

Current Concerns

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Common good or reason of state?

Thoughts on peace in the global age

by Professor Dr Dr h. c. mult. Hans Köchler*



Hans Köchler
(picture hanskoechler.com)

I will begin my remarks with a caveat: Whenever the common good, in the sense of the ‘noble goals of humanity,’ is invoked in the pursuit of realpolitik – the so often invoked *raison d’état* – , caution is always called for. History has taught us this since the time of *Alexander the Great*.

Covering up power politics under the guise of the “common good”

For the purpose of our analysis, I will refer to two recent examples: Speeches given by two presidents of the United States – father and son – three and two decades ago, respectively. During the Gulf War in 1991, President *Bush senior* proclaimed with great pathos a “new world order”, in which different states and peoples would come together in the common cause of permanently realizing humanity’s all-encompassing quest for peace, security and freedom. (*State of the Union Message*, January 29, 1991) A decade later, President *Bush junior* spoke of the world’s fight – civilization’s fight – for progress, pluralism, tolerance and freedom. (*Address to the Nation*, September 20, 2001)

Both proclamations – by father and son – placed the armed action that followed these speeches, which they announced, in the idealistic and universalistic context of the common good of humanity. The sobering historical truth, however, is that for three decades (since the first speech in 1991), the world has witnessed and become the victim of a struggle for global dominance, for which entire regions and their peoples have been subjected to war; one need only

“The ‘negotiation’ of a new, this time probably multi-polar, balance of power will only proceed without prolonged war if all those responsible – irrespective of their states’ political, economic or military place in the global competition – take to heart the solemn pledge of the Preamble to the UN Charter, poetically expressed by the founders of the organization in the name of ‘We the Peoples of the United Nations’: ‘to live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.’”

look to Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, or Yemen. The “New World Order,” proclaimed with eschatological pathos, ultimately resulted in a ‘war of the worlds,’ the end of which is still not in sight – not even after the events of August 31 of this year and the apparent renunciation of the policy of “nation-building” by a hegemon who failed in Afghanistan. The conclusion to be drawn from this (to date) thirty-year war is that the common good always serves as pretext when power politics is in need of a cover.

Communal action is the essence of our species

In order to clarify the situation, philosophical reflection on the fundamentals of politics is required, i. e., the elaboration of the “deep politics” of the state. The Aristotelian characterization of the human as a ζῷον πολιτικόν [*zōon politikón*] denotes that communal action constitutes the essence of our species. The goal of every *polis* – in whatever form it may be organized – is to ensure survival and to increase the *life opportunities* of each member of the polis through the social division of labor. This implies, *ex definitione*, an orientation towards the *wellbeing of all*. This is precisely the goal of the *res publica* (the republic as the “common cause”): Individuals rise above their isolation, opting not only to follow their own *particular interests*, but also to strive for their goals within

an organizational framework that serves the cause of the people (*res publica* / republic). One can also draw an analogy here with the step described by Rousseau from the *volonté particulière* to the *volonté générale*, the latter of which is not to be seen as a uniform common will, but rather as the will of each individual directed towards the community of citizens.

The sole goal and legitimation of political action is the common good

It goes without saying that the “natural” organizational form of such “republicanism” is democracy – in the sense of the direct participation of all in community affairs. (Democracy by its very nature is rule *by* the people [direct], not rule *over* the people [representative]). Office bearers in a democratically constituted republic solemnly undertake to serve the interests of their community – and not merely their own particular interests. This undertaking is the essence of any oath of office. The goal and legitimation of political action is solely the common good in the most prosaic sense: that all citizens in the particular state can thrive and prosper.

... bound to justice and human rights

However, it is equally true that the means to achieve this goal are not arbitrary. Political action, even and especially when it articulates “national interests” (i. e., the

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* Introductory statement “Mut zur Ethik” – Annual Conference: “The bonum commune in relations between people, nations and states: Solving problems and conflicts with dignity – with one another rather than against one another” 3–5 September 2021 in Sirmach (TG). (Translated from German)

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good of the state as a whole), is bound not only to the particular constitution and domestic legal situation, but also to the general principles of *justice* and *human rights*. To a certain extent, these are the *jus cogens* [binding rules] for any action by the state. If the common good of the population of a state is to be realized by *any* means – 'whatever the cost' – even beyond the rules of law and morality, then it degenerates into mere *raison d'état*, the only maxim of which is the self-assertion of the existing political structure. Such a strategy brings to mind *Machiavelli's* reflections on the methods of politics needed to 'mantenere lo stato' (maintain the state).¹

As is the case with all principles relating to social action, the principle of the common good, when it is *reduced* to the means of its realization, i. e., when it is viewed in *isolation* and *as an absolute*, turns into its opposite: namely, into pure *statism*, which establishes the self-preservation of the state – detached from the real life of the people the state represents and who alone justify its existence – as an *end in itself*. Following this logic, howev-

er, the use of nuclear weapons to ensure the survival of the state would then possibly also be legally justified, as the *International Court of Justice* stated in a not uncontroversial part of its *Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*.²

Etatism in this abstract sense – as the *raison d'état* of the particular rulers (the ruling elite), determined by their striving to maintain and increase power – also seems to be the driving force behind the succession of wars for supremacy in the imaginary "new world order" that has now been with us for 30 years – the period to which I previously referred. What is important at present – in the precarious situation of a never-ending war, the futility and hopelessness of which (taking the form of the "global war on terror") has once again been brought home to us in recent days – is a return to the principle of the common good as the substantive, not merely formal, basis of existence and legitimation of the state.

Return to the common good as the basis of the state

More so than in previous eras, the law of *interdependence* applies. In the global age, every community is connected

to all others at all times. For most countries, *autarky* – "splendid isolation" – is only possible by forgoing some essential achievements of technical civilization, i. e., ultimately by reducing the quality of life. Thus, if autarky is no longer a realistic option, the polis in question must take note that the welfare of its citizens is inextricably linked to the welfare of the citizens of all other polities. This is particularly evident in the case of the environment, as the central issue of our collective survival. The common good can and must therefore no longer be defined *exclusively* in terms of one's own state, to the exclusion of all others. Otherwise, as indicated, it becomes the mere (abstract) *raison d'état* as the basis of power politics, i. e., the assertion of one state's national interests vis-à-vis all other states.

Prerequisites for a genuine policy of peace

Rather, the common good must also be defined inclusively – with reference to the entire community of states. So there are two categorical levels here: (1) common good at the level of individuals (citizens)

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The bonum commune in relations between people, nations and states: Solving problems and conflicts with dignity – with one another rather than against one another

September Talks of "Mut zur Ethik" from 3 to 5 September 2021 in Switzerland

From 3–5 September 2021 the September Talks of the working group "Mut zur Ethik" were held; this year, due to the pandemic, in a hybrid format. During three days fundamental questions on current events were discussed in dialogue on an equal footing. The talks this time were focused on the theme: "The bonum commune in relations between peoples, nations and states: Solving problems and conflicts with dignity – with one another rather than against one another". The speakers from various European and non-European countries as well as the numerous participants, including the participants who gathered in several German and Austrian cities and who were connected to the conference, contributed to the success of the discussions with their highly qualified statements.

What is meant by bonum commune in interpersonal relations? The bonum commune, the common good, "is the natural meaning and purpose of people living together, and this meaning, this purpose, consists in the free development of the person in and through community. [...] At the centre of all efforts for the common good is the individual person. He or she must never be a means to the end of a superior collective. The free development of the individual person must not degenerate into

radical individualism, where the individual, detached from human relations only pursues its own interests. Self-interest and the common good are not opposites." ("Bonum commune — Ethics in Politics and Society", Congress "Mut zur Ethik" 1998)

The view on this year's topic went in two directions: The extremely willingness to help at the beginning of the Corona pandemic or the willingness to help after the flood catastrophe in Germany are just two obvious examples of the fact that the social nature of human beings is not just a theory, but lived life all over the world. Precisely because it corresponds to the social nature of man to be attached to their fellow human beings, to develop compassion and a sense of community, it is natural for the overwhelming majority of people to contribute to the common good.

But there is also another direction: The unscrupulous striving for power, which does not shy away from the use of brutal violence — even in the form of war. The results: Billions of people continue to live in abject poverty, children still have to starve, and an end to the wars in the world is not yet in sight. The list is much longer.

20 years of NATO war against Afghanistan have shown us in a microcosm to what kind of war crimes and

crimes against humanity those are capable who lack orientation towards the bonum commune or where people are lied into wars through an abusive reinterpretation of the common good as *raison d'état*.

In this issue we start with the introductory statement by Professor *Hans Köchler*, other contributions will follow.

Other contributors were: Dr *Srdan Aleksic* from Serbia, *Eva Aras* from Germany, Professor Dr *Peter Bachmaier* from Austria, Dr *Matin Baraki* from Germany (originally from Afghanistan), *Ralph Bosshard* from Switzerland, Professor *Stanislas Bucyalimwe* from Belgium (originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo), Professor Dr *Marc Chesney* from Switzerland, *Nicole Duprat* from France, Bishop em. Dr *Elmar Fischer* from Austria, *Edward Horgan* from Ireland, *Zoltan Kiszelly* from Hungary, *Karin Leukefeld* from Germany, *Sergey Lapshinov* from Russia, Professor Dr *Velimir Nedeljkovic* from Serbia, *Florian Pfaff* from Germany, Dr *Muruchi Poma* from Germany (originally from Bolivia), *Jochen Scholz* from Germany, Professor *Emmanuel Seemanpillai* from Sri Lanka, Dr h.c. *Hans von Sponeck* from Germany, Professor Dr *Heinrich Wohlmeyer* from Austria.

