THEMATIC LEAFLET

UNITED racism fascism nationalism

The idea of this leaflet is to present a general overview of the phenomenon of Holocaust denial and to help groups and individuals who want to be active against Holocaust denial in their communities to recognize the argumentations and tactics of the deniers.

How to Understand And Confront Holocaust Denial

The Holocaust is the term that generally describes the genocide of European Jews during World War II. Between 1941 and 1945, six million Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazis and their allies. Holo-caust is unique in terms of its extraordinary scale and intensity. In regards to other groups which were perse-cuted and killed by the Nazis (e.g. Roma, Soviet soldiers and communists, disabled people, gays, Jehovah's Witnesses), some scholars include them in the definition of the Holocaust, but some others define it only as a genocide of Jews. The phenomenon of Holocaust denial is mainly associated with the Jewish Holocaust.

Holocaust denial (or "negationism") is the most extreme form of so-called "historical revisionism" as regards World War II. Soon after the War there were the first attempts to deny the fact of the Holocaust. The phenomenon of Holocaust denial won some popularity especially among former supporters and participants of the Nazi regime and European collaborationist movements who refused to accept responsibility for the crimes of genocide by denying them. Holocaust denial was as a set of historical claims presenting the Nazi regime in a favourable light. It was created as a result of certain political needs of neo-Nazi movements.

Nevertheless, Holocaust denial as a phenomenon has developed and received much more attention since the 1990s when it become more widespread and sophisticated. Arguably, two aspects are crucial here. One is the gradual disappearance of the generation of witnesses of Nazi crimes. Second one is the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the international tendency to re-write those parts of history that were previously suppressed or manipulated by them. Some Holocaust deniers use this context in order to pose as 'independent' researchers who uncover some hitherto hidden aspects of history.
The general aim of the Holocaust denial is to challenge and ridicule the history of Jewish suffering during the war. The deniers want to rehabilitate fascism by denying its past. Holocaust denial is the most extreme form of antisemitism and it shows how the system of antisemitic thought functions. Holocaust denial is therefore a result of classical antisemitism. As Ken Stern writes in his book Antisemitism Today, "Holocaust denial is about Jews, not about Holocaust" (2006).

UNITED for Intercultural Action
European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees

I What are the main claims of Holocaust denial?

The international movement of Holocaust denial uses several strategies and lines of argumentation. They use a range of tactics, from outright denial of facts of the Nazi genocide to various forms of minimalization and trivialization of the Nazi crimes.

The first, most extreme, strategy is explicitly denying the facts of the genocide of the Jewish people, which according to the deniers simply never took place and is a wholly fabricated story, which in their opinion was invented in the interests of the state of Israel and the international Jewish conspiracy. In particular, all evidence of killing people in gas chambers is disputed by the deniers. Of course, such extreme claims of the Holocaust deniers are easily defeated, simply by quoting the numerous testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust. For this reason, the revisionists pay some attention to challenging the survivors' accounts, accusing them all of being motivated by self-interest or falsified. Similarly, a number of Holocaust deniers invested some energy into claiming the famous diary of Anne Frank is false and it was allegedly written after the war.

When they cannot refuse to admit that Jews and other victims of Nazism did die during World War II, the revisionists argue that the number of people killed was in fact much smaller than generally thought. Reports of atrocities and mass killing are considered exaggerated. They attempt to minimize the amount of suffering and destruction which resulted from Nazi policies in Europe, claiming the causalities were simply results of armed conflict and diseases, and not of an intentional policy of genocide conducted by Hitler and his allies.

Finally, in order to trivialise and relativize the Nazi crimes, the revisionists try to give them a kind of justifica-tion by claiming that Nazi brutality was not worse than alleged atrocities committed by the other side during World War II, the Allied bombing of Germany, especially of Dresden, being mainly exploited for this purpose (members of regional parliament of the rightwing extremist National Democratic Party of Germany even applied the term "bombing holocaust" when referring to the Allied bombing of Dresden).

