

# Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

---

---

## Road map in times of war

by Karin Leukefeld\*



ef. Independent journalist *Karin Leukefeld* was born in Stuttgart in 1954 and has studied ethnology, islamology and political sciences. She has been reporting from the Extended Middle East for daily and weekly journals as well as German state sponsored radio programmes since the year 2000. She was accredited in Syria in 2010 and has been reporting on the Syria conflict since then. Since the beginning of the war in 2011 she moves back and forth between Damascus, Beirut, other places in the Arab world and her hometown Bonn. She has published several books, such as "Syrien zwischen Schatten und Licht – Geschichte und Geschichten von 1916–2016. Menschen erzählen von ihrem zerrissenen Land" (Syria Between Light and Shadow – History and Stories 1916–2016. People Narrate about their Wartorn Country.) (2016, Rotpunkt edition Zurich); "Flächenbrand Syrien, Irak, die Arabische Welt und der Islamische Staat" (Surface Fire Syria, Iraq, the Arab World and the Islamic State.) (2015, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2017, PapyRossa edition, Cologne). Her new book will be released soon: "Im Auge des Orkans: Syrien, der Nahe Osten und die Entstehung einer neuen Weltordnung" (In the Eye of the Hurricane: Syria, the Middle East and the Rise of a New World Order).

"Travelling to the Russian Federation is not advised," warns the website of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. German Foreign Minister *Annalena Baerbock's* patronage of the German-Russian theme year "Economy and Sustainable Development 2020-2022" has been suspended. The US and EU are cutting ties with Rus-

---

"Our own courageous heart – what can it tell us? Look closely and do not let yourself be misled. Question the media reports that try to tell us what is happening in Ukraine, what Russia is allegedly planning; seek other sources. [...] Refuse to become an enemy and hold on to the friendship with Russia and its people that has been worked on for decades. Intervene, like the cargo workers at the airport in Pisa."

---

sia politically, economically, culturally – in the fields of sport, education and science. Even Switzerland, which was valued worldwide for its neutrality, has just abandoned this neutrality by adopting the imposed sanctions.

Russian stations are being switched off. An incendiary device was thrown at a German-Russian school in Berlin. A pupil was asked to think about whether it was still appropriate for him to wear a T-shirt marked "St. Petersburg". A clinic in Munich declared that it would no longer treat Russian patients. In Milan, a university seminar on the Russian writer *Fyodor Dostoyevsky* was dropped from the curriculum. Universities, sports clubs, museums have been asked to "review" their contacts with the Russian side. The *German-Russian Museum* in Berlin – built to commemorate the 27 million Russian victims of the Second World War – has pulled down the Russian flag and crossed out the words "German-Russian".

It is all about Ukraine. The Western world speaks of "*Putin's war*" and a "Russian invasion". Moscow, which gave its troops the order to march into Ukraine, speaks of a "special operation". Anyone who has followed the history of the last 30 years knows that it is about more than Ukraine. It is about whether the Western US-led bloc of NATO, EU and partners respects other geopolitical centres on earth or whether this "Western bloc" submits to the US plan to rule the earth as the "sole world power".

This claim has been enforced for decades in other parts of the world by means of wars and crises, through interventions, militarily and with "soft power", by oc-

cupation, attacks, economic sanctions as well as other means. Now this war has arrived in Europe and is directed against the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation invaded Ukraine on 24 February to demilitarise the country and drive out the Nazi forces in military and politics.

### You only see what you know

A fellow photographer once said to me that his working motto is: "You only see what you know." This means that you have to prepare yourself before reporting, and this is especially true for wars, crises and conflicts, as these arise from many levels and complicated contexts. You have to find out about them in advance, you have to inform yourself about the relevant history, the actors. Only then can you truly see, in the sense of understanding, what is happening and only then can you report well on it.

So, what do we know about Ukraine? What is the history of this country, what has been the interaction between Russia and the US-led Western bloc there in Ukraine? To put it simply, what interests do East and West have there?

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the *Warsaw Pact* in 1991, Moscow has demanded security guarantees and that NATO should not expand eastwards. For just as long, NATO has refused the demands and moved ever closer to Russia's borders. Country after country along the Russian border was lured into joining either the EU or NATO. Western media reported on the development mostly in Western terms. According to those, the Eastern European states – which used to be part of the *Warsaw*

continued on page 2

---

\* The text reproduces a lecture given by *Karin Leukefeld* to a readership of *Current Concerns* in Switzerland on 19 March 2022.

**"Road map in times of war"**

continued from page 1

*Pact* and were now all afraid of Russia – could not wait to join the Western alliances. After all, they were all afraid of Russia and only wanted freedom and democracy, which would be defended by the EU and NATO.

Today, NATO troops are deployed in all those places where, from Russia's point of view, they should not be. Since 1999, NATO has been in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, since 2004 in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Albania and Croatia were added in 2009, followed by Montenegro in 2017 and Northern Macedonia in 2020. Ukraine and Georgia were to become the next new NATO members. Moscow continued to push for a security agreement and demanded Ukraine's neutrality – which was also established in the Ukrainian constitution until 2014. After the *Maidan coup* in 2014 – in the West they call it a "revolution" – Russia resumed control of Crimea. Under international law, this was classified by the West as an annexation. The tone and actions between NATO and Russia were exacerbated. NATO began training Ukrainian troops and stockpiling weapons. Russian media were persecuted as "disinformation channels" and considered as dangerous to the "Western democracies" as were the media of the "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" (IS).

During this time, something also happened that we in Germany or in other European countries did not really notice: The cooperation between the EU and NATO became ever closer and eventually so close that today – beyond the EU Parliament – one can hardly distinguish NATO from the EU. The heads of both organisations, *Ursula von der Leyen* and *Jens Stoltenberg*, increasingly appear in a double act at events of each other's organisations, and their statements are very similar.

**The refusal by the West**

For the year 2022, ten NATO manoeuvres along the Russian border between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea have been planned, and in these also Ukraine wanted to and was expected to participate. Soldiers and war material had already been transported to the east for the major manoeuvres "Defender 2020" and "Defender 2021". In response, Moscow began a large manoeuvre along its external borders at the end of 2021. The USA warned of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, but no one met Moscow's political demands to create a common security architecture for Europe. Concrete plans put forward by Moscow were rejected by the West. So enough was enough, and Moscow was no longer prepared to be subdued and humiliated.

On 24 February, Russian troops invaded Ukraine.

The Western bloc in the UN Security Council condemned Russia and called Putin the aggressor. The majority of the UN General Assembly shared this view in a resolution "Condemning Aggression in Ukraine". From the beginning, the Russian view of these developments was denounced to such an extent that it hardly appears in the European, especially the German-speaking public. This is also due to the fact that Russian media such as *RT Deutsch* or *Sputnik News* were switched off in Germany as in the other European countries.

And yet politicians and military leaders in East and West – especially in the USA – had been warning against this development for a long time. Ukraine, the heart of Europe, disputed for generations, could have been of advantage for East and West if had neutrality been granted to the country. But US foreign policy continues to be guided by *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, who said that Ukraine should never be a partner of Russia. Today, Ukraine is synonymous with war. It is the beginning of another, bigger war that will be about a new world order. Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei Lavrov* said in Moscow a few days ago that Russia is the "last obstacle" for the West, before it can subdue China.

**The Shock Strategy**

For a long time, it had appeared to any observer as if the US was concentrating on its opposition to China and on preparing for a possible military confrontation in the South China Sea. But the war strategists in Washington had yet another plan that would first involve other competitors in war. The USA will not attack China directly, but via Russia, and uses the European states for this purpose. Washington hardly has to deploy any soldiers of its own, sells the Europeans US armaments and destabilises the competing European economy through an economic war that is supposed to be directed against Russia and China, but will cause massive damage to Europe.

Germany, which had profited more than any other country in Europe from cooperation with Russia, has capitulated. Not only since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the *Clinton* administration in 1993 has Washington worked to divide the Eurasian continent, where Russia and Germany have key economic and political functions. One can speculate whether the "new era" in Germany would also have been possible under the *Merkel* government. The fact is that it was the new coalition formed by Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats which orchestrated the "new era" and accomplished it through massive anti-Russian propaganda. This government had only been in office

for three months when they yanked Germany's foreign and peace policy around by 180 degrees, while the country's peace-oriented population was virtually in shock after the start of the war in Ukraine. Not a word was said about their own political mistakes, which had provoked their long-time partner Russia to take this step. No pause, no dialogue, no talks, no diplomacy.

**The deception**

"Ready, because you are" was the election slogan of the Greens with their top candidates *Baerbock* and *Habeck*. The current Chancellor *Olaf Scholz* and the Social Democrats campaigned with the slogan "Respect for you". They would push, they claimed, for the ecological modernisation of the economy to save the world from climate collapse. More social justice and recognition, more cohesion in society and a strong Europe were promised.

Today we know that these politicians deceived the public with fine words and announcements. The new government is ready for war against Russia, not for friendship and international understanding, not for respect or justice.

Russia is facing a barrage of unilateral economic sanctions, which – because they are unilateral – do not comply with the UN Charter. Christian Democrat Member of the European Parliament *Manfred Weber* is not the only person demanding "weapons, weapons, weapons" for Ukraine. The self-commitment of previous federal governments not to supply weapons to war and crisis zones is now wastepaper. Germany is sending weapons to Ukraine, and fighters and mercenaries, also from Germany, are following right behind. As recently as in June 2020, the Greens submitted a motion to the Bundestag demanding the withdrawal of US nuclear missiles from Büchel in the Eifel and an end to Germany's "nuclear participation". However now the government is declaring its entitlement to "nuclear participation", although the Bundestag (German parliament chamber) decided on the opposite claim years ago. New fighter jets are ordered from the USA so that nuclear bombs can also be transported to the target.

The German Foreign Minister does not talk about diplomatic initiatives to end the war. *Baerbock* wants to "ruin Russia" and also work out a new China strategy. For the first time in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Foreign Ministry is working "in a leading role" on a "National Security Strategy". Germany was "ready" for a stronger international commitment to peace, said the minister. "Foreign policy will be shaped with a clear compass of values in hand". And everyone should join in: The parties, the Bundestag, experts as well as civil socie-

continued on page 3

**"Road map in times of war"**

continued from page 2

ty actors are to work together with national and international partners. Then Berlin wants to link this new "security strategy" with the plans of EU and NATO.

The EU, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize only ten years ago, is supplying weapons using a fund called the EU Peace Facility. A simple way of borrowing for peace is being used for the first time for the war in Ukraine.

NATO is also supplying weapons. Thousands of fighters from NATO countries are moving as mercenaries to meet the flow of refugees from Ukraine. In the USA, 20,000 have already registered with the Ukrainian consulate. One of these volunteers tells the German radio station *Deutsche Welle* (DW) in New York: "I want to help the weak, defend the helpless and give them courage." DW accompanied the man to a shop for combat equipment where he stocked up. He said he wanted to "take away people's fear and help get refugees out of the country safely".

