

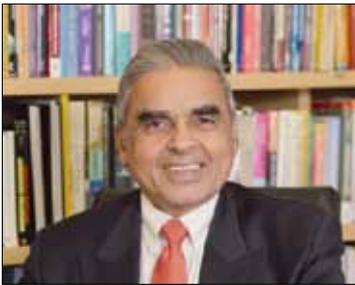
Current Concerns

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*

Where are the peacemakers?

by Kishore Mahbubani*, Singapore



Kishore Mahbubani (picture ma)

The West was prompt in condemning the invasion of Ukraine as illegal under international law. Reflecting on when this war actually began, however, takes a little longer. And it will take a little longer for the West to start thinking more about why “the rest” of the world – after all, the vast majority of the world’s population – is observing the war from a completely different perspective than “the West”. Kishore Mahbubani is one of those who have been warning for years that the mentality of Western dominance leads to a dead end and that cooperation would be a far more intelligent way of approaching global problems and challenges. The sooner Western politics realises this, the fewer victims the unstoppable transition to a multipolar world will entail. However, a Western policy that still considers itself superior, unique, indispensable – and believes it is entitled to kill because it represents “the good” – will result in much suffering. The list of victims already runs into millions.

Erika Vögeli

The iron law of geopolitics

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is illegal and has to be condemned by the international community. And it has been condemned. As a former Ambassador to the United Nations, I fully understand and support the need to protect the principles of the UN Charter. Yet, in geopolitics we must always do two things simultaneously. We must moralise. And we must analyse. Since geopolitics is a cruel game and fol-

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“This may well be the most important lesson that the world should learn from the Ukraine episode. Wars are tragic, as they always have been. Peace must be preserved. And the world needs to develop a class of globally respected statesmen who could emerge as global peace-makers.”

lows the cold and ruthless logic of power, we must be cold, dispassionate and hard-headed in our analysis. The only iron law of geopolitics is that it punishes those who are naïve and ignore its cold logic.

So, could we have predicted this war in Ukraine? And could we have prevented it? The simple answer to both these questions is yes. Indeed, many leading statesmen in the West correctly predicted this disaster in Ukraine.

Probably the greatest strategic thinker that the US produced in the 20th century was *George Kennan*. He fashioned the famous containment strategy which ultimately succeeded in defeating the Soviet Union. He passed away on 17 March 2005.

Despite clear warnings from leading US thinkers

On 21 February 2022, the famous “New York Times” correspondent, *Tom Friedman*, requoted at great length what George Kennan told him in 1998. When asked about the impact of the expansion of NATO into former areas of the Soviet

Union, he said, very presciently, “I think it is the beginning of a new cold war. I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else. This expansion would make the founding fathers of this country turn over in their graves.”

So why did NATO continue expanding despite the clear warnings of George Kennan? In some ways, the correct answer was also endorsed by George Kennan. On 1 December 1997, the famous and legendary editor of the magazine *The National Interest* *Owen Harries* wrote an article explaining why NATO expansion was unwise and then gave the reasons why it was happening. He cited several reasons, but let me just quote the first two: “the strength of the Polish-American vote, as well as that of other Americans of Central and East European origin” and “the enormous vested interests—careers, contracts, consultancies, accumulated exper-

continued on page 2

George F. Kennan* on NATO’s eastward expansion: “The most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era.”

“In late 1996, the impression was allowed, or caused, to become prevalent that it had been somehow and somehow decided to expand NATO up to Russia’s borders.[...]

But something of the highest importance is at stake here.

And perhaps it is not too late to advance a view that, I believe, is not only mine alone but is shared by a number of others with extensive and in most instances more recent experience in Russian matters. The view, bluntly stated, is that expanding NATO would be the

most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era.”

George F. Kennan. “A fateful Error”. In: “New York Times” of 5 February 1997

* George Frost Kennan (* 16 February 1904 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; † 17 March 2005 in Princeton, New Jersey) was an American historian and diplomat. He was the spiritual father of the US containment policy against the Soviet Union (Containment) during the Cold War. Between 1926 and 1961, he worked for the United States Department of State, including in Moscow, Berlin, Prague, Lisbon and London.

Swiss neutrality – a first-class peace project

by Dr phil. René Roca, Research Institute for Direct Democracy (www.fidd.ch)

Once again, Swiss neutrality is under intense pressure. This was most recently the case in the early 1990s, after the end of the “Cold War”. At that time, the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the “end of history”. He referred to Hegel’s philosophy of history, which actually leads to an end in the sense of a final synthesis, where, according to Fukuyama, there are no more world political contradictions, there is only peace and democracy. Fukuyama first published his thesis in the summer of 1989 and was refuted as early as in

January 1991, when a coalition of war-willing countries, led by the USA, initiated the First Gulf War. Switzerland’s neutrality policy went into a tailspin, and it finally abandoned its integral neutrality and took part in the economic sanctions against Iraq. Since then, Switzerland has been applied differential neutrality, while the USA has been waging war almost permanently. Now, in view of the Ukraine war, Swiss neutrality is once again in the focus of world politics and is in danger of becoming completely empty of content.