The revisionists like to cite examples of other events in world history to show that brutality is "normal" throughout ages and the Nazis should not be blamed for using harsh methods. They often mention the crimes of communism and argue that the crimes of fascism were not unique and in some ways Hitler's war could be seen as defence of European values against communism.

Holocaust denial comes in a variety of forms, however it is often more implicit than explicit. Subtle forms of Holocaust denial can also appear through discursive methods such as quotation marks, usage of the words 'claim', 'allege' etc. Today when outright denial is hardly credible, subtle means become more common practice.

II Who are the main exponents of Holocaust denial?

The first Holocaust deniers were Nazis themselves. Today Holocaust denial is promoted by a small but internationally connected group of amateur historians and political activists. The international Holocaust denial movement has some leading figures such as David Irving in Great Britain, David Duke and Arthur Butz in the United States, Robert Faurisson in France, Ernst Zündel in Canada. They differ in the focus of their revisionist agenda, but what they share is a clear antisemitic political outlook, based on the desire to rehabilitate fascism and to promote the fight against a 'global Jewish conspiracy'.

Holocaust denial is strongly linked with antisemitism. As there is no universally agreed definition of antisemitism, it is appropriate to present here the definition, which will fit to our understanding of the term in the context of the Holocaust denial phenomenon:

> Antisemitism is hatred toward Jews and is directed toward the Jewish religion, Jews as a people, or, more recently, the Jewish state. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm non-Jews and is often used to give an explanation for why things go wrong. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms, and action, and regularly employs stereotypes.
>
> source: Stern, Kenneth. 2006. *Antisemitism Today: How It Is the Same, How It Is Different, and How to Fight it: American Jewish Committee*

The majority of known Holocaust deniers have strong connections with political movements whose agendas are antidemocratic. A leading example is David Irving who has been described by a British court as a "Holocaust denier who associates with rightwing extremists promoting neo-Nazism". Other examples of known Holocaust deniers linked with political organizations include Nick Griffin, the leader of the extreme-right British National Party as well as David Duke, a former leader of the Ku-Klux-Klan. It is clear that Holocaust denial here is just an element of a much broader political programme directed against minorities and against democracy as such.

Not all Holocaust deniers are rightwing extremists. Some, like French philosopher Roger Garaudy used to be connected with the far left but gradually adopted an antisemitic conspiracy-obsessed outlook.

The Holocaust deniers are generally excluded and condemned by the mainstream historians and the general scholar community. That includes David Irving who used to be the most 'respectable' of the revisionists. He lost a widely-reported court case against his critic in London and was arrested and convicted for offending the Holocaust victims' memory in Austria.

Nevertheless, Holocaust denial occasionally appears to be influential outside the small circle associated with the above mentioned individuals. A series of speeches and statements of the president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who repeatedly endorsed the claims of Holocaust deniers are the most significant examples. He simultaneously questioned the historical fact of the Holocaust and called for the destruction of the Jewish state. An international conference of Holocaust deniers took place in Teheran in December 2006. It further illustrated the official interest of the Iranian government in the issue of Holocaust denial.

Holocaust denial appears in a 'scientific' form in order to be taken seriously. First of all Holocaust deniers try to portray the fact of the Holocaust as debated and discussed. Then they try to pose themselves as respectable conservative historians and try to show that they possess academic qualifications and scientific knowledge (for example, as the Institute for Historical Review does in California). For Holocaust deniers the most important goal is to be recognized as credible and reasonable historians.

The texts of many Holocaust deniers often include a large number of footnotes and scientific vocabulary in order to appear respectable. In this way the Holocaust denial tries to enter academic discourse. Academic titles are used by Holocaust deniers whenever it possible. Even though they are not in the field of history (for example, a leading denier Arthur Butz is a professor of Electrical Engineering and Robert Faurisson is a retired professor of literature). The largest Holocaust denial pseudo-academic institution is Institute for Historical Review based in United States. It paid a special attention to the quasi-academic form of its publications and conferences. The private Ukrainian university Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP) is another quasi-academic institution which has promoted Holocaust denial.

