembers the meeting of The Communist University Union, to which he was invited as a freshman at the Faculty of History. Some students in the third and fourth year of study were blamed for showing solidarity with the Hungarian Revolution and were expelled. Arpad Deak and the rest of the audience at that meeting admired their courageous attitude. They cheered them when they left the room; these students were secretly considered to be victims of the communist regime and role models for teenagers.

# Sharing Memories of Protest and

Foundation for  
a European Future?



# Resistance

In the future, remembrance of protest will influence decision-makers on the highest political levels. That's not bad. In fact, the handling of history requires a public and international discussion about concepts of truth and justice. These 24 young amateur researchers have a vision as to how that discussion could function for Europe.



*I still dream of a major European memorial site for those who actively resisted the Nazis, Fritz Stern stated in January 2007 in an interview with the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. The great historian, whose Jewish family managed to flee to the USA from Nazi Germany in 1938 when he was twelve, said his dream of a European resistance memorial was an implicit rebuke of how the Holocaust is remembered: I believe that we are doing the next generation a great injustice when we only remember the crimes and not the people who resisted. These actively decent people existed; this must be made clear at every opportunity. This memory should also be preserved.*

But what does the history of resistance and protest mean for Europe when one doesn't limit it, as Fritz Stern does, to the Second World War, the Holocaust and the German occupation? What role in our memory should be given to protest and resistance to communism? Up until only a few years ago, the victims of Stalinism were scarcely of any importance to how the 20th century was remembered in Western Europe. If one were to take as a standard the speech that Barroso gave in Budapest on the occasion of the memorial celebrations for the Hungarian uprising, then the history of European resistance could be promoted to a posi-



Distillation: A stage presentation is derived from the Internet forum material.

tive foundation myth of the new Europe – a counterweight, so to speak, to the already institutionalized victim remembrance of the Holocaust.

### Conflict-filled remembrance

The 25 participants of the European project “Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe” obviously have no doubt that anti-Nazi protest and resistance should also be remembered in the future. The research into family recollections made it possible to surmise that, along with the dominant theme of the Second

World War, events from post-war European history also interest young people today. For participants from post-communist countries, it was often the more recent protests leading to their nation's independence or democratization which they understand as a challenge for official remembrance today.

In their critical analyses of available forms of memory, many participants make it clear that they want to be informed in a more differentiated way about the motives and political goals of resistance fighters and protesters. In other words, the decisive question remains not *whether* but *which* stories of the resistance and protest should be remembered, and *how*. That still especially relates to the national level, but also, in a second phase, the transnational one.

The representation of the resistance in Latvia offers an example of the challenges involved in the attempt at trans-national remembrance. On the Internet platform, Anete reported how excitedly her father still describes the intense community spirit he experienced in 1991 – more intense than anything since – when he and many other Latvians protected a TV station in Riga from possible Soviet incursions: *People made many campfires and passionately discussed new political events and politicians' speeches and also sang old forbidden Latvian songs from World War II. My father remembers the “feeling in the air,” as everyone was very friendly towards one*



“I still dream of a major European memorial site for those who actively resisted the Nazis. I believe that we are doing

the next generation a great injustice when we only remember the crimes and not the people who resisted.”  
(Fritz Stern)

**“What my father particularly remembers  
was the use of Latvian – everywhere  
they spoke or sang in Latvian, not Russian at all.” (Anete)**

another. What he particularly remembers was the use of Latvian – everywhere they spoke or sang in Latvian, not Russian at all.

In response to a question by Tina of Slovenia as to how many Russians from Latvia took part in the “Baltic Way” in August 1989, the 600-kilometer-long human chain through the Baltic countries, Anete replied: *My dad said that there were some Russians who lived in Latvia before WW II and were actively engaged, since they also considered Latvia their homeland and country. But most of the immigrants were quiet and very scared, as they thought that some ethnic clash or killings would start. Luckily it did not come to that, Anete wrote, nor did it lead to street battles. The government was very moderate and reasonable to not activate some supra-national sense. At the time, more than 34 percent of the entire population was Russian; today, with 28 percent, Russians remain the largest national minority in the country.*

Tina’s curiosity demonstrates her special sensitivity toward the situation of national minorities in other countries. Anete’s answer signals how justified this concern was. The anti-Soviet and anti-Russian protest made many Russians fear for their lives. The singing of Latvian songs certainly also woke memories of times when Latvians welcomed the German Wehrmacht as their liberators from Soviet dominance. The Russians who had been resettled in Latvia did not see themselves as “immigrants” but as Russians who freed Latvia from Hitlerian fascism. For the Latvians, on the other hand, who had to suffer again after 1945 under Stalinist persecution, these Russians were not liberators but simply occupiers. There appears to be little room for grey areas.