Eva Maria Föllmer-Müller

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of the state (*intrastate*) and (2) common good at the level of states as forms of collective organization or subjects of international law (*interstate*). Only when a state “learns” to articulate its national interests – the epitome of the common good at the domestic (*intrastate*) level – jointly with all other states, can it develop a *credible* and *consistent* policy of peace. Just as the state only comes into being when individuals are able and willing to position their *particular* interests within the framework of the *general* interest – i. e., when they do not see themselves as acting in isolation, but as members of a community, as citizens –, so an interstate (ultimately global) order of peace can only exist when each state rises above its “sovereign isolation” and acts as an equal member of the global community of states. This is the essence of the “sovereign equality of states” proclaimed by the UN as a central principle.

In conclusion: As soon as there is more than *one* state and the states enter into a relationship with each other (in our technical civilization, autarky à la *Robinson* is merely an abstract idea), the common good of each individual (sovereign) state is always also a function of the global common good. This means that if peace is to be maintained, national interests can only be asserted on the basis of *reciprocity*. Anything else would cause the world to revert to the “Souveränitätsanarchie” [anarchy among sovereign states] of earlier centuries. Under the conditions of the global coexistence of states and peoples, the term “common good” contradicts *itself if it refers to only one* polity.

Even if for the most powerful actors insistence on the *raison d'état* in the sense of absolutism has remained a temptation to this day – for which the United Nations Charter is considerably at fault –, the perpetuation of old fashioned power politics cannot simply be accepted. In the *global age*, such an approach signals “perpetu-

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al confrontation” instead of the Kantian “perpetual peace” – with all the devastating consequences for the peoples at the fault lines of the global power struggle, as we have observed in the already mentioned decades since the end of the Cold War. The “negotiation” of a new, this time probably multi-polar, balance of power will only proceed without prolonged war if all those responsible – irrespective of their states’ political, economic or military place in the global competition – take to heart the solemn pledge of the Preamble to the UN Charter, poetically expressed by the founders of the organization in the name of “We the Peoples of the United Nations”: “to live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.”

The fact that the UN Charter, born out of the catastrophe of World War II, effectively exempts the *most powerful* states from the application of the obligations resulting from this proclamation is no cause for optimism. The guardians of peace – in the sense of the global common good as intended by the Charter – would finally have to be convinced to submit themselves

to the rules that apply to everyone else.³ Only when this happens – i. e., when those states renounce their privileges enshrined in the UN Charter – will world peace not remain a mere illusion, and only then will the common good be more than the *raison d'état* of the most powerful. •

¹ The term “*raison d'état*” was not coined until after *Machiavelli*, by *Giovanni Botero Benese*, in his work remarkably dedicated to the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, *Wolf Dietrich – Della Ragion di Stato: Libri Dieci Con Tre Libri delle Cause della Grandezza, e Magnificenza delle Città*. Venice: I Gioliti, 1589.

² International Court of Justice, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*. *Advisory Opinion* of July 8, 1996, Section 97 (“legality or illegality of the use of nuclear weapons by a State in an extreme case of self-defence, in which its very survival would be at stake”). It is important to note that the Court’s position on this issue would have remained undecided (7:7) had it not been for the President’s casting vote.

³ Because of the decision-making rules of Article 27 of the UN Charter, the prohibition of the use of force in relations between states cannot be enforced against the five permanent members, upon whom the application of coercive measures substantially depends. If one of these countries commits an act of aggression, it can use its veto to prevent the Security Council from intervening.

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Baltasar Garzón – Advocate for international law and human rights

Laudatio by Professor Dr iur. et phil. Alfred de Zayas on Baltasar Garzón on the occasion of the Kant World Citizen Award 2011 (excerpts)*

UN Human Rights Committee condemns the professional ban on the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón

gl. In February 2012, the well-known investigating judge *Baltasar Garzón* was banned from his profession for twelve years by the Spanish Supreme Court for allegedly perversion of the course of justice. As an investigating judge in one of Spain's biggest corruption cases, the so-called "Gürtel case", he had had telephone conversations between politicians and their lawyers tapped. However, this was not inadmissible at the time.

Garzón had already made himself unpopular with both left and right-wing parties through his investigations into drug trafficking rings, ETA terrorism, corruption cases and *Franco*-era crimes. In 2009, he also investigated the US government for torture crimes committed at the Guantánamo detention centre.

The UN Human Rights Committee states in its opinion that the sentence "was arbitrary and unpredictable as it was not based on sufficiently explicit, clear and precise provisions that precisely define the prohibited conduct."¹ Furthermore, the Spanish Supreme Court violated the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Garzón had not been able

to appeal against the professional ban, nor had judicial impartiality been given.

This is the first time that the UN Human Rights Committee has condemned a state for taking criminal action against a judge. Spain is asked to erase his criminal record and provide an "adequate compensation for the damage suffered." Furthermore, measures are to be taken on the part of the state to ensure that such a case is not repeated.

As Baltasar Garzón announced in an interview with "El País" on 26 August he wanted to be reinstated as a judge in Spain. Since his impeachment eleven years ago, he has worked as a lawyer in Latin America, coordinating the defence of Julian Assange, among others. He has received numerous awards for his commitment to human rights.

¹ <https://baltasargarzon.org> (accessed 14 September 2021)

Sources: "Spaniens Starrichter Garzón kämpft um seine Rehabilitierung" (Spain's star judge Garzón fights for his rehabilitation). In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 30 August 2021; <https://el-pais.com/espana/2021-08-26/baltasar-garzon-voy-a-pedir-mi-reingreso-en-la-carrera-judicial.html>

reviled, turned into culprits or treated unjustly. No effort can be too large to achieve a true compensation. All public institutions and responsible persons and, moreover, the whole society have to fight for it to reach this goal because we all are responsible. The victims show us the path we have to follow if we want to win back our dignity, because they have never lost it." [...]

So, it is the noblest task of law to protect the victims – all victims, without discrimination – and to rehabilitate them. [...]

Baltasar Garzón Real was born on October 26, 1955 in Torres in the province of Jaen in Andalusia/Spain. He studied law at the University of Sevilla, qualifying as a judge. His career as a judge started in Valverde del Camino, in Villacarrillo and Almería before in 1983 he was appointed Inspector for Andalusia at the *Consejo General del Poder Judicial*. In 1988 he became one of the six investigative judges at the Audiencia Nacional in Madrid, the highest court of appeal for criminal affairs in Spain. In 1990 and 1991 he opened judicial inquiries against organized crime, particularly against drug trafficking in the Spanish province of Galicia.

In 1993 he was candidate for Parliament and became an MP for the socialist party of *Felipe Gonzalez*. He soon became the representative for the national anti-drug plan ranking as an undersecretary, but after one year he returned to his true dedication – to jurisdiction. [...]

The name Garzón is probably best remembered for the investigation into violations of human rights in Latin America and in particular for the battle against the impunity of former members of the military juntas like the Argentine head of military in Rosario, *Leopoldo Fortunato Galtiere*, against whom he issued an arrest warrant on March 24, 1997. On October 16, 1998 he issued an international warrant against the former Chilean President General *Augusto Pinochet*, charging him with the responsibility for the murder and torture of Spanish citizens in Chile. Garzón relied on reports of the Chilean "Truth Commission" which in 1990 and 1991 investigated crimes committed during the dictatorship. This was a real pioneer achievement since heads of states and senior military persons had enjoyed an extensive immunity – not only while they were in power, but, according to the doctrine of "Act of State", also when they had lost it. •

* First published in *Current Concerns* of 5 June 2011

It is a special honor for me to say some words about Juez *Baltasar Garzón Real*.

Renowned world-wide as a pioneer in the realm of international law and human rights, today's laureate has given important impulses both towards a development of the doctrine and the practical application of the norms of international law.

Juez [Spanish for: judge] Garzón has made important contributions as a pioneer to the extension and implementation of the principle of universal jurisdiction, a principle building on the developing "world law".

You, judge Garzón, have achieved a breakthrough in the battle against the impunity of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Rightly you are recognised as a pioneer for the rights of disappeared persons, the so-called *desaparecidos*, in Latin America, but also in Europe and all over the world.

Now, many victims of injustice are also victims of silence – *víctimas del silencio*. You, Juez Garzón, have lent them a voice, allowing for some rehabilitation, since what the victims wish in the first place is their recognition as victims. This perspective of the victims, this recognition of individual suffering, is a precondition for the implementation of general human rights which is based on the dignity of every individual. [...]

In his latest book "La Fuerza de la Razon" (The Power of Reason), judge Garzón writes about the notion of the universal victim – "víctima universal" –, because we are all victims when crimes are committed somewhere. Thus, Garzón starts the second chapter by citing Baron *de Montesquieu*, "An injustice committed against an individual is a threat for us all." We can agree with Montesquieu and Garzón, because human rights oblige us not to fight violations selectively but also injustice against every individual. Indeed, victims are not abstract constructions. They are humans made of flesh and blood and we all have an obligation towards the victims. Or, as the first UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Dr *José Ayala Lasso* (Ecuador), liked to say, there are no second-class victims. There is also no international law at will or human rights à la carte. Garzón also opposes the politics of double standards and condemns "la doble moral o vara de medir".

Garzón ends his book with a warning – he reminds us of the dignity of the victim and his entitlement to rehabilitation: "I would like to direct my closing words towards all those who take a stand with all their power towards justice, truth and the rehabilitation of the victims of so many cruelties, victims that are sometimes forgotten,

“Afghanistan’s victims of war will need years of assistance and rehabilitation”

Statement by Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, at the end of a four-day trip to Afghanistan

Kabul (ICRC) – The scars of war last generations. Destroyed buildings can one day be rebuilt, but shattered limbs do not re-grow. Children re-live trauma long after the bomb blasts subside. Family members killed leave a permanent void.

