

# Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,  
and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## Can peace become the main issue in politics again? Not only on the Geneva meeting of Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

On 18 June 2021 the German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier gave a remarkable, a moving speech. The occasion was the opening of the exhibition "Dimensions of a Crime. Soviet Prisoners of War in World War II" which can now be seen at the German-Russian Museum in Berlin Karlshorst. The museum is the building where on 9 May 1945 the German leadership of the Wehrmacht signed the Document of Unconditional Surrender. The speech by the Federal President was also the central commemorative speech on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the German war of aggression against the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941.

The Federal President not only recalled the suffering of the Soviet prisoners of war and the crimes against the peoples of the Soviet Union (see box on p. 3). He also spoke about the importance of historical memory for our present and future.

Even today, the war and its consequences – the division of the world into hostile blocs – have an impact on our thoughts and feelings: "The war and its legacy have also divided our memory, a division that has yet to be overcome even three decades after the lifting of the Iron Curtain. It continues to be a burden for the future. Changing this state of affairs is our task, a task for which we urgently need to redouble our efforts beyond borders – for the sake of the past, but, above all, for the sake of a peaceful future for coming generations on this continent."



Russian President Vladimir Putin, Federal President Guy Parmelin and  
US President Joe Biden in front of the conference building in Geneva.  
(Picture Keystone, Source: Tass, Sergei Bobylev)

### "We should remember ..."

And further: "We should remember – not in order to burden present and future generations with a guilt that is not theirs but for our own sake. We should remember in order to understand what impact this past has on the present. Only those who learn to understand the traces of the past in the present will be equipped to help shape a future which avoids wars, rejects tyranny and makes possible peaceful co-existence in freedom."

"That after everything that happened Germans are received today with great hospitality by people in, of all places, Belarus, Ukraine or Russia, that they are extended a warm welcome – is nothing short of a miracle."

For Germany and the Germans, this means: "On this day when we are remembering the millions upon millions who lost their lives, let us also recall how precious reconciliation is when it has grown over the graves of the fallen."

### Doing everything to work for peace

From the gift of reconciliation arose a great responsibility for Germany: "We want, and indeed must, do everything to [...] strive for peace with and among the success states to the former Soviet Union. [...] we remember not by turning our backs to the future. Rather, we remember by looking ahead and shouting out loud and clear: never again should there be such a war! [...] I ask you to ensure, indeed let us all ensure, that we do not confront each other again as enemies; that we do not fail to recognise the human being in others. Let us ensure

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### US-Russia Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability of 16 June 2021

We, President of the United States of America *Joseph R. Biden* and President of the Russian Federation *Vladimir Putin*, note the United States and Russia have demonstrated that, even in periods of tension, they are able to make progress on our shared goals of ensuring predictability in the strategic sphere, reducing the risk of armed conflicts and the threat of nuclear war.

The recent extension of the New START Treaty exemplifies our commitment to nuclear arms control. Today,

we reaffirm the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

Consistent with these goals, the United States and Russia will embark together on an integrated bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogue in the near future that will be deliberate and robust. Through this Dialogue, we seek to lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures.

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5658>

## 22 June 2021 – Let us finally make peace

An appeal, 80 years after 22 June 1941

cc. *The German-Russian Forum and the International Peace Bureau (IPB) publish the appeal "Let's bring about peace" on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The appeal was initiated by Antje Vollmer, former Vice President of the German Bundestag, Adelheid Bahr, educational scientist, Daniela Dahn, writer, Peter Brandt, historian, Reiner Braun, Managing Director of the International Peace Bureau, Martin Hoffmann, Executive Member of the Board of the German-Russian Forum, Michael Müller, former State Secretary and Chairman of the Friends of Nature, and Matthias Platzeck, former Prime Minister and Chairman of the Board of the German-Russian Forum.*

*The more than 1,300 signatories recall the victims of German atrocities in the East and call on Europe's politicians to overcome Cold War patterns of thought and to make conciliatory moves towards each other.*

*The appeal, published on 22 June 2021 in the "Berliner Zeitung" and the Russian newspaper "Kommersant", sets out a sign of commemoration and reconciliation in the context of the severe tensions in German-Russian relations.*

*In Germany, this appeal has been almost ignored so far.*

22 June 2021 marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nazi German invasion of Russia and the peoples of the Soviet Union. For us, the signatories, this day is a day of grief, shame and reflection on our own historical guilt. From German soil emanated an unprecedented war of extermination, driven by political hubris and racism against the people of the Soviet Union, especially the Jews and other minorities. It brought endless suffering to the people and claimed more than 27 million victims in the Soviet Union

alone, mostly from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

It is part of the responsibility of our generation that no one should be allowed to forget or relativise these atrocities. For the history of Europe also includes the fact that the Soviet Union defeated fascism at the cost of great sacrifices and liberated Germany from this ideology. The history of German-Russian relations also includes the fact that the Soviet Union and its legal successor Russia had been playing a decisive role in the reunification of Germany and the end of the Cold War.

We know: Peace in Europe can only be achieved together with Russia and not against Russia.

That is why we call on Europe's politicians in East and West: Get moving! Move away from the sphere and logic of the Cold War! It is not the number of tanks or arms that must grow, but the willingness to approach each other. Do it as people in Russia, Germany and Europe are doing through their concrete initiatives in town and city partnerships, in youth exchanges, in economic and scientific cooperation. Leave the mental prisons of enemy images, resentments and fears! Let us finally make peace! The people of Europe have been longing for it for a long time.

This is the lesson of 22 June. And this is what we stand for.

*First signatories:*

**Abendroth, Elisabeth; Bahr, Adelheid** (educationalist); **Hanne, Magret** (peace researcher); **Brandt, Peter** (historian); **Braun, Reiner** (International Peace Bureau); **Bruch, Thomas** (shareholder GLOBUS GmbH); **Claußen, Angelika** (Chairperson IPPNW); **Dagdelen, Sevim** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Dahn, Daniela** (Writer); **Dehm, Diether** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Enkelmann, Dag-**

**mar** (Chairperson of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation); **Erdmann, Torsten** (German-Russian Forum); **Ernst, Klaus** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Falk, Thomas** (German-Russian Forum); **Frantz, Justus** (conductor); **Gornig, Hans-Joachim** (German-Russian Forum); **Hänsel, Heike** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Hahn, André** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Hermes, Oliver** (Chairman of the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations); **Hoffmann, Christine** (Pax Christi); **Hoffmann, Jelena** (Chairwoman of the West-East Meetings Foundation); **Hoffmann, Martin** (German-Russian Forum); **Hunko, Andrej** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Joas, Hans** (Social Philosopher); **Kaiser, Kerstin** (Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Moscow); **Krone-Schmalz, Gabriele** (Publicist); **Kumm, Uwe** (German-Russian Forum); **Müller, Michael** (Former State Secretary, **Nastic, Zaklin** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Neu, Alexander** (Member of the German Bundestag); **Platzeck, Matthias** (Chairman, German-Russian Forum); **Rahr, Alexander** (Eastern Europe expert); **Raiser, Konrad** (former General Secretary of the Council of the Ecumenical Church); **Rösch-Metzler, Wiltrud** (Cooperation for Peace); **Schröder, Gerhard** (former Federal Chancellor); **Silly** (band); **Sommer, Jörg** (Chairman, German Environmental Aid); **Teltschik, Horst** (former Foreign Policy Advisor of Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl); **Thierse, Wolfgang** (former President of Parliament); **van Ooyen, Willi** (Federal Committee Peace Council); **Vassiliadis, Michael** (Chairman Trade Union, Mining, Chem, Energy); **Vogler, Kathrin** (former Member of the German Bundestag); **Vollmer, Antje** (former Vice-President of the German Bundestag); **von Knoop, Andrea** (Honorary President of the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce Abroad); **von Weizsäcker, Ernst-Ulrich; Wahl, Peter** (Scientific Advisory Board Attac); **Werneke, Frank** (Chairman ver.di); **Wiese, Heino** (Former Member of the German Bundestag); **Wohlfahrt, Harald** (Managing Director Käthe Wohlfahrt KG).

(Translation Current Concerns)

### "Can peace become the main issue ..."

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that those who propagate national hubris, contempt, enmity, and alienation do not have the last word. Remembrance should bring us closer together. It must not be allowed to divide us once more."

At one point, the Federal President quotes a question posed by former Soviet prisoner of war *Boris Popov*, who had the great good fortune to survive German captivity – a question *Boris Popov* posed publicly many years after the war: "This raises the compelling question: is it not time for humanity to categorically reject wars and to resolve issues – no matter how complicated – peacefully and in a spirit of mutual respect?"

### A path that led away from the logic of escalation

Steinmeier himself answers: "Europe was once closer to the answer than it is today. Decades ago, despite tensions and the confrontation between the two blocs, there was a different spirit on both sides of the Iron Curtain. I am talking about the spirit of Helsinki. In the midst of the mutual threat of nuclear annihilation, a process developed which was intended to avert, and did indeed help to avert, another war through the recognition of joint principles and through cooperation. This path, which led to the Helsinki Final Act, now lies almost half a century behind us. It was neither easy nor straightforward. However, it was a path which led us away from the logic of escalation and the threat of mutual destruction."

### Biden and Putin have met in Geneva

Two days before the speech of the German President, the US President *Joe Biden* and the President of the Russian Federation *Vladimir Putin* met in Geneva – thanks to the good offices of the Swiss Confederation – for about three hours of talks. Both presidents commented on the content of the conversation and its atmosphere in separately held press conferences in the late afternoon and early evening; both are publicly available in pictures, sound and text.<sup>1</sup>

The meeting of the two presidents took place at a time of great estrangement between the governments of the two states and in an environment of massive enemy

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## 80 years after the start of the war of aggression on the Soviet Union

Extract from the central commemorative speech by the German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier

“What now came to pass, what began on 22 June 1941, was an unleashing of hatred and violence, the radicalisation of a war that culminated in the madness of total annihilation. From day one, the German military campaign was driven by hatred, by antisemitism and anti-Bolshevism, as well as by a fanatical racist doctrine against the Slavic and Asian peoples of the Soviet Union.

Those who waged this war killed people in every imaginable way, with an unprecedented degree of brutality and cruelty. Those who were responsible for it, who in their national fanaticism even invoked German culture and civilisation, Goethe and Schiller, Bach and Beethoven, betrayed all civilised values, violated all principles of humanity and law. The German war against the Soviet Union was murderous barbarity.