Today the history of the Latvian resistance to both the Soviet and the National Socialist occupation is used to strengthen Latvian patriotism. With this history of uninterrupted resistance, the national independence of the Baltic state, achieved in 1991, is set in a long line of tradition. To be sure, this tradition also

contains contradictions and ruptures, as Mihails explained while describing his research on Riga’s “Museum of the History of Occupation.” *I was astonished with the information about Latvians welcoming German warriors. Of course I understand that first occupiers were the horror number one, but I would be very suspicious about the Nazis coming to help Latvia – why was the Latvian press so easily deceived? For me today it is clear that it was act of getting territory and people. Why didn’t people see it then?*

Mihails has a Russian father, and for ethnic Latvians counts to some extent as a successor to the previous “occupiers.” It is easy to understand why he is not only interested in the Latvians’ anti-Soviet resistance but also wants to learn more about the Latvians’ relationship to the National Socialists. According to Mihails’s analysis, however, the museum accentuates the anti-German resistance. The official remembrance of Latvian protest and resistance also helps downplay Latvians’ collaboration with the Nazis.

## European history: new canon or international dialogue?

It is precisely such conflicting historical memories that make a collective European remembrance difficult if not impossible today. It appears that social groups’ remembrance does not unify but above all divides. How then can the commemoration of resistance and protest function as a unifying element in Europe? And who should design the new – European – images of history? How should the collective memory manifest itself? Does it need new, key memorials? Or new schoolbooks?

Many European textbooks still avoid complex and contradictory questions and only offer a *validated* version of “the (national) history.” For example, a pupil in Russia will not learn from his textbook that the Eastern European states saw his nation after 1945 mainly as an occupier – and not as a liberator. Given this background, anti-Soviet protests like the Hungarian uprising in 1956 or the “Prague



Dress rehearsal: Participants make the last arrangements before their presentation.

**“History is always about values,  
so it is impossible to create one history book  
if we don’t have common views about  
the past.” (Agnieszka)**

Spring” in 1968 must also remain largely incomprehensible for many Russian pupils.

The exchange of information on the Internet forum about the differing national representations of history made participants aware that often even the neighbouring country appraised certain events differently than one’s own nation. In order to emerge from a nationally constricted viewpoint, one obvious approach would be to first enter into a dialogue with neighbouring countries about differences, contradictions and blind spots in the respective national views of history. In the



Differences versus similarities: Discussion on stage.

Internet forum, Anete, from Riga, referred to the history textbook “Histoire/Geschichte,” which was designed for both French and German pupils. *Do you think that such a “common history book” really make sense?*

Agnieszka, from Warsaw, remained sceptical and explained the binational textbook as a premature attempt “from above” to give pupils a “European identity”: *And does a common European identity make sense? Yes it does, but it remains an abstract category, so far. History is always about values, so it is impossible to create one history book if we don’t have common views about the past. And that we don’t share them is quite obvious: It*

*is enough to evoke the discussions about the European Constitution (e.g., the Preamble) and the German Centre against Expulsions (Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen), to name but a few examples.*

For Agnieszka, the schoolbook only has a symbolic function. *Is it possible to make many, even contradictory and controversial, stories into one European perspective on history, into one story? Agnieszka’s scepticism is justified. In this textbook about post-war history, for example, a French or German pupil learns nothing about*

*the (West) German problems with the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border. However, the former great European powers – France, Germany and Russia – are put in the limelight. Does that mean that Liliiana of Romania is right to fear that the “little” European countries get lost in such a work? When she studied “European history,” that only meant the history of France, Germany, Italy and Great Britain. What happens with the “small nations,” and WHO will write this history? What do you think? Obviously a group of historians. But what type of historians? From which country?*