The people of Afghanistan have lived through 40 years of conflict. In my years as the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross I have seen agony, suffering and despair in many of the world’s warzones. But I cannot begin to express how deeply four decades of war damages a nation.

That’s why Afghanistan’s challenges are so mammoth. The good news is that humanitarian action helps stabilize society. Compassion and empathy help heal the wounds of war. Funding that ensures health care, clean water and schools can help pull Afghan families from misery’s depths. It’s crucial that the international community finds solutions, even if temporary, to ensure continued funding. The needs of Afghan families can’t wait for the resolution of political change.

To be effective, humanitarian work must be inclusive – of women, girls and ethnic minorities. That’s why the ICRC makes sure that women in Afghanistan have access to our services, including medical and rehabilitation, and we make sure we have female medical and rehabilitation staff on our teams.

I encourage authorities to continue access to health services for women – but also – access to education. In a country where only 50 per cent of women deliver in a health facility with trained staff, it’s critically important that Afghanistan have more educated women midwives and doctors.

During my four-day visit to Afghanistan, I met with Mullah *Baradar* and other Taliban leadership. I emphasized ICRC’s neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian work and noted that we have been assisting Afghans affected by conflict for more than 30 years, and that we won’t stop now.



Boys with prostheses. Every day, ICRC medical teams and rehabilitation centres treat adults and children injured by mines and explosive devices. In June, July and August 2021, 40,000 people injured by weapons were treated. (picture © ICRC)

Our long history in the country tells us that Afghanistan’s victims of war will need years of assistance and rehabilitation. The toll from only the most recent fighting has been huge. More than 41,000 people wounded by war were treated at ICRC-supported health facilities from June to August, an 80 percent increase compared with the same period last year.

Quality medical care is a top concern for Afghan families. Last month the ICRC doubled the number of health facilities we support to 89 clinics and mobile health teams, up from 46, in addition to two hospitals, one in Kandahar and the other in Kabul, which is run by the *Afghanistan Red Crescent Society*.

We want to enhance access to immunizations and primary health care — including for pregnant women. Sadly, clinics are seeing a rise in the number of children wounded by newly laid mines. De-mining efforts must be prioritised, for the sake of all the naturally curious children who one

day soon may pick up a mine and lose a limb – or their life.

ICRC’s orthopaedic services have helped more than 210,000 physically disabled patients since we began our work in Afghanistan in 1988. We see about 150,000 patients a year. We help them walk again. Just as important, we help them reintegrate into society with dignity. My visit to our Kabul centre put a smile on my face as I watched proud and determined Afghans re-learn to walk or use a new prosthetic arm.

COVID-19 presents another major challenge. When bombs are falling and bullets flying, families do not have the luxury of worrying about masks and physical distancing. Still, COVID continues its spread. But the country hasn’t received nearly enough doses of the vaccine, and I’m urging world governments to ensure it gets an equitable share.

Where did 40 years of war leave Afghan families? Some 9 out of 10 people live on less than \$2 a day. Some 10 million people are experiencing high levels of food insecurity, according to the latest IPC data. Unaccompanied minors have recently been separated from their families during the crush at Kabul airport, a challenge the global Red Cross Red Crescent family will tackle, to reunite as many separated families as possible.

The world has come to know Afghanistan as a land of beauty, but also one of

“The world has come to know Afghanistan as a land of beauty, but also one of heart break. War shatters bodies and souls. Four decades of war shatters nations. My greatest hope now is that we all pitch in to help the wounded to heal, the separated families to find one another again, and that any future fighting spares as many civilians as possible.”

Afghanistan – What to make of the UN “donor conference” in Geneva on 13 September 2021?

km. On invitation of the Secretary General of the United Nations, representatives of around 40 states have come together in a hybrid conference in Geneva on 13 September 2021 and declared their willingness to provide around 1.2 billion US dollars for emergency humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Germany's Foreign Minister *Heiko Maas* said his country would provide 100 million euros for emergency aid and promised another 500 million. *António Guterres* was very pleased with the result. The UN itself had assumed an immediate need of around 600 million US dollars until the end of the year. According to UN figures, 93 per cent of households in Afghanistan do not have enough to eat. Basic services in the country are on the verge of collapse, he said.

Guterres also said he had received two letters from the Taliban leadership. One had assured the UN of full support and respect for the humanitarian work in the country. The other had stated that the Taliban were able to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers. Guterres stressed that the Taliban clearly want to cooperate with the international community.

Who is responsible for the damage in Afghanistan?

It has been noticed that the UN donor conference has been reported extensively and very positively, especially in the Western media. How should this be assessed? In this context, a few points need to be added.

The damage that Afghanistan and the Afghans have suffered over the past 20 years as a result of the war launched by NATO in violation of international law can hardly be quantified; it will amount to hundreds of billions. Lost and maltreated human lives cannot even be measured in dollars or euros or francs.

Nor is the current humanitarian situation of the people in the country a consequence of the new Taliban rule, but mainly of 20 years of war (among other causes such as a drought this year). An impor-

“Afghanistan's victims of war ...”

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heart break. War shatters bodies and souls. Four decades of war shatters nations. My greatest hope now is that we all pitch in to help the wounded to heal, the separated families to find one another again, and that any future fighting spares as many civilians as possible. •

Source: ICRC News Release of 8 September 2021

3.7 per cent or the fairy tale of Western reconstruction in Afghanistan

“According to figures from the *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (Sigar)*, the war has so far cost the Americans almost 1 trillion dollars*. Of this, the vast majority (837 billion) was spent on the war, 133 billion is reported as reconstruction costs. But even of the reconstruction costs, the largest part went into the security of the country. About 89 billion dollars were spent on training Afghan soldiers, the fight against drug trafficking and peacekeeping. About 36.3 billion (3.7 per cent of the total expenditure) was put into the development of the country, for example in infrastructure projects, social programmes or the health system. Here, too, part of the money went into the fight against drug trafficking. The US

government's expenditure on humanitarian aid projects was limited to 4.2 billion dollars.”

Source: “*Wo die Billion Dollar geblieben ist, welche die USA in den Afghanistan-Krieg gesteckt haben*” (What happened to the trillion dollars the USA spent on the war in Afghanistan). In: NZZ online of 23 August 2021

* The figures provided by various institutes differ greatly in some cases. For example, the US Watson Institute had calculated 2.26 trillion US dollars for the war costs alone for the years 2001-2021 (cf. *Current Concerns* No. 19/20 of 6 September 2021). However, which figures are correct is not decisive at this point, because we are concerned here with the scale of reconstruction aid for Afghanistan. (Editor's note)

tant principle within a national and international legal community is that those responsible for the damage must also be liable. In the past, people spoke of compensation (“reparations”) after wars. It is true that this has been abused time and again. But that does not change the justification of the principle.

In fact, Afghanistan would also be entitled to such compensation: Reparations by the NATO states and their fellow warriors. The first step would be an open admission of guilt.

But the NATO states do not show remorse, they continue to be loudmouthed

But we are far from that. On the contrary: the official representatives of the NATO states are not showing any remorse, but rather a loudmouthed and demanding attitude. For example, the online version of the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” on 13 September stated: “The United States demanded a written commitment from the Taliban government to uphold the rights of aid organisations, women and minorities. ‘Words are not enough. We need to see action,’ said the American UN ambassador, *Linda Thomas-Greenfield*.” The German foreign minister and representatives of other NATO-EU states made similar comments.

The people of Afghanistan urgently need humanitarian aid. That's where the 1.2 billion dollars until the end of the year are very important. But this sum is not a reason for a big media echo or even ful-

some gratitude. Compared to the damage actually caused, 1.2 billion US dollars is a tininess. •

Current Concerns

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What we did to Afghanistan

Five weeks ago, Taliban fighters entered the Afghan capital Kabul. On 30 August 2021, the last remaining US soldiers at Kabul airport also left the country. The extent to which the Taliban now actually control the whole of Afghanistan cannot be known with certainty. And the question of what will become of Afghanistan and the people living in the country cannot be answered today. It is to be hoped that after more than 40 years they will now find a way to live together in peace, that the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the country can be improved as quickly as possible and that the Afghans themselves can determine their future fate. The next months and years will show how realistic these wishes are and who is responsible for one direction or the other.

Mostly propaganda is the way those responsible in the NATO states and their mainstream media have reacted to their defeat in the past five weeks. Historical comparisons can illustrate basic lines, attitudes of those responsible, paths and aberrations – and the writer of these lines, reading many mainstream texts, also had to think of the heavy defeat of the German Wehrmacht in Stalingrad in the winter of 1942/43, the official German reaction to it with the speech of the German Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels on 18 February 1943 in the Berlin Sports Palace. The German “total” war, which, despite the undeniable defeat in the war, was waged for another two years and cost more lives and brought more destruction than the previous years of the war. As I said, not for the sake of equation, but for the sake of the basic lines.

There are, however, also other voices in the mainstream. These include statements such as those of Gilles Dorronsoro, professor of political science at the Panthéon-Sorbonne University in Paris and field researcher in Afghanistan since 1988, which were published in an interview by the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on 25 August 2021: “Not the Taliban, but we have destroyed the Afghan state.” This includes interesting voices on the reappraisal of history since 11 September 2001, such as that of the Mannheim historian Philipp Gassert and his book “11 September”, which was published in May 2021. And if you look beyond the German-speaking world, you realise that especially in the USA itself there is a very controversial and broad-based discussion. One example of this is the US “Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft”, to which the “NZZ am Sonntag” drew attention by an interview on 5 September. Even “Foreign Affairs”, the magazine of the influential Council on Foreign Relations, had headlined on 3 September: “Afghanistan’s corruption was made in America”. Although

– and this must not be concealed – it is above all US-American self-interest that is at the centre here, too.