Definition, content and goals

Basically, neutrality means the non-participation of a state in a war of other states. In this sense, examples of neutrality can already be found in the *Old Testament*, in Greek and Roman antiquity, in the Middle Ages and in early modern times. Switzerland has practised neutrality since the early modern period and has contributed significantly to shaping its content. In retrospect, the history of Swiss neutrality is a success story for the state itself, for Europe and also globally, even if ruptures and contra-

continued on page 3

“Where are the peacemakers?”

continued from page 1

ture—represented by the NATO establishment, which now needed a new reason and purpose to justify the organization’s continued existence”.

In short, short-term domestic political interests of gaining voters and narrow economic interests trumped geopolitical wisdom. Immediately, after Owen Harries published this article, George Kennan immediately wrote a letter endorsing all the points made by Owen Harries. He said “It was in some respects a surprise because certain of your major arguments were ones I myself had made, or had wanted to make, but had not expected to see them so well expressed by the pen of anyone else.”

What is striking about the project to expand NATO is that many leading American thinkers, both liberal and conservative, opposed it, including *Paul Nitze, James Schlesinger, Fred Ikle, John Mearsheimer, Jack Matlock, William Perry, Stephen Cohen, Bill Burns, Vladimir Pozner, Bob Gates, Robert McNamara, Bill Bradley, Gary Hart, Pat Buchanan, Jeffrey Sachs,* and *Fiona Hill* among others.

Kissinger: “To Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country”

The greatest living strategic thinker in the US today is *Henry Kissinger*. He didn’t oppose the expansion of NATO to the former Warsaw Pact states of Eastern Europe. But he strongly counselled against admitting Ukraine into NATO. As a good student of history, Kissinger pointed out why Ukraine was viewed differently by Russians. In a 2014 article published in the *Washington Post*, this is what Kissinger said, “The West must understand that, to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country. Russian history began in what was called *Keivan-Rus*. The Russian religion spread from there. Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before then. Some of the most important battles for Russian freedom, start-

ing with the Battle of Poltava in 1709, were fought on Ukrainian soil.”

As a wise statesman, Kissinger proposed a sensible compromise solution. On the one hand, he said, “Ukraine should have the right to choose freely its economic and political associations, including with Europe.” On the other hand, he said (in 2014), “Ukraine should not join NATO, a position I took seven years ago, when it came up.”

The real tragedy about Ukraine is that if the then American President, *Barack Obama* (a Nobel Peace Prize winner) had heeded the advice of *Henry Kissinger*, the war in Ukraine could have been avoided. Kissinger’s formula emphasised that the Ukrainians would be free to choose their own political system and regional associations.

Indeed, the strong Ukrainian resistance to the Russian invasion was not anticipated. This strong resistance confirms their strong desire to join the European Union. And they should be allowed to do so. And, as advised by Kissinger, Ukraine can stay out of NATO and remain “neutral”. In the past ‘neutral’ states were allowed to join the European Union. Ukraine could follow that precedent. Such a win-win solution could have prevented a war. Indeed, two days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, *President Zelensky* (who has emerged as a real hero after the invasion) said, “We are not afraid of Russia, we are not afraid of engaging in talks with Russia, we are not afraid of discussing anything, such as security guarantees for our state, we are not afraid of talking about neutral status.” If neutral status had been agreed to, the war could have been avoided.

The world needs globally respected statesmen as peacemakers

When future historians write about this Ukraine episode, one big question they will surely ask is why the clear and explicit warnings of leading Western states-

men, like *Kennan* and *Kissinger*, were ignored? They will also ask why our world doesn’t have distinguished peacemakers today who could have prevented the conflict.

This may well be the most important lesson that the world should learn from the Ukraine episode. Wars are tragic, as they always have been. Peace must be preserved. And the world needs to develop a class of globally respected statesmen who could emerge as global peace-makers.

Curiously, we used to have such globally respected statesmen, including people like *Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan* and *Desmond Tutu*. Many of them were members of a council of “The Elders” which has tried to provide calm and sensible advice from time to time. Clearly, we seem to lack such distinguished statesmen today.

Provocative suggestions from the USA that could lead to another war

And the risks continue to grow. Recently, the former US Secretary of State, *Mike Pompeo* said in Taiwan that the US should “immediately take necessary, and long-overdue, steps to do the right and obvious thing, that is to offer the Republic of China (Taiwan) America’s diplomatic recognition as a free and sovereign country.” One doesn’t have to be a geopolitical genius to figure out that his prescription would lead to a war over Taiwan.

Since his provocative suggestion could lead to a war, a war that could be even more destructive than the war in Ukraine, one would expect a global chorus of voices to emerge and condemn the reckless statement of *Mike Pompeo* which could lead to a war.

So far, I have not heard any leading voice on our planet condemn his statement. And that’s the nub of our global problem. Where are the global peacemakers when we need them more than ever? •

Quelle: <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/app-essay-kishore-mahbubani-4/>

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“Swiss neutrality ...”

continued from page 2

dictions can be identified time and again. The citizens of Switzerland have had to assure themselves of the value of neutrality over and over in the course of time, and in this way they have been able to secure their country’s existence and keep war at bay. Other countries do not always have much sympathy for Swiss neutrality. However, Switzerland’s humanitarian commitment has often noticeably mitigated their criticism. This commitment has been particularly evident in the work of the *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)* and in Switzerland’s Good Offices. The preservation of internal and external peace as well as the common good can be deduced from history as its central goal.