The new approach was also discussed in Slovenia. Tina reported that Slovenian education ministers reject collective textbooks for Europe. Although the Slovenian historian Bozo Repe recognizes the chance that “national egoisms” can be overcome by aiming for binational perspectives, he also is unsure how a consensus can be found on controversial

historical themes. This historian, like Tina, certainly had in mind the continuing conflicts between Slovenia and Italy. While Italy is not prepared to remember the violent policies in the territories of Yugoslavia occupied by Mussolini fascists, Slovenia attempts to justify the massacres conducted by Tito’s partisans of fascist prisoners of war but also of many civilian opponents in the Slovenian karst sinkholes (Foibe). Each side wants to be right and insists on its truth; scarcely anyone seeks a way to arrive at an historical justification that recognizes the crimes of both sides. In light of such unsolved conflicts, how should a Slovenian-Italian history textbook be created?

The project participants’ misgivings about whether binational textbooks make sense alluded more to their suspicion that panels of experts, in the peace and quiet of their rooms, create their own idea of European history, through which only a new canon with a new truth emerges – this time a bi- or trans-national history textbook. Christina, a junior student of history from Germany, pleads for a fundamental departure from the idea of codifying history into a canon binding for one and all: *In my opinion the only way to develop something like a European perspective on history is to give space to a diversity and plurality of many stories, even contradictory and controversial ones. “European History” thus is no real fixed product but a process, a process of discussion and exchange, of quarrels and agreements.*

By no means were all participants immediately satisfied by such catchwords as “diversity” and “plurality.” *Passages on communion of diversity and pluralism tend to sound beautiful, Agnieszka argued in response to Christina, however, I think you contradict yourself. Is it possible to make many stories, even contradictory and controversial stories, into one European perspective on history, one story? Yes, if you see the story as some abstract set of values typical of Europe. No, if you understand history as the content of the history schoolbook.*

“In my opinion the only way to develop something like a European perspective on history is to give space to a diversity and plurality of many stories, even contradictory and controversial ones.” (Christina)

“History does NOT have to be a (single) story. Neither does the content of a schoolbook have to form a single story. I think that the conceptualization of European history as a dialogue can also be translated into everyday school life.” (Christina)

“Passages on communion of diversity and pluralism tend to sound beautiful. However, I think you contradict yourself. Is it possible to make many stories, even contradictory and controversial stories, into one European perspective on history, one story?” (Agnieszka)

The fact that it was hard for participants to imagine that a history textbook can also present many perspectives is based on personal experiences with textbooks, which in Europe still exhibit national differences and always significant ones. Nevertheless, Christina also did not want to simply toss out the idea of the schoolbook: *History does NOT have to be a (single) story. Neither does the content of a schoolbook have to form a single story. Many of the newer books, at least in Germany, actually don't have a closed, single line of interpretation to be followed but rather a varied, differing choice of sources and historians' interpretations. I think that the conceptualization of European history as dialogue can also be translated into everyday school life – on a less theoretical level, to be sure.*

The approach taken in the dialogue toward acquiring history and imparting it is similar to that chosen by this international project toward the remembrance of protest and resistance. Christina describes it the following way: *with a diversity of perspectives – national, transnational, local, individual, regional and so on – a wide range of subjects, exchange and discussion on*

*an equal level, openness to new ideas and not aiming at an absolute, single truth meant to be found in the end.* Such an approach, however, according to Potsdam historian Thomas Lindenberger in his statement about the participants' work, does not just presuppose a mutual recognition of the others' perspective. It is not a question of an arbitrary tolerance of other points of view but an understanding of them on the basis of mutually recognized historical facts. *It should be clear that while it is certainly correct to criticise the political instrumentalisation of historical knowledge and "official" claims to final "truths," we should not throw away the baby with the bathwater and deny any possibility of finding out about objective "facts" altogether.*

Before every interpretation and debate, therefore, it is appropriate first to establish and agree about the historical facts – something that is frequently overlooked by the politics of remembrance. Many conflicts about the interpretation of history come about because victims' groups feel threatened by the demands of other victims' groups for recognition and compensation. Not only does such remembrance of conflict-ridden history not lead to mutual respect, but it can even become a new ticking bomb that sets off old nationalist feelings.

