

In the air

# An ABC of resistance

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**You read books or watch films about the rock-like courage of the men and women who risked – risk – their lives, undergoing persecution and torture, to resist dictatorships, simply because they cannot imagine themselves not doing so; because it is just not in them not to resist.**

You ask yourself: „Could I have done that?“ You have no answer and probably never will have, as most of us, living in comfortable old Europe run by mediocre men of materialistic not messianic ambition, will escape being put to such an extreme test.

Yet on another level completely, there are many things – less extreme, though insidious – which we ought to resist. Things that do not threaten our life or physical safety but are dangerous for our mental, moral and imaginative world, the quality of our life in society and our identity as humans.

Here is a sample alphabet of resistance. It has no claim to completeness – on the contrary many really important things – like bigotry, intolerance, prejudice – are absent. It is one of a number of ABCs I could have imagined. Read it and then imagine your own.

## Resist

**Advertising.** Big Business manipulating your insecurities and dreams to get your money. It is founded on illusion: you are not going to look like Claudia Schiffer by buying the car she's being paid to sell.

**Brainwashing.** Politicians, press magnates and others will stop at nothing to fill your head with ideas that serve their own ends.

**Cruelty.** Avoid hurting people's feelings. If you can't think of something positive to say, remain silent.

**Dogs.** Nice enough animals but a bad example for humans, being subservient creatures. Remember: dogs have masters, cats have staff.

**Enemies.** Keep them at a safe mental distance: you start by defining yourself in terms of what they are not, but end up resembling them.

**Fear.** The worst motive for many of the things we do – and fail to do.

**Governments.** They come to power with political debts to pay. If you want to know what they will do with their power, don't listen to what they say, but look at who financed their campaign.

**Hamburgers.** Especially McDonald's

– for „old European“ reasons. Anyway, if you read Günter Wallraff on his time working there, you'll never want to go near one again.

**Interruption.** Do not interrupt others. You know what you think. You learn much more from listening to what someone else has to say.

**Jokes.** Laughter is liberating but humour can serve unacceptable ends. Never be complicit in jokes told by „us“ to demonstrate the inferiority of „them“. You may well be accused of being „humourless“ but remember: *Türkenwitz, Judenwitz, Auschwitz.*

**Knee-jerk reactions.** Take a moment to think: does your response really come from within you or are you merely repeating something you've heard without having thought about it yourself?

**Lies.** They're a repudiation of reality, a

breach of contract with life itself. Never knowingly misinform.

**Manichaeism.** Nothing is ever black and white; no one is ever all good or all bad. Don't let yourself be goaded into over-simplification: reality is complex.

**Negativity.** Avoid concentrating your energy on the dark side. Your thoughts give it power over you.

**Obsessions.** They are like malign growths in your mind. They take root and before you know it, they have taken over your mental space and are devouring your energy.

**Procrastination.** When you put off to another day something you don't want to do, you end up doing it a hundred times, in imagination, instead of just once.

**Questions.** Learn to spot the ones that are asked solely to allow the questioner to talk about themselves at great length.

**Roquette.** Too much Roquette – a concept I personally find incomprehensible – is apparently bad for you (too many nitrates).

**Stereotypes.** Look at the whole reality of people instead of just sticking a label on them, or trying to cram them into a prefabricated one-dimensional mould.

**Thoughtlessness.** If you have had a door carelessly slammed in your face you will know what I mean. Think about who's being affected by what you do.

**Uniformity.** Avoid using words like „product“ for everything from holidays to CDs. Everything has its own name that makes it unique. And don't try and be like other people: your fascination lies in your uniqueness.

**Virtual reality.** Let's live in the only reality we have, namely real life. It is surely better to use your time tackling real problems than conquering virtual monsters.

**Women-haters.** Never, ever, let pass a remark that contains even the most innocent suggestion of misogyny or phallocracy!

**Xenophobia.** The stranger at your gate is interesting precisely because they are different. Welcome them in; question them; learn from their experience.

**Yahoos.** Remember Swift's brutish humanoids? They are everywhere and sometimes where you would devoutly hope never to find them ...

**Zoos.** It's nice for humans to see wild animals close to, but the animals are in prison. Would you like to be put behind bars and stared at?

*Can we manage to resist all that? Not easy, but let's take heart from dear Oscar's Lord Darlington, who famously said he could resist everything – except temptation.*



„... a bad example for humans, being subservient creatures“