But after almost 20 years of NATO war, wouldn’t it be time to focus on other questions than those that are still being proclaimed by the majority? First and foremost: What have we done to the country and its people? And how can we, in view of our great guilt – which can never be repaid – at least help the people of the country to live better in the future than they have in the past 40 years? – Two questions that, incidentally, arise with regard to each of the countries subjected to war by the USA and other states.

In other words: What kind of aberration is it when in recent weeks the “great” evacuation efforts of the US Army and the German Bundeswehr have been widely discussed and “reported”? When it is pondered over and over again whether they have not withdrawn from the country too early? When the accusations against our governments are mainly limited to the fact that they did too little and too late for the evacuation of the “local forces” in the country and of all those willing to leave? When the focus is entirely on a westernised minority of women – not on the millions of women who and their families have had to endure countless war sufferings and terrible deprivations all these years? When the search is on everywhere for how the Taliban, now in power, are acting in violation of human rights? When the NATO states try to outdo each other in their demands on the Taliban? When it is claimed that the Afghans were so much better off when the NATO countries wanted to “democratise” and “civilise” the country – although admittedly not everything worked and the Afghan population was not really “ready” for their westernisation? When now those responsible in the EU (such as Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the EU speech of 15 September) call for a military build-up in order to be able to go to war “independently” of the USA in the future? And so on and so forth.

We decided to focus differently than large parts of the “mainstream”. One text is taken from film maker Frieder Wagner’s 2019 book, “Todesstaub” (“Deadly Dust – Made in USA. Uranium ammunition contaminating the world”). It is the chapter on Afghanistan. The second text is a speech by former Bundeswehr officer Jürgen Rose, which he gave in Munich on 1 September 2021 – on World Anti-War Day. Both authors have kindly made their texts available to us.

May our readers reflect on them and decide what most closely corresponds to the truth that would be at stake today.

Karl-Jürgen Müller

Uranium ammunition use in Afghanistan

by Frieder Wagner

In May 2002 a team of researchers was sent to Afghanistan by the *Uranium Medical Research Center* (UMRC), an NGO from Canada led by Professor Dr Asaf Durakovic. The UMRC team started their work by identifying several hundred people who suffered from diseases or medical conditions reflecting those clinical symptoms which we know are characteristic of radioactive exposure. In order to investigate whether these symptoms were caused by radiation sickness samples of urine and soil samples were taken and sent to an independent research lab in England.

That way the UMRC research team was able to find a terrifyingly high number of

Afghan civilians with acute symptoms of radioactive exposure in a short period of time, including birth defects in new-borns and symptoms of chronic internal uranium poisoning. Inhabitants of the area reported big, thick blueish-black clouds of dust and smoke rising above the ground during the bombardments since 2001, which was accompanied by a pungent stench, followed by burning pain in the sinuses, throat and upper airways. The victims reported pain in the cervical spine, the shoulders, the base of the skull, pain in the loin area, around the kidneys, musculoskeletal weakness, sleep disorders, headaches, memory loss and disorientation.

Two research teams were sent to Afghanistan in total. The first one focused on the region of Jalalabad. The second one followed four months later and extended the study to include the capital city of Kabul with their 3,5 million inhabitants. In the city the researchers found the highest number of stationary targets that were bombed during “Operation Enduring Freedom” in 2001. The team had expected to find traces of depleted uranium in the urine and soil samples they had taken. But nothing prepared them for the shocking results: samples from a number of people from Jalalabad and Kabul showed

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"Uranium ammunition ..."

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concentrations exceeding the upper level of normal in general populations by 400 to 2000% – figures that had never been seen in civilians, not even in Chernobyl. So, it became apparent that uranium was causing the high incidence of diseases in Jalalabad and Kabul.

Unlike those from Iraq the UMRC lab results from Afghanistan revealed high concentrations of non-depleted uranium – that is why the degree of contamination was much higher than in the victims of depleted uranium in Iraq. The UMRC concluded that in Afghanistan a concoction of so-called "pristine uranium" mixed with radioactive waste from nuclear power plants had been used, because in all samples uranium 236 was found, an isotope which is not present in nature as we have learnt but only emerges during the reconditioning of fuel rods from nuclear power plants.

The people in Kabul who had been immediately targeted by the Anglo-American precision bombardments also reported flu-like symptoms such as a runny nose with epistaxis and gingival bleeding. Even the research team members themselves complained of similar symptoms during their stay. Most of these symptoms lasted for days up to months. In August 2002 the UMRC team finalised their preliminary analysis of what they had found in Afghanistan: Without exception all persons who had provided urine samples were tested positive for uranium contamination. The specific results showed that this contamination was terrifyingly widespread. The concentrations exceeded those of gulf war veterans' samples taken by the UMRC in 1999 and later with us in Iraq 2003 by 100-400times.

In summer 2003 the UMRC team returned to Afghanistan to conduct an investigation on a larger scale. This revealed an even bigger contamination than originally thought. About 30% of those interviewed in the affected regions showed symptoms of radiation sickness. New-borns were among those with symptoms and the village elders reported that more than 25% of all children were mysteriously sick.

In conclusion this means that according to UMRC Afghanistan had become a test zone for a new generation of bunker-busting uranium ammunition containing high concentrations of all sorts of uranium isotopes. Professor Dr *Mohammad Daud Miraki* who is Afghan by birth and lives in the USA now told me, that during his travels through Afghanistan he had seen and photographed new-born children with se-

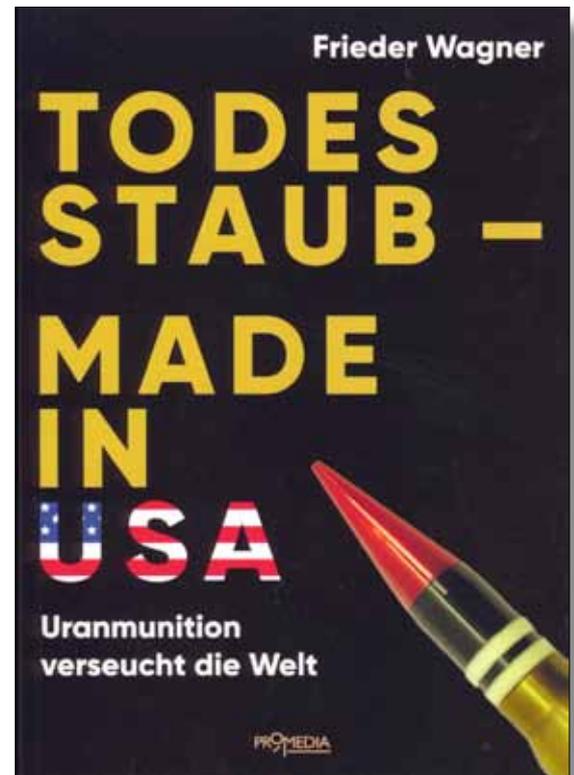
vere birth defects in hospitals for-instance in Kabul, who died in agony only few days after birth, and that not only physicians but also the parents of those children worried about their careers and indeed their lives if they dared to participate in investigations suggesting a connection between these birth defects and uranium ammunition. Specifically, Dr Miraki stated: "Parents will not tell their names or those of their affected children and physicians would not contribute to such research."

It seems that during that time a huge, unknown number of innocent people including a disproportional number of children were poisoned as a collateral damage of the hunt for a small group of terrorists such as *Osama bin Laden*. Experts have estimated the number of contaminated people as tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands. Figures are similar for Iraq; Bosnia and the Kosovo where allied bombers also dropped tons of uranium ammunition and bombs.

Meanwhile the US administration admits to urine samples being tested positive for uranium in their own soldiers, but claims those were to low in most cases to cause serious illness. However, data published so far don't support that claim.

Neutral researchers, among them Professor Dr *Asaf Durakovic*, the German physician Professor Dr *Siegwart-Horst Günther*, radiation biologist Dr *Rosalie Bertell*, the American scientist Dr *Leonard Dietz* but also American military researchers have proven that uranium ammunition fulfils the criteria of weapons of mass destruction and therefore has to be banned. Germany should consequently demand a ban of this military technology in adherence to international law.

Some time ago one could read again in the press that about 100,000 German troops have served in Afghanistan over recent years. These soldiers were stationed in Kunduz, in Faisalabad and in Massar-i-Sharif. The German Federal government must be aware that in all these regions US fighter jets had used uranium ammunition and bombs during "Operation Enduring Freedom" in autumn of 2001. Again, neutral researchers and physicians as well as NGOs such as UMCR are concerned that as many as 30% of these German soldiers



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may have been contaminated with uranium nanoparticles and will have to face all the terrible health hazards from immunodeficiency, cancer, leukaemia and genetic mutations affecting their offspring.

And the Afghan population? For them these neutral researchers estimate the risk to be about 1000times higher since they live constantly in these regions. This is why an embittered Afghan father, whose child had been killed by an American bomb, told Professor Daud Miraki:

"We may have no plains but we do have something the Americans lack which is convictions and ethics. We will never do anything remotely similar to American children what they did to our children and families. They may well win some more battles but we have already won the big fight which is about who is morally right."

Initially I had planned to go to Afghanistan as well when I produced my documentary "Deadly Dust". But when I talked with *Tedd Weyman* about this in Iraq, who had been there twice, he strongly advised me not to go because there were uranium contaminated regions which were much worse than the most horrible places in Iraq. And since the contaminations in Iraq are already terrible enough, I abandoned the plan. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The shame of the West

Speech at the peace demonstration in Munich on 1 September 2021

by Jürgen Rose*



Jürgen Rose
(picture ma)

Dear friends assembled here, dear friends of peace!