This showed itself during the argument that escalated in the spring of 2007 between Russia and Estonia over a Soviet war memorial in Tallinn, when politicians in Moscow vilified the Estonians as “Nazis.” The monument honouring fallen soldiers of the Red Army had been moved during the night out of the centre of the Estonian capital in order to be reerected on the

city's borders. For the Russians, the monument is a commemoration of their dead soldiers and stands for the liberation from fascism. Estonians see the war memorial as a symbol of the restored Soviet occupation and Stalin's terror.

The Poles, who themselves were once under Soviet dominion, also wish to free themselves from this historic burden. At the end of April 2007, the Polish president announced a draft law of the Polish Ministry of Culture, which would allow local authorities and the public administration to get rid of symbols of foreign rule over Poland. Thus, in the near future, the demolition of Soviet memorials will also take place in Poland.

As a way out of such dead ends in the field of remembrance politics, Thomas Lindenberger recommends a public discussion that would orient itself to “historical justice” rather than to a single and final truth, about which presumably none of the conflicting parties could agree. *This might still be controversial, as all “legal” disputes are, but it necessarily includes some basic attitudes and virtues all can agree upon in order to make such disputes fruitful and constructive: accepting the priority of rational arguments, bringing forward evidence in the order in which it was found, and – last but not least – being prepared to check one's own prejudices if confronted with evidence and arguments of others.* To be sure, it is no easy task to take leave of a definite idea of universal truth and virtue. But opportunities are also involved, as Christina explains: *By losing these certainties, one gains a lot: openness of mind, probably also some tolerance in everyday contact with others.*



History goes public: Participants introduce their WIKI PROTEST idea.

“European History is no real fixed product but a process, which may resemble a bit this project: with a diversity of perspectives, a wide range of subjects, exchange and discussion on an equal level, openness to new ideas and not aiming at an absolute, single truth meant to be found in the end.” (Christina)

## The future of remembrance – international exchange in digital networks

Europe is what Europeans make of it. With their knowledge and commitment, the 24 high-school and university students involved themselves in the continuing negotiation about how European history is remembered. They exchanged information about the tradition of fundamental values that are so important to Europe – such as human rights, democracy, protection of national minorities and national self-determination. And they learned that these civil rights are not always – and were not always – self-evident. With their research, the participants in this workshop recognized how memory is coupled to questions of power and dominion, of national and collective identification and of ideology and propaganda. They also understood the importance of seeking a European perspective on history.

“European history” could best be made through the cooperation of experts/professional historians and “laymen” on an equal footing, wrote Christina in a discussion on the Internet forum. This

idea led the participants to develop a vision called WIKI PROTEST at their concluding workshop, which took place in Hamburg under the direction of Axel Doßmann and Benno Plassmann. On this planned Internet platform, international researchers on protest would take part in a moderated exchange about the remembrance of protest and resistance in Europe.

Such a network of interested and politically reflective citizens addressing themes of protest and resistance might not only describe but also actually change the culture of remembrance in Europe, to some degree. To create such a digital program, no Commission’s decrees from Brussels are necessary, as presumably would be the case for a European remembrance site. What is absolutely necessary

for the online encyclopaedia WIKI PROTEST is the initiative of mature citizens with a feeling for history and human rights, responsibility and team spirit. Local competence and experience could be made visible worldwide, and national, cultural and professional limits overcome. The participants could scarcely have made more concrete their desire for a democratic way of addressing European history.



Last Protest: The finale of the presentation.

