



80 Jahre Kriegsende

Das sagen unsere
Partnerorganisationen



EXPERIMENT
DEINE AUSTAUSCHORGANISATION



Anna M. Tessitore

Experiment Italien



Generalversammlung
Federation EIL

What significance does the end of World War II hold for you and your country today?

"What happened to Italy during WW2 was devastating. Italy experienced the destruction of industries and agriculture. The rate of unemployment rose, and the country's currency collapsed.

The end of World War II holds profound significance for Italy, as it marked the collapse of Fascist rule, a shift in political, social, and economic life, and the beginning of a new democratic era for the country."

Do you see parallels between the challenges of that time and current developments in democracy?

"Democracy is in decline around the globe. Its robustness is affected by both the new international backdrop and the failings of governments regarding the provision of social wellbeing.

Democracy is one of the most talked-about issues in political thought because of the lack of consensus about its basic characteristics, which stem from its different models and the variety of scenarios in which it exists – an indication of the complexity of this concept.

However, despite this lack of consensus, democracy must be regarded as the best form of political organization because it enables the will of the people to be respected whilst upholding a rule of law and a division of powers able to prevent the abuse of power by those in government, unlike authoritarian regimes."

What role do international exchange programs play in preserving democratic values?

"The Experiment is committed to creating opportunities for cultural exchange that overcome barriers of language, social background or religious beliefs. Diversity is not an obstacle, but an opportunity to enrich oneself and understand other realities.

Through our programs, we promote values of respect, tolerance and openness towards the world, convinced that only through direct contact with different cultures can we contribute to building a future of peace and cooperation."



Carye Duffin
CIEE USA



"International exchange programs like BridgeUSA play a crucial role in preserving and promoting democratic values by fostering cross-cultural understanding, encouraging civic engagement, and strengthening global networks of individuals committed to democratic principles. These programs expose participants to democratic institutions, free speech, and civil society in action, helping them appreciate the importance of transparency, human rights, and political participation.

By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, exchanges help counter authoritarian narratives, reduce misinformation, and build resilience against extremism. Alumni of lifechanging programs like BridgeUSA often return to their home countries with a much deeper understanding of democratic governance, inspiring grassroots initiatives, and advocacy efforts. Moreover, they create lasting international partnerships that promote cooperation and collective action in defending democratic ideals.

In essence, exchange programs like BridgeUSA serve as soft-power tools that reinforce democratic norms by empowering individuals with firsthand experiences of democracy in practice."



Martine Mangion
CIEE USA



"International exchange programs play a crucial role in preserving democratic values by fostering cross-cultural understanding, promoting global collaboration, and strengthening democratic principles.

International exchange programs are vital in promoting understanding, tolerance, and democratic engagement, which ultimately helps preserve and strengthen democratic values worldwide. For example.

1. **Cultural Exchange and Understanding:** By allowing participants to experience life in other countries, exchange programs help individuals understand diverse political systems, cultures, and values. This understanding can dispel stereotypes, reduce prejudice, and promote empathy for different perspectives, which is essential for sustaining peaceful, democratic societies.
2. **Promoting Democratic Ideals:** Exchange programs often emphasize the importance of democracy, human rights, and civic engagement. Participants are exposed to different forms of governance, learn about democratic processes, and often gain insight into the role of active citizenship in shaping effective, accountable governments.
3. **Networking and Global Dialogue:** These programs create international networks of students, leaders, and professionals who maintain relationships and collaborate long after their exchange.
4. **Encouraging Critical Thinking:** Exposure to different societal structures and ideologies encourages participants to question assumptions, think critically about their own systems, and assess democratic practices from a global perspective. Such reflection helps improve the quality of democratic discourse and decision-making in participants' home countries.
5. **Building Leadership for the Future:** By immersing future leaders in diverse environments, exchange programs cultivate leadership skills and global perspectives. These leaders are more likely to uphold democratic values and work collaboratively to address global issues, ensuring the long-term preservation of democratic systems."

Maria Kovacs

Interstudy Slowakei



“80 Jahre ist es her, dass der Krieg zu Ende ging. Die Zeitzeugen werden von Jahr zu Jahr weniger. Und mit ihnen verblasst allmählich die Erinnerung.