As difficult as we may find it, we must remember that. And when if not on anniversaries such as this. Remembering this inferno, this absolute enmity and the act of dehumanising the other – re-

membering this continues to be an obligation for us Germans and a memorial for the world.

Hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers fell, starved to death or were shot dead during the first few months of the war alone, in the summer of 1941.

Immediately after the invasion by the German troops, the murder of Jewish men, women and children by the firing squads of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD), the SS and their auxiliary troops got under way.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians in Ukraine, in Belarus, in the Baltic States and in Russia fell victim to bombing attacks or were relentlessly hunted down as partisans and murdered. Cities were destroyed and villages burned to the ground. Old photographs show only charred stone fireplaces rising in a devastated landscape.

At the war's end, the death toll of the peoples of the Soviet Union numbered some 27 million. Twenty-seven million people were killed, murdered, bludg-

oned, starved or left to die as a result of forced labour by National Socialist Germany. Fourteen million of them were civilians.

No one had to mourn more victims in this war than the peoples of the then Soviet Union. And yet these millions are not as deeply etched in our collective memory as their suffering and our responsibility demand.

This war was a crime – a monstrous, criminal war of aggression and annihilation. Those who go to its theatres today, who encounter people who bore the brunt of it, will be reminded of 22 June 1941 – irrespective of whether there is a day of remembrance or memorial or not. Traces of this war are to be found among the elderly who experienced it as children, and in the younger generation, in their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.”

Source: <https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2021/210618-Invasion-SovietUnion.html> of 18 June 2021

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images. Enemy images that had been created and deepened for years, especially by the USA and its Western allies. The Western mainstream media had not only conveyed the image of Russia as an enemy, but had also added fuel to the fire. Factual reporting on Russia was practically non-existent. How things were on the Russian side is difficult to judge from here. From time to time I read the German-language Russian media and have by no means observed such propaganda about the other side as in the Western media.

### No one should want to be a winner any more

Be that as it may, finding a way out of this impasse is not easy. This was evident in many Western media commentaries after the meeting of the two presidents, also in Switzerland. Here is just one small, rather harmless, but significant example among many. On 18 June, a major Swiss daily newspaper ran the headline: “Russia sees itself as the winner”. There is no evidence of this in the text that follows. Could it not be that the title mainly reflects the thinking patterns of the newspaper makers? Namely, that the meeting of the two presidents was about the question of who was the winner – and thus, of course, who was the loser. Such thinking is widespread, but it is fundamentally opposed to the search for peace. The fact that both presidents in their press conferences were not out to look like “win-

ners” but as serious seekers of a peaceful solution to serious problems and conflicts is a good sign. The fact that even such a critical thinker as *Willy Wimmer* gave a positive assessment of the Geneva summit in an interview with the German edition of *Russia Today* (RT) on 18 June<sup>2</sup> makes one prick up one's ears.

### Peace is the most ardent wish

It is always risky to make statements about the future. A single meeting does not create peace. It remains to be seen what the working groups to be set up will come up with. The will of the political leaders to reach an agreement will be decisive. It will be clear to all participants that unspoken geopolitical calculations (for example, in the triangle between the USA, Russia and China), i.e. questions of power, will also play a role. Nevertheless, if the meeting in Geneva is a step towards more peace, it was a great success. The first result of the meeting of the two presidents, a “Joint Declaration on Strategic Stability” (see box on p. 1), which was put on paper, is certainly to be welcomed. Both presidents recall that, even in times of tension, both states have managed to make progress in “reducing the risk of armed conflict and the threat of nuclear war”. More than that, they reaffirm the “principle that nuclear war cannot be won and must never be waged”.

The people and peoples in every country of the world have one most ardent wish: to be able to live in peace. This peace was very much at risk until 16 June. Not for the first time since the Second World War.

For years, there have been regions of the world where the new confrontation – as in the Cold War – is also being fought with

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Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: [CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch](mailto:CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch)

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# The micro-tax initiative – countervailing power against tax havens, stock market speculation and cryptocurrencies

by Nicole Duprat, France\*

“Science without conscience is the death of the soul” this is how *Rabelais* expressed himself in his “*Pantagruel*”.

We owe a debt of gratitude to *Marc Chesney* for restoring the nobility of economic science by publishing his extremely clearly written books (*La crise permanente and Dépossession*), as well as his recent fundamental article in *Current Concerns* No 11 of 25 May 2021, in which he develops his critical analysis of the financial sector with simplicity, integrity and loyalty, and refers economic science back to its humane, just and universally understandable foundations. In doing so, economics is once again becoming a discipline that strives to reconcile its scientific capacities with what is morally acceptable.

It is a great opportunity that a university professor specialising in finance uses simple terms to describe extremely complex situations that appear so complex because they are penetrated by the fog of the institutions and actors involved, by the fog of the banks, by the fog of the role of tax havens in the globalised stock exchange business, by the fog of dubious speculation, the so-called “shadow bankings” (financial transactions in the shade), the prevailing inedible technical jargon in the field of economics, the victory march of crypto-currencies, the rotten tricks in

international financial transactions, the fraudulent technical literature disseminated by the Chicago school, and the general acceptance of profit and disloyal competition.

“A good mind is better than a gorged one,” *Montaigne* stated, and he was right. The students of economics who, from their course of study, then devote themselves to the various professions in the field of economics, will undoubtedly appreciate encountering university teachers who do not orient their thinking entirely towards the logic of the current financial casino and its aberrant effects, but lead them towards reflection and interdisciplinary exchange, towards a more precise understanding of how everything is connected. The educational programmes of young economists are often characterised by very narrow specialisation, which increasingly loses sight of the comprehensive perspective and forgets the whole for sheer knowledge of details. This inevitably leads to not being able to see the wood for the trees. It is only by overcoming disciplinary boundaries that one can see the whole of the economic system.

It cannot be surprising that the “*gilets jaunes*” in France were convinced by the idea and the initiative that electronic financial transactions should be subjected

to a micro-tax in order to renew the country’s outdated and bureaucratic tax system, which is generating more and more injustice, rampant hardship and impoverishment.

There are many fellow citizens, communities and groups today who agree that in creating a more just and humane model of society, creativity and the gift of renewal are the driving forces when it comes to taking action.

There is certainly merit in denouncing the machinations of the financial oligarchy, but working to create a different kind of economic regulation has a much wider dynamic. The future cannot be predicted, it demands the search for solutions. The best way to look into the future is to help shape it. The future is us, what is inside us.

The committee’s initiative is to be welcomed. It brings the economy back to the path of reason, to its real connections. And certainly, something like this is easier to realise in Switzerland, thanks to its direct democracy, its means of initiative and referendum, easier than in France, where democracy often remains a democracy of chatter. •

\* *Nicole Duprat* is a political scientist with a degree in law and international relations from the *Institut d’Etudes Politiques Aix-en-Provence*, a teacher and a contributor to *Horizons et débats*.

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weapons. In the bloc confrontation, a correct conclusion was drawn in 1962 after the Cuban Missile Crisis: an ever-widening spiral of escalation is a dead end and brings the world to the brink of destruction. An escalation of the conflict between the USA and Russia today is no less a dead end in which there can only be losers.

In an article for the German weekly *Die Zeit* on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German war of aggression on the Soviet Union<sup>3</sup>, Russian President Vladimir Putin once again called for overcoming dividing lines on the Eurasian continent together and on an equal footing; because “we simply cannot afford to carry with us the burden of

past misunderstandings, grievances, conflicts. A burden that prevents us from solving current problems”.

The EU summit of heads of state and government on 24 and 25 June showed how difficult it is for those in positions of responsibility in the NATO and EU states to leave the dead-end street once it has been reached. Instead of engaging in dialogue with the Russian government again after seven years, as proposed by the French President and the German Chancellor, they “agreed” on tougher sanction threats against Russia. Truly not a step towards détente.

So, the question of the Soviet prisoner of war Boris Popov should be repeated at the end: “The question arises compelling-

ly: Would it not be time for mankind to reject wars in principle and to solve even such complicated questions peacefully in a relationship of mutual respect?” •

<sup>1</sup> as video with German translation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdubWvLsCow> (Vladimir Putin’s press conference), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZlbcywRpHs> (Joe Biden’s press conference); as texts in English: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/16/remarks-by-president-biden-in-press-conference-4/> (Joe Biden’s press conference), <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65870> (Vladimir Putin’s press conference)

<sup>2</sup> <https://de.rt.com/international/119263-willy-wimmer-gipfel-von-putin/> of 18 June 2021

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2021-06/ueberfall-auf-die-sowjetunion-1941-europa-russland-geschichte-wladimir-putin/komplettansicht> of 22 June 2021

# Nuclear arms race – disarmament is necessary

by Gerd Brenner, Colonel iG



*In 1987, Soviet head of state Mikhail Gorbachev and US president Ronald Reagan signed the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in the White House in Washington, D.C. This treaty ruled that all land-based Soviet and US-American intermediate range nuclear missiles were to be dismantled. In the whole world hopes were running high for a disarmament of nuclear and conventional weapons when the treaty was signed. (Picture Wikipedia)*

*In the future, new geopolitical conditions must be reflected by new treaties about nuclear weapons and their carrier systems, considering new technologies and signed by new actors. Moreover, the number of such weapons throughout the world needs to be drastically decreased. The danger of a “nuclear winter” has been looming for decades and should today, when everybody is talking about “climate crises”, finally be taken seriously. Generally speaking, a comprehensive new analysis of worldwide weapons arsenals is required since it doesn’t make any sense to simply restart negotiations based on the numbers of ten years ago.*

In 1987, the sitting US president *Ronald Reagan* and the Soviet head of state and ruling party *Mikhail Gorbachev* signed the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty. It is often referred to as the “global double zero” since it prescribed the destruction of existing intermediate range nuclear missiles, i.e., those of a range between 500 and 5,500km, and the refraining from developing new

ones. In the years afterwards the USA destroyed their middle range missiles of the type “Pershing II” and the Soviet Union or Russia, respectively, their “RSD-10” which had become famous in the West under the term “SS-20”. However, neither air-borne nor sea-borne middle range weapons were mentioned in the treaty. After Russia had complained for several years that the USA had broken the INF treaty, the *Trump* administration revoked it on 1 February 2019. Russia withdrew as well and since 2 August 2019 it has been officially invalid.<sup>1</sup>

In 2010 the sitting presidents *Dmitri Medvedev* of Russia and *Barack Obama* of the USA signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, often referred to as New-START-Treaty.<sup>2</sup> Russia and the US agreed that both sides would reduce the number of warheads from 2,200 to 1,550 each and the number of carrier systems from 1,600 to 800. Ratified in February 2011 it was to be valid until February 2021. The *Trump* administration did nothing to prolong its duration, possibly because *Donald Trump* thought he

would once more be able to strike a better deal. After *Joe Biden* had been inaugurated as the new US president in January 2021, he did prolong the duration of the treaty. So far so good, but old hitherto neglected scientific data, new geopolitical developments, new actors and new technologies warrant sustained and even enhanced efforts in nuclear disarmament control.