III Internationalization of Holocaust denial: The case of Eastern Europe

Since the 1990s Holocaust denial has appeared in Eastern Europe, too. In some of the Eastern European countries it especially fell on fertile ground. And, while in the West the deniers of the Holocaust are considered to be marginal figures, in Eastern Europe they sometimes have access to the mainstream public life.

The Eastern European societies are struggling to come to terms with their own past, and to find new expressions of national collective memory. The arguments of Holocaust "revisionism" help them to deal with feelings of guilt for their own role during the Holocaust. As in Spielberg's film "Nasty Girl", the culture of denial can be dominant, especially in smaller, local communities. Those who want to uncover the inconvenient facts are labelled as "troublemakers".

Deborah Lipstadt describes the post-Communist growth of the Holocaust denial in Eastern Europe as an unavoidable phenomenon brought by the mixture of "extreme nationalism" and "traditional antisemitic populism". She writes, "[i]t is likely that as Eastern Europe is increasingly beset by nationalist and internal rivalries, ethnic and political groups that collaborated in the annihilation of the Jews will fall back on … strategy of minimization" (Lipstadt, D. 1993. *Denying the Holocaust. The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*: The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism). In Eastern Europe the 'revisionist' approaches to the Holocaust seem to be subordinated to the idea of 'nation' and 'nation' itself is imagined to be much closer to the 'ethnic' than to the 'civic' ideal type.

Through eliminating the Holocaust from collective memory the home-grown revisionists want to re-write the national history. It is clear in the example of two neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe, Romania and Moldova, where the culture of the Holocaust denial occupies an influential position in the discourse of academic history and among a certain part of national socio-political elites. To some extent the phenomenon of Holocaust denial replaces the former Communist and Soviet paradigm of national history. A lack of knowledge about the Holocaust among the wider public makes the task of the revisionists easier.

Israeli scholar Michael Shafir defines three forms of the Holocaust denial in Eastern Europe: "outright", "deflective" and "selective" negationism. Outright denying the existence of the Holocaust is rare but not insignificant in Eastern Europe. It is supported by extreme nationalism and antisemitism and, it is expressed mainly by politicians. Usually outright deniers have strong links with Western negationist movement and literature. Most of Holocaust denying literature in Eastern Europe and/or its argument are in fact imported from Western Europe or North America. Holocaust denial is "imported", i.e. copied from the discursive strategies of international deniers rather than an original home-grown phenomenon.

For example, the main Holocaust denial protagonists in Romania Ion Coja and Radu Theodoru are supported by the French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson. Or, the former leader of Slovak National Unity Party Stanislav Panis in his interview for the Norwegian television in 1992 said that "it would be 'technically impossible' for the Nazis to exterminate six million Jews in camps". This is an exact thought of the French antisemite Robert Faurisson. In Romania, the leader of the Greater Romania Party Tudor Vadim in 1994 said that he was informed that "English and American scientists are contesting the Holocaust itself, providing documentation and logical arguments proving that the Germans could not gas six million Jews, this being technically and physically impossible"

source: Shafir, M. 2002. *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization". Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism

While outright denial rejects the existence of the Holocaust, the phenomenon of deflective negationism is focused on the historical enemies or national minorities. Here deniers use strategies such as accusation of others or transfer of the charge to others (it is German responsibility for the Holocaust and extermination of the Jews), defence and positive self-presentation, trivialisation and mitigation of the seriousness of others' negative behaviour and justifications. Deflective negationism is present, for example, in Hungary in the form of 'transforming' the country allied with the Nazis into a victim of Germans.