The day before yesterday, the world witnessed the last Western occupying soldier finally leave Afghanistan – hastily, almost exactly twenty years after

the US empire of barbarism and its loyal NATO vassals unleashed a war of aggression against the country in the Hindu Kush and its people in violation of international law. In the last twenty years, thousands and thousands of Afghan men, women, children and old people have fallen victim to this crime of human rights and international law – murdered, mutilated, raped, tortured – and in many cases by those who were sent by supposedly civilised, democratic nations with the mission to bring human rights, democracy, freedom and prosperity to Afghanistan.

False legitimacy attempts

The military invasion into the country in the Hindu Kush was legitimised as self-defence against an act that *Helmut Schmidt* had described as a terrorist “mammoth crime” – whereby it apparently did not play the slightest role that not a single Afghan was involved in the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001. But even then, there were millions of people around the world who did not want to accept this arbitrary act of war by US President *George W. Bush* and his henchmen in NATO and stood up to raise their voices against war and terror in favour of a non-military solution to the conflict. This included the many thousands of citizens concerned about peace who had gathered in Stuttgart on 13 October 2001 to demonstrate against the US invasion of Afghanistan, which had started a few days earlier. As an active soldier in the Bundeswehr at the time, I had been asked to contribute to this rally. I justified my refusal to agree to the act of barbarism staged in the Hindu Kush, let alone to participate in it, among others with the following words:

Peace speech of 13 October 2001: Doubts about the NATO war even then

“Of course, murderous terrorism must be contained and eliminated; nor am I a

supporter of fundamental pacifist views. Nevertheless, I have serious doubts about the usefulness of combating terrorism through the use of military force in the form we are currently experiencing. After all, killing terrorists, fundamentalists, Islamists or other enemies of civilised peoples and destroying their rather poor infrastructure, which in any case can be quickly replaced, is merely a cure for symptoms. It does not change the slightest thing about the causes for the emergence of templates of thinking and patterns of action with which fundamentalist martyrs go into their holy war against a world that is perceived as godless and deeply unjust.

But instead of pausing to rethink the consequences of the USA’s previous world policy and, if necessary, to fundamentally change it, the American president announces a ‘crusade against terrorism’, speaks of ‘hunting’ and ‘smoking out’, swears revenge and retribution, demands in Wild West style the extradition of the main suspect *Osama bin Ladens* ‘dead or alive’. The American Congress gives him carte blanche to go to war, only one congresswoman found the courage to vote against it. And governments around the world join in the war rhetoric, to the initial applause of almost the entire media landscape.

On 11 September 2001, too, 40,000 children died as a result of misery, hunger, disease and war

Yet on that day as the silver towers of the *World Trade Center* shone in the light of the rising sun, forty thousand children died in the Third World as a result of misery, hunger, disease and war. Forty thousand – that is almost ten times as many victims as there were after the New York attack. But has anyone ever heard of the Wall Street stock exchange opening its trading with a minute’s silence for these quietly dying children in the Third World? Of course, horror, anger and grief over one’s own dead are always the greatest, but can one therefore simply ignore the deaths of others?

US military spending at astronomical levels

This year, US military spending will reach the astronomical sum of about 700 billion DM (the then German currency) – more than fifteen times the German defense budget. This outrageous waste of resources is absolutely obscene. Not only because the most formidable military machinery in world history has failed

grandly, indeed had to fail, in the face of the ice-cold rationality, the barely surmountable criminal energy, the barbaric determination and the suicidal fearlessness of the perpetrators. But above all because the causes and not only the symptoms of terrorist violence could be fought with a fraction of the resources spent for military purposes. Instead, the American Congress is making more than 80 billion DM available for a nonsensical terrorist hunt with military means. Imagine the indignation of the same MPs if they had been asked to provide the same amount of money for development aid. It is obvious that in a country like Afghanistan, where civil war has been raging for decades, bombs and missiles are the last thing that can contribute to peacemaking. *Robert Bowman*, who himself sent death and destruction from the skies as a fighter pilot for the American forces during the Vietnam War and now serves as Bishop of the United Catholic Church in Melbourne Beach, Florida, castigates his government’s war policy with these words: ‘Instead of sending our sons around the world to kill Arabs so we can have the oil that lies under their sand, we should send them to repair their infrastructure, provide pure water and feed starving children’. And he goes on to say: ‘In short, we should do good instead of evil. Who would try to stop us? Who would hate us? Who would want to bomb us? That is the truth that the American people and the world need to hear.’

Not war can bring peace, but justice alone

It is not war that can bring peace, but only justice. In a modification of the well-known Roman motto, the motto must therefore be: If you want peace, serve peace! This struggle for peace must be waged for the souls and hearts of the people in the Islamic countries – but it is inconceivable that bombs and missiles could lead to success in this. Every bomb on Afghanistan increases hatred and resentment against the USA in the Muslim world immeasurably. Every missile strike serves to stabilise governments in the Middle East that are thoroughly corrupt, inhuman and anything but democratic. But all this apparently counts for nothing when former rogues are needed as allies today. The nations of the world calling themselves civilised should not fall into the jargon of terror and counter-terror. In view of the horrific catastrophe in New York and Washington and the now looming, at least

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* Jürgen Rose was a Lieutenant colonel in the German Armed Forces and is chairman of *Darmstädter Signal* support group.

"The Shame of the West"

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as horrific famine and refugee catastrophe in Afghanistan, they should instead devote all their energies to improving the intolerable political, economic and social conditions in that region of the world.

I have seen with my own eyes Afghan refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan, the misery in the Palestinian camps of southern Lebanon and the indescribable poverty of the people in Sudan. At least one thought results from those images, namely that these are the hells in which those angry young men are born who are animated by only one desire: to turn their hell into our hell.

At the same time, in the course of many journeys through the Near and Middle East, I have met countless people – men and women, children and the elderly – who have welcomed me, as a 'rich Aleman', with great cordiality and overwhelming hospitality dozens of times, despite their own poverty. It is time to give something of these experiences back, even if it is only a little solidarity and the certainty that this war is not my war!

Germany served the "sole superpower" with "full solidarity"

Regardless of this, a Red-Green bellicose mishmash, led by *Gerd Schröder*, *Joschka Fischer* and *Peter Struck*, assured Germany's "sole superpower" of "full solidarity" in the context of the globalisation wars that were coming under the title "Global War on Terror".

The acid test for my then openly announced refusal to actively support the war against Afghanistan and its people came in March 2007, when I received the official order to provide logistical support for the deployment of Tornado weapon systems of the German Air Force in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, which had been approved by the German Bundestag with democratic dignity. Thereupon I reported to my disciplinary superior in an official "Dienstserklärung" (official declaration) that I could not reconcile it with my conscience to support the deployment of these weapon systems in Afghanistan in any form, since in my view it could not be ruled out that I thereby contributed by virtue of my own active action to a Bundeswehr deploy-

ment against which there were serious reservations under constitutional law, international law, criminal law and international criminal law. At the same time, I requested to be relieved of all further orders concerning "Operation Enduring Freedom" – this mission was Mr Bush's private war against terrorism in violation of international law – in general and with the deployment of the Tornado weapon systems to Afghanistan in particular. My decision at the time was based on several considerations:

German Tornados were searching targets for US bombs in a war that was illegal under international law

The deployment of the Bundeswehr Tornados in Afghanistan necessarily meant Germany's participation in military actions that were illegal under international law and not in accordance with the NATO Treaty, because the reconnaissance results obtained by those weapon systems were also forwarded to the American high command for the purposes of "Operation Enduring Freedom" – the German air force planes reconnoitred those targets that were subsequently bombed by the Allies.

The warfare of the USA within the framework of OEF was illegal under several aspects, namely:

- It could no longer be justified as self-defence and was not based on a Security Council mandate;
- it exceeded even the authorisation of the *Karzai* government of Afghanistan in the manner in which it was carried out, particularly with regard to the impact on the civilian population
- it was inconsistent with the rules of international law for the protection of civilians with regard to the so-called collateral damage to the civilian population that was accepted; and
- it violated fundamental human rights principles with regard to the treatment of prisoners.

By deciding to deploy the Tornado weapon systems in Afghanistan, the German government actively participated in a war mission conducted on the basis of a military strategy that was incompatible with the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and the NATO Treaty, and implicated the German armed forces in this.

The bitter result of the war of a megalomaniac US empire

The development that the war in Afghanistan – orchestrated by a megalomaniac US empire – has taken in the course of the last twenty years was inevitable and fully confirms both my assessment and my corresponding action. For the outcome after all these years of war can only be described in one word: devastating. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans deliberately murdered or booked as so-called civilian "collateral damage", tens of thousands of foreign invaders euphemistically lied about as "killed in action", countless wounded in body and soul on both sides, excessive war and human rights crimes committed against the Afghan population, an immense suicide rate, especially among the US warriors of aggression, of thousands of villages and cities, Land poisoned by depleted uranium ammunition, drug cultivation and trafficking on a global scale, trillions of US dollars and billions of euros of wasted taxpayers' money, from which the arms industry, logistics companies and mercenary firms of the West have profited first and foremost, state structures in Afghanistan completely disrupted by pervasive corruption, a NATO unmasked as an incompetent paper tiger, and a West that can only reveal its moral bankruptcy. In this respect, it may only be a side note that the nomenklatura of the Soviet Union had understood after ten years of war that such a war could not be won in Afghanistan, while the ignoramuses and morons in the government offices of the West needed twice as long to come to this basically a priori obvious realisation. As a Taliban commander once remarked in this regard "You in the West have the clocks, but we have the time." *Quod erat demonstrandum!*

What remains to be done in the end?