## Scientific data, hitherto neglected

The explosive force of any warhead, nuclear or conventional, will basically always distribute in the three dimensions of space and therefore the radius of any degree of destruction caused by an explosion will grow not in proportion to the explosive power itself but only its cubic root. An eightfold increase in explosive power will theoretically cause the same degree of destruction in a radius which is only twice as long. Theoretically, it is therefore by no means impossible to control the extent of destruction any explosion can cause – including nuclear ones. Moreover, the impact of pressure, debris

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flying around, heat and radioactive radiation will be diminished by the topography and the landscape. But this is true only for the immediate hazards of nuclear explosions. The poisoned dust travelling far and wide after an explosion means that, in combination with radioactivity, the medium-term effects of nuclear explosions are barely restrictable in space and time. This may be the reason why the nuclear powers have shied away from deploying nuclear weapons since 1945. At first, the American military tried to conceal or downplay the radiological consequences of the first atomic bombs in 1945, but by the time when the Cold War had entered into a phase of practically unhinged nuclear experimentation, these consequences had become obvious for anybody to see.<sup>3</sup> After several accidents in nuclear power plants in North America, Europe and Asia one can safely assume that everybody is aware of the global hazards of radioactivity today. Unwanted long-term consequences of nuclear warfare are unavoidable. One of these unwanted political consequences would be a nuclear winter.

**Nuclear "deadly freeze"**

From the middle of the 1970s onwards scientists concluded that nuclear detonations would have consequences far beyond the site of the explosion. The enhanced simulation capacities of computers combined with progresses in climate research made it possible to postulate that a widespread deployment of nuclear warheads would lead to irreversible damages for the natural environment worldwide and threaten the very basis for the survival of humankind.

The US American scientist *John Hampson* outlined some of the changes in the photochemical regime of the atmosphere wrought by nuclear explosions. Benign as this may sound, it amounts to a near blackout of all sunlight from the surface of the earth. His recommendations, that these effects should be discussed in future disarmament talks, were ignored.<sup>4</sup>

Another group of US scientist reached similar conclusions in 1983: "[...] The yield threshold for major optical and climatic consequences may be very low: only about 100 megatons detonated over major urban centres can create ... even in summer, subfreezing land temperatures for months."<sup>5</sup>

The catastrophic consequences of a nuclear war were recognised in the Soviet Union, too. Based on computer simulations two Soviet scientist predicted that a nuclear war would cause a "... strong temperature drop over the surface of continents of the Northern hemisphere, the

warm-up of large mountains, the crucial change of the hydrological cycle and of the mechanism of the global circulation of the atmosphere."<sup>6</sup>

Today we know that the danger is not only due to the Russian and US-American nuclear arsenals: "The United States and Russia are not the only countries capable of wreaking worldwide climate havoc. All of the nuclear states – except North Korea, with its relatively small arsenal – if involved in a nuclear war, have the destructive power needed to alter the global environment."<sup>7</sup>

There is no practical point in discussing scientific data any further because one thing is already clear: A large scale nuclear conflict at a range of 100 mega tons but possibly even much lower would create a physical experiment with the earth's atmosphere with unpredictable damage to the earth's surface, the oceans and at the end life on earth. These consequences could amount to the extinction of a majority of humankind and much of life on earth in general. The strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) as it was pursued in the early phases of the Cold War has changed to a Guaranteed Global Destruction which would affect the first-strike-power within days or weeks.<sup>8</sup>

But much less dramatic ecological sequelae would probably suffice to throw the economy of entire world regions out of balance. Just imagine what would happen if densely populated regions in the Northern hemisphere would suddenly become uninhabitable, all infrastructure and means of production are lost and people migrate to the South in masses which is poverty-stricken anyway. The number of 100 mega tons may be still overestimated. Since there is no consensus how many nuclear explosions would cause a "nuclear Winter" we cannot say with confidence whether we are still in the era of Guaranteed Global Destruction, which we thought we had overcome already, or not. If so, we would yet again pursue a doctrine of suicide mistaken for self-defence.

**New technologies, new opportunities**

Generally, deployment ranges, precision and explosive power of any type of ammunition, be it nuclear or conventional, need to correspond with each other. For ballistic types of ammunition such as dump fire missiles, artillery grenades or rockets there is a close correlation between firing range and precision. The longer the firing distance, the bigger the expected variance in precision. Some deficiencies in precision are compensated by greater impact by some manufacturers. In this approach the slogan would be – if precision is bad, take a bigger one. This explains why in the Cold War nuclear warheads of the size

of the Hiroshima bomb were planned to destroy single objects. Moreover, statistics is utilised to substitute for precision or destruction probabilities: if one bomb won't do the job, just keep firing. That way the staggering numbers of warheads were piled up in the arsenals of both superpowers.

Current technologies of directed high precision missiles allows to reach the target with smaller but still effective warheads, to the point that highly efficient conventional warheads can cause more destruction than unprecise nuclear weapons. In addition, with higher precision you need fewer missiles. This way an effective strategic deterrent may be non-nuclear as long as its long-range precision would be able to target nationally or military-strategically important items of the enemy. Missiles with inertia or satellite navigation systems supplied with a thermobaric or aerosol warhead can destroy targets for which one or even several nuclear warheads would be planned years ago.

This deterrence approach has been discussed in circles of the Russian chiefs of staff for years.<sup>9</sup> For the time being the West argues that this doesn't matter since nobody can tell whether an approaching missile is carrying a conventional or a nuclear warhead, and besides, those new Russian conventional weapon systems can easily be supplied with nuclear explosives. Indeed, a relatively small and light nuclear warhead instead of a bigger and heavier conventional one could increase the firing range of a missile. If supplied with a 100kg nuclear warhead instead of a conventional one weighing several hundred kilogrammes, an operative-tactical rocket would probably outfly the 500 km as agreed upon in the treaty. But this is still theory for the time being. It would be beyond the scales of this article to discuss all controversies between Russia and the US or NATO respectively. But it may be time to think about disarmament measures for the conventional sector.

Hypersonic weapons and similar buzzwords are quite en-vogue in military circles these days. Indeed, technicians and "rocket scientists" in Russia and the US are currently working on a new generation of intercontinental rockets. Naturally the details are classified information so that it is difficult to speculate about the concrete consequences. On the other hand, the new generation of Russian ballistic rockets may be capable to avoid approaching counter-missiles due to their on-board navigation devices. This means that defence systems like the Israeli "iron dome" would be rendered ineffective or would require unrealistic efforts.

continued on page 7



**"Nuclear arms race ..."**

continued from page 6

The second technology currently under discussion is that of the sub-orbital stratospheric glide missile, which was conceived in the 1930s by the Austrian engineer *Eugen Sänger*. Little is known about the Russian "Avangard" missile. What is clear is that after reaching a suitable flight altitude, it virtually "glides" on the Earth's atmosphere or bounces off the Earth's atmosphere several times, only to enter it at the right moment and fall on its target. With this technology, high ranges can be achieved, so that it would also be conceivable for such missiles to approach the USA not by the shortest route via the North Pole, but via the South Pole, and thus virtually fly around the chain of US radar stations in the far north. This increases the flight distance to up to 30,000 km and the flight time to up to one hour. But since sub-orbital stratospheric glide missiles, at their low altitude compared to ballistic missiles, can only be detected late by ground-based radar stations, the time between detection and impact could be reduced to a few minutes; possibly to just five to six minutes. This is the level of medium-range missiles.<sup>10</sup>

Due to all these new developments the goal to counter approaching missiles with counter-missiles becomes impossible to achieve, which leaves us with the logic of strategic deterrence again. While the conflicts between Russia and the US regarding counter-missiles will become less important, efforts for nuclear disarmament remain crucial as always.

**New geo-political conditions**

The INF treaty deals only with land-based systems of ranges between 500-5,500km. In the Cold War the Soviet Union had stationed their RSD-10/SS-20 rockets only on their own territory, so that these missiles would have been able to reach the US east coast from Belarus or the Ukraine. The west coast of the US was targeted from Siberia and the Russian Far East.

Systems stationed in Siberia and the Far East barely reached the west coast of the USA. But the range of the RSD-10 was sufficient for targets all over Europe and the Middle East. This was probably the reason for the concern on the part of the Europeans that the two superpowers might break off a nuclear war after the nuclear devastation of Europe, so as not to devastate each other as well. When one knows about the possibility of a nuclear winter, it becomes clear that such considerations are rather theoretical.<sup>11</sup>

Today, possible nuclear missile sites in Russia are several hundred kilome-

tres further east than they were during the Cold War. Like the Soviet doctrine then, the Russian doctrine now demands that after repelling aggression, hostilities should continue until the enemy has lost the ability or motivation to continue the war. If, in order to implement this doctrine, Russia really wants to develop weapons that can destroy the economic and political centres of Western Europe, the known locations of nuclear weapons and the most important ports on the Atlantic, Channel and North Sea coasts from its own territory, then ranges of around 2,000 km would suffice.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, Russia's most important centres, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as the economic centres along the Volga, lie at a distance of no more than 1,500 km from the territory of the European NATO states. At best, new distances would have to be reckoned with in new arms control negotiations.

With its Atlantic Ocean marginal seas projecting far into the continent, Europe is a continent for which sea-based weapons are of great importance. However, since not all of these waters are suitable for the deployment of ballistic missile submarines in terms of their hydrography, surface units capable of carrying medium-range missiles would also have to be considered in future arms control negotiations. These include the US Ticonderoga-class cruisers, the Arleigh Burke-class frigates, the British City-class frigates, and the Russian Admiral Grigorovich- and Admiral Gorshkov-class multi-purpose combat ships.