Very often Holocaust deniers transfer the charge to Jews themselves. Thus, for example, Paul Goma, a France-based historian of Basarabian roots, published a book "Red week: 28 June - 3 July 1940, or Jews and Bessarabia" which distorts the Holocaust by manipulating the history of Soviet rule in Basarabia in 1940-41, claiming that the massacres of Jews were 'merely' a reaction to Jewish support for the Soviet regime and to the anti-Nazi partisans during the war. He also tries to prove that the Jews themselves were to blame for their own extermination on the territory of the Romanian protectorates of Basarabia (now Moldova), Bucovina, Transnistria, and the South of Ukraine. The Jews - a "fifth column" - were in fact a mean mercenary tribe - robbers, thieves, criminals, and Soviet agents who turned in Romanian patriots and desecrated churches. He blames the Jews, labelling them as "communists", "spies", partisans" etc.

source: *"Moldova" Annual Report 2003/2004*, Stephen Roth Inst. for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism & Racism

The third form of Holocaust denial which is spread in Eastern Europe is selective negationism. It does not deny the Holocaust as having taken place elsewhere, but excludes any participation of members of one's own nation. The characteristic example here is justification of crimes of Romanian dictator Antonescu and his army during World War II. For example, Gheorge Buzatu, a nationalistic Romanian scholar says, "there has been no Holocaust in Romania during World War II", with the exception of Hungary-occupied Transylvania

source: Shafir, M. 2002. *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization"*

Dealing with the facts of the killing in Eastern Europe, the deniers resort to distortion of facts and statistics. For example they are using the fact the killing often took place on the spot, the victims were not transported to death camps, the killing was largely 'spontaneous' and therefore there is no archive documentation which can be comparable with the careful archivization of the genocide by the German Nazis in the extermination camps. However, as Elie Wiesel writes "While there were no gas chambers in Transnistria, everything else was there: not one community was spared; all were decimated". According to Wiesel, these were "crimes which, in a sense, were 'more cruel' but more savage for being less structured in their brutality than those of the Germans"

quoted in: Ioanid, Radu. 2000. *Holocaust in Romania. Destruction of Jews & Gypsies Under Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944*

IV Legal and academic responses to Holocaust denial

In many countries in Europe the Holocaust denial is forbidden by law and, in fact, it can easily be condemned. Many states also have broader legislation against racial and ethnic hatred. European intergovernmental organizations passed resolutions and signed agreements to commemorate the Holocaust and to condemn its denial. It includes the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust; the European Parliament Resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, antisemitism and racism; the various declarations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (e.g. the Permanent Council Resolution in 2004, the Berlin Declaration in 2004, the Cordoba Declaration in 2005, the Brussels Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in 2006, the Bucharest Declaration in 2007).

Many states, especially in Western Europe adopted different approaches against Holocaust denial, including monitoring of Holocaust denial discourse by academic and non-governmental organizations, punitive measures such as fines, imprisonment and even deportations. Here are some examples of successful measures against Holocaust deniers.

Zündel Trial

German national Ernst Zündel living in Canada is known as an owner of the publishing house "Samizdat Publications" which is infamous for producing and disseminating Holocaust denial material. He is also a co-author of the book *The Hitler we loved and why*. Zündel propagates the notion that the world is controlled by an international "Zionist conspiracy" that is destroying the white race. Zündel also has a web-site which publicizes his antisemitic views. In January 2002, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that his web-site propagating hate speech is against the Canadian Human Rights Act. Zündel was ordered by the court to stop hate messages. In February 2003 he was arrested in the United States and then deported to Canada. In Canada, before he was deported to Germany, he stayed in prison until March 2005. In February 2007 in Germany, Zündel was convicted on 14 counts of incitement under Germany's Volksverhetzung law, which bans the incitement of hatred against a minority of the population and was sentenced to five years in prison.