“Sitting still” as the hallmark of the old federal neutrality

Neutrality developed gradually as the Swiss Confederation grew from 1291 onwards. In the course of this development, domestic as well as foreign policy reasons always remained the important driving force. For example, when Basel joined the Confederation in 1501, the new ally was obliged to “sit still” and to mediate in the event of conflicts between the communities, the “places”. The experiences of the Eight Old Places had led to these demands, which furthered peaceful coexistence and constructive cooperation. A foreign policy experience that caused a fundamental turnaround was the defeat in the Battle of Marignano in 1515. This disastrous war led to the consolidation of the federal structure of the Confederation and to the rejection of a purposeful, comprehensive federal expansionist policy. “Sitting still” and mediation, both of which kept the peace in human relations, now became important in foreign policy as well and ultimately led to the first official declaration of neutrality by the “Tagsatzung” (Swiss Diet) in 1674.

However, many questions were still unresolved, as the actual law of nations had only been developed since the 17th century, above all by *Hugo Grotius* and *Emer de Vattel*, a representative of the Western Swiss School of Natural Law. For instance, the conclusion of defensive alliances was still permissible, and the Confederation was involved in numerous alliances. This led to contradictions, and power-political interests repeatedly paralysed peaceful development. Moreover, the mercenary system, for which Switzerland was famous, did not exactly promote a foreign policy built on trust. Nevertheless, Switzerland’s declared neutrality increasingly brought about the desired unity, and the confessionally divided, multilingual country was able to evolve in relative independence after its sovereignty had been recognised under international law in the *Peace of Westphalia*

(1648). The Confederation then also managed to stay well out of the European wars of faith, conquest and succession of the early modern period. In the course of the *Thirty Years’ War* (1618-1648), armed neutrality increasingly took shape with the *Defensionale of Wil* (1647), the first pan-federal military order.

The Congress of Vienna brings perpetual neutrality in 1815

In the Helvetic Republic from 1798 and under *Napoleon’s* rule, Switzerland had to surrender its neutrality until 1815. The consequences were devastating: it became a theatre of war, an occupied country, and had to endure military march-throughs. Only after the defeat of Napoleon I did Switzerland become a sovereign country again. Though quarrelling amongst themselves, the delegation of the Confederates at the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) for the first time achieved official recognition of Switzerland’s perpetual neutrality and territorial inviolability under international law. The great powers of the time, Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia and Russia, guaranteed Switzerland this right, without which a right of intervention on their part could have been derived (2nd *Peace of Paris*). This obligation, which is still valid internationally today, was owed to the will to establish a kind of “balance” in Europe, but was expressly wished for by Switzerland and not just “graciously granted” to it, as has repeatedly been claimed.

In 1848, after the Sonderbund War, neutrality was consolidated with the founding of the federal state, although the fathers of the Constitution did not explicitly enshrine it in the Purpose Article of the Federal Constitution, but only in the Competence Articles of the Federal Assembly and the Federal Council. In the following decades, in the course of the formation of nation states (especially Italy and Germany), neutrality was eminently important for Switzerland to assert itself as a multicultural country with several languages. Swiss neutrality was subsequently strengthened by the ban on cantons entering into alliances with foreign countries and the ban on foreign military service (1859). At that time, Switzerland was the only republic in an “ocean of European monarchies” and thus not quite unendangered. However, the growing national consciousness and the willingness to defend the country against attackers guided it well through numerous difficulties. It helped that Switzerland did not simply stand aside and watch during conflicts, but took decisive humanitarian initiatives, such as the evacuation of the civilian population from besieged Strasbourg in 1871 and the reception of the *Bourbaki Army*, both during the *Franco-Prussian War*. In addition, Switzerland at that time

first suggested a protecting power mandate and independently developed arbitration procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The founding of the Red Cross and the first *Geneva Convention* in 1864 laid the foundation for Switzerland’s sustained humanitarian commitment, which it was able to exercise credibly, not least because of its neutrality.

Finally, the *Hague Conventions* of 1907 included establishing the right of neutrality. The first two articles to this are: “The territory of the neutral powers is inviolable”. (Art. 1) and: “It is forbidden to the warring parties to pass troops or columns of ammunition or food through the territory of a neutral power”. (Art. 2) Furthermore, in addition to non-participation in wars, neutrals are prohibited from forming alliances, and apart from individual exceptions, they have the right to maintain economic relations with all warring parties. Of course, Switzerland readjusted its neutrality policy again and again in the maelstrom of world history, but it had to be careful to ensure the predictability and credibility of its permanent armed neutrality.

The two world wars as a test

Overall, the First World War strengthened the integrative power of neutrality and ensured better internal cohesion, which had still been rather fragile at the beginning of the war. In addition, Switzerland expanded its Good Offices, represented the diplomatic interests of other countries with 25 mandates and thus promoted the settlement of disputes between them. Switzerland’s accession to the *League of Nations* in 1920 changed its neutrality policy decisively: Switzerland was exempted from participating in military sanctions, but not from economic sanctions. Neutrality was now redefined as “differential”. Geneva was able to distinguish itself as the seat of the League of Nations, and Switzerland, rich in experience of its own, advocated in particular the establishment of arbitration proceedings. With the rise of totalitarian systems in the course of the 1930s, the League of Nations found itself in a difficult position. The withdrawal of Japan, Germany and Italy finally persuaded Switzerland to return to an “integral neutrality”, so that it was released from obligations of backing economic sanctions.