**Consequences for the nuclear arms control**

By extending the period of validity of the New START treaty, the Biden administration has first made it clear that it is interested in continuing the arms control efforts interrupted under Donald Trump. But that is not the end of the story. Negotiations must also be conducted with other actors. New technologies make new treaties on carrier and weapon systems necessary. And finally, in the light of the findings on a nuclear winter, the upper limits on the number of weapons must be drastically lowered. In principle, neither the official nor the unofficial nuclear powers must be granted the right to make the most densely populated areas of the Northern hemisphere uninhabitable with their arsenals. A drastic reduction of the nuclear arsenals of all nuclear powers must become a central demand of nuclear arms control in the future. •

<sup>1</sup> see information and text of treaty at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm#text> and <http://www.peterhall.de/treaties/inf/inf1.html>. On

the mutual accusations see <https://slub.qucosa.de/api/qucosa%3A71608/attachment/ATT-0/>

<sup>2</sup> see <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/newstart/index.htm>. The New START Treaty followed START I, which was in force from 1994 to 2009, and START II, which never entered into force.

<sup>3</sup> see <https://www.welt.de/geschichte/zweiter-weltkrieg/article144994003/Niemand-kennnt-die-wirkliche-Zahl-der-Opfer.html>; the first journalist to report on the consequences of the nuclear explosion in Hiroshima, despite opposition from the US military, was the American *John Hersey*; see <https://www.perlentaucher.de/buch/john-hersey/hiroshima.html>; cf. also the report by ICRB staff member *Benoît Junod* at <https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/der-schweizer-samariter-von-hiroshima/4654838>

<sup>4</sup> see Hampson J. "Photochemical war on the atmosphere", in: *Nature* 250, No. 5463, 1974, p. 189–91, online <https://www.nature.com/articles/250189a0>

<sup>5</sup> R. P. Turco, O. B. Toon, T. P. Ackerman, J. B. Pollack, C. Sagan. "Nuclear Winter: Global Consequences of Multiple Nuclear Explosions". In: *Science* 222, No. 4630 of 23 December 1983, p. 1283–92, online <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17773320/>. This was confirmed in studies in 1990: "Should substantial urban areas or fuel stocks be exposed to nuclear ignition, severe environmental anomalies – possibly leading to more human casualties globally than the direct effects of nuclear war would be not just a remote possibility, but a likely outcome." See R. P. Turco, O. B. Toon, T. P. Ackerman, J. B. Pollack, C. Sagan. *Climate and Smoke: An Appraisal of Nuclear Winter*, 1990, online [https://atmos.washington.edu/~ackerman/Articles/Turco\\_Nuclear\\_Winter\\_90.pdf](https://atmos.washington.edu/~ackerman/Articles/Turco_Nuclear_Winter_90.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Alexandrov, V. V., G. I. Stenchikov. *On the modeling of the climatic consequences of the nuclear war, the Proceeding of Appl. Mathematics, The Computing Centre of the Academy of science of the USSR*, Moscow, 1983, online <https://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/pdf/AleksandrovStenchikov.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Alan Robock, Owen Brian. "Self-assured destruction: The climate impacts of nuclear war". In: *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 4, 2016, online <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0096340212459127>

<sup>8</sup> To mention just one of countless presentations on this topic: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mutual-assured-destruction>.

<sup>9</sup> The author himself is a graduate of the General Staff Academy of the Russian Army.

<sup>10</sup> Technical analysis with *Jill Hruby*: "Russia's New Nuclear Weapon Delivery Systems – An Open-Source Technical Review". In: *nti.org, NTI – The Nuclear Threat Initiative* of 1 November 2019, online [https://media.nti.org/documents/NTI-Hruby\\_FINAL.PDF](https://media.nti.org/documents/NTI-Hruby_FINAL.PDF), and "Hypersonic Weapons: Background and Issues for Congress". In: *fas.org, Congressional Research Service* of 10 September 201, online <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/R45811.pdf> on the political-military effects. See also Pawel Podwig, "Russia shows Avangard system 'to maintain viability' of New START", online [http://russianforces.org/blog/2019/11/russia-shows\\_avangard\\_system\\_t.shtml](http://russianforces.org/blog/2019/11/russia-shows_avangard_system_t.shtml). On Eugen Sänger and his "Antipodean Bomber" see <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz109535.html>

<sup>11</sup> cf. ATOMWAFFEN: Nuklearer Winter. (Atomic weapons: Nuclear winter) In: *Der Spiegel* No. 33, 1984, online <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13508607.html>; in view of the stockpiles of nuclear weapons available in Europe at the time, *Der Spiegel* concluded: "Even a Euro-strategic exchange of blows would therefore end in a death freeze."

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, at times there was speculation that Russian "Iskanders" could have ranges of over 2,000 km: <https://www.dw.com/de/ein-nicht-so-geheimnis-heimnis-die-russische-rakete-9m729/a-46603054> and <https://www.bazonline.ch/ausland/europa/russland-hat-mehr-marschflugkoerper-als-bisher-bekannt/story/25086690> And so does the "Kalibr"; see <https://www.armstrongcontrolwonk.com/archive/207816/russian-cruise-missiles-revisited/>

# “Dictatorship socialised” fellow citizens – the new most outrageous word of the year?

## A statement on the style of public debates in “advanced” democracies

by Peter Küpfer

In his article “Enemy images outside ... and also inside the country. Germany before the federal elections” (*Current Concerns* No. 14 of 22 June 2021), *Karl-Jürgen Müller* once again analysed changes in the matter and in the style of debate, with a focus on Germany. However, the increasing aggressiveness and lack of objectivity in public debates, shown in many examples in his articles, is not only at work there. His above-mentioned article is another example of how modern democracy today is also threatened from inside. In this context, it is not only the represented content that has to be in accordance with the constitution in a functioning democracy if it is to be entitled to approval, it is also the language with which it is represented.

The article mentioned above is about the spectre of the AfD, painted on the wall by many, and to which the label “radical right-wing” is quickly attached in leftist, even neoliberal perspectives, as was also the case in the run-up to the federal state elections in Saxony-Anhalt. They met with a wide response because many took them as a “barometer” for the parliamentary elections in September.

The central quote, which was the reason for these lines, is introduced there as follows: “The spectre of the threat from the extreme right-wing has a long history in Germany and, after 1990, has [...] replaced the spectre of the threat from the extreme left-wing as the main threat from the official side. Particularly in Western Germany, many believe they can recognise this spectre in the flesh. The most recent example of this are the statements made by *Marco Wanderwitz*, a CDU politician and the German government’s representative to the East, in the “FAZ Podcast for Germany” on 28 May, according to which there was a stronger tendency to vote for right-wing extremist parties in East Germany than in the West.” Then follows as a quote the completely unacceptable statement by the German government’s representative to the East. *Wanderwitz* says: “We’re dealing with people who have partly been *socialised by a dictatorship* in such a way that they *haven’t yet arrived in democracy* even 30 years later.” Some people in Eastern Germany, he continues, “*just haven’t properly grasped democracy yet*” [emphasis PK]. With this, he apparently wants to “justify” why in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt (former territory of the GDR) citizens voted for AfD to a greater extent than CDU.

That’s pretty steep, first in terms of matter and then also in terms of style, clearly beyond the red line of what is still acceptable even in heated debates. When making public statements about an election result, a high-ranking civil servant should not have such obvious difficulties in distinguishing his personal opinion from what is imposed on him by his position: moderation in form and waiving of evaluative, partisan statements.

Apart from its verbal arrogance, the statement has also to be vigorously rejected in the matter. To allege part of the population of a federal state that formerly belonged to the GDR of being “dictatorship socialised” to a large part and therefore to certify “stable non-democratic views” is not acceptable at all. Does the Federal Government Commissioner for the New Federal States only want to have proper and factual relationships, if the majority of the people there vote his own party?

According to his “logic”, all those who believed at the time that the entire German people had to be “denazified” (with appropriate measures!) would have been right, because in this inadmissibly generalising argumentation they were all, in this logic, more or less “dictatorship socialised”. Even then, the allies had the highly doubtful conviction that they were particularly legitimised to do so. It is this arrogance, which is more often noticeable in the West today and which is poisoning the climate, both nationally and internationally. The founding generation of the Federal Republic of Germany agreed from left to right that no war of aggression may start out from Germany, including any assistance to such wars. Even if the highest courts have turned things in a different, highly questionable direction, one thing is clear to every contemporary of the post-war generation who is committed to the matter. The German Basic Law is flawless in its fundamental orientation towards the ban of any form of war of aggression. It confirms this ban with its literal commitment to applicable international law (e.g., the UN Charter). The active participation and co-responsibility of the Federal Republic of Germany in NATO’s illegal war of aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which openly contradicts this basic principle, did not start from the German people (they were not asked) and certainly not from those of the former GDR, but rather quite strikingly from the member of the ’68 generation and turned

Green, *Joschka Fischer*, Foreign Minister of the *Schröder* government at the time.

The currently demanded strong linkage of the German armed force to the “new” NATO, which has betrayed its original purely defensive purpose, is not only the wish of warmongering circles in the USA, but apparently also that of the candidate for chancellor of the German Greens. No heedless word can sort out such worrying facts. In case of Ms *Baerbock*, her openly advocated position of aligning the German armed force with a globally aggressive NATO certainly is not a result of a “dictatorship-socialised” value (the candidate for chancellor, born in 1980, grew up and was “socialised” in West Germany); it probably originates from a completely different think tank.

If we are talking about “democratic deficits”, then primarily they are here. Not with voters who behave differently from what a certain political interpretation of the world expects. The first principle of any democracy is respect for the will of the sovereign. In real democracies, it is the people, not self-appointed experts, who self-righteously comment on their will or reinterpret it as incompetent with unscientific slogans. •

Letter to  the Editor

### Gender Newspeak

The comments of the German philologist, Dr *Peter Küpfer* regarding Gender Newspeak advocate a language usage which maintains the cultural tradition of a richly differentiated language. He is not alone in this matter. The contortions regarding the so-called ‘male-dominated language’ to be forced into a ‘female-dominated one’ have been an irritation for many for a long time. As an example of this, I wrote to *Radio SRF* relating to this subject because I found the substitute for ‘demonstrators’ (which means those who point out, generically neutral) by ‘demonstrating people’ another proof of the loss of the recognition of the root word and of the language. The answer showed me that the complaint was not understood as well as the concern, to free language from this weight, was not shared. It was then a greater pleasure for me, today, to have found the following remark in a letter from my bank: “In the interest for a better readability, the texts are formulated in a gender-neutral way ...”