Es sind die Urgroßeltern inzwischen, die noch von den Hungerjahren, den Zerstörungen, den Bombardierungen und den Verbrechen erzählen können, die uns noch sagen können, wie es war, als allmählich nach dem Wiederaufbau der Wohlstand wuchs, wie es war, als der kalte Krieg den Frieden bedrohte, wie es war, als unter kommunistischer Herrschaft die individuelle Freiheit des Einzelnen drangsaliert wurde.

Auch der Zusammenbruch des Ostblocks und der darauf folgende demokratische Aufbruch sind nun schon annähernd 40 Jahre her.

Zwei der vielen Ursachen eines Krieges sind ein extremer Nationalismus und autoritäre, antidemokratische Regierungen. Autoritäre Regierungen neigen dazu, im Freund/Feind-Denken ihre Herrschaft mit Gewalt zu sichern. Hilfreich dazu sind die Vorurteile, die man verbreitet über die Nachbarn, die Ignoranz gegenüber anderen Völkern, der Hass auf Minderheiten usw.

Diesen Nationalismus, der die vermeintliche Größe des eigenen Volkes dadurch gewinnt, dass er auf andere Völker herabsetzend und verächtlich herabblickt, ist stets die wichtigste Ursache gewesen, warum Menschen sich bereit erklärt haben, in den Krieg zu ziehen.

Vor 80 Jahren war nicht nur der Krieg vorbei, sondern in vielen Staaten haben Demokratien die Gewaltherrschaft abgelöst, vor 80 Jahren hat die Idee der Menschenrechte und des Völkerrechts ihren Siegeszug angetreten.

Beides kann nur von Dauer bleiben, wenn die Menschen in den Staaten lernen, sich als Teil einer Welt zu verstehen und sich kennenlernen. Jede neue Generation ist zu beidem aufgefordert, die Erinnerung an die Katastrophe des 20. Jahrhunderts wachzuhalten und die Bereitschaft zu entwickeln, auf die „Fremden“ zuzugehen. Nur wer die Sprache des Fremden lernt, hebt die Fremdheit auf. Eine gemeinsame Sprache zu finden oder gemeinsam die Sprache des anderen zu lernen, ist die einzige sichere Voraussetzung dafür, dass man die Probleme dieser Welt friedlich löst.

L. Wittgenstein hat geschrieben, dass die Grenzen unserer Sprache die Grenzen unserer Welt sind. Diese Grenze zu verschieben oder gar ganz zu öffnen, ist der Sinn von Austauschprogrammen.

Dass die Zahl derer, die an solchen Programmen teilnehmen möchten, wächst, zeigt uns auch, dass der Wunsch nach individueller Freiheit, Wohlstand und Frieden größer ist als jener ewiggestrige engstirnige Hochmut, der dazu führen kann, dass die Gespenster der Vergangenheit wieder auferstehen."



Oliver Kontram
ASSE Estland

What significance does the end of World War II hold for you and your country today?

"We are coming from the small country, where our true independence was played out after WW I, like with many countries in Europe after the collapse of Empires. Unfortunately, just 33y later, just before the WW II the Soviet Union annexed us and we lost, what is the most important for any nation – the independence.

I was personally born in the Soviet Union era and lived the first 17y and went through the re-independence process. I can say that with this experience and comparison, I am very lucky to feel the positive change and live in an independent country with freedom and democracy. Unfortunately the living without a fear has been interrupted with the latest development, not far away, where Russia as a big country is extending its influence and is a threat to any independent country in Europe."

Do you see parallels between the challenges of that time and current developments in democracy?

"As I have a personal experience, coming from Socialist country to a Democracy. From times from iron curtain to free speech and liberty. I understand the value and we should never return to dark age."

What role do international exchange programs play in preserving democratic values?

"Exchange students as real ambassadors take back a lot of new perspectives as well as understanding and tolerance towards different cultures. This has a positive impact on the whole society and with more tolerance and understanding, the real values of democracy. They are the potential leaders of the future and can safeguard the values the free world and democracy represents."