Source: Jones, Adam. 2006. *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction*: Routledge

Irving Trial

In 1998 the most known Holocaust denier David Irving sued American scholar Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin publishing house claiming that they libelled him in her book *Denying the Holocaust*. He used Great Britain's loose libel laws to file a suit for defamation. In her book Lipstadt accused Irving of misrepresentation of evidence and called him, among other things, "one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial". She also pointed to his links with neo-Nazi figures and organizations. David Irving's purpose was to silence criticism and to publicize widely his ideas through the court case. Holocaust deniers appeal to the freedom of speech in case of refusal to present and discuss their ideas on an equal footing with others. As a result of work of Lipstadt and other historians, Irving's suit was dismissed. In November 2005 David Irving was arrested when he went to Austria to give a lecture to a far-right student group. He was accused of denying the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz in his speech and interview in Austria in 1989. He spent a year in jail there before gaining early release.

Source: Jones, Adam. 2006. *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction*: Routledge

Robert Faurisson Case

French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson was suspended from his university teaching position and brought before a court for denying that the Nazi gas chambers had existed. In July 1981, the Paris Court of Appeal stated that his words "would arouse in his very large audience feelings of contempt, of hatred and of violence towards Jews in France."

Source: Jones, Adam. 2006. *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction*: Routledge

There are not so many similar examples from Eastern and Central Europe, but still not all those denying the Holocaust are unpunished. Thus, for example, in 1999 Dariusz Ratajczak, a popular lecturer at the University of Opole was suspended from his university post following protests over his book *Dangerous Topics*. In his book Ratajczak claimed that for technical reasons it was impossible for the Nazis to kill people with Zyklon B and that Nazis did not have plans for the extermination of the Jews. Ratajczak was subsequently convicted by the court.

Source: *"Poland" Annual Report 1998/99*, Stephen Roth Institute for Study of Contemporary Antisemitism & Racism

In Hungary the criminal proceedings were initiated against outright deniers Albert Szabo and Istvan Gyorkos, who claimed that the Holocaust is a hoax. Both of them were linked with US Nazi and Austrian neo-Nazi movements.

Source: Shafir, M. 2002. *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization"*

Importantly, Holocaust denial might be condemned not only by the legal means but also by a variety of other ways. As Ken Stern writes: "Laws are insufficient to combat Holocaust denial, which is no more exclusively a legal question than it is a cultural, political, or historical question. An effective strategy requires a multifaceted approach" (Stern, Kenneth. 1999. *Holocaust Denial*: American Jewish Committee).

For example, in 2000, the Polish translation of David Irving's biography of Hitler's right-hand man Hermann Göring by a state-owned company was stopped by the joint efforts of anti-fascists from the "Never Again" Association and the media.

Source: Never Again Association (PL)

In May 2007, Holocaust denier David Irving visited the Warsaw International Book Fair. His aim was to promote his books, which question the important facts about the Holocaust, such as the existence of the gas chambers at the Auschwitz death camp. As a result of the media campaign initiated by the "Never Again" Associa-tion, Irving was immediately ejected from the Book Fair by the organizers.

Source: Never Again Association (PL)

In Moldova, a group of former ghetto prisoners – publicist and musical critic Efim Tcaci, academician Efim Levit and poet Anatol Gujel - founded the Anti-fascist Democratic Alliance, whose main goal was to fight antisemitism and Holocaust denial on the social and academic levels. The quarterly magazine "We will not forget" was published by them. Organizations in other countries such as "Never Again" in Poland, "People against Racism" in Slovakia or "Movement against Intolerance" in Spain combat antisemitism and Holocaust denial by publishing magazines and monitoring hate speech in media and on the Internet.

Many countries in Eastern Europe have made some important gestures to recognize the facts of the Holocaust in the recent years. A number of public figures and scholars such as Holo-caust survivor and Warsaw Ghetto Uprising leader Marek Edelman in Poland or Romanian-born Nobel Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel speak out against Holocaust denial.

Education-based programs that help in the fight against Holocaust denial have been initiated on the governmental and non-governmental levels in many countries.