Renate Dünki, Oberwangen



# “They wanted to discredit me”

## Legal dispute between Middle East correspondent Karin Leukefeld and WDR

by Ilona Pfeifer

*Is there a copyright on an interview as a linguistic work, and do interviewees have to put up with it if a media outlet uses the interview despite objections and, on top of that, spreads false allegations? This is the issue in the legal dispute between freelance Syria correspondent Karin Leukefeld and Westdeutscher Rundfunk (West German Broadcasting Cologne, WDR).*

For a radio feature produced by author Marc Thörner on behalf of WDR for all ARD broadcasters, the latter had contacted Middle East correspondent Karin Leukefeld with an interview request via e-Mail in August 2019. Leukefeld has been reporting from Syria for various German-language media for almost ten years and is the only German correspondent accredited in Syria. Because of her many years of experience as a journalist and her expertise as a correspondent who is actually on the ground talking to the local population, it seemed only right to request Karin Leukefeld as an interlocutor to discuss the future of Syria.

Regarding the questions, Thörner wrote in advance that he wanted Leukefeld’s “assessment of Syrian domestic policy, especially reconciliation policy. Secondly, it is about how you assess German foreign policy with regard to Syria, also the image of Syria in the German media”. The Middle East correspondent, who in the past had also produced contributions for WDR, among others, agreed and prepared herself for the topics mentioned. However, Karin Leukefeld told *SNA News* that she became suspicious during the recording of the 40-minute *Skype* interview. Some topics did not come up at all, while others that had not been agreed upon were persistently asked about.

“One point that made me suspicious during the interview was the topic: the German media’s view of the Syria conflict. I can say a lot about that. But he said: You write for “Junge Welt” and for *Russia Today RT*. He classifies *RT* on the right, “Junge Welt” on the far left. He also said: Do you not notice that your argumentation is similar to that of the AfD? Then I said: Listen, one is a party, and I am a correspondent on the ground. You yourself are also a correspondent, and you know that you report what you hear and see on the ground and try to convey that to the public in Germany. That has nothing whatsoever to do with the position of any party,” said Leukefeld. Thörner nevertheless kept on probing until she finally said that she would not say anything more about it. “He wanted me to distance myself from the AfD. I said I am a journal-

ist and do not have to distance myself from any politicians’ opinions. At that point I became suspicious.”

The unease she felt during the interview, which she also expressed in part, led her to ask by e-mail after the interview which parts of the conversation the author wanted to use for his radio feature, combined with the request to be able to authorise them in their respective context beforehand. Thörner refused, whereupon she informed him and the radio station that she was withdrawing her consent for the use of her interview, the Syria correspondent said.

### Publication with false allegation

Despite Leukefeld’s explicit objection, including her reasons, the radio feature was published on 26 February 2020 and broadcast nationwide on ARD radio stations. For a long time, the feature was also available in the media libraries of the public broadcasters, albeit with a preceding counterstatement, which Karin Leukefeld was able to obtain. The counterstatement refers to this passage in the feature, in which author Thörner states:

“Soon after our conversation, Karin Leukefeld surprised me with an e-mail. She wants the passages about the SSNP and their suicide attacks deleted from the interview. When I refuse because that does not meet journalistic standards, she wants to withdraw the entire interview.”

An outright false claim, as can be seen from the journalist’s statement of claim. At no point had Leukefeld linked the withdrawal of her interview to passages about the Syrian opposition party SSNP. In fact, after Thörner refused to comment on which passages he wanted to use, she had merely written in justification of her refusal that she did not know his manuscript and did not know which of her statements were to be taken over and in which context. Since Thörner did not want to or could not comment on this, she withdrew her consent.

After some time, the feature disappeared from the ARD media libraries, but the transcript remained available on the WDR site for another while. A year later, both, the radio feature and the transcript are no longer available in the ARD media library. References to the programme are accompanied by the sentence: “Due to an ongoing legal clarification, this programme cannot currently be listened to.” Press announcements at WDR can still be viewed.

### The internet forgets nothing

The fact that the feature is no longer available in the media libraries should be little

consolation because, as we know, the internet forgets nothing. Even a brief query via a web archive brings the work in question to light again, just as it was broadcast. Listening to Thörner’s almost one-hour contribution, it is noticeable from the beginning that a certain atmosphere is to be created with diverse background noises and audio effects, an atmosphere against the background of which the author spreads his narrative of Assad’s “new Syrian empire”. Original sounds from the 40-minute interview with Karin Leukefeld appear in small snippets taken out of context. Several times they are spliced together with statements by AfD politician *Christian Blex*, as if this were a natural alliance. By contrast, hardly anything remains of her expertise on Syria’s possible future.

When she first heard the feature, it became clear to her that author Marc Thörner had a completely different idea for his presentation than he had conveyed to her when she asked for an interview, Karin Leukefeld recalls. He was not concerned with the question of what the future of Syria would look like, but had a specific image of how he wanted to portray it.

On the one hand, Thörner did not bother to explain the background, such as the formation and composition of the Syrian opposition party SSNP. On the other hand, he used the usual images of good and evil, with the usual suspects, such as the evil ruler Assad, the evil Hizbullah, and the evil accomplices Russia and Iran.

“I think he already had a framework in which direction it should go – martyrs, Islamists, Nazis. I think the only reason I was brought into it was to discredit me. Because he did not need me at all for the idea of how he portrays the alleged new Syrian empire of Bashar al-Assad. For that, he needed the aforementioned martyrs, Islamists and Nazis. But I, as a journalist, had no function at all for this portrayal. I think the only reason why he interviewed me was that he wanted to mix me in somehow, because as a journalist I have been exposed to a lot of criticism for reporting from Syria for almost ten years. I think he wanted to add to that.”

### Leukefeld goes to court

In May 2020, Karin Leukefeld filed a lawsuit against WDR at the Cologne Regional Court. The core issues here were the extent to which WDR was allowed to use her interview, despite Leukefeld’s objection, and the false allegation regarding Leukefeld’s reason for withdrawing the

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# Football: Exhibition of the gladiators

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen e. V.*

The football associations are not only the richest, most powerful and best-known sports organisations, but also the most unscrupulous, corrupt, money-hungry functionality-run organisations in the world.

To be sure, the current “European Championship” is also about sports – but it is much more about money. The two dozen players kicking around on a soccer field are, as in horse racing or elsewhere in show business, only the lowest link to ever more organisers’, financiers’, secondary dealmakers’ and criminals’ tussle for big money in international and national competitions.

The fate of individual football players is similarly brutal as elsewhere in show business: if the player is considered a “talent”, he is promoted – not because of his person, but because this investment is expected to multiply. Out of 100 promoted players, more than 95% lose this promotion when they do not become first-class. Only a very few are suited for top performance and make the big deal themselves as well as for their investors.

Professional football today is what gladiatorial games used to be formerly: ruthless, contemptuous of humanity. Only top performance is paid for disproportionately, but top performance in turn is only achieved in combination with the complete subjugation of one’s lifestyle, way of life, goals and health to the pressure to do well in one’s sport.

Thus, professional footballers are today’s modern gladiators and, like them, are ruthlessly drilled, their lives dictated, their function determined by sport, their health ruthlessly exploited by masseurs, doctors and, for example, the use of pills. Like the ancient gladiators in Rome, they are sacrificed to competitive sport, that has turned to brutality. There are only a few top athletes who reach old age in a healthy

condition at all. Most of them have been operated on many times, have become cripples or invalids – like the author himself with his bad knees.

The short top career period of top athletes is usually followed first by a strong deterioration of their health, and then by their economic and human collapse. Those who can no longer deliver top performance are sorted out, dumped; they are unprofitable.

Who makes money with the top performance of athletes is the coaches, advisors, mediators, officials of clubs and associations, as well as the media. The big money stays at the top and reaches the players only in trickles. According to *Mittelstandsinstitut* estimates, more than 30 helpers, freeloaders, journalists and officials earn money from every professional athlete. The European Football Championship means big money for not even 300 players, but for more than a million profiteers.

When a sphere of life, an area of society or a business domain comes under the influence of big capital, there is always a change in its goal and purpose:

- Thus, banks and financial assistants have become financial adventurers on their own account,
- our health care system has become a self-service store for health care functionalities,
- churches have developed from places of idealistic preaching to materialistic social institutions demanding state financing
- and professional sports are no longer pursued for the sake of health or the sport, but for the sake of the associated business. And in this industry, more people are about business than about sport.

Sport itself has changed accordingly. Top-level sports are less interested in talent-

ed new blood in the clubs than in global search for foreign talent. Teams no longer develop young talent from within the club; instead, football legionnaires are bought up from all over the world for sums running into the millions. Down-to-earthiness, identity or even nationality no longer play a role. That is why there is no longer a German national team, but only the “Team” without identities and with a predominantly migrant background.

In all countries, if a talent can be bought somewhere in Africa or Asia, it is even made into a national player with tricks to increase its value (*Musiala*). And if there is a higher bid, the nationality and thus the corresponding “national team” are changed to increase the value.

The question remains: How long can the sport of soccer continue to fascinate spectators or sports bettors when the multi-cultural gladiator teams from England, Belgium, France, Germany, etc., subsidised by millions, have less and less identity of their own, become a plaything of officials and capital interest, and are not only arbitrary but increasingly interchangeable. Today, there is no longer such a person as an *Uwe Seeler* or *Franz Beckenbauer* loyal to his home country despite all financial temptations. Top players play where there is the most money and change clubs and even nationalities as soon as there is more money somewhere else. And from this transfer business, clubs, advisors and agents earn even more than the player himself.

*Borussia Dortmund* has rightly become a joint-stock company the merit of which lies in tracking down young up-and-coming players all over the world, developing them, presenting them, being successful with them and then selling them with a thousand-fold added value. If you have

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## “They wanted to discredit me”

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interview. More than a year later, the parties met in court last Thursday.