**Roadmap in times of war**

How can we stay in communication despite the cries of war? How can we position ourselves so as to resist propaganda, confusion and enemy images? Is there a roadmap in times of war?

It is important to understand the conflict, to analyse events. It is helpful to look at the different levels: international, regional, local. It is also important to look at the conflict from different perspectives. Since it is an international conflict between Russia and the US-led Western bloc with NATO and the EU, they and their respective interests are the actors on the international level. Another important actor is China, which has allied itself with Russia beyond the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* (SCO).

Regionally, the interests and perspectives of affected states, i.e., Ukraine, Russia and their neighbouring states and regions, must be taken into account. In the north, these are the Baltic and Scandinavian states and alliances of the Baltic and Arctic regions. In the south, it is Turkey and the Black Sea region, including the Mediterranean.

Locally, we see a conflict in Ukraine between the Donbass and Kiev as well as the war that has been going on in the south-east of the country since 2014.

To understand different interests and perspectives, it is recommended to apply the "seven journalistic W-questions". It should be noted that these questions must always be asked in at least two directions:

- Who (did something) – who refrained from doing something?
- What (did they do) – what did they refrain from doing?

- Where (did they do it) – where are the actors?
- When (did they do it) – development of the escalation?
- How (did they do it) – militarily or otherwise?
- Why (did they do it) – the background for both/all actors?
- Where (is the information from) – what are the sources?

It is important to research the antecedents of the conflict politically, historically, socially. This also involves the question: who is allied with whom, who is at enmity with whom, etc.? And one will find that alliances and enmities can also change when the interests of the actors change.

In times of war, however, the journalistic rules are usually not observed by the media. Media become a party to the war and, at least in the states and alliances involved, report one-sidedly and spread propaganda. It is therefore advisable to look into the media of other countries and on other continents. This promotes understanding of their view of events. And we learn something about ourselves and our perspectives. Looking at the perspective of others is a good corrective.

---

**"Heard from other continents, many things sound different than in our daily news. There, opposition to war had already been stirring long before the Ukraine crisis, because war and the plundering of resources have been more than well-known there."**

---

Analysis, discussion about the war and its causes should take place in conversation, in exchange with as many others as possible. Newspaper articles, texts, books or lectures sharpen our view and we learn to look beyond what affects us daily through the media. In this way, we can find ways to overcome isolation and powerlessness in the face of the prevailing propaganda and hostility.

**Widening our horizons**

As Russia and the US/EU/NATO bloc are confronting each other also in other parts of the world, we should look to Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin and South America to investigate how what is happening around Ukraine is perceived there. The peoples on these other continents have come to know Europe and the USA as colonial powers and "empires". They have experienced Western condescension and arrogance and often centuries of Western interference – an interference that prevented self-determination and social, economic and political development, exploited resources and people and left countries unstable and devastated. These

countries were then haughtily classified as "failed states" and forced into financial dependence on international financial institutions – the "curse of the evil deed" of permanent interference, as *Peter Scholl-Latour* excellently described it in his book of the same name, "Der Fluch der bösen Tat" (The Curse of the Evil Deed).

Heard from other continents, many things sound different than in our daily news. There, opposition to war had already been stirring long before the Ukraine crisis, because war and the plundering of resources have been more than well-known there. As a representative of other voices in Africa, the Middle East or Asia, I would like to remind you of the book "Open Veins of Latin America", in which the journalist and writer *Eduardo Galeano* from Uruguay describes the consequences of 400 years of colonial rule decades ago:

*"They left us [...] gardens that became deserts, fallow fields, hollowed mountains, rotten water, long caravans of unfortunates condemned to an early death, and empty palaces full of ghosts. [...] We Latin Americans are poor because the ground we walk on is rich."*

---

Very recently, the opposition to Western policies has become louder. A representative example is a statement by the Mexican government, which rejects an EU Parliament resolution – directed against the Mexican government and President *Lopez Obrador* – with harsh words:

*"[...]Mexico is a peaceful country that has chosen non-violence, we stand for dialogue, not war. Under no circumstances do we send weapons to any country, as you are doing now. [...] And do not forget that we are no longer anyone's colony. Mexico is a free, independent and sovereign country. Evolve, leave behind your interventionist mania that you hide behind good intentions. You are not the world government; and do not forget what Benito Juárez said, that giant of the Americas: 'Among men, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace.'"*

**Looking at us**

"Lay Down your Arms" – is the title of a book published in 1889 that made *Ber-*  
continued on page 4

**"Road map in times of war"**

continued from page 3

*tha von Suttner* – that campaigner for disarmament and peace – famous throughout Europe. A few years later, the *German Peace Society* (DFG) was founded in Berlin – which was at that time called the "citadel of militarism". Peace movements have been in existence in Germany and Europe for more than 100 years, and yet these decades have been full of wars. Why so? Why were these wars not prevented? This question is important because

*"there would be enough money, enough work, enough to eat if we distributed the world's wealth properly instead of making ourselves slaves to rigid economic doctrines [...]. Above all, we must not allow our thoughts and efforts to be diverted from constructive work and misused for the preparation of a new war."*

These words are taken from an interview in which *Albert Einstein* talks about peace. It can be read in a 1933 letter from Albert Einstein to *Sigmund Freud* or – in German – in a little book published in 1972 by *Diogenes* entitled "Warum Krieg? (Why War?)". The core of this booklet is an exchange of letters between Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud from the late summer of 1933. At that time, the League of Nations had asked Einstein to discuss a freely chosen issue in a free exchange of opinions with a person of his choice. Einstein turned to Sigmund Freud and chose what seemed to him at the time "the most important question of civilisation": "Is there any way of delivering mankind from the menace of war?"

The advances of technology made this an existential question, Einstein wrote to Freud; all efforts to solve it had "failed to a frightening degree". At the time, Einstein posed this existential question against the background of the First World War and in view of the rising fascism in

**"But [...] what if you do not want to get in line at all? Or what if you understand the other side that has gone to war, even though nobody wants war at all?"**

Europe. Soon after this correspondence – which, by the way, was only distributed in a print run of 2000 copies at the time – the Second World War began with the invasion of Poland by the German Wehrmacht, bringing terrible destruction and the use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

How can it be possible that the youth of Europe today know how to save the climate and yet know next to nothing about the causes of crises and wars! Why was the danger of war in Ukraine not seen? Because we were poorly informed? Because we did not take our neighbour Russia seriously? Because we ignored wars in other parts of the world? Because we think we are the "good guys" with the right values?

Is it not rather our war, which the West has fought in other countries with other actors in various ways – to secure wealth, raw materials, transport routes, control – that has returned to us?

**What is to be done?**

In times of war, one is expected to support "one's own", the others are the "aggressors". When Germany declared war on Russia in 1914, Kaiser *Wilhelm II* aligned the population with the words: "I know no more parties, I know only Germans." US President *George W. Bush* said after 11 September 2001: "You are either with us or against us" and started the "war on terror" that has been continued to this day.

But what if you do not want to join "your own"? Because – as the writer *Christa Wolf* has Cassandra say – because you do not want to be "deceived by your own"? And what if you do not want to get in line at all? Or what if you understand

the other side that has gone to war, even though nobody wants war at all? There is a difficult decision to be made that no one can take away from you. Which path can you take in times of war?

A very personal guide always accompanying me comes from a children's book. It tells the story of the girl *Nuni* and her long journey home from the "fence at the end of the world". On her way over mountains, lakes, through forests and the desert of everyday life, she is helped by the stars. She meets the calendar man and many animals whose wisdom, humour, timidity or confidence encourage her and show her that she must rely on her own courageous heart.

**Our own courageous heart – what can it tell us?**

Look closely and do not let yourself be misled. Question the media reports that try to tell us what is happening in Ukraine, what Russia is allegedly planning; seek other sources. Talk to family, friends, neighbours and colleagues about what you have found out about what is happening in Ukraine, but also about other theatres of war and injustices. Refuse to become an enemy and hold on to the friendship with Russia and its people that has been worked on for decades. Intervene, like the cargo workers at the airport in Pisa. They found out that weapons were being transported in crates and containers declared as humanitarian cargo for Ukraine.

In Germany, the situation is difficult, anyone not falling in line is denounced. In Switzerland, you will have to defend your neutrality. You will only be able to preserve it if you keep EU and NATO off your country. •

**Current Concerns**

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

**Subscribe to Current Concerns – The journal of an independent cooperative**

The cooperative *Zeit-Fragen* is a politically and financially independent organisation. All of its members work on a voluntary and honorary basis. The journal does not accept commercial advertisements of any kind and receives no financial support from business organisations. The journal *Current Concerns* is financed exclusively by its subscribers. We warmly recommend our model of free and independent press coverage to other journals.

Annual subscription rate of CHF 40,-; Euro 30,-; USD 40,-; GBP 25,- for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of CHF 20,-; Euro 15,-; USD 20,-; GBP 12,50 for all other countries.

Please choose one of the following ways of payment:

- send a cheque to *Current Concerns*, P.O. Box, CH-9602 Bazenhaid, or
- send us your credit card details (only *Visa*), or
- pay into one of the following accounts:

CH:	Postscheck-Konto (CHF):	87-644472-4	IBAN CH91 0900 0000 8764 4472 4	BIC POFICHBEXXX
CH:	Postscheck-Konto (Euro):	91-738798-6	IBAN CH83 0900 0000 9173 8798 6	BIC POFICHBEXXX
D:	Volksbank Tübingen, Kto.	67 517 005, BLZ 64190110	IBAN DE12 6419 0110 0067 5170 05	BIC GENODE31TUE
A:	Raiffeisen Landesbank, Kto.	1-05.713.599, BLZ 37000	IBAN AT55 3700 0001 0571 3599	BIC RVVVGAT2B

## Never to forget – 23 years since the beginning of NATO aggression on Serbia (the FRY)



*In keeping with the tradition maintained over all previous years, the Belgrade Forum for the World of Equals is marking 24 March, remembering this day back in 1999 when the NATO Alliance's illegal and criminal aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the FRY) began, thus paying tribute to the fallen defenders of the motherland and the killed civilians.*

This aggression was the first war on European soil waged since the end of World War II. As the bombs and cruise missiles thrown by the most powerful military machinery in the history of civilization were busy destroying a small European country, they also destroyed the European and global security system based on the UN Charter, the OSCE Final Act and the *Paris Charter*. To this day, Europe and the world still suffer the severe consequences of that destruction. In the process, NATO allied with the so-called KLA, a separatist-terrorist formation, as its infantry wing, thus boosting separatism and terrorism.