What remains to be done in the end? Quite simple: show generous and, above all, unselfish solidarity with the Afghan people and provide all the support that is so indispensably necessary for the peaceful reconstruction of the country – and this paired with the insight: never again human rights imperialism, never again war!

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

How to deal with the COVID 19 pandemic situation in Switzerland?

by Alex Kuprecht, President of the Swiss Council of States



Alex Kuprecht
(picture
parlament.ch)

“Switzerland is becoming irreconcilable” – headlined the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” of 31 August this year. Indeed: The fronts between the vaccination advocates and the vaccination opponents are becoming more and

more insurmountable. The opinion climate in the population is becoming more and more hostile. The understanding of some people for the measures, ordered by the Swiss Federal Council, is like that of prisoners in a tunnel tube. The measures taken by our neighbouring countries are not considered. Certificate obligations are demonised by some and very much welcomed by others (some of whom come from the same sector), although or rather because the vaccination rate in our country, less than 70 percent, is far below compared to other countries (due to the relaxation of measures and certification requirements). Returning to an international meeting of parliamentary leaders from around the globe, it should be noted that our Austrian neighbours enforce much

stricter regulations, even in outdoor areas of restaurants, despite higher vaccination rates. Accordingly, we have an almost liberal regime with regard to compulsory certification and other ordered measures.

Those who believe that the pandemic can be overcome with demonstrations, threats, even with the use of violence, will one day realise that the virus will not take this into account. Even a division of our society will not stop the disease.

I therefore call on all citizens to refrain from such interventions. Instead, we should seek to meet each other in peaceful dialogue, listening well and in mutual understanding, and to overcome this pandemic crisis with respect for each other's thoughts. Let's stop blaming each other, let's stop sowing resentment and discord between societies. Instead, let's make sure that the gap between friends and families does not widen. Such widespread sentiments and hatreds certainly do not solve problems. But they leave behind deep wounds and rifts that will be very difficult to heal or overcome in the future.

Let us rather join hands and try to make the best out of this difficult situation. The strengthening of cohesion, the power to solve problems together and to shape the future positively together are values of our

country. They have made Switzerland the country for which we are still respected, even admired abroad. Let us reflect anew on these values of the successful past and let us free ourselves from the seed of discord that is dividing our society. I therefore call on all of you, as carriers of political responsibility and in face of the current difficulties, to play an active and socially unifying role in our democracy.

Take the opportunity to contribute to reconciliation in society, in associations, but also in tense situations in families. Use the opportunity to actively contribute to pandemic response by getting vaccinated or periodically tested. In our country all of us have these opportunities. Meanwhile, people in African countries, for example, with vaccination rates of less than 5 per cent, can only dream of such opportunities.

These are my thoughts on the current political situation, which moves me a lot. I am touched by what is actually happening in our country.

Source: taken from *Official Bulletin* no. 21.9001 of the session of 13 September 2021 (Swiss Council of States, Autumn Session 2021: Statements of the President); <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletindie-verhandlungen?SubjectId=53878>
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Total digitisation – collapse only a matter of time

by Gotthard Frick, Bottmingen



Gotthard Frick
(picture ma)

More and more, our lives are permeated by electronic and electrically driven systems in all areas. A comprehensive collapse of these fully digitised systems, or at least one that affects significant areas, cannot be ruled out. What

would that mean? Would we be prepared or able to deal with it?

A large proportion of the world's people are becoming increasingly dependent on computers, fixed and cell phones, radio, television and their converging and intersecting advancements in their work and personal lives. The same is true worldwide for transportation, energy supply, business, government administration, and armies. Warehousing, production, control, accounting, management and monitoring operations in all areas make

use of ever more perfect and faster systems, which are interconnected to form ever larger networks. Not only people, but also subsystems communicate among themselves in this network. This global nervous system is powered by electricity, the production and distribution of which is also electronically controlled and monitored.

As a result, activities, processes and connections have been and continue to be enormously facilitated, accelerated and made infinitely more efficient, and access to many and much has become limitless. At the same moment that the quantity and price of the plums and eggs bought in the supermarket are read in the scanner at the checkout, they have already been debited from the warehouse there, but the group's central warehouse is also immediately informed and knows what it needs to reorder, the accounting system has already recorded the amount received, and the group's top management, if it is on vacation in Bali, can quickly access its own computer at home in Switzerland via the

cell phone and find out about plum and egg sales.

This development is still in full swing and will, for the time being, lead to further increases in efficiency and networking, but also to ever greater dependence and vulnerability.

Surprisingly, not many people seem to ask themselves yet what it would mean if this system were to collapse for a shorter or longer period of time. They seem to take for granted that it will continue to function smoothly. Only recently have various armies and governments begun to address its vulnerability for military reasons.

This vulnerability is constantly increasing. First, because of the ever-increasing interconnectedness. Even if attempts are made to prevent the consequences of a failure by compartmentalizing, creating several independent backup systems and storage facilities, providing emergency power generators and more, the function-

"Total digitisation ..."

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ing of these supposedly autonomous parts remains dependent on the functioning of the overall system beyond a short period of time.

Second, the complexity of both programs and overall systems continues to increase. Humans seem to reach the limit of what they can still oversee and control, because they are no longer able to overlook the complexity of the processes quickly enough. For this reason, computer systems are being used to control and manage processes that can no longer be overlooked and controlled by humans. On the stock exchanges, for example, large parts of the buy and sell orders are decided and triggered by IT systems. Or computers use their analyses to block the server of a major Internet service provider for the duration of a day if, for example, a Nobel Prize is awarded to an unpopular opposition figure who has been imprisoned by the government. Or, based on a "sensitive" keyword in the text of an individual user, they prevent the corresponding email from being sent completely independently.

Third, vulnerability is also increasing simply as a result of the ever-greater number of users – often many hundreds of millions – connected to a single service. Fourth, the volume of data is also growing ever more rapidly to gigantic proportions.

Fifth, attacks deliberately launched by groups, governments, and armies also aim to shut down or mismanage networks or at least major parts of them.

Finally, as many people overlook, every man-made system – despite the widespread obsession with feasibility – has occasional glitches, including those that can be triggered by natural events such as solar activity or major natural disasters such as earthquakes.

A major breakdown at a central location, perhaps combined with a targeted attack at two or three other locations, would ripple through the network like the waves of a great tsunami around the globe or at least in larger regions, crippling one sub-network after another.

In view of these developments, it is not unlikely that a global or large-scale collapse of shorter but possibly also longer duration will occur in the course of the near or further future. This could lead to an unparalleled catastrophe that would dwarf even the Second World War, because then nothing will run anymore: There will suddenly be no electricity, no telephone connections, no radio and television, no newspapers, no production, no distribution of goods including food, no state administration in the affected area for a shorter or longer period of time. No



"Nowadays, many buildings have emergency power systems. However, if the telecommunications system also fails in the event of a large-scale power failure, this may be of no use. In today's digitised society and economy, telecommunications is almost as important as the power supply. The main problem is the fact that in the event of a severe power blackout, mobile and fixed network telephony and data communication (keyword: internet) are no longer possible within a short period of time. This reduces the benefit of preparations for the power blackout. Risk and vulnerability analyses in the area of critical infrastructures have shown that many particularly important locations such as command and control centres or computer centres have been equipped with emergency power systems at great expense. However, since data communication between and with these sites is no longer possible in the event of a power failure, there is still a loss of important services." (picture and text "Zeitschrift Bevölkerungsschutz. Risikoanalyse und Prävention, Planung und Ausbildung, Führung und Einsatz" (Civil Protection Magazine. Risk analysis and prevention, planning and training, command and deployment) of the Federal Office for Civil Protection FOCP from November 2016; https://www.babs.admin.ch/de/publikservice/information/zeitschriftbabs.detail.publication.html/babs-internet/de/publications/publikationenservice/zeitschriftbevoelkerungsschutz/zeitschrift26_2016de.pdf.html)

railroad or streetcar, no cargo ship, no car runs anymore. No more airplanes flying until the problem is fixed. And that could take a long time because everything that would be needed to identify the problem and fix it – for example, lines of communication and command, people and material – would no longer be accessible or available.

Food would be rotting in the warehouses, cows could no longer be milked, hospitals could no longer be run. Gas stations would no longer be able to pump gasoline into cars, and when they ran out, supplies would stop coming – and the water supply would also stop working. Public administration would collapse. We would be back in the Stone Age.

In contrast to the time 100 years ago, when every household and almost every business had a certain number of supplies to bridge a certain time self-sufficiently, we live today "just in time". Whereas we once had potatoes, vegetables, home-made preserves and supplies stored in the cellar for many months, we modern people live by the motto that everything must be available immediately at all times. Friends

coming over for dinner? Quickly go to the supermarket and get the meat you need, some potatoes and salad, and a new bottle of oil. Protective masks for the pandemic? You should quickly order them in China ...

How many people would then still have the necessary skills, and how many items would then be needed to set up a make-shift minimal organization that would secure our lives until everything was back to "normal"? How many people still know how to arrange life in more primitive conditions? The best off would be the people in villages in the African bush and in the slums of the world, who already have to struggle along without electricity and electronics.

A government that thinks strategically – does that still exist in our country today? Even large companies would probably have to think about how they would deal with such a problem.

Are these wild fantasies of an old man who no longer understands modern times, or could such a scenario become reality? The question will occasionally answer itself.