As Karin Leukefeld told SNA afterwards, the judge did not follow her lawyers’ argumentation that the interview as a work of speech is subject to copyright protection. The legal situation here is not entirely clear, the experienced journalist explains.

“The standard is actually that you have the conversation with the interviewee and then you say: before I publish this, I submit it to you and you authorise it. That is my standard, how I always do it, and I

know it from other colleagues as well. But there is obviously no legal stipulation on this. There are numerous legal disputes on this matter. Always in cases where the interviewee is under the impression, or can also prove, that the use of the original recording was in a completely different context.”

On the other hand, in the other central point of contention, namely the reason for her withdrawal, the judge had said quite clearly that this could not be inferred from the correspondence. “That is what Mr. Thörner made up and that is a false allegation, I would be right about that.”

After a short break in negotiations with intensive consultations, WDR had sub-

mitted a proposal for amicability, which she had accepted, Leukefeld said. However, this still had to be agreed internally at WDR and would therefore only be ready for a decision in a few weeks.

One day after the hearing, we wrote to the law firm representing WDR to also give them the opportunity to comment on the facts of the case. By the time of going to press (2 June), we had not received a reply. •

Source: [https://snanews.de/20210602/rechtssstreit-nahost-korrespondentin-wdr-2338855.html?utm\\_source=push&utm\\_medium=browser\\_notification&utm\\_campaign=sputnik\\_sna](https://snanews.de/20210602/rechtssstreit-nahost-korrespondentin-wdr-2338855.html?utm_source=push&utm_medium=browser_notification&utm_campaign=sputnik_sna)

of 2 June 2021

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# The communes – the neglected foundation of federal democracy

by Dr phil. René Roca, *Forschungsinstitut direkte Demokratie* ([www.fidd.ch](http://www.fidd.ch))

*The communes form the basis of the democratic engagement of the citizens. This makes it all the more worrying that they are increasingly being controlled and restrained by the cantonal and federal levels.*

I have been a non-party communal councillor in Oberrohrdorf-Staretschwil (Canton Aargau) for fifteen years and have been deputy mayor for almost six years. In my function, I am repeatedly confronted with the problem that the canton is trying to achieve standardisation at the communal level in various areas, which ultimately leads to more centralisation. Sometimes the cantonal government issues ordinances that are then enforced by the cantonal administration at the communal level (for example, Curriculum 21), sometimes the Grand Council, as the legislature, passes new laws that result in restructuring and reforms that have to be implemented and paid for at the communal level (for example, the new nursing care law). Increasingly, this results in costs that are tied up in the communal budget and leave the individual communes with less and less room for manoeuvre. In this context of the progressive dismantling of decentralised structures, the canton also promotes communal mergers. The development described weakens the communes



*A commune in Ticino. (Picture ma)*

until they are willing to agree to a merger with other communes, especially if they still receive money from the canton for this. Larger, anonymous units, led by “professional” communal executives, are good for the canton, because they make it easier for it to push through political proposals with a “top-down strategy”.

However, this increasingly undermines federalism and also the principle of subsidiarity.<sup>1</sup>

However, it is possible to take countermeasures: As part of my political office, I was involved as a communal councillor in the committee “For Communal Autonomy and a Solidary Aargau” against the “Communal Reform Aargau”, which would have included the possibility of forced mergers. We were able to win the cantonal votes clearly. Nevertheless, there were new proposals from the canton, with which it unfortunately continues to support communal mergers with advice and a lot of money, even though scientific findings show that such mergers bring little benefit.<sup>2</sup> The canton must certainly continue to be defied here, because “communal freedom” is a fundamental historical building block for Swiss democracy.

## The importance of communal freedom

The Swiss historian *Adolf Gasser* (1903–1985) emphasised more than anyone else the importance of “communal freedom” and, linked to this, the importance of the cooperative principle for Swiss history. For him, European history was strongly characterised by the opposition between two different attitudes, namely “Herrschaft” (rulership) and “Genossen-

schaft” (cooperative). In these phenomena, Gasser emphasised, two worlds confronted each other that followed completely different laws of development: the world of the state built from above and the world of the state built from below – in other words, the world of subordination and the world of coordination, the world of centralism and the world of federalism, the world of command administration and the world of self-administration, the world of communal unfreedom and the world of communal freedom: “The opposition between Herrschaft and Genossenschaft (rulership and cooperative) is perhaps the most important opposition known to social history. The opposition between the authoritarian state and the societal state is about fundamental things: namely, the elementary foundations of human community life”.<sup>3</sup> In his major work “Gemeindefreiheit als Rettung Europas” (Communal Freedom as Salvation of Europe), Gasser noted that it was the cooperative principle of order that led to a communal community ethic and thus also supported federalism, which is linked to the principle of subsidiarity: “Whereas in the authoritarian-bureaucratic state politics and morality are on fundamentally different levels, in the socially communal state they belong inseparably together. Accordingly, the cooperative principle of order, as it underlies communes built from the bottom up, will be particularly appropriately called ‘communal community ethics’.”<sup>4</sup>

This cooperative principle has been recorded in writing for the Swiss Confederation since the High Middle Ages, for example in valley books, and was a con-

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## “Football: Trotting out the gladiators”

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two or three such cases a year, high returns are guaranteed for the club, i.e., the joint-stock company.

Another business model is that of *Bayern Munich* and most of the big Spanish and English clubs, i.e. companies: Buy ready-made players and coaches, lead them to success and live from marketing them as a top team: from the media, spectator numbers, visiting match fees and fan article sales.

English football clubs are even further removed from sport and more oriented towards commerce: The top clubs are now owned by oligarchs and other financial powers. These see this as an investment which must generate returns and increase in value through victories, and may then be sold again at a profit.

One simply has to realise: Football today is first and foremost about money, even more than about sport. Professional sport is no longer an activity in the context of life and health, but a brutal business in which the financial sharks are permanent winners, and the athletes may be short-term joint winners; but in the long run they are the losers.

### “The communes – the neglected ...”

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tinuous and integral part of the Confederation’s ethos. This way of thinking is expressed particularly vividly in a quote by the Swiss historian *Wolfgang von Wartburg* (1914–1997): “These small, natural, self-governing communes have become the school and breeding ground of Swiss freedom and democracy, and still are today.”<sup>5</sup> With the founding of the federal state, the cantons lost the sovereignty they had in the Confederation, but with the Council of States and the cantonal majority-requirement in popular initiatives and mandatory referenda [Ständemehr], the cantons gained considerable influence at the federal level. And the communes?

#### A communal referendum at the federal level?

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that the growing complexity of tasks, the legalisation and the tendency to shift competencies to the canton and the federal government make it difficult for the communes to continue to perform their tasks autonomously. According to a survey of municipal and communal administrators that has been conducted regularly since 1994, communal autonomy is steadily decreasing.

In order to counteract this and strengthen the militia system as well as communal autonomy, the Schweizerische Gemeindeverband (Association des Communes Suiss, ACS) launched the idea of a communal referendum at the federal level in 2017. The starting point was the aforementioned considerations that the communes today are increasingly losing their scope for shaping the future. The ACS wants to prevent the communes from degenerating into a mere enforcement body of the federal government and the cantons. The association emphasises: “Communal autonomy is the bulwark against tendencies to centralise. [...] When independent communes handle a significant part of public affairs, power is shared vertically. Communal autonomy puts the

power of the federal government and the cantons in their place.”<sup>6</sup> The ACS states that the specifically Swiss federalism as well as direct democracy could only be preserved if they could continue to develop their integrating effect on all three levels of government in the future. The communes must retain an independent scope of action. Only if they would have the freedom to shape their own affairs will citizens be interested in the corresponding militia duties at the communal level. How can we achieve this?

In recent years, institutional mechanisms for the preservation of communal autonomy have indeed been developed. For example, seven cantons (Baselland, Graubünden, Jura, Lucerne, Solothurn, Ticino and Zurich) already have a “communal referendum”. This means that the communes can initiate a referendum against cantonal decrees and thus ask the people to vote on them. In the case of a communal referendum at the cantonal level, the number of communes required for a communal referendum to take place varies from canton to canton. What they all have in common is that neither a minimum number of inhabitants is stipulated nor are the population figures of the individual communes taken into account. This communal referendum strengthens the position of the communes in the canton. Decisions of the cantonal parliament that particularly affect the communes can be actively opposed by demanding a referendum.

The ACS’s more far-reaching proposal was to introduce a communal referendum at the federal level to supplement the cantonal referendum. This would allow the people to act as arbitrators in deciding whether to approve a bill passed by the federal parliament or whether to agree with the communes. In concrete terms, the proposal was that 200 communes from at least 15 cantons should be able to submit a referendum. By means of a parliamentary initiative, CVP National Councillor *Stefan Müller-Altarmatt* attempted in 2017 to launch the communal referendum envisioned by the ACS at the federal level. However, the

National Council clearly depreciated the initiative the following year after a relatively short debate.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, it must be asked whether, in the spirit of the subsidiarity principle and the democratic structure from the bottom up, the communal referendum should not be introduced in other cantons before it is examined at the federal level. What is certain, however, is that such debates encourage consideration of which appropriate political instruments can support the communes in Switzerland’s federal system in the future.

#### Republican understanding of freedom

The goal must be to strengthen the militia system and communal autonomy, so that the quality of democracy does not suffer even more and people leave the public welfare-oriented life. For it is still true that the basis of citizens’ commitment to the public good is laid in the small space of the commune. This is what makes up our republican understanding of freedom as the basis of the Swiss federalist-subsidary system, and this should be preserved. •

- <sup>1</sup> Roca, René. “Gemeindefusionen führen zu Demokratieverlust”. (Communal mergers lead to a loss of democracy.) In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 3 February 2021, p. 19
- <sup>2</sup> Schaltegger, Christoph A.; Studerus, Janine. “Gemeindefusionen ohne Spareffekt”. (Communal mergers without saving effect.) In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 14 March 2017, p. 9
- <sup>3</sup> Gasser, Adolf. *Gemeindefreiheit als Rettung Europas. Grundlinien einer ethischen Geschichtsauffassung* (Communal Freedom as Salvation for Europe. Basic lines of an ethical conception of history), Basel: Verlag Bücherfreunde, second, greatly expanded edition, 1947, p. 13
- <sup>4</sup> Gasser, *Gemeindefreiheit* (Communal Freedom), p. 18
- <sup>5</sup> von Wartburg, Wolfgang. *Geschichte der Schweiz* (History of Switzerland), München: Oldenbourg, 1951, p. 17
- <sup>6</sup> Lindegger, Reto; Müller, Andreas. “Für ein Gemeindefreferendum auf Bundesebene”. (For a communal referendum at the federal level.) In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 12 September 2017, p. 10.
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=43947>

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# “No! We don't want that kind of interaction ...”