# WIKI PROTEST in short

**A website available for everybody.**

**Collecting different articles concerning protest, resistance, civil disobedience. Containing articles which describe events, but also articles which describe different definitions of protest, resistance and civil disobedience. In this way, the website will become a database of protest, but also a database for monuments throughout Europe which commemorate events of protest, etc.**

**Anyone can post articles or change existing articles if they feel they are incorrect. In this way, democratic values are very important on this website. Everyone should have a voice.**

**All articles will be checked by history consultants (historical correctness is very important).**

**There are discussion rooms in order to stimulate international conversation. This will improve the understanding between different European countries.**

**There are also communities people can join (like the Hungary '56 community). These communities can be used as a starting point for international meetings and commemoration festivities.**

**Remembrance of protest will play a role in the discussion rooms and the different communities.**

**There are certain rules concerning the content of the articles and the discussion rooms. Democratic values are important.**

**The history consultants will be able to delete articles, discussions or communities if they contain propaganda, discriminatory remarks or false information.**

## Who participated?

### Christina Brauner

Born 1989 in Gladbeck, Germany  
High-school student and university student  
(Department of History, Westphalian Wilhelms  
University, Münster)

*The essence of Europe is the meeting and interaction of its people as well as their interest in each other. Therefore the most wonderful aspect of the project "Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe" is that it gives me the chance to "practice" this meeting and interaction in a very intense way. Focusing on European history also means encountering and discussing different views on and accesses to the past. The project is therefore a chance to write history in a way that is appropriate to the 21st century – abandoning the national state as a fundamental concept and developing an idea of Europe beyond diplomacy, European Union and wars.*



Christina Brauner



Michou Bressers

### Michou Bressers

Born 1986 in Herleen, Netherlands  
History Teacher (Carbooncollege Broekland,  
Herleen)

*In my opinion, civil disobedience helps form a feeling of unity in a country. For example, resistance against foreign occupation helps form a feeling of "us against them." Therefore I think protest, resistance and civil disobedience is part of the identity of every country in Europe. That's why this subject also links the different countries in Europe. The form, time and place of protest and resistance are unique in each country, but in general it's also something that all countries in Europe have in common.*

### Andrea Buchschacher

Born 1985 in Zurich, Switzerland  
University student (Institute of Political Science,  
University of Zurich)

*In this project I would like to find out what makes people decide to disobey authorities. What process lies behind this decision and what are the consequences? What was different in the past and are there big differences between countries? The topic of protest and resistance can be found in everyday life all around the world and I think it will be extremely interesting to find out about the variety of protest and resistance and how it's defined in different countries of Europe.*



Andrea Buchschacher



Diana-Maria Ceres

### Diana-Maria Ceres

Born 1985 in Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
University student (Faculty of Environmental  
Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca)

*Seventeen years ago, the communist regime in Romania collapsed. We became free in terms of human rights: we gained the freedom to express our thoughts and feelings, to travel wherever we want to go. Nevertheless, the younger generation has faced and will have to face unwanted change. Even so, they seem less interested in protest or opposition than their grandparents may have been. These young people have different aims – like living abroad or achieving financial status, aims that involve compromises that young people are willing to make, to the detriment of resistance. As a representative of the younger generation, I believe that the project "Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe" would give me the opportunity to find out what it takes to have the courage to speak out in opposition, and thus to shape my personal development.*

### Ivan Esin

Born 1985 in Astrakhan, Russia  
University student (Faculty of Law,  
Astrakhan State University)

*These days history is often discussed either too narrowly or too globally. At the same time, history becomes social technology and a powerful tool of manipulation. To study people's memories is one way to overcome and destroy historical myths and misunderstandings between peoples. While working on the project "Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe," we will confront different traditions and aspects of remembrance. The project will help me to understand other "ways of remembering" and to avoid a "narrow view" of European history.*



Ivan Esin



Rebecca Hartje

### Rebecca Hartje

Born 1988 in Hanover, Germany  
High-school student (Gymnasium Isernhagen)

*To me it is tempting to find out about how different countries and communities remember civil disobedience in their history, so I can analyse how history is used to glorify or exaggerate certain events. Discussing case studies from different regions and countries will broaden our knowledge and understanding of European history. Hopefully this project will bring out many different opinions and critical viewpoints, so that fruitful discussions will yield a better understanding of the Europe we live in today. In the end we will each be able to remember history in our own way, and hopefully we will have developed a new kind of historical culture through this unique project.*

**Verena Hörl**

Born 1985 in Baden-Baden, Germany  
University student (Faculty of Law, Albrecht Ludwigs University, Freiburg i. Brsg.)