During the Second World War, Switzerland was surrounded by totalitarian powers from 1940 onwards, and its very existence was threatened. The Axis powers’ plans of attack had been worked out, but for various reasons were not put into action. Switzerland was dependent on imports of vital goods, which, according to the law of neutrality, demanded a quid pro quo. The very difficult wartime situation meant that Switzerland did not always implement the law of neutrality to the letter; for example, it

continued on page 4

"Swiss neutrality ..."

continued from page 3

did not adequately control transit traffic between Germany and Italy. Another violation of neutrality was the toleration of the American intelligence centre in Bern. However, the warring parties did not always observe the law of neutrality either, and by the end of the war numerous violations had been committed, such as the violation of Swiss airspace by the Allies. The reality of the war clearly showed how difficult it was to on the one hand comply with the law of neutrality and on the other pursue a prudent neutrality policy. What was never at stake for Switzerland was the country's humanitarian commitment and Good Offices. Never before had this commitment been so great: the ICRC employed 4000 people to look after prisoners of war and to find missing persons, in addition to other tasks. Within the framework of the Good Offices, 1200 people were in charge of 319 individual mandates for 35 countries.

The Cold War and the importance of neutral countries

After the Second World War, the reputation of neutral countries fell into a severe crisis. Similar to today, there were voices that considered the right of neutrality obsolete, as it had been weakened by numerous violations during wartime. However, this crisis of neutrality did not last long, and there were many who soon reassessed the value of neutrality in the Cold War bloc system as high. The non-aligned countries all saw themselves as "neutrals" in the struggle between East and West. The *Non-Aligned Movement* campaigned for peace and disarmament, and in 1975, this culminated in the Final Act of the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe* (CSCE, since 1995 OSCE), which Switzerland had played a decisive role in shaping. This cross-bloc conference, which involved 35 states, namely the USA, Canada, the Soviet Union and practically all European states, confirmed "the right to neutrality" for all participating states. With the CSCE, the neutral and non-aligned states were responsible for the policy of détente and successfully assumed a mediating role in the East-West conflict. In the course of this development, it finally became possible to usher in the end of the Cold War.

For reasons of neutrality, Switzerland kept its distance from the United Nations (UN) and the European Community for a long time. It finally joined the *Council of Europe* in 1963 and laid the foundation for the *European Free Trade Association* (EFTA), an economic alliance that was not supranational in character. Within the framework of its foreign policy motto "neutrality and solidarity", Switzerland intensified its commitment to the Good Of-

fices (including for Cuba and Iran) and established itself as a firmly established prominent player, initiating and organising important disarmament and peace conferences on "neutral ground".

Erosion after 1989

As mentioned at the beginning, Switzerland returned to a differential neutrality after the end of the Cold War and with the First Gulf War, sanctioned by the UN Security Council, in 1991. In the wars that followed, the country upheld this position. In the 1995 Bosnian war, Switzerland granted transit rights to the warring countries (IFOR/SFOR) and sent peacekeeping troops, and these were later even armed. NATO's war of aggression against Serbia in 1999, which violated international law, did not lead to Switzerland ending its non-military sanctions against Yugoslavia, but it did not grant NATO transit rights. After the war, Switzerland participated in the peacekeeping force KFOR. In the war against Iraq in 2003, which also violated international law, Switzerland continued its policy of differential neutrality by maintaining economic sanctions against Iraq, although, as in every conflict, it provided humanitarian aid in the crisis region. In 2002, Switzerland joined the UN and tried to maintain its neutrality by means of a separate declaration. Since 1996, Switzerland has been integrated into the "NATO Partnership for Peace" This must be described as very delicate in terms of neutrality policy, and it leads into a grey zone in terms of neutrality law.

With neutrality, pursue an active peace policy again

In order to stop this erosion and to fill neutrality with content again, Switzerland must return to integral neutrality. Swiss neutrality has a tremendously important dimension in times of peace as well as in times of war, because, as the Swiss historian *Wolfgang von Wartburg* writes: "There must be a place in the world exclusively in the service of peace." Only in this way can the ICRC and the Good Offices be fully effective, otherwise their credibility will be further diminished, to the chagrin of the civilian population in numerous conflicts. It is true that the law of neutrality obliges only the state and not the economy. However, in order to make neutrality politically credible again, the economy must be integrally involved. For example, a general ban on arms exports should be enforced. In 1972, the Swiss population narrowly failed to accept a popular initiative to this effect (49.7% ayes; the cantons voted against the proposal). The law enacted a year later, which restricted the export of war material, has been continually watered down in recent decades. Nevertheless, from 1 May 2022,

the criteria for arms exports will newly be anchored in law instead of only in the War Material Ordinance. Furthermore, laws against money laundering and illicitly acquired assets of politically exposed persons should be tightened and rigorously enforced. The Swiss economy, especially the export industry, should be as consistent as possible in maintaining and promoting peace. Only in this way would integral neutrality remain credible and be able to unfold its blessings.