Petr Kostohryz
AFS Tschechien



What significance does the end of World War II hold for you and your country today?

"Czechoslovakia was the second country after Austria to be swallowed by Hitler, which was enabled by the Munich agreement of 1938, that still today serves as a symbol of the allied betrayal of our country. To a point that it indirectly paved the way for a rise of a different totalitarian regime less than three years after the end of WWII.

The period between 1945 and 1948 was then marked by the brutal expulsion of ethnic German populations from Czechoslovakia, so one may say that one brutality was followed by another and yet again by another. It had therefore taken a bit longer, probably till mid-1960s, for the country to start shaping its own post-war image, abruptly interrupted (again) by the Soviet invasion of 1968.

The legacy of 1968, and then, later 1989, when we managed to get rid of the Communist rule, has probably played much stronger role in the collective mindset than the legacy of WWII and its end, not least since the latter narrative was re-told and re-fabricated by the Communist party, very much influenced by the Soviet propaganda. This is not to say that the end of WWII is not an important historical milestone, not least since it created foundations for many international systems that we have today, whether the existence of the UN, or the broad human-rights-law framework, most of which was built on the ruins of and in the collective shock from the atrocities of the war.

Since then, in many countries, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international legal instruments were transformed into national laws and practices that we indirectly reap the benefits of in our daily lives and freedoms. Without necessarily realizing and, quite unfortunately, seemingly gradually forgetting so."

Do you see parallels between the challenges of that time and current developments in democracy?

"Living in a country that, in many ways and at many levels, is still learning what democracy is and how it may function, we are quite aware that democracy is not a stagnant state of affairs but an ongoing effort that requires constant individual and collective contributions and commitments. Not least, since there will always be entities and individuals who want to prey on others' freedoms and abuse personal-liberty-rooted systems for their personal gain. The fact is that the world has always been full of ambitious maniacs who will not stop at any obstacles to manipulate the masses to their own benefit under whatever guises or catchy slogans.

The rise of the internet, social media and AI may have increased global interconnectedness but, ironically, has made the world less informed and less predictable by fueling polarized narratives and taming inquisitiveness and curiosity. Our social media algorithms are set to show us what we like and reinforce our worldview inside one or several bubbles, which are thus getting narrower and more narrow-minded, no matter how technologically interconnected we become. Some claim that we live in a post-truth world, increasingly difficult to navigate, which creates a breeding ground for collective manipulation beyond what was thinkable only a few decades ago.

Yet, I would probably be careful to compare one era to another or seek parallels that create alarmist or sensationalist narratives, not least since we live in times where narratives tend to heavily influence reality, i.e. the more parallels we draw the more we get used to the idea of history repeating itself. Yet, my view of evolution is much more linear than cyclical and each era is different, although each era breeds individuals with similar propensity to grab power and lead the masses astray like the infamous 13th century pied piper. It is unfortunately not surprising that pied pipers emerge fairly regularly outside of Hammeln or that it only takes a few generations to forget the havoc that the last pied piper wrecked.

At the moment, we seem to observe various pressures to abandon human rights universalism and globalism and shift towards (return to) 19th century-like nationalism and individualism, a time when the international community has the least appetite to agree on anything since the end of WWII. On the continuum between cooperation and competition, we seem to hear stronger voices which claim that the best way to organize our societies is to outcompete everyone else. Hence the need to emphasize international and cross-cultural understanding and cooperation over competition, while acknowledging that democracy is a constant process of construction, an ongoing effort that requires open mind, joint engagement, inclusiveness and accountability."

What role do international exchange programs play in preserving democratic values?

"Organisations like AFS were built around the idea of intercultural exchange as a pathway to lasting peace. Psychology uses the terms 'in-group' and 'out-group' to describe how we tend to create affiliations and aversions and history has plentiful examples of how those have been defined, forged and nourished to alienate, even dehumanize the 'others'.

The idea of making one's 'in-group' as global as possible is core to international exchange programs and, importantly, is proven to work. Unlike short-term tourism-based travel, which surprisingly often works to reaffirm one's prejudices about otherness, immersive intercultural exchange aims for increased curiosity towards and acceptance of differences across national and regional boundaries.