For example, the Museum of Anne Frank in the Netherlands in cooperation with its Ukrainian partner organizations implements a project on Holocaust teaching in schools. In frames of the project the special exhibition for young people "Ukraine and the Holocaust" was organized. More information: www.annefrank.org

The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem has developed classroom activity for junior and senior high school students to promote Holocaust awareness, as well as to foster consciousness about the dangerous rise of antisemitism in Europe. The programme is prepared in several languages and it is available at the Yad Vashem website: www1.yadvashem.org/education/antisemitism.html

Nevertheless, there is a need for less selective memory and more awareness-raising both on the level of political elites and on the level of history teaching and the media, to restore collective memory and the difficult truth about the Holocaust. New 'memory projects' are necessary to build the social and moral awareness of the history of the Holocaust.

V Relevant contacts and useful websites

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http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/

Anti-Defamation League
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Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim
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see: **www.unitedagainstracism.org/pages/aboutab.htm**
for a **searchable database** with over 4000 addresses of European organisations and magazines active against racism, fascism, nationalism and in support of migrants and refugees

VI An initiative of UNITED against right-wing extremism

This Thematic Leaflet was developed in the frame of the project: **'Civil Society Against Right-Wing Extremism - Developing New Lifelong-learning Strategies for NGOs**' a project supported by the Grundtvig Program of European Commission and implemented by UNITED for Intercultural in partnership with:

- ARI Immigrant Association Rieti, Italy - www.ariweb.it
- DUHA - Rainbow Association, Czech Republic - www.duha.cz
- Kulturbüro Sachsen, Germany - www.kulturbuero-sachsen.de
- Movement Against Intolerance, Spain - www.movimientocontralaintolerancia.com
- MTP Oradea, Romania - www.mtporadea.ro
- Never Again Association, Poland - www.nigdywiecej.org
- Norwegian People's Aid, Norway - www.antirasisme.no
- People Against Racism, Slovakia - www.rasizmus.sk
- University of Venice, Master on Immigration Programme, Italy - www.unive.it/masterim

Background information about the project "Civil Society Against Right-Wing Extremism"

This project was developed after many years' experience of UNITED network in antidiscrimination campaigns and deep analysis on the current trends of European civil society active in the fight against right-winged extremism, racism and discrimination.

Experience shows that despite the quantitative and qualitative work done by many organizations active in this field, many NGO's have little knowledge about democratic institutions and processes. Nevertheless, there are effective ways to tackle discrimination at its local and regional level through innovative and informal learning strategies. There are as well ways to give the best practices a European dimension.

The aim of the project is to create a space for antiracial adult education and make it qualified, available and accessible throughout Europe. The objectives are: the creation of feasible ways to enhance the work of local grassroots groups and NGO's active in the field of antiracial education, their training as learning facilitators in antiracial education, and the counterbalance of the unevenness in antiracial fight Europe-wide. The project has as its direct target group precisely NGOs activists. Ultimately, the project is also expected reach-out the NGOs' target groups, mainly disadvantaged social categories with less opportunities to access education else way. The main activities envisaged include identification, selection and dissemination of best practices in the antiracist field, conferences, workshops and campaigns, which will eventually bring the following outputs: publications, handbooks, info leaflets, web-pages and campaigning material.

What is UNITED?

UNITED for Intercultural Action is the European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees. Linked through UNITED, more than 560 organizations from a wide variety of backgrounds, from all European countries, work together on a voluntary basis. They base their cooperation on common actions and shared activities on a mutual respect. UNITED is and will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe. Through the UNITED network organizations meet each other, work on common actions and share information. European-wide action weeks, campaigns and such are planned and discussed on UNITED conferences. Like-minded organisations find each other on such conferences and work together on specific projects and on specific topics. Information is received from more than 2000 organisations and mailings go out to about 2200 groups in Europe. If you want to get involved, discuss the ideas and aims of the UNITED network within your organisation. Let us know that your organization would like to join or receive information. And add us to your mailing list!

Written by Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska, Never Again Association (Poland) / Helsinki Citizens Assembly (Moldova)

UNITED IS SUPPORTED BY

more than 560 organisations from all European countries, many prominent individuals, private supporters and long-term volunteers from Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, Austria Service Abroad and Ca' Foscari University of Venice.
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