A large majority of the Swiss population supports neutrality, and this will remain the case if the country pursues an unequivocal neutrality policy. It must once again build up a consistent and unsuspecting effort in behalf of world peace and proactively approach countries that engage in belligerent conflicts. This is not about neutrality of opinion, but about a fundamental renunciation of power politics. In this way, Switzerland can preserve its impartiality in foreign policy and best promote universal peace policy. With such new ethics of "sitting still" and mediation, Switzerland would remain a model for other countries that – like Austria in 1955 – would have to enshrine neutrality as a principle. Today, this also applies to Ukraine, which could, with a declaration of neutrality, bring peace and development rather than further war and violence to its region. •

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Swiss economic sanctions against Russia undermine neutrality and the rule of law

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

As is well known, the Swiss Federal Council decided on 28 February to adopt all EU sanctions against Russia – not voluntarily, according to those familiar with the geopolitical situation, but in any case with more zeal than demanded in Washington and Brussels, because it also wants to please the EU and NATO turbos at home.¹ Since then, the Federal Council has been constantly adapting its decrees – each time with the phrase that this does not harm Swiss neutrality(!).² Before Easter, the Federal Council adopted the fifth package of sanctions, not without a rather casual commentary on the situation in general and the Russian “war guilt” in particular.

The Russian government is right to protest against Switzerland’s abandonment of neutrality and against the ahistorical and anti-neutrality statements of our government (see box). Fortunately, however, there are also Swiss personalities who are countering and insisting on respect for neutrality and the rule of law.

Implementation of the sanctions against Russia: “We are among the best in the world!”

“We are not only on track, we are among the best in the world,” Federal President *Ignazio Cassis* boasted to the Swiss state media on 16 April: “We have virtually sanctioned eight billion francs and we have seized twelve buildings.” To “track down Russian assets”, the Federal Council is working closely with EU, US and G7 task forces, Cassis said, adding: “This action by Switzerland is 100 per cent compatible with the country’s neu-

Neutrality is not measured by words but by deeds

Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman *Maria Zakharova’s* comment on statements by the Swiss Confederation on Ukraine of 11 April 2022

“The Foreign Ministry has noted the recent statements on the developments in Ukraine made by the Swiss leadership, which raise justified concerns.

In particular, the Confederation President *Ignazio Cassis*, who also heads the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), used his April 7 interview with Luxembourg’s *Le Quotidien* to proclaim the end of an era, which had lasted since the end of World War II, ‘when no sovereign, democratic country on the continent suffered from an attack.’

We would like to remind the head of the Swiss state that it was the 1999 NATO bombings and missile strikes against peaceful cities in Yugoslavia that undermined the foundations of the post-war era and disrupted international law. Forgetting these historical facts and loosely interpreting them to fit the current political agenda is totally unacceptable.

In addition, in its April 8 statement in the wake of the latest barbarous crimes perpetrated by the Ukrainian regime in Bucha and Kramatorsk, the Swiss FDFA ignored our detailed explanations and blindly pinned the blame on Russia.¹

We firmly condemn the assessments along these lines by Switzerland and urge Bern, which aspires to position itself as a neutral and honest broker, to make use of facts in all objectivity and good faith.

It is our hope that statements by the Swiss leadership on their unwavering commitment to neutrality are not empty words. However, the actual steps Bern takes will show whether this commitment is sincere. It is these steps that Russia will look at when assessing the true value of the neutral status of the Swiss Confederation.”

¹ On 8 April, the EU adopted further sanctions against Russia and certain restrictive measures against Belarus, in light of Russia’s continuing military aggression against Ukraine and reports of atrocities (committed by the Russian armed forces) in Bucha.

(Pressrelease by the Swiss Federal Council of 13 April 2022)

Source: https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/ch/1808935/?lang=en&COUNTRY_CODE=ch

trality” – you almost cannot hear it anymore!³

So quickly – and without opposition – is our sovereignty being sold off. At the same time, every person’s fundamental right to the protection of their personality is being thrown in the rubbish. Because according to Art. 16 Para. 1 of the “Ordinance on Measures in Connection with

the Situation in Ukraine” of 4 March 2022 (which the Federal Council relies on the Embargo Act), an “obligation to report” applies to everyone: “Persons and institutions that hold or manage funds or know of economic resources that may be assumed to fall under the blocking pursuant

continued on page 6

Testing of loyalty to the President of the Zurich Art Society?

mw. At present, the former President of the National Bank, *Philipp Hildebrand*, is a candidate for the presidency of the *Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft* (association supporting the Zurich Kunsthhaus). He was unanimously nominated by the board, which also includes Mayor *Corinne Mauch* (SP).

The *IG Transparency* put up a fight against Hildebrand’s candidacy. Anything that doesn’t suit their representatives has no connection whatsoever with the Zurich Art Society. In his interview with the *Handelszeitung*, Hildebrand answered the question “How do you assess the invasion of Russia into Ukraine?” replied: “The war in the Ukraine is a devastating, dramatic and tragic development, which, however, has been in the

making for years or decades. Since 2008 at the latest, this story has continued to develop in the wrong direction.”