Starting with the recognition that getting to know and understanding foreign cultures is very much about understanding and challenging one's own foundations, habits, reasoning and preconceived notions, hopefully leading to a recognition that otherness is more often an interesting opportunity rather than a threat. That despite individual cultural differences, human commonalities are much more prevalent, that cooperation is more conducive to prosperous and peaceful life than competition.

Not least since, in the public arena, we are increasingly surrounded by cheap slogans of modern pied pipers whose interests have nothing to do with public affairs (*res publica*) but mostly with personal ambition and gains."



Ana Eseverri Mayer

AIPC Pandora Spanien



What significance does the end of World War II hold for you and your country today?

"In Spain, we had a Civil War from 1936 to 1939 that devastated the country, divided the population in two, and caused 200,000 deaths. The war was won by the National Front and gave way to a dictatorship in the country until 1975.

The Second World War, which began just a year later, saw the Spanish state under Francisco Franco adopt neutrality as its official policy. After the fall of France in June 1940, Spain declared "non-belligerence," and had it been in a human and military position to participate, Spain would have participated on the side of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

What happened during World War II regarding the Jewish genocide has had the same effects of prevention and a culture of peace, as well as the signing of international agreements as in other countries. However, geopolitically, Spain was a closed country for 45 years, without any external relations due to the dictatorship, which occurred precisely after World War II."

Do you see parallels between the challenges of that time and current developments in democracy?

"There is a world order that has been taking shape in recent times in which major powers, many of them undemocratic, have gained significant economic and military strength. Europe's "pacifist" stance, as well as the stability of countries based on the Welfare State, has made us unprepared for the interests and attacks on democracy that have been brewing for years, we should have probably be more aware of the need of the self defense of our culture of peace and democracy, and how the understanding of other countries was growing in an opposite direction.

Furthermore, the vast difference in the understanding of "democracy" between 100% capitalist states like the United States and European states means that the only common language is economics, and therefore, democratic power is measured solely and exclusively in these terms. Trump, as a representative of the assimilation of politics and states to the economy and business, is changing the rules of the democratic game and forcing a realignment of forces and positions in Europe. Let's hope we're in time to address the situation."

What role do international exchange programs play in preserving democratic values?

"The vision and open-mindedness offered by international exchanges, as well as the establishment of new relationships and networks, are key for citizens to interiorize and understand the importance of the culture of peace. Positive experiences in environments completely different from our own origins develop understanding, empathy, respect, and a sense of common good.

Now, more than ever, we should promote agreements and programs with countries like Israel, Palestine, and countries in the Middle East and North Africa, the US, China... to strengthen a youth movement that desires and understands peace and creates alliances and ties to promote it, both internally and externally."



Kelli Jones

ERDT ENVISION USA



"As we near the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, Americans reflect on the importance of the global community in times tainted with hatred and isolationism. This war demonstrated how combined global efforts can produce change that benefits all through ideals such as peace, freedom, and equality. The dramatic transformation from war time to peace set a precedent for international cooperation and mutual understanding that would last. While World War II showcased humanity's determination for good, it also serves as a stark reminder of how dark humanity can plummet should facism, totalitarianism, and bigotry remain unchecked. Although the world has changed significantly since 1945, recent world events contain parallels to those that occurred during this time.

The rise of propaganda and misinformation, which was strategically implemented by the Nazi Regime, still stands as a threat to modern day democracies, as seen in the 2016 United States Presidential Election. Increased attention toward domestic civil rights movements is also prevalent in both time periods. In the early 1940's many Americans felt a contradiction between fighting for freedom while denying it at home, particularly to Japanese Americans who were sent to internment camps against their will. This sentiment still lives within the Black Lives Matter movement, where Americans pursue justice for all, regardless of race or ethnic origin.

Lastly, both time periods highlight the need for global cooperation to uphold democratic values. WWII ushered in the creation of multilateral institutions such as NATO and the UN, both of which still promote global cohesion in order to combat climate change, pandemics, and cyber threats.