On 23 March 2022, at 11:00 a.m., representatives of the Belgrade Forum, together with its partner *Club of Generals and Admirals of Serbia* and other patriotic-oriented organisations, will lay a wreath at the Monument to Serbian children killed during the aggression in the Tašmajdan Park. During the ceremony, *Dragutin Brčin*, Director of the Belgrade Forum, will address the audience on behalf of the Forum. Next, around the noon, representatives of the Belgrade Forum and the *Club of Generals and Admirals of Serbia*, together with other patriotic organisations, will pay tribute to all victims of NATO aggression at the monument "Eternal Fire", in Novi Beograd. On the occasion, General *Luka Kastratović*, ret., President of the Executive Board of the *Club of Generals and Admirals of Serbia*, will address the audience.

The Belgrade Forum invites all patriotic organisations and individuals that cherish the memory of the fallen members of the Serbian military and security forces and all those killed in the aggression, to

join these events and thus pay their respect for the fallen defenders and civilians.

### **Strategy of military expansion to the east began as early as 1999**

At present, we are witnessing calls for observance of international law and blaming other countries for violating it, cynically made by the USA, the UK, Germany and NATO as a whole, that is, the exactly same countries and bodies that had themselves illegally attacked the FRY without a UN Security Council decision, the same ones who intentionally used missiles filled with depleted uranium and other banned weapons to deliberately and indiscriminately bomb our country's infrastructure and the civilian targets, killed children, women, hospital patients and civilians, and who openly conducted smear campaigns against the Serbian people in global media.

The marking of the beginning of the 1999 NATO aggression against our country is another opportunity to recall all their crimes and atrocities and to remind our public, especially the youth, of the horrors and damage the aggression caused, as well as of the consequences of which many are yet to be remedied. The precedent of aggression executed without the UN Security Council approval was reused in the subsequent aggressions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria. NATO's aggression against the FRY in 1999 was a stepping stone in bringing to life the strategy of military expansion to the East, closer to the Russian borders, which is the root cause of the Ukrainian crisis.

### **War damage from NATO aggression since 1999**

During 79 days of unrelenting attacks on the FRY, from 24 March to 10 June 1999, the mass-scale assaults of NATO aviation sending missile systems and other weapons from air, waterways and land, with collaboration comprising the terrorists Albanian KLA, the regular army of the Republic of Albania, the mercenaries recruited and financed by Western states, and the instructors and special operation units of the leading Western states, has

indiscriminately killed members of the Yugoslav Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Serbia, as well as civilians including children, and destroyed cultural monuments, churches and monasteries, devastated military, economic, strategic and traffic infrastructure, business facilities, civilian facilities and institutions, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, and even the public broadcaster – the Radio Television of Serbia, killing 16 of the *RTS* employees. Over the course of this aggression, NATO carried out 2,300 airstrikes on 995 facilities throughout the country, and its 1,150 fighter planes launched some 420,000 projectiles with the total mass of 22,000 tons, including depleted uranium weapons.

About 4,000 casualties were estimated, of whom some 3,000 civilians and 1,031 members of the army and the police. 89 children were killed. In total, more than 12,000 people were wounded, of whom about 6,000 civilians including 2,700 children, and 5,173 soldiers and police officers. 25 persons are still listed as missing.

Since the precise list of civilian casualties has not been established yet, the Belgrade Forum reiterates its appeal to the state authorities to finally see to this sad task being completed. In their attacks on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, NATO forces employed approximately a thousand aircrafts (fighters, fighter-bombers, bombers, spy planes, etc.); the largest share in the air attacks had the forces of the USA, UK and Germany, albeit with significant roles in the aggression also played by other members.

The air assaults destroyed and damaged 25,000 residential buildings, disabled 470 km of roads and 595 km of railways. They also inflicted damage to 14 airports, 19 hospitals, 20 health centres, 18 kindergartens, 69 schools, 176 cultural monuments, and 44 bridges, while leaving additional 38 totally destroyed. Among the latter, of special significance are the destruction of two oil refineries (in Pančevo and Novi Sad), the demoli-

**"Never to forget – 23 years ..."**

continued from page 5

tion of the *Avala* Broadcasting Tower, the building of the Serbian Radio and Television, the Petrochemistry Complex in Pančevo, the bombing of bridges in Novi Sad, the *Zastava* automobile factory in Kragujevac, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, and many other civilian targets. Estimates are that some 38 % of targeted facilities were of a civilian purpose. The war damage was estimated to about USD 100 billion.

**And the late effects until ...?**

During the bombing of the territory of the Republic of Serbia, ammunition banned under the Geneva Convention was routinely used, with in total 15 tons of uranium dumped on Serbia. As a direct consequence of missiles filled with depleted uranium, in 2015 Serbia was announced to be the top-ranking country in Europe in terms of mortality from malignant tumors. In addition, about 1,000 cluster bombs were dropped on 219 locations on an area of 23,000 km<sup>2</sup>, killing a large number of civilians. As a result of that,

from the end of the aggression until 2006, 6 people perished from detonated cluster bombs throughout the territory of Serbia and Montenegro, while additional 12 were wounded.

In all likelihood, all those who fell victims to the delayed effects of missiles with depleted uranium, unexploded cluster bombs and other lethal means, will hardly ever be exactly accounted for. The Belgrade Forum invites the competent state authorities to ensure the continuation of the work of special bodies tasked with determining the consequences of the use of depleted uranium weapons and other means and methods employed during the NATO aggression.

The aggression ended on 10 June 1999, upon the signing of the Military-Technical Agreement in Kumanovo and the subsequent adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which established the truce and temporarily transferred the administering of Kosovo and Metohija to the United Nations. Pursuant to this Agreement, the FRY Army, the Police and the administration of the FRY and the Republic of Serbia, with-

drew on an interim basis to the territory of Central Serbia. Along the withdrawal of the army and police, about 250,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija fled to central parts of Serbia. This made Serbia the country hosting the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Europe, after this and other wars that marked the violent and forcible breakup of Yugoslavia.

**Cynical**

It is cynical to the extreme to take to accusing other countries of crimes that the leading NATO states have continuously committed themselves. It would serve them well if, at least as late as today, as they stand accusing others, they halt for a moment and remember their own misdeeds, repent and remedy all the injustices they have done to our country as well as to others, most notably, to Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and others. Never forget.

*Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals,  
16 March 2022*

**Pro memoria****On Ukraine****Excerpts from the Final Document of the International Conference held in Belgrade on 22 and 23 March 2014, on occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NATO aggression against FR of Yugoslavia**

"Exporting democracy and dictating cultural and civilization patterns has become a common approach of Western powers, primarily of the USA, in their aspiring to govern the world pursuant to their own standards and in line with their self-serving interests. The imposition of such cultural and civilisation patterns is an act of violence against reality that almost invariably results in conflicts, internal disorders, and deeper fragmentations and divisions; over time, this is prone to undermine the peace in the world, and presents a perfect excuse for external military interference. This model has created the so-called "coloured revolutions" in Georgia, Venezuela and Ukraine and high jacked "Arab Spring revolution", which managed to devastate and turn the clock back for several decades, such as: Libya, Egypt and Syria.

The strategy of interventionism involves several motives and purposes. These include the control over natural and developmental resources, realloca-

tion of resources, and geopolitical re-configuration of the world, against and at the expense of the predetermined key geopolitical adversary. This is how the USA/NATO/EU staged the crisis in Ukraine, whose solution is still nowhere in sight. One can say that the Ukrainian crisis is the single most dangerous threat to the peace since the end of the Cold War. Instead of acknowledging Ukraine as a natural connection between Russia and Europe, the West chose to interfere, by artificially dislocating it from its natural cultural, civilisation, and geopolitical environment and drawing it westwards. In doing so, the West paid no attention at all that the action could lead to internal conflict within Ukraine and that it would put at risk Russia's vital interests. This dangerous geopolitical game played by America, NATO and the EU against Russia, as a proxy war at the expense of Ukraine under a "fine" but fake excuse of being waged for the benefit of the Ukraini-

ans and their democratic social structure, has completely disregarded the effects of such policy against the interests of Ukraine, its people, the peace, and security in Europe and the world. Participants of the Conference advocated for a peaceful political solution free of interference and external pressures, that is, a solution that will guarantee its peoples will, and respect its role of a bridge between the East and the West. Such solution implies abandonment of the pernicious "Eastern expansion" which has already produced destabilisation in Europe. Participants expressed satisfaction that the people of Crimea have used their right of self-determination which resulted in reunification with Russia."

*Source: The Global Peace vs. Global Interventionism, Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals, Belgrade, 2014, ISBN 978-86-83965-44-1, multilingual*

*The Belgrade Forum Information Service,  
beoforum@gmail.com*

# German politicians speak about peace – but what do they do about it?

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

*Many thousands of people have fallen victim to war in Ukraine over the past eight years. Indeed, another “defeat of humanity”. Every day sooner that the weapons rest means saving human lives. An early positive outcome of the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine should therefore be desired by everyone. But many who are currently condemning this war are doing so with quite bellicose intentions. Unfortunately, this is also the case in Germany.*

Currently, our media are full of texts and pictures about the war in Ukraine every day. Disregarding a few internet media or smaller independent newspapers, even a first glance shows that the coverage is not about trying to establish the truth, let alone about efforts for peace, but without exception about putting Russia’s politics and especially the country’s president in the worst possible light – and clearing the NATO states.

One focus is to accuse Russia of blatant breaches of international law and international humanitarian law.<sup>1</sup> This is supposed to spur politicians to escalate the conflict. And while the politicians speak of peace, they have in fact declared hybrid war on Russia. “Hybrid war or hybrid warfare describes a flexible hybrid of the regular and irregular, symmetrical and asymmetrical, military and non-military means of conflict brought to bear overtly and covertly for the purpose of blurring the threshold between the binary states of war and peace established by international law.” That is what *Wikipedia* says, and that’s exactly what the NATO states, the EU states, other states allied with the USA – and unfortunately also Switzerland – are currently doing. Playing – not playing – with fire!

In the following, the focus will be on Germany.

## No no-fly zones and peacekeeping troops ...

On 23 March, the German Chancellor *Olaf Scholz* spoke at length in the Bundestag debate on the budget of the Chancellor and the Federal Chancellery. In doing so, he said:

“Of course, I am hearing the voices of those calling for a no-fly zone or NATO peacekeeping forces in Ukraine. As difficult as it is, we will not give in to them. In almost 80 years of post-war history, we have avoided the unthinkable: a direct military confrontation between our Western defence alliance, NATO, and Russia.