*To analyse the way protest is remembered, one must start with a lot of questions. For instance, the peace marches in European countries – like during the Vietnam War, the 1990–91 UN-Iraq War, the 2003 US-Iraq War – raise the question about trans-national connections between protests. The disturbances in France in October 2005 as well as the “No” votes against the EU constitution can be seen as protest movements that raise questions about European integration, identity and solidarity. Through the project “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience,” I want to find out: How are social movements and democratic processes interrelated? How do trans-national exchange and national contextualization of protest cultures take place?*



Verena Hörl



Tina Ilc

**Tina Ilc**

Born 1988 in Šempeter pri Gorici, Slovenia  
High-school student (Škofijska gymnasium Vipava)

*Throughout history, people have sensed when the authorities no longer represented their will. That was when they decided to use their own power to be heard and to change the situation. There are various reasons why a group chooses protest. Some are reasonable and some might not be, but there is one common truth: people have a right to be heard. It might sound paradoxical, but protest is somehow a part of democracy. That is why I think that if we want the EU to function as a democratic union, we have to analyse and discuss our common history so that we will be able to work toward our common future.*

**Liliana Iuga**

Born 1985 in Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
University student (Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca)

*I like studying local history and talking with people involved in various historical events, because I think history is first and foremost about people, not about politics, economy and wars. The perceptions of eye-witnesses help me better understand the events I am studying. This project will give me the opportunity to speak to people, to hear their memories and thus to better understand the past. Comparing the situation in Romania with similar experiences in other countries will open new perspectives. And then there are no more distances between us – it is a world without limits, at least for communication.*



Liliana Iuga



Anete Jēkabsons

**Anete Jēkabsons**

Born 1986 in Riga, Latvia  
University student (Faculty of Political Science, Stradins University, Riga)

*If we want to learn about resistance and disobedience in Europe, the experience of Latvia in this context is quite unique: The events that changed our state from a totalitarian regime to a democracy took place only 16 years ago, involving almost everybody in non-violent action as in the Baltic in 1989 and in the “Song Revolution” in Latvia. In this project I wish to collect information from eyewitnesses, to meet the people behind the facts. To hear and understand life stories from different countries, to become aware of the diversity and at the same time the similarity of these stories, helps guarantee tolerance and understanding. This is a process in which I would like to take part.*

**Kalina Kirilova**

Born 1984 in Sofia, Bulgaria  
University student (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Mannheim)

*Resistance and opposition are the very substance of youth. Being young is about opposing and rebelling against established rules and official norms. My generation lives at the crossroads of history – where old barriers and straightjackets have been destroyed, but new norms and rules have not yet been established. For us, the natural tendency of youth to criticize, oppose and rebel against anything that is established coincided with the destruction of all foundations of the “old world,” with uncertainty and at times wild swings towards all that is opposite.*



Kalina Kirilova

**Mihails Kozlovs**

Born 1986 in Daugavpils, Latvia  
High-school student (Russian Liceum, Daugavpils)

*Working on an Internet platform will connect us, the participants in “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience,” for half a year. This will foster our understanding of each other because we will not only undertake research in our own environment, but also discuss our work and the problems we confront in our countries. Thus we will embrace all Europe. Obviously the Internet platform improves conditions for our research, which will be done step by step. I consider such meetings for young Europeans increasingly important in a globalized world. Dialogue helps improve our understanding of our differences and peculiarities.*



Mihails Kozlovs

**Anna Michalkova**

Born 1986 in Bratislava, Slovakia  
University student (Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University, Bratislava)

*By increasing our knowledge of history, we decrease the likelihood of history being misused by demagogues. But knowledge alone is not sufficient. If we know about our history and remain passive even if we witness atrocities or crimes, our knowledge is worthless. I am interested in this project because I believe that by participating in it I will become more informed about various ways to use civil disobedience, protest and resistance. And I believe that, with the help of my colleagues, I will be able to draw some conclusions and eventually reach out to others and mobilize the whole society.*



Anna Michalkova



Lesia Moskalenko



Jakub Mrozowski



Agnieszka Niezgoda



Lidija Pejčinović



Michał Przeperski

**Lesia Moskalenko**

Born 1985 in Hadiach, Ukraine  
University student (Department of Physics, National Taras Shevchenko University, Kiev)