Among those international institutions created, also established in 1946 in the aftermath of WWII, was the Fulbright Program. The Fulbright Program was created as a way of promoting peace and understanding through educational exchange. And to this day, international exchange programs play a quiet but powerful role in preserving and promoting democratic values.

Today there are dozens of international exchange programs for teens, interns, university students, teachers and more. Through international exchange, students are exposed to different cultures, perspectives, and political systems than their own, countering the fear and mistrust that is so often spread through modern media outlets. American citizens in contact with international students; as their host family, teacher or friend also gain the perspective of people of another country, opening their narrow views or clarifying misconceptions.

Travel and education are wonderful aspects of international exchange, but the real takeaways are not only the transformation of the students into citizens that value mutual understanding, trust, and shared values across borders, but also the "exchange", and the impact they have on the people they come in contact with. That is what the true promotion of peace and understanding looks like, and as ironic as it seems, it was a result of World War II and the precedence that was set then for global cooperation and understanding.

International exchange programs today are just as important as ever, and continue to be an effective and direct path to peace and understanding."



Carola Flor
EIL Ecuador



What significance does the end of World War II hold for you and your country today?

"The end of World War II, in 1945, marked a major turning point in global history. It led to the reorganization of international relations, the creation of the United Nations, the beginning of the Cold War, and the foundation of the modern global order. For many nations, the end of World War II is a reminder of the cost of conflict, the value of diplomacy, and the need for international cooperation. In some countries, this time is commemorated as a symbol of victory over tyranny and the protection of human rights and freedom.

Ecuador was not directly involved in World War II, but the war had significant global consequences that affected Ecuador and Latin America as a whole. Following WWII, there was a greater push for global cooperation and peace, and the formation of the United Nations in 1945 marked a new era for international relations. Ecuador, like other countries, was involved in these global changes and supported the creation of the UN and its focus on human rights.

We saw our first oil boom in the 1970s, which was influenced by global political and economic trends that were shaped, in part, by the post-war international order. The end of WWII also helped initiate the spread of more liberal democratic ideals, although Ecuador went through periods of political instability, including military regimes and populist movements.

While the country may not have been directly impacted by the war itself, the aftermath created a global environment where countries like Ecuador could strengthen democratic institutions and focus on internal development."

Do you see parallels between the challenges of that time and current developments in democracy?

"After World War II, many countries were faced with rebuilding democracies, dealing with the scars of fascism, and promoting economic and social stability. The post-war period also saw the rise of ideological conflicts like communism versus capitalism during the Cold War.

Ecuador faces modern challenges to democracy that echo some of the struggles seen after WWII. There are ongoing concerns about corruption, political polarization, economic inequality, and the erosion of democratic institutions. In recent years, Ecuador has dealt with significant protests, political instability, and changes in leadership. These challenges reflect the fragile nature of democracy and the difficulties of ensuring it thrives. Ecuador has seen populist leaders emerge, challenging the democratic order. Ecuador's experience of alternating between democratic and authoritarian governments parallels some of the global struggles seen after WWII to maintain democratic systems.

The fight against totalitarianism, the protection of civil rights, and the role of international alliances in maintaining peace are all issues that were as pertinent in the post-WWII era as they are today. Economic inequality, access to education, and social justice remain significant challenges in Ecuador, much like many countries faced after WWII as they rebuilt their societies and economies.

In some ways, the current populist trends and challenges to democracy in parts of the world mirror the rise of totalitarian ideologies that led to WWII."

What role do international exchange programs play in preserving democratic values?

"International exchange programs are a crucial tool in fostering mutual understanding, dialogue, and respect across different cultures. By facilitating direct interactions between people from different nations, create personal connections that transcend political and ideological divides.

Exchanges play a role in promoting democratic ideals by encouraging open communication, understanding diverse perspectives, and championing the rights and freedoms of individuals. When people from different countries engage in such exchanges, they often bring back insights on how democracy functions in other places and the importance of protecting democratic principles.