---

“The former German President *Joachim Gauck* had said in a talk show on German television at the beginning of March that one could ‘freeze once in a while for freedom’. He drew criticism for the fact that he – himself extremely well off – wanted to encourage Germans to ‘freeze’. One must add the question of what kind of ‘freedom’ he means. The fact is that Germany is in the process of giving up its remnants of political freedom – in favour of a transatlantic, controlled united front. This front will very likely cost the Germans themselves dearly. The Chancellor’s government declaration of 27 February already showed the loss of intellectual independence and almost nothing but transatlantically coordinated platitudes. The extent of the abuse of language is enormous. The loss of freedom and independence is now called ‘solidarity’. *It cannot be that the Germans go along with all this in the long run.*”

---

This must remain the case. Many citizens are very worried because they understand that this is exactly what is hidden behind terms like ‘no-fly zone’ and ‘peacekeepers’. Day after day, I am receiving hundreds of concerned letters and emails. Wherever you talk to citizens these days, sooner or later you encounter the question: Will there be war, also here? There can only be one answer to this question: NATO will not be a party to the war. We agree on this with our European allies and the United States. That is a dictate of common sense. Anything else would be irresponsible.” A little later he added: “We will leave no stone unturned until peace reigns again on our continent.” And at the end of the speech, quoting *Willy Brandt*: “Without peace, everything is nothing.”

So far, so good.

## ... but arms supplies and economic war

As late as 7 February 2022, *Deutsche Welle* (DW), Germany’s public broadcaster abroad, had read: “The German government rejects Ukraine’s demands for arms deliveries. Reason: As a matter of principle, *Germany does not send weapons of war to crisis areas.*” (emphasis km) But now the German Chancellor said:

“President *Zelensky*, Ukraine can rely on our help. Since the beginning of the war, Germany has been supplying Ukraine with anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, equipment, and ammunition. The European Union is providing an additional one billion euros in military aid.” Isn’t it very likely that arms deliveries to Ukraine will prolong the war?

The Chancellor’s speech of 23 March also states:

“Together with our international partners, we have *imposed sanctions that are unparalleled*. For months we have prepared them down to the smallest detail so that they hit the right people, so that they have an effect. [...] And we see: The sanctions are working. *Russia’s economy is staggering, the stock market is largely closed, the currency has crashed, there is a lack of foreign currency, foreign companies are leaving the country by the hundreds. But this is just the beginning.* Many of the harshest consequences will only become apparent in the coming weeks. And, *we are constantly tightening sanctions.*” (emphasis km)

Quite openly, there is talk today in the NATO states and among like-minded people of “economic warfare” against Russia. Does this serve peace?

continued on page 8

**"German politicians speak ..."**

continued from page 7

**Massive German rearmament programme**

Over the next five years, Germany intends to put 100 billion euros more than planned into the arms budget and spending on armaments is to be permanently increased to more than two per cent of the German GDP (that would be more than 70 billion euros for 2022 instead of the 50 billion euros planned in the budget so far, i.e., more than Russian arms spending).

And finally: Dialogue and cultural exchange with Russia and with Russians has largely ended from the German side ... personal contacts are becoming increasingly difficult.

*How serious is the pursuit of peace if one is actively waging a hybrid war at the same time? Waging war without having been attacked oneself, without having been threatened with an attack, without an alliance obligation that has to be fulfilled. This is another reason why the current German rearmament rhetoric ("Russia is threatening us") is not honest.*

**Yugoslavia and Russia**

Once before, in 1999, Germany took part in a war of aggression against international law, that of NATO against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At that time, the war was called "humanitarian intervention". Even then, not a single NATO state had been threatened or attacked. But the political and military leadership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was also accused of serious crimes. The German Foreign Minister, the Green *Josef Fischer*, wanted to prevent a new "Auschwitz". The NATO PR agencies toasted with champagne after their propaganda had been successful.<sup>2</sup>

However, Russia can defend itself much better today than the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Is this the only reason why no NATO bombs have fallen on Moscow as they did on Belgrade in 1999?

Since 2007 (President *Vladimir Putin's* speech to the *Munich Security Conference*), Russia has made its demands again and again and in more concrete terms with two draft treaties from mid-December 2021. Russia considers the fulfilment of these demands to be essential in order to ensure equal security for all European states. From Russia's point of view, these demands are still relevant and only absurd from the point of view of the NATO states. At least that is how the USA and

the NATO states have so far reacted to the Russian proposals and demands.

**Not only the unilateral sanctions are contrary to international law and human rights**

We have repeatedly argued in this newspaper that unilateral sanctions are contrary to international law and human rights.<sup>3</sup> Other fundamental rights are also no longer respected. This goes from the property of Russian citizens to freedom of expression. Citizens who contradict the same-sided propaganda roller are pilloried. And it is deeply undignified how many are now bowing to the pressure and publicly kowtowing to Western war policy.

The *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland* (rnd) headlined on 16 March: "Don't believe your eyes! In the war of images, practically anything is possible". Further down it reads: "Never before has a modern war produced such a flood of unverifiable images." This is to be agreed with. But the very next paragraph says what the editorial network is about: "The technical perfection with which, for example, Kremlin propaganda has for years been creating and disseminating masses of useful image fairy tales to influence public opinion internally and externally in Putin's favour has reached a new level of escalation, according to Western experts." (emphasis km) Well, well, one can only say. And so it goes on until the end of the article. One of the speaking "experts" for example, is the head of the *tagesschau.de* online portal *faktenfinder* (fact finder), who is also the "head of the investigative department". Then it must be true.

**What is meant with "Zeitenwende"?**

What is this "Zeitenwende" (turning point) that the German government has been talking about since the end of February? And what is meant by the headline on page 1 of a Swiss daily newspaper on 25 February: "The end of the old world has begun"? We know this vocabulary from the days and weeks after 11 September 2001, followed by the endless "war on terror" that plunged Afghanistan, the Middle East and parts of Africa into chaos and from which these regions of the world have still not been able to recover.

Today, racist Russophobes are fighting on the Ukrainian side. With German "help"? With German weapons? The National Socialist war against the Soviet Union was a racially motivated war of extermination against the "Slavic Undermen" (the National Socialist race ideolo-

gist *Alfred Rosenberg* had taken the term "Under-man" from the US anthropologist, race ideologist and eugenicist *Lothrop Stoddard*). What do today's Germans think when they reflect on this? And if they accept that the German chancellor dismissed as "ridiculous" the Russian statement that genocide was being perpetrated against the Russian-born population in eastern Ukraine at the extremely aggressively held "security conference" of the NATO states in Munich the weekend before 24 February?

The former German President *Joachim Gauck* had said in a talk show on German television at the beginning of March that one could "freeze once in a while for freedom". He drew criticism for the fact that he – himself extremely well off – wanted to encourage Germans to "freeze". One must add the question of what kind of "freedom" he means. The fact is that Germany is in the process of giving up its remnants of political freedom – in favour of a transatlantic, controlled united front. This front will very likely cost the Germans themselves dearly. The Chancellor's government declaration of 27 February already showed the loss of intellectual independence and almost nothing but transatlantically coordinated platitudes. The extent of the abuse of language is enormous. The loss of freedom and independence is now called "solidarity".

*It cannot be that the Germans go along with all this in the long run.* •

<sup>1</sup> Here we cannot address the question of how far Russian warfare is violating international law and international humanitarian law cannot be pursued here. The question is important, but I consider trying to give a reliable answer to this question now presumptuous and therefore rather part of propaganda. In his speech on 24 February, Russia's president referred to the treaty of alliance with the republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, which were recognised as independent states on 21 February, and Article 51 of the UN Charter (right to individual and collective self-defence). Russia contradicts the Western allegations of Russian war crimes. Accusing the other side of war crimes (atrocities) is part of the standard repertoire of war propaganda. Therefore, the utmost caution is called for here as well, as long as a reliable verification is not possible.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Becker, Jörg/Beham, Mira. *Operation Balkan: Werbung für Krieg und Tod*. (Operation Balkan: Advertising war and death.) Nomos-Verlag 2006

<sup>3</sup> cf. on this, among others: de Zayas, Alfred. "Unilateral sanctions violate international treaties". In: *Current Concerns* No. 9/10 of 16 April 2015 (<https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/archives/2015/no-910-16-april-2015/unilateral-sanctions-violate-international-treaties.html>); Köchler, Hans. "Sanctions from the perspective of International Law". In: *Current Concerns* No. 11/12 of 3 June 2018 (<https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/archives/2018/no-1112-3-june-2018/sanctions-from-the-perspective-of-international-law.html>)

# “There is no room for different opinions”

## On the war in Ukraine

Interview by Robin Delobel with Anne Morelli

Anne Morelli is a historian, professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and specialist in historical media criticism. She published the standard work “Principes élémentaires de propagande de guerre” (*The Principles of War Propaganda*). We asked her about the war propaganda used in the Ukraine conflict. The blaming of the other side, which has been in the media in recent days, is in line with one of the ten principles she set out in her book. She argues that demonising the opponent, whose word is constantly discredited, does not contribute to understanding the conflict.

*Robin Delobel: Our media give Putin full responsibility. Why don't they look at the consequences of the previous actions of the Western camp, i.e. the US, Europe and the Ukrainian leadership?*

*Anne Morelli: We are in a situation where there is no room for disagreement. I am stunned to see posters at ULB saying “Save Ukraine”, “Putin Murderer” and similar messages. It is the first time I have seen students taking such a position in a military conflict. It must be emphasised that Ukraine has weapons and that these weapons did not come of their own accord. Ukraine has been armed since 2014 and the government regularly uses its weapons against the “insubordinates” in the so-called “pro-Russian” areas.*

When areas like Croatia and Kosovo seceded in Yugoslavia, this was cheered. Western countries supported them directly. Germany or the Vatican, for example, immediately recognised Croatia's independence while they were busy dismembering a country that had been united until then. But when the opposite is the case, as here, where our enemy supports an autonomy, we say that this is scandalous. We have a blatant double standard. Imagine if tomorrow the Basques, Catalans or Flemings wanted their autonomy. Would we applaud?

*It is not entirely clear what prompted Russia to attack Ukraine, unless one simply thinks Putin is a madman seeking world domination. However, a report by the French news agency AFP, picked up by numerous media, mentions what Moscow accuses Kiev of: genocide in the Donbass, neo-Nazis and Selenski's nuclear weapons claims ... But AFP states that these are “crazy accusations”. Is that really so? Demonising the enemy is a basic principle of war propaganda that is quite continuous. Napoleon was crazy. So were the Emperor, Saddam Hussein, Milose-*

*vic and Ghaddafi. And Putin, of course, is crazy too. We are lucky that our leaders are all in their right minds, while they are all crazy on the other side. This is an elementary principle of war propaganda. Nevertheless, the problem of neo-Nazis is very real. The Azov battalion, they are not choirboys, they are neo-Nazis. One must also remember that a part of Ukrainians has shown solidarity with Nazi Germany. There is a part of the population that fought the Nazis, but there is a part that supported the genocide of the Jews and all the atrocities.*

When Putin says “We will fight the Ukrainian fascists”, Russia knows what it is talking about. Again, Western propaganda has made people forget that it was the former USSR that contributed most to the defeat of Nazi Germany. For the Belgian population, this was completely obvious in 1945. But since then, propaganda has had its effect, not least through Hollywood productions, films like *Soldier James Ryan* and a multitude of other films.