## Youth violence needs our resolute counterpose

by Dr Eliane Perret, psychologist and curative teacher

Since 2015, juvenile delinquency and juvenile violence have steadily increased, after declining in previous years. Such a development cannot simply be accepted by society but requires united action from all of us. We cannot be indifferent to the future of the upcoming generation and of the society.

### Why this language?

Some time ago, I happened to witness a conversation between two young people. Marc was telling his friend *Mario* about a relationship with a girl that had ended. She broke up with him via WhatsApp. *Marc* had apparently met her that way too, as a female colleague of a colleague of a female colleague. Naturally, he was very affected, as experiences during the first attempts at a love relationship weigh particularly heavily, and the emotional life of adolescents is especially sensitive in during this age. Fortunately, in *Mario* he had a friend to whom he could confide his distress. I felt sorry for *Marc* and hoped that he could soon get over his heartbreak and regain confidence and a clearer view. I knew the two young people personally and appreciated their affable and often humorous manner. I was all the more surprised by their use of words. They talked about “bitch”, “loser”, “piss off”, “hang out” etc. At least the majority of the language used was German ...

### An increasingly rough atmosphere

I shivered as I listened, because for some time now I have been concerned about the rough atmosphere in interpersonal relationships, which is also reflected in the language of young people. For some of them, the youth slang described above has become “normal”. Not meant maliciously, rather expressing a helplessness and lack of care in dealing with each other. but also not demanded otherwise by their adult caregivers. Of course, I know that every generation has “its” language, which changes again and again... Do you remember when we were young how we used the word “läss”? The adults didn't understand us either. Since then, replaced by “mega”, “cool” and “super”! Nevertheless: “The climate among young people has become rougher again”, the Youth Ombudsman's Office of the Canton of Zurich also stated in a media release in 2020.<sup>1</sup> And that must give us something to think about.

### Renewed increase in juvenile delinquency and juvenile violence

In April 2021, the Youth Ombudsman's Office of the Canton of Zurich again

reached the public with its report on juvenile delinquency and juvenile violence and reported that the 5,208 criminal proceedings opened against juveniles represented an increase of 3.6% compared to the previous year. For the fifth time in a row, an increase in recorded juvenile violence was reported. Every twentieth conviction was a violent offense. Since 2015, juvenile violence in the canton of Zurich has increased continuously, most strikingly in 2019 with a shocking 35.6%.

The accused of all reported violent crimes were mostly male perpetrators (91.3%), who were on average 15.7 years old. Most of them had never committed a criminal offence before. There was also an increase in the number of young people who were reported for several violent offences. It was also noticeable that group offences had again increased slightly – markedly in the previous year – especially among the older youths who were out at night or in the evening far from parental control and often under the influence of alcohol, increasingly committed delinquent acts in public spaces. The victims were mostly other young people, whereby victim and perpetrator did not necessarily know each other.<sup>2</sup> In addition to media consumption, which has been proven to be linked to violent behaviour, the figures on abusive media consumption among young people have also been gathered since 2016 with the aim of raising awareness among parents and young people about the possibilities and dangers of the internet. “Because thoughtless online behaviour can hardly be reversed and can result not only in criminal consequences, but also in massive personal harm.”<sup>3</sup>

### No room for youth violence

A large proportion of young people never come into conflict with the law. Of those aged 10 to 17, only about one in five did so in 2020. Often these are minor to moderate offences such as fare evasion, shoplifting or damage to property. And fortunately, for most of them, the “yellow card” of a reprimand is enough, and the offence against the law remains unique. “However, regardless of the severity of the offence, any form of youth violence has no place in our society and will not be tolerated”<sup>4</sup>, the criminal authorities state. Often, the motivation for delinquent behaviour is pure boredom, as *Alexandra Ott Müller*, the head youth lawyer of the Winterthur Youth Prosecutor's Office, notes. Most of the accused have a daily structure, but little structure in their leisure time behaviour. “They have no hobbies, hang around and commit a crime out of boredom.” As an example, she tells of

a 15-year-old student who got into a problematic environment and punched a youth in the face with his fist during an argument. Despite being punished, he was involved in a robbery a short time later. Now he also has to answer for this in court.

### It is not Corona

In the Corona year, it was obvious to look for the causes of the renewed increase in youth violence in the restrictive measures. However, this is contradicted by the fact that the increase has already been taking place for five years and even skyrocketed in 2019, the year before the pandemic. It is also by no means the case that difficult living conditions lead to delinquent behaviour, as is repeatedly claimed. In the canton of Zurich, most young people from such backgrounds did not commit any offences. It may be that risk factors such as family stress, financial problems and lack of day structures have increased during the pandemic, the report further notes.<sup>5</sup> But it is not the main cause of the increase in violent acts.

### Prevention needs solid scientific foundations

The issue of youth violence is not new. Various branches of science have dealt with the causes of aggression and violence and have conclusively clarified the questions that are still open. Even if these scientific findings have not yet been consistently disseminated among the population and also among those responsible in politics and society, there is agreement at the scientific level.<sup>6</sup> Violence is not an inherent human behaviour but is learned. *Albert Bandura's* social learning theory provides decisive insights into this. The knowledge of these connections must underlie sustainable prevention efforts, which – today even more so – are necessary on different levels.

### “I have to let out my anger ...”

Despite everything, outdated theories persist and are quickly at hand when rioting and violence are to be explained or even excused. I noticed this in the argumentation of a young person who desperately wanted to sign up for boxing or kickboxing training. *Alex* was annoyed about his bad grades, a mate who had stolen his girlfriend and that his parents required him to be home by ten o'clock at the latest during the week. *Alex* had heard somewhere that punching a punching bag would help him to be more relaxed in life, and that he needed it for self-defence nowadays. He was unwittingly advocating a theory of aggression

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### “No! We don't want that kind ...”

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that had its origins in *Freud's* theory of the instincts. This idea of the “naturalness” of human aggression was continued in the 1940s with the frustration-aggression theory. Every aggression is the result of frustration, and every frustration in turn leads to aggression. Therefore: Do not frustrate children under any circumstances! In a similar way, the behavioural scientist *Konrad Lorenz* explained aggressive and violent behaviour when he formulated his instinct theory in the second half of the last century. Aggression and violence, he said, were the discharge of energy that had accumulated in human emotional life and needed an outlet.<sup>7</sup> It was amazing how stubbornly outdated theories persist, I thought, as I listened to the young man argue. – Incidentally, his argument of self-defence was just as wrong. Any security expert would tell him that it is best to get away from dangerous situations as quickly as possible, or even better, not to stay in such places at all. Young people today also need to know this, because many are increasingly looking for risk, orienting themselves towards their peers and setting themselves apart from adults to a certain extent. So, the young person and I had an exciting discussion together, and I hope that my arguments will somehow stick with him.

#### Positive and negative behaviour is learned

Today it is clear: Aggressive and violent behaviour is learned just as much as communal interaction in interpersonal relationships! This finding by the American research team *Bandura* and *Walters* has not been refuted to this day. It is not only about behaviour in the narrower sense, but also about attitudes and certain norms of action. Just like socially positive behaviour, also aggressive behaviour is learned, if children have corresponding role models. Models for this come from the immediate environment - parents, educators and peers. Increasingly, however, role models from the media, the music and the computer game scene also play an important role, as do drugs and alcohol. But these issues have been clarified today. “That is clear, the role models from the media. We know from violence research that there are clear connections between media and violence. One has clear facts. Who wants to deny that?” says the renowned violence and bullying researcher *Françoise Alsaker*.<sup>8</sup>

#### Prevention needs a common foundation

Aggressive and violent behaviour must be prevented through sustainable prevention. This includes agreement on the values on which our social coexistence should be based. Our culture and our national and

international legal systems have developed over a long period of time, based on the Christian occidental culture. The human being as a person and their dignity are at the centre, and from their social nature, the feeling of being dependent on one another necessarily arises. This also means having responsibility for living together, showing consideration and standing by each other in emergency situations. Every generation is faced with new tasks for which it has to find suitable solutions and pass on the knowledge it has acquired to the next generation. In this way, children and young people can grow into this way of thinking and this view of life and gain the confidence to be able to cope with upcoming tasks in their social environment. The legal framework for living together is provided by national legal systems and international agreements. The state must safeguard this foundation of human coexistence, which has evolved over centuries, and punish the violations.<sup>9</sup>

#### Crumbling foundation, but ...

In a creeping process, these basics of our society have been questioned from various sides for quite some time and have led to a decline in values and value relativism. Without including this change in values, the question of the causes of increasing youth violence cannot be clarified, because it has opened up a gap between the generations. Therefore, the transmission of fundamental values has become weak and interpersonal relationships are fragile.<sup>10</sup>

Despite this crumbling foundation, it is shown time and again that the feeling of community and human sympathy is still alive in many people today. This was well observed at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, when people helped and supported each other and were grateful for the work and commitment of fellow human beings working in specially exposed professions – including many young people. They were happy to be involved or actively developed ideas on how they could contribute to overcoming the difficult situation.

#### “What it needs, is concerted action ...”

“... and a common attitude of those actors who deal with young people. Schools are just as much in demand as parents' homes and youth social work. They have to do it together», demanded criminologist *Dirk Baier* in a recent television interview.<sup>11</sup> Violent behaviour must not be trivialised and must be taken very seriously in any case and at any age level. This requires children and young people to build up internal and external protection against violence in all areas of their lives. This begins in the parental home, where the family can build the emotional foundation for their children to treat their fellow human beings with respect and dignity, to demand this for themselves and to be

prepared to make a meaningful contribution to society. Children need the emotional security of having their parents by their side as they take their first steps into life. If this is to succeed, educators must not fall prey to the error of sparing their children from the demands of life and always being anxious to fulfil their wishes and needs. In this way, they weaken their children without meaning to; the children do not develop a natural respect for them, and the natural process of adopting values is severely disrupted or even prevented. Mutual help, human responsibility, sympathy and other values cannot develop in this way. – This build-up work in the family environment must be continued in kindergarten and school. There is a broad field for counteracting the origin of violence.