*I suppose you have heard about the small revolution that took place in my country from November 2004 until January 2005. To tell the truth: it has never ended. The situation has not improved much. Most Ukrainians don't reflect on the history that led to our present situation, and thus they don't know their own goals. The result is indifference and irresponsibility. In this project I will become acquainted with the culture of other European countries and thereby recognize the unique features of my own culture. I wish to find out what is lacking in the Ukrainian mentality, so I can help us create solutions for our country. I think that I will greatly enjoy the analysis of the history of protest, resistance and civil disobedience.*

**Jakub Mrozowski**

Born 1983 in Białystok, Poland  
University student (Faculty of Law and Administration, University of Gdańsk)

*I started my very personal adventure with history through exploring the history of my local surroundings. It is a history that I can almost touch: pavements on which I walk, people whom I see, places that have changed throughout time but that retain their spirit. Maybe I am just a bit too sentimental, but I think history should be personal and subjective, because that is how people will not only remember the past, but stay close to it, feel it, understand their roots. For this reason I would like to take part in the project "Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe," as it aims at local research that will be discussed with people from different countries.*

**Agnieszka Niezgoda**

Born 1984 in Lipno, Poland  
University student (Department of Modern Languages, University of Warsaw)

*I look forward to the collaboration in an international study circle, which I have always seen as very valuable. Surely, the meetings with German and international students and professors will give me the opportunity to compare our methods of working and our perspectives on history.*

**Lidija Pejčinović**

Born 1986 in Belgrade, Serbia  
University student (Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade)

*I was born and grew up in Belgrade in the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ). In the course of my life I have seen my country change several times. I was 14 years old when I witnessed and participated in overthrowing the idea of real socialism, standing with my parents in the crowd on the 5th of October 2000 in front of the Parliament, while the police used tear gas and brutal force against the citizens who asked for nothing more than what was guaranteed for the first time by the Constitution of 1935, the right to vote. I would like to look at the whole situation from a scientific point of view and to share my perceptions of the protests and civil disobedience in Serbia, which could be viewed as a step forward on the road toward maturation and political cultivation of a nation.*

**Michał Przeperski**

Born 1986 in Bydgoszcz, Poland  
University student (Faculty of Law and Administration, University of Warsaw)

*It is hard to imagine a country that suffered more under the two totalitarianisms of the last century than Poland. During the 2nd World War, my grandfather spent his childhood in Pomerania. His two uncles were soldiers in the German SS division, killed by the Americans during the Battle of the Ardennes. My second grandfather was a child in Lodz; his brother was an officer of the execrable so-called "navy-blue police" appointed by the Germans, consisting of former Polish policemen. After the war, my grandparents were involved in building the new Poland under the banner of communism. They had been misled, and their children – my parents – took*

part in the great demonstrations against communism in 1980–81. I have been fighting against forgetting, and I have tried to encourage eyewitnesses to break their silence. Taking part in this project would be a continuation of my interests.

### Lotta Schneidmesser

Born 1987 in Hamburg, Germany  
High-school student (Freie Waldorfschule, Rendsburg)

I think that the project “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe” will provide a great opportunity to get to know different cultures in Europe, to speak about the different experiences that participants have had in historical research projects, and to exchange opinions and ideas concerning the development and the future of Europe.



Lotta Schneidmesser

### Katarina Spanović

Born 1978 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Teacher of German (8th gymnasium, Belgrade)

I would like to contribute to this project by doing research about the student protests in Belgrade from 1997 to October 2000 (“October Revolution”). This research would be a challenge for me because it is about events from the recent past and I am very curious as to how they are remembered in media, schoolbooks (if anything has been written about that yet) and exhibitions. While doing such research, I might be faced with problems like suppression of memories from the recent past. So I would probably need to ask hypothetical questions like: How could something have existed that perhaps no longer exists?

### Milena Tatalović

Born 1987 in Belgrade, Serbia  
University student (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade)

Over the past 15 years, my country has been exposed to civil disobedience and protest. In some way, my whole childhood and youth has been marked by these events. In October 2000 my fellow citizens, family, friends and I spent many days on the streets, demanding our rights. I believe that my people would still be living under repression if there had been no civil disobedience. When I look at recent events, like demonstrations by French students or the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, I can see that protest is still very much “alive.” That is why I would like to participate in this project. I hope to discover and learn about ways in which citizens can legally fight for their rights and defend general interests.