This appropriate historical classification, as well as the fact that Hildebrand’s wife is Russian by birth (!), causes the people at *IG Transparency* to take offense at Philipp Hildebrand: his election would be a “reputational risk” for the city of Zurich. “His rejection of the Swiss sanctions against Russia puts him close to understanders of Putin. The strong participation of his Russian wife in the commodities group *Louis Dreyfus Co.* (LDC) [...] raises further questions. [...] Before the election, it is therefore imperative to get Hildebrand to make clear statements about possible sponsors, the origin of sponsorship money, his posi-

tion on the sanctions and on Russia’s war against Ukraine.” (accentuations *mw*)

It is to be hoped that the electoral body will not allow itself to be influenced by such opinion-snoopering and resentment against Hildebrand’s Russian wife, but will adhere to the constitutional basic rights (freedom of expression, protection of personality) and will vote for the obviously suitable candidate.

Sources: *Herwig, Sarah.* “Controversy over the presidency of the Zurich Art Society”. *SRF 2 Kultur und Gesellschaft* of 21 April 2022. *Statement of the IG Transparency on the candidacy of the former National Bank President and current Blackrock Vice President Philipp Hildebrand as President of the Zurich Art Society from 18 April 2022*

"Swiss economic sanctions against ..."

continued from page 5

to Art. 15 para. 1 must report this immediately to SECO." Spying on neighbours? Along the lines of "Every Russian is suspect"? That is reminiscent of dark times...

Let us give the floor to a Swiss expert to put this outrageous process into perspective, the former president of the Swiss National Bank and today's vice-president at the world's largest US asset manager "Blackrock", *Philipp Hildebrand*, who views today's situation for Switzerland, Europe and the world with concern not only as a banker but also as a Swiss citizen: "What worries me is the legal arbitrariness with which some of the actions have been taken. Who will decide which accounts are closed – which will force companies to close because they no longer have bank access and can no longer pay wages? Who will decide who is close to *Putin*? I wouldn't be surprised if there is a lot of concern among clients of Swiss banks because for years they relied on the stability, legal certainty and long-term nature of Switzerland. These were the core values of the Swiss financial centre.⁴ Incidentally, the media are already discussing whether the obligation to disclose should also apply to lawyers – that would be the beginning of the end of lawyer-client confidentiality!"

Swiss constitutional state: Here we are not (any longer) among the best

I asked the General Secretariat of the *Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research* (EAER) three questions about the confiscation of Russian assets and houses. Here are excerpts from the answers given by *Michael Wüthrich*, the media spokesman for the EAER.

What is the constitutional basis for the freezing of bank accounts and the seizing of buildings?

Michael W.: The Federal Council took the decision in principle [...] on 28 February to adopt EU sanctions in connection with the situation in Ukraine. [...] The ordinance on measures in connection with the Situation in Ukraine was issued by the Federal Council on the basis of the *Embargo Act* (EmbA) and will be adapted when new sanctions are adopted.

Note: The "Federal Act on the Implementation of International Sanctions" (Embargo Act) of 22 March 2002 allows the Confederation to take coercive measures to enforce sanctions imposed by the UN, the OSCE or "Switzerland's main trading partners" which "serve to ensure compliance with international law, in particular respect for human rights". (EmbA Art. 1) The EmbG lists some very widely defined articles as constitutional bases, for example FC Art. 54 para. 1: "Foreign affairs are a matter for the Confederation". Everything can be based on this!

From the point of view of international law, the only permissible sanctions against a state are those decided by the UN Security Council – which in fact hardly ever happens, because as a rule at least one of the five veto powers votes against it. The fact that Switzerland has laid down in law that sanctions imposed by "Switzerland's most important trading partners" (the EU? the USA? China?) are to be enforced by means of coercive measures is also very questionable in terms of neutrality law.

How do you seize a building?

The freezing of assets is to be distinguished from confiscation; according to the Embargo Act, property rights remain with the sanctioned person in the first case (rule of law). Houses, cars and the like are also blocked, provided these persons are listed. In concrete terms, however, these assets are not confiscated. Trading in them, however, is prohibited. As an example: a house may remain inhabited by a sanctioned person, but it may not be sold or rented out.

Note: The guarantee of property is one of the most important fundamental rights in the constitutional state (Federal Constitution Art. 26). By theoretically leaving the sanctioned homeowner his or her property rights, the state cloaks the actual encroachment on the guarantee of property. If a homeowner is not allowed to rent or sell his house, what are his property rights?

What remedies do the sanctioned individuals and companies have?

Currently, 1091 natural persons and 80 companies and organisations are listed in Annex 8 of the "Ordinance on Measures in Connection with the Situation in Ukraine" – analogous to the EU. [...]

Individuals, companies and organisations sanctioned by Switzerland can submit a so-called delisting request to the competent *Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research* EAER. The EAER examines this and issues a contestable ruling. Any delisting would have to be decided by the Federal Council as a whole. This ensures that the rule of law is upheld.

Note: In order to be removed from the list, the person concerned must therefore apply to the same department that is entrusted with implementing the sanctions. The EAER, ultimately its head, Federal Councillor *Guy Parmelin*, examines the application and then decides, together with the other six Federal Councillors, whether the applicant's name should be removed from the list. Since the decision on who to put on the list was made in Brussels and Washington respectively, the Federal Council is presumably neither willing nor able to judge the legality or illegality of the sanction. "The rule of law is therefore upheld," replies the EAER – really?

Take countermeasures and hold on to Swiss values!

There is an urgent need for voices of dissent to these devastating events in Switzerland. There are some in our country, for example *Guy Mettan*, member of the Grand Council of the Canton of Geneva

continued on page 7

Respect Swiss law of neutrality!

mw. – No flyovers of NATO military aircraft with war material for Ukraine.