The children must learn to treat each other with respect and care, to deal with differences of opinion, rivalries and conflicts and to deal with them fairly. This requires the attentiveness and determination of everyone involved, otherwise an aggressive school climate can quickly spread. It is not enough to implement violence prevention programmes over a certain period of time, and when they peter out, complain that everything is of no use. Nor can this task be handed over to specially trained children and young people.<sup>12</sup> Instead, everyone needs to stand together and stand shoulder to shoulder, with the involvement of parents, in order to put a quick and decisive stop to situations of violence and conflict.<sup>13</sup> – A consensus is also required at the level of society. If there is no clear agreement on violence and aggression, a conflagration can quickly develop. Because an absent or doubtful opinion means affirmation and acceptance for young people. This social consensus must be restored today. It includes preparing the children and young people for the tasks of living together and involving them in solving issues that arise. For example, there are still many youth organisations that offer children and young people excellent opportunities to be active and get involved with others, be it in the youth fire brigade, the youth SAC, the *Swiss Lifesaving Society* and many more. It is striking that those who are so committed are more mature than their peers. Because not only do they discover a new hobby (and they no longer have to complain about being bored!), but they also learn about the demands they will face later in their profession, in their responsibilities as parents and in society. In this way, they learn to think ahead and prepare for their future in social skills as well. Such skills can already be developed by a young child, but it is also never too late to catch up.<sup>14</sup> And there is a sphere of action for each of us!

I have taken important thoughts and facts from the following sources (see footnotes for further details):

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# The Seville Statement on Violence

cc. In April 2021, on the 35th anniversary of the Seville Declaration, J. Martín Ramírez, Professor for Psychobiology, wrote that "we are not condemned to war and violence because of our biology. Instead, it is possible for us to end war and the suffering it causes. We cannot do it by working alone, but only by working together. However, it makes a big difference whether or not each one of us believes that we can do it. In the same way, war was invented in ancient times, and we can invent peace in our time. It is up to each of us to do our part."

The General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-fifth session in Paris on 16 November 1989 decided (resolution 25C/Res.7.1) to disseminate the Seville Statement on Violence, agreed upon on 16 May 1986 by 20 scientists. The Statement was meant as a contribution to the International Year of Peace 1986 and as a basis for further expert meetings of the UNESCO. The statement vigorously opposes the fatalistic adherence to the opinion that violence and aggression are a kind of "natural law" and that no matter how well-intentioned actions are, nothing can change this. Even today, 35 years later, we would do well to remember this principal document.

Believing that it is our responsibility to address from our particular disciplines the most dangerous and destructive activities of our species, violence and war; recognising that science is a human cultural product which cannot be definitive or all encompassing; and gratefully acknowledging the support of the authorities of Seville and representatives of the Spanish UNESCO, we, the undersigned scholars from around the world and from relevant sciences, have met and arrived at the following "Statement on Violence".

In it, we challenge a number of alleged biological findings that have been used, even by some in our disciplines, to justify violence and war. Because the alleged findings have contributed to an atmosphere of pessimism in our time, we submit that the open, considered rejection of these misstatements can contribute significantly to the International Year of Peace.

Misuse of scientific theories and data to justify violence and war is not new but has been made since the advent of modern science. For example, the theory of evolution has been used to justify not only war, but also genocide, colonialism, and suppression of the weak.

We state our position in the form of five propositions. We are aware that there are many other issues about violence and war that could be fruitfully addressed from the standpoint of our disciplines, but we restrict ourselves here to what we consider a most important first step.

### Ethology

*It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors.*

Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal species, only a few cases of destructive intraspecies fighting between organised groups have ever been reported among naturally living species, and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons. Normal predatory feeding upon other species cannot be equated with intraspecies violence. Warfare is a peculiarly human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals.

The fact that warfare has changed so radically over time indicates that it is a product of culture. Its biological connection is primarily through language which makes possible the co-ordination

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To mark the 35th anniversary of the Seville Declaration, the Spanish magazine "Nuestra Nebrija" published the article by Jesús Martín Ramírez, psychobiology professor and co-signatory of the 1986 Seville Statement: "The Seville Statement on Violence on the occasion of its 35th anniversary" in April 2021. (Picture screenshot of the magazine "Nuestra Nebrija")

### "The Seville Statment on Violence"

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of groups, the transmission of technology, and the use of tools. War is biologically possible, but it is not inevitable, as evidenced by its variation in occurrence and nature over time and space. There are cultures which have not engaged in war for centuries, and there are cultures which have engaged in war frequently at some times and not at others.

#### Biogenetics

*It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature.*

While genes are involved at all levels of nervous system function, they provide a developmental potential that can be actualised only in conjunction with the ecological and social environment. While individuals vary in their predispositions to be affected by their experience, it is the interaction between their genetic endowment and conditions of nurturance that determines their personalities. Except for rare pathologies, the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence. Neither do they determine the opposite. While genes are co-involved in establishing our behavioural capacities, they do not by themselves specify the outcome.

#### Evolutionary Research

*It is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behaviour more than for other kinds of behaviour.*

In all well-studied species, status within the group is achieved by the ability to co-operate and to fulfil social functions relevant to the structure of that group. "Dominance" involves social bondings and affiliations; it is not simply a matter of the possession and use of superior physical power, although it does

involve aggressive behaviours. Where genetic selection for aggressive behaviour has been artificially instituted in animals, it has rapidly succeeded in producing hyper-aggressive individuals; this indicates that aggression was not maximally selected under natural conditions. When such experimentally-created hyperaggressive animals are present in a social group, they either disrupt its social structure or are driven out. Violence is neither in our evolutionary legacy nor in our genes.

#### Neurophysiology

*It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a "violent brain."*

While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialised. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

#### Psychology

*It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by "instinct" or any single motivation.*

The emergence of modern warfare has been a journey from the primacy of emotional and motivational factors, sometimes called "instincts", to the primacy of cognitive factors.

Modern war involves institutional use of personal characteristics such as obedience, suggestibility, and idealism, social skills such as language, and rational considerations such as cost-calculation, planning, and information processing. The technology of modern war has exaggerated traits associated with violence both in the training of actual combatants and in the preparation of support for war in

the general population. As a result of this exaggeration, such traits are often mistaken to be the causes rather than the consequences of the process.

#### Conclusion

We conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this "International Year of Peace" and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors.

Just as "wars begin in the minds of men", peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace.

The responsibility lies with each of us.

Seville, 16 May 1986

#### List of signataires

**David Adams**, Psychology, USA – **S.A. Barnett**, Ethology, Australia – **N.P. Bechtereva**, Neurophysiology, USSR – **Bonnie Frank Carter**, Psychology, USA – **José M. Rodríguez Delgado**, Neurophysiology, Spain – **José Luis Díaz**, Ethology, Mexico – **Andrzej Elias**, Individual Differences Psychology, Poland – **Santiago Genovés**, Biological Anthropology, Mexico – **Benson E. Ginsburg**, Behavior Genetics, USA – **Jo Groebel**, Social Psychology, Germany – **Samir-Kumar Ghosh**, Sociology, India – **Robert Hinde**, Animal Behaviour, UK – **Richard E. Leakey**, Physical Anthropology, Kenya – **Taha H. Malasi**, Psychiatry, Kuwait – **J. Martín Ramírez**, Psychobiology, Spain – **Federico Mayor Zaragoza**, Biochemistry, Spain – **Diana L. Mendoza**, Ethology, Spain – **Ashis Nandy**, Political Psychology, India – **John Paul Scott**, geneticist, Animal Behaviour, USA – **Riitta Wahlstrom**, Psychology, Finland

Source: <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/seville.pdf>

### "No! We don't want that kind ..."

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<sup>1</sup> Canton of Zurich. Directorate of Justice and Home Affairs. Youth Ombudsman's Office. "Renewed increase in juvenile delinquency and juvenile violence". *Media release* of 22 April 2020. p. 1

<sup>2</sup> "Renewed increases in juvenile delinquency – significant rise in juvenile violence". *Media release* of 22 April 2021, p. 3

<sup>3</sup> Canton of Zurich. "Facts & figures on juvenile law". p. 8. [www.zh.ch/de/sicherheit-justiz/jugendstrafrecht/zahlen-fakten.html](http://www.zh.ch/de/sicherheit-justiz/jugendstrafrecht/zahlen-fakten.html) (retrieved 6 June 2021)

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<sup>5</sup> "Renewed increases in juvenile delinquency – significant rise in juvenile violence". *Media release* of 22 April 2021, p. 4

<sup>6</sup> see UNESCO (1986). *Seville Declaration*. <https://wayback.archive-it.org/all/20050928235336/>

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<sup>7</sup> cf. Burger, Alfred/Gautschi, Eliane. p. 10ff.

<sup>8</sup> "Ensuring the well-being of all – with all together. An interview with Professor Dr Françoise D. Alsaker, University of Bern". In: *Zeit-Fragen* No. 3 from 17 January 2012. <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/archiv/2012/nr3-vom-1712012/das-wohlergehen-aller-sicherstellen-mit-alien-zusammen.html> (retrieved 13 June 2021)

<sup>9</sup> cf. Burger, Alfred/Gautschi, Eliane. p. 8

<sup>10</sup> cf. Burger, Alfred/Gautschi, Eliane. p. 9

<sup>11</sup> Baier, Dirk. "Eine Kultur der Wertschätzung von Gewalt hat sich durchgesetzt" (A culture of appreciation of violence has gained ground.) *SRF. 10* vom 10. 29 June 2020. <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/anstieg-der-jugendgewalt-eine-kultur-der-wertschaetzung-von-gewalt-hat-sich-durchgesetzt> (retrieved 7 June 2021)

<sup>12</sup> cf. Killias et al. p. 251

<sup>13</sup> Dan Olweus, the Norwegian pioneer of violence research, has written an excellent basic work on the subject. In addition to a careful analysis of the problem, it offers a wealth of suggestions on how to achieve a violence-free school climate. It should be required reading for school principals, teachers and youth representatives.

<sup>14</sup> cf. Burger, Alfred/Gautschi, Eliane. p. 52f.