*How can you develop a peace movement under these circumstances and what role can we play?*

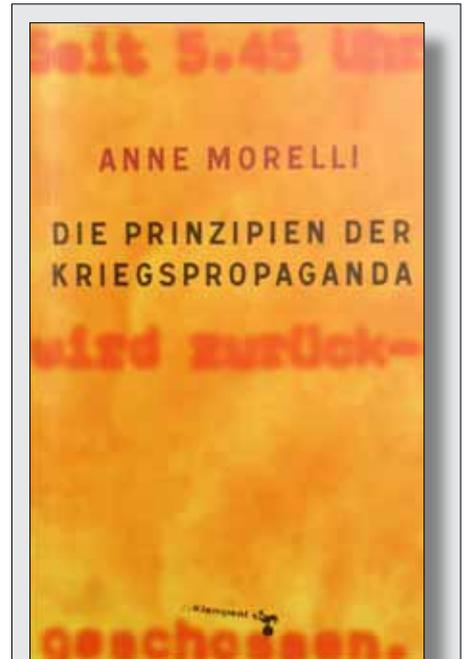
That is very difficult at the moment. This corresponds to the tenth principle: if you ask questions at the time of war, you are already going too far. You are effectively considered an agent of the enemy.

If you ask: “Don't the people in Donbass have the right to be independent like the people in Kosovo?” you are suspected of being an agent of Putin. No, I don't love Putin. But I have no desire for information that is so biased, no desire for information that is ultimately NATO's!

So, what should I do? I have been invited to TV stations several times, and when I asked to project the Europe map of 1989 to show who is moving his pieces towards the other, I was strangely told that there was no need for me to interfere.

I think that in the present time, with such tremendous propaganda, our voice is not being heard.

Nevertheless, one has to see who is encircling whom. It is the NATO troops who are encircling Russia, not the other way round. When a demonstration against the war was held recently, only a few people came. Since the Iraq war until today, there has been a certain discouragement in the peace movement. If you look at the huge demonstrations that took place in Britain and Italy, for example, it hasn't stopped the governments from going to war, despite the reactions of the people.



ISBN 978-3-86674-415-8

“If one wants to weaken the enemy, then one must first portray its leader as incompetent and cast doubt on his trustworthiness and integrity. [...] Then no opportunity must be missed to give the enemy leader demonic features, to present him as a stain to be eradicated, as the last dinosaur, madman, barbarian, as a cunning criminal, butcher, troublemaker, enemy of the human race, monster. As a monster from whom all evil has originated. [...] The technique of diabolising the enemy leader is very efficient and will certainly be used for a long time to come. Citizens and media users obviously need ‘good’ and ‘evil’ that they can clearly identify. The easiest way to achieve this identification is to present the respective ‘devil on duty’ as the new Hitler.” (Morelli, Anne. *Die Prinzipien der Kriegspropaganda*; p. 35 ff and p. 42; translated from the German)

*In an interview with La Libre Belgique, you said that for Biden “China is too big a chunk, which is why an attack on Russia via Nato seems more accessible”. Isn't the reality of a war between the US and Russia exaggerated?*

I don't think Biden will wage it himself, because he promised his voters that he would no longer send US troops directly to the front. But on the one hand he is sending military to countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union, like the Baltic states, Poland, etc. And on the other hand, he hopes that European countries will

continued on page 10

# Political constraints within US inhibit critical thought on Ukraine crisis

by Scott Ritter

Since Russia launched a military operation against Ukraine, the anti-Russia crowd has put forth a narrative constructed around the self-supporting themes of irrationality on the part of Russian President *Vladimir Putin*, and his post-Cold War fantasies of resurrecting the former Soviet Union.

This narrative ignores the reality that, far from acting on a whim, the Russian president is working from a playbook that he initiated as far back as 2007 when he addressed the *Munich security conference* and warned the assembled leadership of Europe of the need for a new security framework to replace an existing unitary system currently in place, built as it was, around a trans-Atlantic alliance (NATO) led by the United States.

Moreover, far from seeking the reconstitution of the former Soviet Union, Putin is simply pursuing a post-Cold War system that protects the interests and security of the Russian people, including those who, through no fault of their own, found themselves residing outside the borders of Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In this day and age of politicised narrative shaping, which conforms to the demands of domestic political imperatives, as opposed to geopolitical reality, fact-based logic is not in vogue. For decades now, the Russian leadership has been confronting a difficult phenomenon where Western democracies, struggling to deal with serious fractures derived from their own internal weakness, produce political leadership lacking in continuity of focus and purpose when it comes to foreign and national security relations.

Because the White House is held hostage to the political constraints imposed by the reality of domestic partisan politics where the adage "It's the economy, stupid" resonates far more than any fact-

based discussion about the relevance of post-Cold War NATO, what passes for a national discussion on the important issues that comprise foreign and national security are, more often than not, reduced to pithy phrases conforming to a need to replace the complexities of a balanced dialogue with a good-versus-evil simplicity more readily digested by an electorate where potholes and tax rates matter more than geopolitical reality. Rather than trying to explain to the American people the historical roots of Putin's concerns with an expanding NATO membership, or the impracticalities associated with any theoretical reconstitution of the former Soviet Union, the US political elite instead define Putin as an autocratic dictator (he is not) possessing grandeur dreams of a Russian-led global empire (no such dreams exist).

It is impossible to reason with a political counterpart whose policy formulations need to conform to ignorance-based narratives. Russia, confronted with the reality that neither the US nor NATO was willing to engage in a responsible discussion about the need for a European security framework that transcended the inherent instability of an expansive NATO seeking to encroach directly on Russia's borders, took measures to change the framework in which such discussions would take place. Russia had been seeking to create a neutral buffer between it and NATO through agreements that would preclude NATO membership for Ukraine, which distanced NATO combat power from its borders by insisting NATO's military-technical capabilities be withdrawn behind NATO's boundaries as they existed in 1997. The US and NATO rejected the very premise of such a dialogue.

The Russian military action toward Ukraine must be evaluated within the context of this reality. By launching a special military operation against Ukraine, Russia is creating a new geopolitical reality that revolves around the creation of a buffer of allied Slavic states (Belarus and Ukraine) that abuts NATO in a manner like the Cold War-era frontier represented by the border separating East and West Germany. Russia has militarised this buffer, creating the conditions for the kind of standoff that existed during the Cold War. The US and NATO will have to adjust to this new reality, spending billions to resurrect a military capability that has atrophied since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Here's the punchline – the likelihood that Europe



Scott Ritter is a former US Marine Corps intelligence officer whose service over a 20-plus-year career included tours of duty in the former Soviet Union implementing arms control agreements, serving on the staff of US Gen. *Norman Schwarzkopf* during the Gulf War and later as a chief weapons inspector with the UN in Iraq from 1991–98.

balks against a resumption of the Cold War is high.

Source: *Global Times* of 24 March 2022, with friendly permission of the author

## Current Concerns

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

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

Editor: Erika Vögeli, Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box 247 CH-9602 Bazenheid

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

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

Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of  
SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of  
SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-  
for all other countries.

Account: Postscheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters to the editor. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *Current Concerns*.

© 2022. All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

"There is no room for ..."

continued from page 9

wage the war against Russia. In this case, Biden would not have to deal with the public opinion. On the contrary, he will gain the reputation for being courageous in the face of the enemy. I am only a historian, but I think that Biden will try to let others fight the war. By the way, the Ukrainians have already received an enormous amount of military equipment.

Source: [www.investigaction.net](http://www.investigaction.net) of 26 February 2022; with friendly permission of the author

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# The Congolese permanent crisis as reflected by the UN

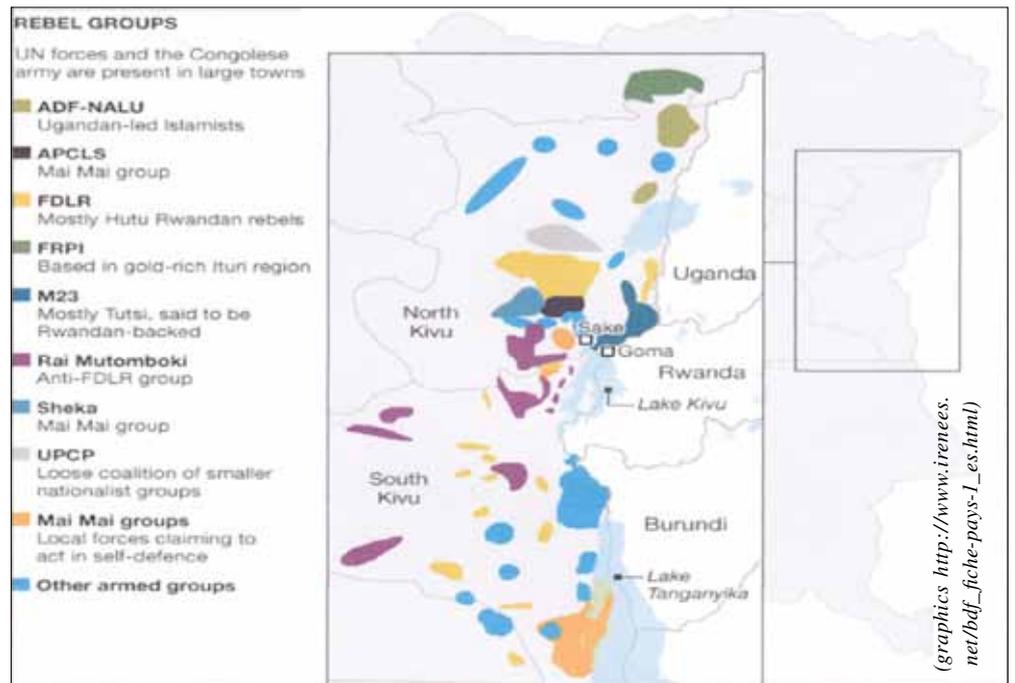
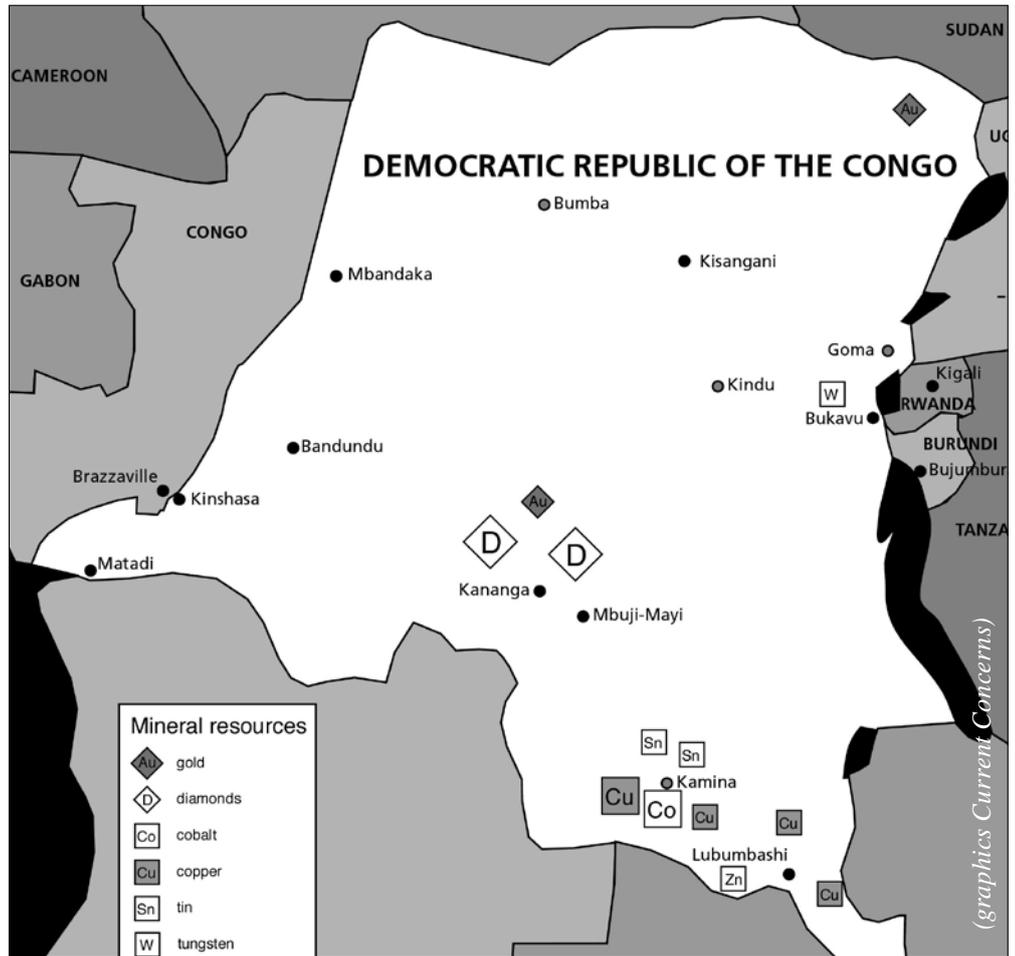
by Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo

A UN expert report from 2021 lists further serious atrocities against the civilian population in eastern Congo. They have completely lost their trust in the government and the international community.

A new UN expert report<sup>1</sup> dated 10 June 2021 describes with all the necessary clarity the suffering that large parts of the population of the Democratic Republic of Congo are still facing daily as a result of the war and the illegal exploitation of its resources – all this despite the fact that they are in view of 20,000 UN officials whose mandate is to ensure the security of the civilian population. The wording of the introduction to this report could not be more accurate, where, among other things, the following sentences, which are heavy in content, are written: “[During the reporting period], the civilian population in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been subjected to constant violence; they have firmly expressed their despair about this to the United Nations Mission for the Stabilisation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), to the international community and to the Congolese government, partly through uprisings and demonstrations, especially since March 2021. During the reporting period, armed groups have been able to operate unhindered in the east of the DRC, apparently with impunity.”

The reporting area covered the eastern Congolese provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu; the first two have been under a state of military emergency since 6 May 2021. Six months later, the initial situation has not only worsened, the number of massacres committed there has even increased by leaps and bounds, as independent reporters confirm: “Attacks over and over again, violations of human rights, corruption” – these are the terms used to describe the situation in eastern Congo, and this time they come from the mouths of Congolese members of parliament. The of the Congolese National Assembly has just submitted a devastating report.”<sup>2</sup> Although many organisa-

continued on page 12



The encircled areas denote territories in South and North Kivu where various non-regular armed groups operate (alongside, with and against regular army units!). Their identity often remains as hidden as their true goals, but not their behaviour bringing death and destruction, creating burning despair everywhere, so that whole swathes of land are depopulated. (pk.)

### "The Congolese permanent crisis ..."

continued from page 11

tions point to the disastrous conclusions of this report, which justifies their identical complaints, the government in Kinshasa remains unmoved. This means nothing else than that the government is shirking its responsibility and that there is no pressure on parliament to change this. In reality, everyone is content with the status quo, thus proving their complicity with those responsible for the drama unfolding in the east of the country. The few energetic interpellations by a few deputies who come from the Eastern territories do not find a hearing or any manifest interest in the Council Chamber. It is indeed the case, and this is confirmed by deputies who are disgusted by the immobility of the parliament, that this body is filled with people who are in cahoots with the president (*Félix Tshisekedi*) and his predecessor and string-puller *Joseph Kabila*, the current "senator for life" [and thus protected from any prosecution!]. Their role is to carry out their instructions and not, as it should be the case in a democratic parliament, to co-sponsor good legislative work and exercise parliamentary control over the executive.

The armed formations that the expert group mentions by name in this context are the following: In the Ituri region and the territories of Irumu and Djugu, these are the *Front de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri* (FRPI), the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* (CODECO), the *Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo* (FPIC); in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, Walikale and the south of Lubero, it is the *Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové* (NDC-R) and the *Collectif des mouvements pour le changement* (CMC); in the Beni region, the *Alliance démocratique de la libération* (ADL); in the high plateau of the territories of Fizi, Uvira and Mwanga, the *Mai-Mai* with the groups *Mai-Mai Yakutumba* and *Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale* as well as the groups *Gumino*, *Twirwaneho*, the *RED-Tabara* and the *Front national de libération* (FNL); as well as the regular Congolese army, the (FARCD).

### Too narrow, too one-sided optics

The report documents battles, massacres of civilians as well as frequent mass deportations of entire populations (expulsion from their ancestral settlements, massing in homeless camps, one should better say concentration camps, which are secretly set up). These misdeeds go hand in hand with illegal arms trafficking, illegal trade with minerals (cassiterite, coltan, tin, tungsten, tantalite, gold, diamonds and other valuable raw materials) – and cocoa.

However, the expert group is guilty of a significant omission. It does not say a word about the devastating role played in this area for many years by the Ugandan, Rwandan, South Sudanese and Burundian army components, who run their own businesses. Thus, the insecurity in this whole area appears in the report to be entirely locally generated. The report does not say a word about its national, regional and international dimensions. The government's appeal to Rwanda and Uganda to help the Democratic Republic of Congo to finally put a stop to this insecurity, which follows this report, sounds like a mockery. It not only proves the powerlessness of the Congolese national army or, better, of the government in Kinshasa (an admission of its defeat, its uselessness), but suggests that the two aforementioned states that militarily attacked the Democratic Republic of Congo [in the two Congo wars of 1996 and 1998 with the deceptive labels AFDL and RCD, and thereafter via a multitude of remote-controlled guerrilla groups with changing names] could be pursuing common interests of their population with the Congolese government. This is ludicrous in view of the real situation.

### The rule of lies

Because the fact is: The Rwandan and Ugandan armed forces never left Congolese territory at all, even though the *Pretoria Global and Inclusive Agreement* of 17 December 2002 (*Accord global et inclusif*, AGI) required them to do so. Allowing the Rwandan and Ugandan armed forces to officially re-establish themselves on Congolese territory out of this situation<sup>3</sup> meant that they can concentrate even more forces in the areas that the two states want to take for themselves. In other words, they want to use force to restore the situation that prevailed in the days from January 1999-June 2003 (we have terrible memories of them!) of the unrestricted rule of the RCD (*Rassemblement congolais pour la Démocratie*). The Second Congo War (1998-2003) resulted in the division of Eastern Congo by the Rwandan-Ugandan-Burundian aggressors into two militarily occupied zones of influence, one Ugandan and one Rwandan, with Kanyabayonga as the demarcation point, with Uganda controlling the Great North (Grand Nord) area and the former Nande territory with the Ituri area, and Rwanda controlling the rest of North Kivu as well as South Kivu. This is exactly what the recent intensified militarisation of these areas achieves, for it is an absurdity that the small armed resistance groups of Rwandan provenance (FDLR, FOCA) and Ugandan-origin militants (ADF<sup>4</sup>, LRA, NALU) are picked out as the only ones and the main sources

of insecurity in eastern Congo and are seen as having the power to pose serious threats to the dictatorial regimes of *Paul Kagame* (Rwanda) and *Yoweri Kaguta Museveni* (Uganda). So far, these groups have (since 1999) never attacked Rwandan or Ugandan territory and generally nothing has changed, namely that it is the Rwandan and Ugandan army that rules freely in eastern Congo (thanks to their autonomous brigades and their additional militias) and that it is their figures who sit at the levers of power in Kinshasa. What military strength do these small groups represent that they could challenge the combined military might of FARDC, MONUSCO, AFRICOM and the armies of Rwanda and Uganda? None at all! Why then Rwanda's and Uganda's call for Kenya to join their side as well in the fight against the armed gangs, simultaneously with the repeated declarations by Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo and his palace guards who never tire of proclaiming that the state of emergency has produced its fruits? These small armed groups from abroad only offer Kigali and Kampala the pretext to justify their interventions in consultation with the big multinational raw material consortia and their permanent occupation of Congolese territory, all this while Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo lies to the Congolese people like a trooper.

### It is indispensable to look behind the scenes

All those who care about the real situation, including the UN Security Council, know perfectly well that Uganda and Rwanda finance and supply arms to the following groups (and we quote only a few of them): the CODECO, URDPC, FPIC, CMC, ADF, the M23; the NDC, NDC-R, the *Raia Mutomboki*, the CNPSC, the *Gumino*, *Twigwaneho*, *RED-Tabara* and the FNL. Do they want to refrain from doing so under the given circumstances? That would be naively taken to the extreme, for they have other trump cards in the contested territory, as the UN report confirms (see maps). It is even more likely that everything will remain as it is because the profits that some of these groups make from the illegal trade in stolen valuable raw materials are not enough to provide them with all the ammunition they need. It is an open secret that they act as intermediaries between the two neighbouring countries and Western mineral multinationals.

One must try to see clearly in this deliberately created confusion. The following excerpt from the report of an impartial observer, who sees things in the context of the overarching cold war

continued on page 13

**"The Congolese permanent crisis ..."**

continued from page 12

which by now takes place between the former comrades-in-arms Rwanda and Uganda, can help: "On the night of 30 November 2021, the surprising [Ugandan] raid with aerial bombardments, accompanied by artillery fire, inflicted heavy casualties on the Rwandan forces of the RDF [*Rwandan Defence Forces*, official name of the Rwandan army since 2002]. They had been operating covertly in the border zones of Beni and the Ituri, disguising themselves as ADF groups [...] In the area of Nobili, Kamanogo and Semliki, almost the entire ADF infrastructure was destroyed. It had been built by Rwanda. The Rwandan survivors of the attack, as well as the injured, were rescued by Ugandan military personnel, who in return received important military indications from them. The injured were cared for in army hospitals of the UPDF [*Ugandan People's Defence Forces*, Ugandan army] and now continue to be available to the Ugandan army as informants. [...] Paul Kagame, wounded in his pride by the destruction of the military bases he built in the Beni and the Ituri area, now wants to take revenge on

Uganda by terrorising eastern Congo with waves of assassinations. The Ugandan newspaper confirms that Rwanda is now also recruiting splinter groups of the FDLR opposed to Kagame, which are surprisingly attacking units of the Ugandan army."<sup>5</sup>

Kinshasa (especially Joseph Kabila and Félix Tshisekedi), AFRICOM [NATO's headquarters for Africa], MONUSCO [the UN Security Mission for Congo] and certain circles of the Nande elite (including *Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi*, *Julien Paluku Kahongya* and other members of the PPRD [*Parti Populaire pour la Réconstruction et la Démocratie*, Kagame-friendly party in North Kivu]), who have good relations with Kigali, are likely to be well informed about these activities of the Rwandan army in the above-mentioned heavily affected areas in eastern Congo.