In accordance with the law of neutrality¹ the Federal Council decided on 11 March that in the context of the Ukraine conflict "the following flyovers will not be authorised: Flyovers by military aircraft of the conflicting parties that serve a military purpose. Flyovers of military aircraft of other states whose purpose is to provide military support to one of the parties to the conflict, namely with the delivery of war material".²

In accordance with this clear regulation, FDFA head *Ignazio Cassis* asked NATO member Canada at the end of March to withdraw its request for a transport aircraft loaded with weapons to fly over Switzerland – which Canada did.

– No delivery of ammunition purchased in Switzerland to Ukraine

On 24 April, the *Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research* (EAER) prohibited Germany from sending Swiss-made ammunition to the war zone, citing Swiss neutrality and "the mandatory rejection criteria of the war material legislation" (*War Material Ordinance* of 25 February 1998).

The NATO states know the Swiss law of neutrality and will cope with the refusals from Bern. What must give us Swiss much more food for thought is the prompt event of great excitement about the Federal Council's decisions in the Swiss mainstream media. Carried by the prevailing emotional wave, *Gerhard Pfister*, President of the Centre Party, actually tweeted on 25 April that the Federal Council should have permitted the deliv-

ery of ammunition to Ukraine by means of emergency law. At least the "Berner Zeitung" brings us back to reality:

"The law of neutrality, enshrined in the *Hague Agreement* of 1907, prohibits neutrals from supporting belligerent states with troops or supplying them with weapons. One may think this is right or wrong in the Ukraine war. But it is binding international law. Full stop."³ Yes – full stop!

¹ *Agreement concerning the rights and obligations of neutral powers and persons in the event of a Land War, adopted in The Hague on 18 October 1907.*

² *Federal Council media release of 11 March 2022*

³ *Häfliger, Markus. "Commentary on neutrality and the Ukraine war. Arms exports to Kiev are wrong. The only question is: for how much longer?" In: Berner Zeitung, 26 April 2022*

“NATO expansion blamed for Ukraine crisis”

Former foreign minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Zivadin Jovanovic urges dialogue instead of escalation

The decades-long eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has not only caused the crisis in Ukraine but it has also evolved into a threat to peace and cooperation worldwide, a Serbian expert has told Xinhua in an interview.

Zivadin Jovanovic, who served as foreign minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between 1998 and 2000, said he believed that back in the spring of 1999 he witnessed the beginning of NATO's expansion into eastern Europe. This, he said, has by now threatened Russia's borders, sparking the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

NATO's eastward push has deeply harmed the whole European continent, Jovanovic noted, by “militarising its infrastructure, economy and even its education system.” Globally, it increased the probability of local, regional and even larger conflicts, followed by impoverishment and hunger.

Jovanovic, who currently presides over the think-tank *Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals*, said that instead of fueling the conflict further, the West should engage in a global high-level dialogue for peace and security, which would be vital to overcoming the crisis.

Unprovoked?

According to Jovanovic, the position commonly held in the West that the conflict in Ukraine is “unprovoked” is false – because since its 1999 aggression on Yugoslavia, NATO has deployed troops across the Balkans, added 11 countries as mem-

bers and established numerous military bases across Europe.

“In March 1999, NATO launched an illegal attack – an aggression against Yugoslavia. The publicly announced goal was to protect the rights of an endangered national minority... However, we see that the result of it all was the permanent deployment of NATO troops across the Balkans... These are undeniable facts,” he said.

Since then, NATO has significantly grown by integrating a number of eastern European countries, which resulted in the deployment of NATO troops and the establishment of military bases on their territory.

“Back then (in 1999), NATO had 19 members, while now it has 30. Where is the reservoir for new member states? It is in the east of Europe, and this means increasing proximity to Russia's borders... When these bases were opened, NATO said they had a defensive purpose... However, they turned out to be missile bases, which can hold offensive weapons.”

The tensions were further aggravated because, as Jovanovic pointed out, the United States has recently withdrawn from important international military agreements.

“The US, as the key power of NATO, has pulled out from many important agreements on arms control, intermediate-range missiles... The big question is: why did it do so and to what end?” he asked.

According to Jovanovic, in absence of responses to Moscow's initiatives to renew the arms control treaties and to stop NATO's eastward push, Russia was forced to

launch a military operation to protect its interests.

Enormous damage

According to Jovanovic, NATO's eastward push has endangered vital agreements that ensured a long period of peace after World War II.

“During its enlargement, NATO has violated all the agreements that existed and that are undisputable. During its attack on Yugoslavia, they violated the UN Charter, and challenged the authority of the UN Security Council... The damage done is certainly enormous. Because of NATO's enlargement strategy towards the east, the world is in a changed condition. The global system of security, peace and cooperation is in danger,” he warned.

This decades-long process has, according to Jovanovic, destroyed key European values and militarised the entire continent.

“Due to NATO's enlargement to the east, the entire European continent has become militarised. There have never been more military bases, arms and military equipment in Europe than today... Europe has militarised its economy and its education system,” he said.

Moreover, NATO's expansion has “shaken the entire international order” and endangered peace in the whole world, Jovanovic said.