(Translation Current Concerns)

Drinking water in Switzerland – from the village fountain and in emergencies

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

If you are a hiker or cyclist in Switzerland, you will find one or more fountains in every village where you can quench your thirst. Or rather until a few years ago, you could rely on the village fountains. In recent times, more and more fountains have a sign installed saying “No drinking water”. Because the water is not safe? Or because the water quality controls regulated by the Federation would be too costly for the municipal authorities and the farms? These questions demand an answer, especially urgent in an emergency. Inspired by reading *Gotthard Frick’s* “Total digitalisation – a collapse is only a question of time” (see this issue), another question arises: Do we need electricity so that water flows from the fountain and our drinking water is safe?

Moated castle Switzerland – a privilege to be treasured and cherished

Being able to drink water “from the tap” at any time is a great privilege. We only become aware of this when we have to buy bottled drinking water on holiday at the seaside, and even more urgently, when we see in documentaries women and children in faraway countries who have to carry their water – the cleanliness of which is often not assured – for kilometres. This reality in large parts of the world is pointed out on the homepage of the Technical Services of my residence Wil (Technische Betriebe Wil, TBW): “To be adequately supplied with safe drinking water is considered a privilege worldwide. This is because only just under half of the world’s population has satisfactory sanitary facilities. Moreover, the global demand for water is growing twice as fast as the population.” (<https://www.tb-wil.ch/wasser/>)

Switzerland is a “moated castle”. This means that the numerous rivers, lakes and glaciers, the rain and the snowmelt in spring provide more than enough and usually also perfect water for the needs of the population – even if the summer sometimes is too dry. The Technical Services write: “Due to the nature of the soil, the water of Wil meets the high-quality requirements of the Food Law without human intervention. All water conveyed by the Technical Services reaches our customers unfiltered, untreated and unvaccinated from the pumping stations and spring tapplings via the reservoirs”.

Strict legal requirements for Swiss fountain operators

So, everything is fine! If our ground- and spring water is clean enough for the



Village fountains in Bazenheid (SG). Today, most of the fountains say “No drinking water”. (pictures ef/km)

tap in the kitchen, then it should actually also be drinkable from the village fountain. At least that is how it was fifty years ago when we children quenched our thirst at the fountain, and that is how it was throughout the country until a few years ago. In this sense, the *Swiss Gas and Water Association (SVGW)* states in 2018: “In Switzerland, it is assumed that the flowing water at publicly accessible fountains is drinkable unless there is an explicit drinking prohibition or warning sign. It does not matter whether the fountain is privately or publicly owned.”¹ Such warnings used to be very rare. But today they are on more and more fountains all at once. Why?

There is one problem. According to the SVGW leaflet, “flowing fountains, i. e., fountains where the water flows permanently, are considered as ‘structures’ under Swiss law. This is where strict liability² comes into play. If people are injured due to reduced water quality or other defects of a publicly accessible fountain, the owner of the fountain has to pay for the damage caused.”

However, the new legal requirements for Swiss well operators are not child’s play. The basis can be found in Article 3 of the Drinking Water Ordinance of the Federal Department of Home Affairs

(FDHA)³, which has only been in force for a few years:

Art. 3 Requirements for drinking water

1 Drinking water must be inconspicuous in terms of odor, taste and appearance and must not pose a health hazard in terms of the type and concentration of microorganisms, parasites and contaminants it contains.

2 Drinking water must meet the minimum requirements specified in Annexes 1–3.

3 The operator of a drinking water supply system shall also [...] periodically carry out an analysis of the hazards to water resources.

The first paragraph of the article makes sense. However, the three annexes mentioned in paragraph 2 are quite a challenge: Annex 1 Microbiological requirements, Annex 2 Chemical requirements (maximum values of around 50! different chemical substances must be complied with), Annex 3 Further requirements for drinking water. Even without having the appropriate technical knowledge, the reader can guess that a full-time fountain

"Drinking water in Switzerland ..."

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inspector would be needed to meet the requirements.

In the small town of Wil, the tap water is checked every month: "To ensure that the water in Wil is clean, water samples are taken every month and analysed bacteriologically and chemically. The Cantonal Laboratory, as the enforcement authority, monitors compliance with quality requirements." (<https://www.tb-wil.ch/wasser/>) Upon request to the Technical Agencies Wil, I learned that the water of the Wiler fountains is also monitored in this process, because they are mostly directly connected to the drinking water network. However, this does not apply to many wells in the countryside.

The well drinking water is not worse than in the past ...

The fountains on the village squares and also many others, which stand at the roadside and belong to farms or other private houses, obtain their water mostly directly from a spring. For example, the well in a hamlet of the municipality of Wuppenau, as my husband learned from the owner of the farm belonging to it. The well has no warning sign, so that we always refill our water bottle there when we ride our bikes. A few hundred meters away there is a well with the sign "No drinking water".

I asked *Hanspeter Gantenbein*, the former long-time president of the commune Wuppenau, about the reasons for the increasing number of warning signs. He replied: "The fountain drinking water has not become worse compared to the past, but we require ever greater safeguards, since contamination could possibly occur at some point under certain circumstances. Our quality system now requires regular laboratory water testing, and then no one can be held liable."

"... but the common sense is getting more and more lost"

The former commune president Gantenbein says: "The water from the wells you mentioned (and I could list at least another twenty wells in our municipality) comes from local sources for which there are no official, elaborate quality tests, so they cannot be called drinking water. The well operator has the alternative of simply

turning off his well, making it inaccessible to strangers, having the well water tested regularly or connecting it to the municipality's water pipes. The last two options are far too expensive, so to avoid juristic liability many attach the designation 'no drinking water'."

His personal opinion, says Hanspeter Gantenbein: "The common sense is getting more and more lost – and in an incident of any kind, it's only all about who you can blame!" The author of a newspaper commentary came to a similar conclusion while hiking through Switzerland in the late autumn of 2020: "I kept passing wells, but usually there was a sign: 'No drinking water'. I was somewhat irritated. The rippling fountain stood in the middle of nature – and the water was not supposed to be drinkable?" Finally, the hiker came across a well with the inscription: "Spring water, but no drinking water due to legal regulations. Enjoy at your own risk." He was excited about this information and tasted the water, which was excellent. He realised that the sign "No drinking water" is mainly put up for legal reasons: "The warning has not much to do with the quality of the water."⁴

Drinking water supply in shortage situations – the water could quickly become scarce!

These assessments by two practical-minded people are important in case the water pipes do not work one day, which we cannot exclude in Switzerland either. Recently, a brochure from the cantonal "Office of Military and Civil Defence" was in all mailboxes in the canton of St. Gallen, presenting the canton's precautions in the event of an evacuation or a prolonged power blackout, with checklists of the necessary precautions for the population. The brochure is supplemented with a leaflet "Emergency luggage for an evacuation" and a leaflet "Emergency supplies at home (for at least 5 days)". One of the most important items is a mineral water supply of at least 10 litres per person. It is good that we are reminded once again to refresh the provisions for our families – if necessary.

Because the drinking water from our taps would quickly stop flowing in the event of a longer power cut. In response to my question: "How is the water supply se-

cured in emergency situations if the electricity were to fail for a longer period of time?" I received an unexpectedly shocking answer from Andreas Gnos, Head of Network and Technology at the Technical Works Wil (TBW): "If the electricity fails, then the water supply network is no longer fed. Only the water from the reservoirs is still available, about one day's consumption in Wil. From then on, cistern wagons have to be made available so that the population can collect water from certain places."

Water for one day only! We would have to learn to limit ourselves unaccustomedly. According to the Federal Council's "Ordinance on Drinking Water Supply in Severe Shortages (VTM)" of 19 August 2020 the Cantons are responsible for "securing the drinking water supply in situations of severe shortage" (Art. 3 para. 1). The prescribed minimum quantity for private households is only just "at least four litres per person per day" (Art. 2). By way of comparison: In 2019, every Swiss person consumed an average of about 294 litres of drinking water per day!⁵ There is nothing in the new ordinance about the obligation of residents to keep a water supply themselves, but Andreas Gnos says: "Personal responsibility applies in this area."

Back to the wells: If the water pipes do not work, the population is fortunately left – besides self-sufficiency and cantonal rations – with the running wells, which are fed from springs and thus do not need electricity (or internet). We can assume that they will provide us with good drinking water. •

¹ Swiss Gas and Water Association (Schweizerischer Verein des Gas- und Wasserfaches, SVGW). *Leaflet for fountains W10031* from March 2018

² Strict liability: According to Art. 58 of the Swiss Code of Obligations, "the owner of a building or any other structure is liable for any damage caused by defects in its construction or design or by inadequate maintenance", even if he is not personally at fault.

³ 817.022.11 *Ordinance of the FDHA on Drinking Water and Water in Publicly Accessible Baths and Shower Facilities (TBDV)* of 16 December 2016 (as of 1 August 2021).

⁴ Niederer, Alan. "'Kein Trinkwasser' steht am Brunnen – soll ich das Wasser trotzdem kosten?" ('No drinking water' is written on the well – should I taste the water anyway?) In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 16 November 2020

⁵ <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/950548/umfrage/durchschnittlicher-trinkwasserbedarf-in-der-schweiz-je-einwohner-und-tag/>

“Eternal peace is not an empty idea; it is a task”

Thoughts on peace education

by Dr Eliane Perret, psychologist and curative teacher

The recent events in Afghanistan have jolted many people awake and made them think about where we are heading in our world. One can only agree with Immanuel Kant, who in 1795 stated in his writing entitled “On Perpetual Peace”, that perpetual peace is not an empty idea, it is a task. It is a task that challenges all of us! Not only in view of the devastation left by the wars in Afghanistan, Congo, Iraq, Yemen, the former Yugoslavia and many other countries, but also in view of the countries battered by sanctions and the numerous unresolved social and political problems in many parts of the world. At the same time, there is the question of why previous efforts to live together in peace have not borne fruit. This is a problem to be faced by popularly mandated leaders and representatives of all disciplines, who are called upon to make their contribution to the resolution of conflicts and peace in the world. They must take seriously their responsibility towards their fellow human beings in the sense of the common weal, as many of them have done in the past. A reflection on their efforts and what they have already achieved is valuable and necessary.