The Congolese are stunned to see their country going down this hellish ride.<sup>6</sup> They feel abandoned by their political leaders and the international "community", of which they are not really a part. On the contrary, Rwanda and MONUSCO often pass the ball to each other, one using the other as an excuse for its

apparent inability to do its part to restore peace and protect civilians. It sounds like washing one's hands of the matter when the UN envoy stresses in a report on MONUSCO's effectiveness that "the challenges faced by the government in implementing the state of emergency in Ituri and North Kivu provinces highlight the limitations of a purely military solution for the protection of civilians and the neutralisation of armed groups". This was said by the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, *Bintou Keita*, during a report on the situation in Congo at the Security Council in December 2021, stressing that the period of the state of emergency declared in May 2021 has led to a 10 % increase in human rights violations and abuses in the country compared to the previous situation, as well as crimes in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, most of which are attributable to both armed groups and the security forces themselves. The UN-authorised observer said: "A sustainable solution to the problem of violence requires a broader political commitment to address the root causes of the conflicts. For stability to return to eastern Congo, the state must be able to regain and maintain the confidence of the population in its ability to protect, administer and enforce law and justice and to meet their immediate needs."<sup>7</sup> This in a situation where many Congolese and honest observers of the situation believe that MONUSCO is really there to protect the interests of a Western world controlled by the US and those of its two tributary states, Rwanda and Uganda: "In the DRC, the strategic priorities are not to ensure the protection of the population in the east of the country from the threat of terrorist attacks by the ADF/NALU (see graphic), but to isolate and defeat them," as the UN Secretary-General *António Guterres* has pointed out.

#### **MONUSCO does not do what it was created for**

On the contrary, MONUSCO has been playing a completely different, highly questionable role in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 2006, which consists of providing a security guarantee exclusively to the Tutsi population in North Kivu (on the background of the Hutu-Tutsi problem in eastern Congo, see also *Küpfer, Peter. The delusion of supremacy sabotages the dialogue of peoples. On the contribution of Prof. Dr. Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo at the annual conference Mut zur Ethik 2021. In: Current Concerns Special Supplement No. 25/26, 2021*). Thus, the United Nations and with it the international community have clearly taken the side of one (war) party in this conflict: They only

continued on page 14

#### **Sober language – unbearable reality. Remedy remains urgent.**

Even if such things have difficulty penetrating our consciousness, especially in view of today's predominant focus on just one war theatre in our war-ravaged world: Another UN expert report on the desperate situation of the civilian population in war-torn Eastern Congo has been published, ordered by the Security Council, compiled by proven experts to the best of their knowledge and conscience and delivered on schedule. It lists in sober, factual language what the populations living there have been subjected to for almost three decades now: They are men, women, children, defencelessly at the mercy of a mostly anonymous soldiery that robs, murders, sets fires, rapes and tortures, and this for 26 years now, depending on the territory practically permanently, and above all with impunity, as the report already states in the first sentences. And this under the eyes of the world's largest UN mission, which since the precarious "peace" agreements of Lusaka and Sun City (almost 20 years ago!) has had the task of protecting the civilian population from precisely such conditions. Furthermore, members of the UN troops, as well as elements of the Congolese army and its gendarmerie are, as the report testifies, directly or indirectly involved in some of these atrocities. In this context, *Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo* insistently points out that this report is also too narrowly focused.

Although by now it is known and witnessed that clients, profiteers and also actors of the apparently never-ending atrocities sit at the top of the governments of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda (also in Western executive floors and circles of power) and orchestrate them, this report also misses the true realities and confines itself to soberly and statistically listing the human victims they claim. Nevertheless, the red carpet is still rolled out for the real perpetrators by Western governments, especially by those who want to loudly defend threatened human rights everywhere in the world. How long should this active turning a blind eye last, this failure of every right, this disgrace of humanity? How many more reports will it take? They do not reduce the despair of the population affected. It has become routine. So has the shrugging of shoulders at a few sober six- or ten-liners in our major leading media. The delusion of the supremacy of so-called world powers has been an impact here for decades and disturbs the non-violent relations of peoples and states, as Professor *Bucyalimwe* once again impressively testified in his contribution to last year's conference "Mut zur Ethik" (cf. on this and on the world political background *Current Concerns Special Supplement No. 25/26, 2021*).

*Peter Küpfer*

### "The Congolese permanent crisis ..."

continued from page 13

support Rwanda and thus not the Congolese patriotic forces, their local communities and civil society actors in their struggle against the prevailing insecurity in eastern Congo. This one-sidedness also includes Washington's support according to the "Tripartite Plus 1" formula, which is entirely in line with US strategic objectives. Under his leadership, an alliance of the three main regional military actors was created, initially consisting of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda [all under the political rule of the Tutsi and Hima ethnic minorities in Uganda], until it was expanded to include Uganda, an alliance often referred to as "Tripartite Plus 1". The aim of this alliance was to guarantee the security of this predominance. If the international press is to be believed, in particular the German "Tageszeitung" in its edition of 3 November 2007, the American scenario contains various proposals deposited by the Washington diplomats in the Great African Lakes region with all their interlocutors. One of these concepts was that the American presence was a guarantee for the Tutsis in North Kivu. This is indeed an elegant version of "giving this ethnic community a special statute and thus opposing it to other ethnic groups in the DRC".<sup>8</sup>

#### Where is the solution?

So once again the Congolese are left in the lurch. To seek salvation within themselves is certainly not wrong. But the main effort is still to ensure that the Congolese people produce leaders who, from the bottom of their hearts, hold high the flag of the country's real liberation, which consists precisely in freeing themselves from the current rulers at the top. They have no real democratic legitimacy and are driven by everything but love for their country and its people. •

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Security Council. Rapport du Groupe d'experts sur la République démocratique du Congo (S/2021/560) New York, 10 June 2021; Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo. (<https://www.undocs.org/fr/S/2021/560>) [The full text of the document is available in English and French at this link]. See also, same source: Rapport du Secrétaire général; S/2021/987

<sup>2</sup> "RD Congo; rapport accablant sur l'état de siège" (TV5 Monde, 31 October 2021).

<sup>3</sup> "The Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi authorised the Ugandan army on 29 November 2021 to cross the border into the Congo to fight the group responsible for the massacres in eastern Congo (the ADF, Allied Democratic Forces) [...] Many of the Congolese themselves do not agree with this and point to the sad role that Ugandan and Rwandan combat units from the two neighbouring states have played in destabilising eastern Congo over the last 30 years. (see "L'armée ougandaise procède à des frappes aériennes sur des positions ADF en RDC", France 24, 30/11/2021) Worse still, Félix Tshisekedi Tschilombo also authorised the Rwandan police units to be active in Goma, at the very time when the airline Rwanda Air has chosen Goma as its hub for international flights. (see on this: "Police Rwandaise à Goma, la souveraineté de la RdCongo bafouée?", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tax3mD8SPdA>)

<sup>4</sup> Behind the ADF designation are covert Rwandan combat units as well as certain disaffiliations of the FDLR [Front Démocratique pour la Libération du Rwanda, armed Hutu opposition with the original aim of overthrowing the Kagame regime in Rwanda, today parts have broken away from this objective and are pursuing their own interests].

<sup>5</sup> Pascal Masumbko. "SOS: RDC/OUGANDA/RWANDA. Les ingrédients d'une guerre froide Kampal-Kigali"; <https://benilubero.com/s-os-rdc-ouganda-rwanda-les-ingredients-dune-guerre-froide-kampala-kigali/>

<sup>6</sup> In this context, the former Rwandan ambassador Jean-Marie Vianney Ndagijimana (now emigrated and a weighty voice among those who have the courage to call the crimes of the Kagame dictatorship by name) testifies to the following particularly oppressive circumstance: According to him, 250 inmates were taken by night from the prison in Cyangugu [Rwandan border town opposite Bukavu] to North Kivu, where they had to fill up the thinned ranks of the ADF. The witness further states that this type of operation is carried out regularly. Finally, he testifies that the ADF today is nothing more than the extended arm of the Rwandan army in eastern Congo. (Cf. Vague d'arrestations. Paul Kagame a peur et intensifie les crimes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rw9LbZeVZg>, visited 20/10/2021)

The fact that the state of emergency imposed on the territory favours such events fits the sad role played so far by the incumbent Congolese president, Félix Tshisekedi. Other witnesses report that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) takes prisoners from Rwandan prisons to the above-mentioned areas of eastern Congo, has them killed there and then passes them off as members of the FDLR killed in fighting. Source Iryavuzwe rirashye - RPF mu marebera, *Isinijuru* tv. [Rwandan opposition TV station] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Pug\\_P7qPZk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Pug_P7qPZk), (visited by author on 15/12/2021)

<sup>7</sup> "For stability to return to eastern DRC, civilian confidence must first be regained, UN envoy says." In: *ONU-Info* (fr.) of 06/12/2021.

<sup>8</sup> see "Sharing DRC: MONUSCO, a security guarantee for the 'Tutsis in North Kivu'", in: *La Prunelle DRC*, 1/2/2021. For more details see Bucyalimwe



pk. Grown up as a simple farmer's son in the hilly region of North Kivu, Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo overcame, still in Mobutu times, all the hurdles of a then extremely difficult university career. After graduation, this was interrupted by doctorate and post-doctorate semesters at American universities. During his many years of teaching at higher education institutes of the Kivu, Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo continued his research on the subject to which his dissertation was already dedicated: the harmful influences of foreign interests on his homeland. His clear language created for him an increasingly brazen opprobrium.

When, in autumn 1996, the murderous mercenary hordes of AFDL under the straw man Laurent Desiré Kabila first captured Goma, then Bukavu and specifically detained the Congolese patriots or killed them on open streets (such as the courageous Archbishop Christophe Munzihirwa, revered by the people of Kivu), it was reported to Bucyalimwe that his name was the second (next to the archbishop) on their death lists. This was followed by six months hiding in the AFDL occupied Bukavu, then a long escape, which finally led him to Antwerp. Here he worked at the *Research Institute of the Great African Lakes Region* (University of Antwerp) where he built up his second scientific existence.