Through these exchanges, Ecuadorians can better understand the value of democratic principles and how they are implemented in other parts of the world, which can help strengthen democratic values within Ecuador. International programs involve students, professionals, and citizens who learn about governance, human rights, and the rule of law. Exchange programs helps create a global citizenry that values democracy and is committed to defending it. Additionally, it helps bridge divides between nations, fostering cooperation that can prevent conflict and promote peace.

International exchanges also play a key role in counteracting disinformation, which is increasingly a challenge for many societies. Exposure to diverse viewpoints and educational experiences abroad helps people to develop critical thinking skills, which is crucial for engaging with modern challenges to democracy like fake news, polarization, and political manipulation.

For our participants, our programs contribute to building a sense of global citizenship among its youth. By participating in EIL Ecuador programs, Ecuadorians are better able to collaborate and build international networks that foster democratic ideals and peaceful conflict resolution. This kind of global engagement plays a key role in Ecuador's long-term democratic development, ensuring that citizens are not only active in their own political processes but also aware of the global context of democracy.

International exchange programs serve as one of the key mechanisms through which we can safeguard these values, ensuring that they remain relevant and vibrant for future generations."



Andrea Franzoi

Intercultura Italien



"The end of World War II marked a turning point for Europe and the world — a moment of profound loss, but also of rebuilding, reconciliation, and hope. For countries like Italy, it signified the beginning of a new democratic path, shaped by a strong desire to never return to the divisions and violence of the past. Still today, May 8th or 9th is a moment of remembrance, reflection, and renewed commitment to peace and cooperation.

Many of the challenges we face now — polarization, misinformation, threats to human rights — echo the tensions that once led to global conflict. Democracy is not a given; it must be nurtured and defended. The lessons of the post-war period remind us that dialogue, education, and international collaboration are key to building resilient societies.

Today, we see growing political instability both in Europe and around the world. The rise of authoritarian tendencies, populism, and nationalism challenges the foundations of democratic cooperation. The war in Ukraine, tensions in the Middle East, and increasing divisions within European societies remind us how fragile peace can be. Just as after WWII, we are again called to stand up for unity, human dignity, and shared values.

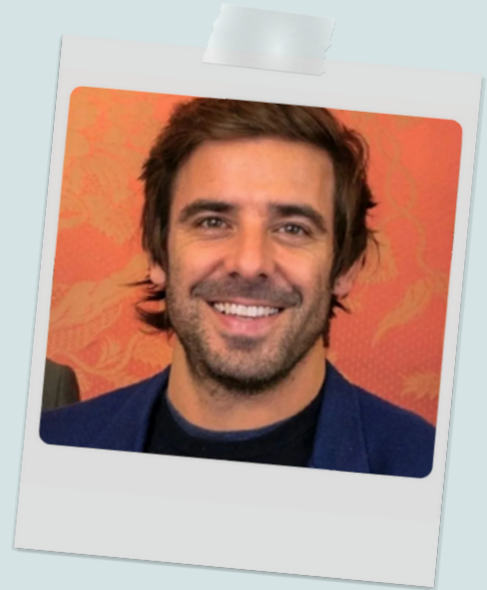
This is where international exchange programs play a vital role. By allowing young people to live and learn across cultures, they help develop empathy, critical thinking, and a sense of shared humanity. These experiences foster open-minded citizens who value diversity and actively contribute to democratic life. In this sense, exchanges are not just educational — they are democratic acts.

In Italy, these programs are supported at Intercultura by a wide network of dedicated volunteers who are deeply committed to these founding values. Their daily work, inspired by the ideals of peace, mutual understanding, and civic responsibility, ensures that each exchange is not only a personal journey, but also a step toward a more democratic and interconnected world."



Thibault Dufresne

CEI Frankreich



Aus einer Rede von Emmanuel Macron über die Arbeit von CEI:

“CEI wurde aus einer enormen Hoffnung heraus geboren.

Es ging im Jahr 1947 darum, die vom Krieg verwundeten Völker davon zu überzeugen, dass eine gemeinsame Zukunft möglich war, trotz der Toten, trotz der Trümmer. Und dass diese Zukunft durch Dialog, Austausch und Reisen gebaut werden würde. Vor allem aber, dass sie durch die Jugend gebaut werden würde. Das hatte etwas Visionäres an sich.