A brief look at history

The desire to live together in peace has always been a main concern of humanity. Already Aristotle, the great thinker and natural scientist of ancient Greece, wrote down fundamental thoughts on how this deeply human need could be met. He saw humanity's task in finding its position in the cosmos by virtue of reason and in making possible peaceful and harmonious coexistence in the state, by means of the cardinal virtues laid down in education – prudence, justice, wisdom and courage. Thoughts on peace can also be found in Roman philosophy. “In war there is no salvation, for peace we all ask,” wrote the Roman poet Virgil, referring to this great question of humanity.

In later years, on the threshold of modern times, the Dutch scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam was very resolutely committed to peace and rightly stated in his writing “The Complaints of Peace” that people need peace and tranquillity in order to be able to carry out their daily work and to establish a community for the good of all. He lamented the great misery that war brings to the individual and the whole nation. We also find important ideas in the work of Baruch de Spinoza, also a Dutch philosopher, in that he defined peace not simply as the absence of war, but as “[...] virtue, an attitude of mind, an inclination

to goodness, trust, justice [...]”. He thus referred to the pedagogical task of enabling people to achieve peace through education, that other philosophers and pedagogues subsequently also explored and discussed.

For example, Johann Amos Comenius, who had himself experienced the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, also delved into the question of education for peace. And a hundred years later, Immanuel Kant demanded the abolition of standing armies so as not to incite opponents to an arms race. For him, creating peace was not a future vision, but an achievable goal for humanity to approach by means of reason and education.

So, we can see: from the earliest times in our cultural history, people have reflected about war and peace, and we would do well to reconsider these reflections with the necessary seriousness and respect and to commit political decision-makers to them.

“Never again war!”

Many writers also tried to stir up humanity with their works. “Put Down Your Arms” by Bertha von Suttner, “Nothing New in the West” by Erich Maria Remarque, *Romain Rolland's* “Clérambault”, the trilogy by Arnold Zweig “Young Woman of 1914”, “Education before Verdun” and “The Case of Sergeant Grisha” or also Jaroslav Hašek's novel “The Good Soldier Švejk” were intended to anchor a defence against these terrible developments in the minds of their readers. The works of these authors must not be allowed to gather dust on bookshelves or to even disappear from libraries. They are a legacy to future generations. Dealing with them supports young people in their emotional and spiritual maturation and will give them confidence, security and hope for a life in equality and peace, just like the touching pictures by Käthe Kollwitz, in which she shows us the human tragedies that wars bring with them. The engagement with these works provides starting points for dialogue as well as a conversation about what Silvio Gesell, the founder of the “Natural Economic Order”, might have meant when he wrote: “In the way father and mother converse, in the way brothers and sisters treat each other, there is already a good part of armour against war and for peace.”

War is not part of human nature

Psychology, educational science and other human sciences have also contributed with their research to clearing up the

fatal error of accepting war as a necessary evil pertaining to humanity. These disciplines always were and still are particularly challenged to contribute to the way in which people may develop compassion and a spiritual connection with their fellow human beings as well as the desire to take responsibility for the well-being of all.

Unfortunately, people had for a long time erroneously based their understanding of the question of war and peace on Sigmund Freud's doctrine of an innate aggression and death instinct, as he had postulated it in the first half of the last century. From his point of view, waging war was therefore inevitably linked to the human existence. This assumption has been clarified since the 1960s after comprehensive and careful scientific debate: an aggression instinct belonging to the human being is a nonsensical myth! (cf. Plack 1973)

Peace education – a question of social bonding

At the same time as Freud, the Viennese individual psychologist Alfred Adler also addressed himself to the question of war and peace. He had experienced the devastation of war himself during the First World War and saw it as his responsibility to make a contribution with his work as a physician and psychologist. He came to the conclusion that the decisive factor lies in the development of social bonding.

In sense of community (Gemeinschaftsgefühl), as he called it, he not only recognised the most important aspect of mental health, but also a protection against the seduction of people to war by power- and money-hungry strategists. In his practical work, he supported parents and educators in an upbringing concurrent with the nature of the child and helping it to develop and unfold its innate sense of community. At that time in particular, as a result of the First World War, children and young people were often mentally and emotionally neglected. With his counselling and training activities, Adler gave parents and educators a tool to help their children regain confidence and a constructive outlook on life.

In his tradition, a large number of pedagogically active people were involved in the training of teachers and in school experiments, but their work unfortunately came to a standstill under National Socialism. Today, however, it is available to us as an important contribution to peace ed-

“Eternal peace is not an empty ...”

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ucation, and it urgently needs to be taken up in the curricula of today’s educational training institutions.

Developing an inner defence against war

The horrors and misery of the two world wars and the shock of the dropping of the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki prompted many people to discuss the question of how another war could be prevented.

A milestone in this development was the founding of the UN and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 by prudent and mature individuals from all over the world. UNESCO, a UN sub-organisation, stated in its preamble: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

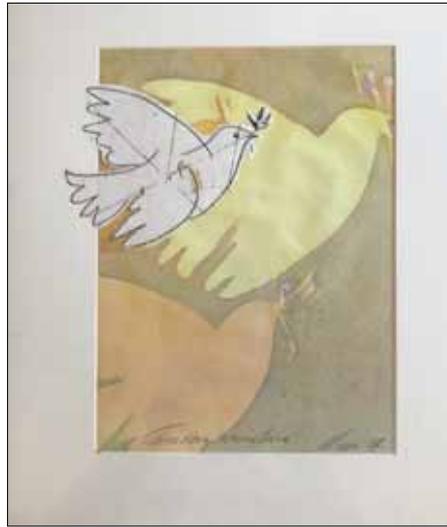
With this in mind, Unesco drew up material plans for schools with valuable suggestions on how to teach various school subjects in a way that might bring people together. It would be worthwhile to evaluate them in terms of their foundations and successes.

Prophylaxis as a way

Unfortunately, this is not the place to describe in more detail the numerous contributions to peacebuilding made by other exponents of the human sciences. For example, the neo-psychoanalysts of the 1930s made valuable contributions to the question of education for peace. The psychiatrist *Harry Stack Sullivan* formulated an impressive appeal to all those working in health and social services to participate in the possibilities of prophylaxis he had conceived to prevent another war and to make lasting peace possible. An *International Congress on Psychohygiene* in London in 1948 and the *UNESCO Tension Project* in Paris were also dedicated to this topic. Among the psychiatrists involved was the Hungarian psychoanalyst and physician *Franz Alexander*, who, subsequent to the aforementioned congress, published the article on “Psychiatric Prophylaxis against War”. And also, *Maria Montessori*, the Italian reformist educator, stated in a book contribution: “The true defence of nations cannot be based on weapons. For wars follow each other, and victory never secures peace or the welfare of anyone – nor will it ever be able to do so unless we use education as a great ‘armour for peace.’”

Failed considerations

Many educationalists and psychologists saw education as a possible way of prophylaxis, and after the Second World War var-



“Achieving Peace” by Marlies Klesse, 2007. (picture ev)

ious peace education programmes were devised. What to do to create a reluctance in children and young people to be instrumentalised for war? These considerations did not always lead to the desired result. For example, exhibitions of pictures documenting the atrocities of war were created. But the children confronted with them either developed fears, nervousness or insecurity, or they became accustomed to violence and emotionally deadened. Today, it is clear from research in developmental psychology that this path was not suitable, because it reduces the child’s basic trust in his or her fellow human beings, in the human community, and generally weakens the child’s entire personality. Children need adults who act as role models, who show them the way towards peace and give them the necessary protection so that their mental development will not suffer.

The Canadian psychologist *Albert Bandura* with his research on aggression as well as the research group around *Monroe Lefkowitz* with his long-term study “Growing up to be violent” published in 1977 clearly showed that children orientate themselves on role models in their immediate environment. If parents and teachers do not take on the appropriate role, children look for role models elsewhere, for example in the media.

This is an insight that should definitely be taken note of by all those who expose our children and young people to the very widespread depictions of violence in films and video games which glorify violence.

Peace education begins at the family table

Research findings in the human sciences in recent decades show that human beings are social in nature and that children can be led to love peace through upbringing and education in responsibility, compassion, solidarity and cooperation. There-

fore, peace education begins in the family and is continued at school by living together in the class community (sic!). If peace education is to succeed, it must begin in the first interpersonal relationships in which a person develops his or her personality and forms a sense of social connection. There is no substitute for the reciprocity in the relationship between parents and child, the deep emotional bonds, the unity in the shared future, the togetherness in shaping and securing life. If the conversation at the family table is alive, a child will experience sympathy and interest in the concerns of its fellow human beings beyond the family framework. Here the child’s emotional desire is laid to be active in the world later on and, on a smaller or larger scale, to make a contribution in the sense of the bonum commune. As an adult, a child brought up in such a way feels equal to the demands of family, work and community and shows interest, expertise and commitment in political debate. These people will not allow themselves to be stirred up against their fellow human beings, and they will know how to use their intellect and reason courageously to oppose ideological seductions critically and resolutely, neither allowing themselves to be driven into war nor submitting passively and defencelessly to violence.

We are therefore today called upon to review what has been achieved so far and, on the basis of a scientific view of humanity, to rethink what we can contribute to the growth of a generation that carries the idea of peace within itself. •

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