Numerous studies, research reports and analyses are proof of his now worldwide respected (and feared by his opponents) publications on the current state of the suffering of his homeland.

imwe Mararo Stanislas: 'Prévention du génocide des Tutsi en RDC: une politique très dangereuse', in: *Masisi et Rutshru dans la dynamique nationale et régionale (1993–2009)*. Editions Universitaires Européennes, 2009.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# No human being must be forgotten

by Moritz Nestor

He was emotionally shocked when he found his first dead body. “The fact that they are lying here, unburied, unknown soldiers”, moves the young Russian deeply. The remains of a man from an unmarked grave lie in front of him and a group of other “searchers”, as they call themselves, who dig for fallen soldiers from the Second World War close to Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad). They don’t know anything about him yet, not even his nationality.

The searchers are volunteers. The “Great Patriotic War” has been over for 75 years. The fact that people are simply buried Russian soil, unofficially and unknown, and unremembered – that alone motivated this Russian to join “searchers”.

What an amazing testimony of human greatness in the midst of a world full of violence and ridiculous banalities. What an amazing testimony of the strength of the human heart this man radiates. We humans can also be like that, I think as I listen to him, unless some imperious idea kills compassion: that we are “God’s own nation”, a “chosen people”, on the “right side of history”, or belong to a superior “race”, and so on. Recent history has produced many varieties of this striving for power.

We humans can also be like this young Russian who thinks of the human being. It is within our nature. It is only a question of how we choose to live our human nature.

This “seeker” is not wealthy, you can see that. But he has enough to live. And he does not regret giving something to others. It is something more precious than power and money that drives him across the Russian steppes and over the blood-soaked battlefields of Stalingrad: It crushes his heart that the dead are forgotten. They should at least be given back their names. Later the parents of the dead man were identified, and their son was rightfully buried. The dead man has his name back.

At the Russian’s words, my thoughts wander back to childhood when one begins to see everything with somewhat more sceptical eyes than before when evil spirits still lived in the walls of the dark cellar and invisible forces were omnipresent. At that time, we had Protestant religious instruction with Pastor *Hartlieb* who once tried to make us understand what “eternal life” is. We young people wanted an answer to this question: How should the finite, mortal human being imagine what is eternal, what is infinite?

“You know,” began the tall, broad man in his robe and bands with great seriousness, “when you lose your father or your mother or someone close to you whom

---

“Nothing is more lacking in our time, driven by the desire for power, than this humane attitude in thinking, feeling and acting: Everything that is individual and everything that is political lives from whether it is for the person or against him. We could all live like that Russian who cannot stand the fact that people are forgotten. He is a human being like us.”

---

you love very, very much, you never forget that person. Do you? That dear person will always live on in you. But it is a different ‘life’ from when that person was alive, flesh and blood. Nevertheless, he is alive in you. And I believe that ‘eternal life’ means that just as each of us does not forget those whom he loves and who pass away, that in exactly the same way, but to a much greater extent, the infinitely kind God does not forget any of us human beings who have ever been born and will ever be born, even if that person has died. That is how great his goodness is. Because we are his children and because every human being is born innocent and therefore somewhere always lovable as this creature of God. Even though he may have gone down bad paths later in life.” Pastor *Hartlieb*, who died, still lives as a part of me today, lives his image of “eternal life” and what it has made of me. This pastor awakened something new in me at that time: people must not be forgotten. I never thought about that before.

I was introverted for days after that religious lesson, thinking about who among those I knew would not be forgotten.

I have never forgotten my school friend *Gabi*, ever since she played Mother Mary so lifelike – although she was not yet a mother! – and shed motherly tears when she protected her baby *Jesus* from the *Herod’s* henchmen in the nativity play in such a lifelike way that it didn’t even occur to you that her tears could be an act! I haven’t forgotten my good-natured school friend *Otto*. Principal *Bauer* beat him through the corridors of the school because of some foolishness, past the open classrooms where our hearts contracted and no one followed the teacher any more. I wonder who actually could forget Principal *Bauer*? The two people who saved my life as a young student, I have never forgotten them beyond their deaths.

The founder of individual psychology, *Alfred Adler*, answered the question of who would be forgotten by posterity and who would not: Those would be immortal among us humans who left behind contributions to humanity for the good of the human community. The millennia-old Chinese humanist *Confucius*, whose de-

scendants still live as a large family in a valley with his tomb, is such an immortal. When asked by a student what compassion was, Confucius replied: “charity”. The founder of Christianity came later and also gave humanity this immortal gift of charity and hope. I personally remember a craftsman who paused while repairing damaged water pipes in his community because he realised that the pipes had been doing their job for three generations: “I admire my ancestors,” he said, “that they worked so far ahead without any personal benefit. They thought not only of themselves, but always of those who came after them.” Alfred Adler called this attitude “*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*” (sense of community/community spirit).

Nothing is more lacking in our time, driven by the desire for power, than this humane attitude in thinking, feeling and acting: Everything that is individual and everything that is political lives from whether it is for the person or against him. We could all live like that Russian who cannot stand the fact that people are forgotten. He is a human being like us. A different country. The same compassionate nature.

The great thinker of humanity *Johann Gottfried Herder*, who died on 18 December 1803 in Weimar, sought an alliance between progressive intellectuals and the “common” people: “You philosopher and you plebeian: make a covenant to become useful.” Humanitarianism could not live without a closeness to the people and an interest in the peculiarities of the people and the peoples – with heart and mind, Herder said. “I must speak to the people in their language, in their way of thinking, in their sphere” and educate “with philosophical spirit the human being in self-thinking and in the feeling of virtue” as well as “the patriot, the citizen who acts there”. This is what Herder’s “How can the truths of philosophy become more general and useful for the best of the people” is telling us.

Herder’s humanitarian thinking belongs to the unfortunately forgotten cultural heritage of the German people. But one should not complain about oblivion. For Herder’s work is an immortal gift and an unredeemed legacy to posterity. And that is us. •

# German-Russian town twinning – bridges between the peoples must not be broken

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

*Current Concerns has repeatedly reported on the human and political significance and various projects of German-Russian town twinning. Considerable pressure is being exerted on them to break off their ties – and not just since 24 February. Increasingly, hostility towards Russians is also spreading.*

Although in many areas of society: Culture, sport, music, science, politics, media – fuelled by an unbearable media hype (war propaganda) – in an indescribable rush and almost competitively existing connections to Russia were broken off, there are people with a spine who maintain the friendly relations between people, offices and organisations of different German and Russian cities that have been carefully, personally and lovingly built up over decades. There are over 100 town twinning arrangements.

The President of the Deutscher Städtetag (Association of German Cities), Lord Mayor *Markus Lewe* from Münster, emphasised his decision not to cut the diplomatic thread at the municipal level.

He told the *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland* (rnd): “I strongly advise against ending twinning arrangements with Russian cities now. Because here the connections are people-to-people, not at the state level.” Dialogue would create trust and understanding. “In this sense, town twinings can send peace signals and have a de-escalating effect.”

As Lord Mayor of the city of Münster, he had already addressed a personal letter to his counterpart *Yulia Rokottanskaya* in Münster’s Russian twin city Ryazan on 25 January: “I am following the extremely difficult situation with great concern. I feel a great need to use this letter to reassure our friendship and our solidarity with the city of Ryazan and its people.” Town twinning had already made an important contribution in the past to the reconciliation of people after the Second World War. “I am grateful for the strong, friendly and trusting bond that has connected the people of Ryazan and Münster for 33 years. It is a stable foundation for our relations even in difficult political times.” Markus Lewe addressed the 500,000 citizens of the city of Ryazan with a video message: “Many people in Europe are worried [...]. That’s why it is a matter close to my heart to make it clear, especially now, how important our friendship is,” Lewe said in the video. The people of Münster had always experienced hospitality and responsibility in Ryazan. “Especially now we have to



*Signing of the 112<sup>th</sup> German-Russian town twinning agreement between Innopolis and Elgersburg at the German-Russian town twinning conference in Düren in 2019. (Picture Rudi Böhmer/Düren district)*

stick together. Perhaps we will succeed in sending a sign of peace,” said Lewe in his video message.

According to a survey by *Der Spiegel* among 82 German cities that maintain partnerships with Russian cities, none had basically ended them. 44 cities said they maintained the partnership, including Braunschweig, Berlin and Cottbus, as well as Fulda, Bad Homburg and Offenbach.

In some cities, the citizens are really fighting to maintain their partnership, for example in Erlangen or Düsseldorf. Wolfsburg also maintains its connection with Tolyatti, as does Gera with Pskov, Suhl with Kaluga; Villingen-Schwenningen also maintains its partnership with Tula, as does Krefeld with Ulyatovsk. The Lord Mayor of Stuttgart, *Frank Nopper*, also maintains the 30-year town twinning with Samara, despite the fact that the Ukrainian Consul General had called for its dismantling.

*Thomas Kufen*, Lord Mayor of the city of Essen, which has had a partnership with Nizhny Novgorod for 30 years, writes to his counterpart *Yuri Shalabayev*, Mayor of the city of Nizhny Novgorod, on 18 March: “Together I would like to build on the good partnership relations and work together towards a peaceful solution for Ukraine, Russia and Europe. I am convinced that the cooperation so far within the framework of our town twinning has shown what is possible in terms of international understanding and economic, scientific and cultural cooperation.” [...]

With each passing day, it becomes more difficult to successfully reject public demands to break off partnership relations. Like the *Association of German Cities*, I have spoken out in favour of not ending the twinning arrangements with

Nizhny Novgorod and with Russian cities. Because here, the relations are from human to human, not at the state level. In this sense, city diplomacy can send peace signals and have a de-escalating effect. We appeal to our twin city Nizhny Novgorod to do everything together to restore and preserve peace.”

The lively town twinning of Vladimir/Erlangen has existed for almost 40 years and has received many awards, in 2002 from the then Federal President *Johannes Rau*. Before Corona, there were over a hundred exchanges a year, of choirs, sports teams and school classes, with thousands of citizens taking part every year, as former social mayor *Elisabeth Preuss* emphasised at a rally for the continuation of the partnership. In 2018, German Foreign Minister *Maas* and Russian Foreign Minister *Lavrov* honoured the partnership blog with a certificate of thanks. The motion by two Erlangen city councillors to “put the partnership to the test” led to lively discussions and rallies. At the city council meeting on 1 April, a resolution to continue the twinning was adopted almost unanimously. For the Lord Mayor *Florian Janik*, the dialogue of citizens across borders and cultures remains central.

The city of Gera has two Russian town twinning agreements with Rostov-on-Don (34 years) and with Pskov (26 years). As Lord Mayor *Julian Vonarb* emphasised to the “*Ostthüringer Zeitung*” on 16 March, Gera’s ties to the Russian cities remain unbroken. “Because trust and responsibility are the anchor that holds us together permanently.” For the friendly relations, which are based on appreciation, mutual respect and grown trust, it would be “a fatal sign to dissolve the partnerships”.