Zu jeder Zeit gibt es viele Gründe, den Kontakt zu anderen Völkern abubrechen. Ob durch regionale Krisen, politische Meinungsverschiedenheiten oder wirtschaftliche Schwierigkeiten - der Reflex des Rückzugs in sich selbst kommt schnell zurück. Grenzen geben Sicherheit. Das Unbekannte macht Angst.

In jedem Moment seiner langen Geschichte hat CEI diesen Versuch des Rückzugs mit einer unermüdlichen Arbeit zur Entdeckung des Anderen beantwortet und immer stärkere Bindungen mit immer mehr Ländern geknüpft.

Im Mittelpunkt dieser Arbeit standen Bildung und Kultur, die entscheidenden Werkzeuge für die Jugend aller Länder, um eine bessere Welt aufzubauen. Es gibt keine edlere oder nützlichere Aufgabe.

In unserer hypervernetzten Welt, in der wir zu oft glauben, alles über das Leben entfernter Völker zu wissen, hat nichts den direkten Kontakt zwischen jungen Menschen ersetzt, durch Gespräche, durch das gemeinsame Entdecken von Städten und Landschaften, durch gemeinsames Lernen.

Und keine Technologie wird das Erlernen von Fremdsprachen ersetzen. Durch Sprache betritt man die Kultur eines Landes, eines Volkes. Man erfasst alle Nuancen des Blicks, den der andere auf die Welt wirft. Man erhält Zugang zu seinem Alltag sowie zu den großen Werken der Vergangenheit. Deshalb ist die Arbeit von Austauschorganisationen wie CEI [und Experiment] so wichtig.

Wir müssen die außergewöhnliche Arbeit würdigen, die seit Ende des zweiten Weltkrieges fortgesetzt wird und bei der nicht nur wir, sondern alle Beteiligten früh erkannt haben, dass sie dem Allgemeinwohl dient – das heißt der Zukunft Frankreichs und seiner Jugend, aber auch seiner vielen internationalen Partner.

Dieser Weg wird niemals enden. Die Zehntausenden von jungen Menschen, die ihn gegangen sind, tragen eine dankbare Erinnerung mit sich. Die Welt braucht diese Art von kollektiven Abenteuern. Sie braucht dieses Engagement für das Verständnis des Anderen, das einzige Heilmittel gegen die Ängste, die lähmen und trennen.

Seit siebzig Jahren bietet CEI nicht nur qualitativ hochwertige Sprachreisen an, sondern setzt sich für dieses kostbare und zerbrechliche Gut ein, für die immer wiederkehrende Hoffnung: den Frieden."



公益社団法人

日本国際生活体験協会(EIL)

Hiro Suzuki

EIL Japan



I have an uncle whom I have never met. His portrait was placed in the Buddhist altar even before I was born. My uncle, Masao, died in the war in the Philippines at the young age of 21. After his death, my grandmother was given a survivor's pension by the government every year, and thanks to that money I was able to study in the United States for high school and college. The survivor's pension continued as long as my grandmother was alive. Even now, when I go back to my parents' house and look at my uncle's portrait, I wonder if Japan is now a country he would want to protect. And I wonder what he would think of me, who studied in the United States, which was his enemy.

In Okinawa, we hear news of the disposal of unexploded wartime bombs almost every week, and in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are still people suffering from the aftereffects of the atomic bombings. 200,000 people died in Okinawa, 140,000 in Hiroshima, and 70,000 in Nagasaki. It is true that 80 years have passed, but for many people the war is not over yet. I think it was a very significant event that the Atomic Bomb Survivors Association awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year. I would like to believe that it is a clear message to Russia, which has threatened to launch a nuclear attack on Ukraine.

I feel that the current world situation is somewhat similar to the period before World War I and World War II. Old and new problems such as the expansion of right-wing influence in each country, symbolized by nationalism, and anti-immigration movements, seem to be forcing the same mentality on us who live in the present. Creating a world where differences are recognized as differences and we can coexist. I believe that international exchange programs play an important role in maintaining unbiased thinking.