Milena Tatalović

### Katarzyna Trzpiola

Born 1986 in Olsztyn, Poland  
University student (Faculty of Law, University of Warsaw)

Creating friendly relations now, without forgiveness and understanding of the past, cannot be honest. As evidence I can mention the current relationship between Poland and Ukraine. The rapprochement which took place during the “Orange Revolution” – not only between the politicians but also citizens of both countries – helped to solve historical conflicts dating back to the Polish-Ukrainian War 1918/1919. It helped both sides to say “Sorry.” Such examples give hope. But there are countless examples when history falls into forgetfulness or becomes garbled. Undoubtedly these situations are dangerous and should be met with strong opposition. That is why I see this project as very important for the future.



Katarzyna Trzpiola

### Guido Falk von Rudorff

Born 1989 in Steinfurt, Germany  
High-school student (Gymnasium Arnoldinum, Steinfurt)

The topic of the project “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe” contains multiple aspects of global interest as well as of private experience. One recent example of the global dimension is a prisoner protesting against the military tribunals in Guantanamo, which led to the Supreme Court decision that those tribunals are against international and national law. On a European level, I refer to the protests by French youth who felt forsaken by their government. I want to know what triggers people to resist and demand change. Are there any observable patterns in behaviour or solutions? I am sure it will be possible to answer these and other questions and to place the answers into local circumstances and everyday life as well as into the global context.



Guido Falk von Rudorff

### Amélie zu Eulenburg

Born 1984 in Marburg / Lahn, Germany  
University student (History Department, University of Potsdam)

When I read the poster in the hallway of my university in Potsdam I quickly decided to apply for the project “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience in Europe.” As a student of history, I thought it would be a great chance to receive new input about a culture of remembrance – not only in a national but also in a European context. And I was looking forward to meeting with and talking to other history students from different countries. In addition, the “E-learning- Seminar” sounded very interesting and timely.



Amélie zu Eulenburg

## EUSTORY – History Network for Young Europeans

The Körber Foundation supports a European approach to history that avoids exclusion and encourages rapprochement. To discuss what we have in common and what divides us and thus to come closer to a mutual understanding: These are the underlying ideas behind EUSTORY, the European network of independent history competitions for young people, coordinated by the Körber Foundation. Within the framework of EUSTORY history competitions, young people track down history in their immediate environment.

Civil-society organizations from the following countries have signed the network's common policy document, the EUSTORY charter: Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine and Wales. About 2,500 people contribute as jurors, tutors and voluntary assistants to this network, which offers scholars, history teachers and experts from throughout Europe a forum for exchange and dialogue.



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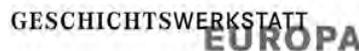
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## History Workshop Europe

A joint promotional competition of the “Remembrance and Future” Fund and the Robert Bosch Foundation

Since 2004 the programme supports international history workshops that critically examine ideologically or nationalistically driven interpretations of history, and which highlight the common European dimension of national, regional and local history.

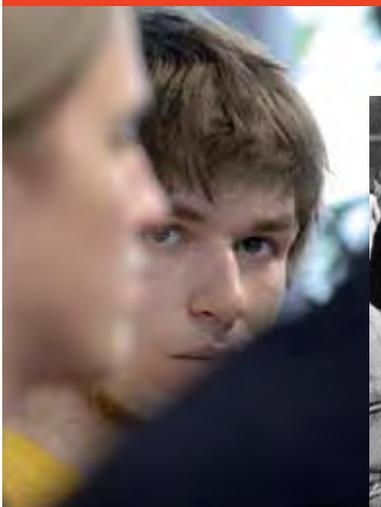
The aim is that adolescents and young adults contribute to forming a European awareness of history by carrying out joint research, asking critical questions about official accounts of history and historical myths, comparing history teaching in schools and universities, and by taking a critical look at history museums and memorial sites. Through the results of their work, they are actively encouraging the revision of teaching materials and portrayals of history, and at the same time enriching educational practices.



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