“Enormous damage has been inflicted on the system of collective security and cooperation, not to mention how much this NATO expansion has contributed to the development of an arms race and the destruction of a whole subsystem in

continued on page 8

“Swiss economic sanctions against ...”

continued from page 6

and former editor-in-chief of the “Tribune de Genève”, who was quoted in the last issue of *Current Concerns* with his striking statements on the abandonment of our neutrality by our “own team”.⁵ In a recent lecture, he called on us citizens to resist: “Switzerland has given up its neutrality, which it has held on to for two centuries, in a few days without a fight. I no longer recognise my country! Now it needs the resistance of a small minority.” That feels good.

Blackrock banker Philipp Hildebrand also proves himself to be a good Swiss and a critical citizen of the world in a recent interview with the *Handelszeitung* (see box). Towards the EU, he advises Switzerland to “act wisely, buy time and wait to see how things devel-

op.” Now is not the time to seek the next round of talks with Brussels. On neutrality: “Neutrality was indeed undermined very quickly, without a constitutional amendment and without a clear legal basis.” Hildebrand raises the question of what it means for diplomacy “if one could and would like to offer good services, but at the same time is no longer in a truly neutral situation and is therefore no longer even requested.” According to Philipp Hildebrand, Switzerland is facing a major challenge: “if the world moves back into a kind of Cold War logic, one has to rethink and articulate the foreign policy strategy [...]”⁶

It is to be hoped that our representatives in Bern will “act wisely” in this sense and first rethink their positioning in Europe and in the world in the future, instead of manoeuvring our country into a situa-

tion from which we almost cannot find our way out. •

¹ See Wüthrich, Marianne. “Ukraine sanctions: Federal Council under massive pressure from within and without. Neutrality policy is not a drop-down menu!” In: *Current Concerns* No. 6 of 15 March 2022

² Federal Council Ordinance of 4 March 2022 on Measures in Connection with the Situation in Ukraine

³ “Bundespräsident zur Ukraine. Cassis sieht Schweiz bei Sanktionspolitik ‘bei den Besten’” (President of the Confederation on Ukraine. Cassis sees Switzerland as “among the best” in sanctions policy). *SRF News* of 16 April 2022

⁴ Meier Diem, Markus. “Es ist sehr bedrohlich” (It is very threatening). Interview with former President of the National Bank Philipp Hildebrand In: *Handelszeitung* of 14 April 2022

⁵ Wüthrich, Marianne. “Swiss neutrality and the rule of law as indispensable prerequisites for the ICRC's work”. In: *Current Concerns* of 26 April 2022.

⁶ Meier Diem, Markus. “Es ist sehr bedrohlich” (It is very threatening). Interview with former President of the National Bank Philipp Hildebrand. In: *Handelszeitung* of 14 April 2022

Atrocity propaganda does not serve the peace

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

Let us start with two definitions from German *Wikipedia*:

“*Information warfare* is a term for the targeted use and manipulation of controlled information in order to gain an advantage over competitors and opponents in business or politics. It also includes influencing the media through false information (*fake news*), partial information or propaganda with the aim of manipulating the media in one’s own interest.”

“*Atrocity propaganda* is a form of political propaganda in which an attempt is made to defame an opponent by attributing to him or her atrocities or misdeeds that have been invented or not committed by him or her, or by deliberately distorting actions undertaken by him or her, thus scandalising them. It is a common tool of psychological warfare and can be used in war to motivate one’s own forces and population or to influence world opinion.”

“NATO expansion blamed for ...”

continued from page 7

charge of controlling the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. This has increased the possibility of conflicts, not only local and regional ones but also global ones... It will take plenty of wisdom, time and effort to repair this,” he said.

Peace through dialogue

Jovanovic said that for the Ukrainian crisis to stop, NATO’s eastward expansion must also stop. The solution, he said, lies not on the battlefield but in high-level dialogue.

“All people in the West say nowadays is that Kiev must continue the conflict and not accept any kind of agreement with Russia, that the West always delivers bigger and technologically advanced weaponry. This way they are adding fuel to the fire... There can’t be any solution on the battlefield.”

Commenting on the Western sanctions on Russia, he said that these further escalate the conflict and that the sanctions are “intentionally directed against civilians.”

“Sanctions are illegitimate and inhumane. Such was their goal in the case of Yugoslavia... Because of this, children and people with difficult chronic diseases died across Yugoslavia, and there were shortages of everything and plenty of ordinary people suffering... Sanctions are no means to resolve conflicts. They are not a means to achieve peace but to escalate the situation further,” Jovanovic said.

He said that instead of fueling further the destruction of Ukraine and forcing NATO’s further expansion, the West

German Bundestag declares the country a war party

km. Even though it literally says the German Bundestag welcomes “the Federal Government’s support for Ukraine under attack while ensuring that neither Germany nor Nato becomes a party to the war”: Without Germany having been attacked, the Bundestag, with its motion adopted on 28 April 2022 by 586 votes to 100 with 7 abstentions, de facto declares Germany a party to the war. With all possible consequences. Unfortunately, only one of the opposition parties formulated this clearly: The motion was a “declaration of accession to war”.

One day earlier, the SPD, CDU/CSU, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* and FDP had jointly introduced the motion in the Bundestag. In its diction, the motion

is reminiscent of bad times in German history – a language of warmongering, but also of loss of reality. And all this with a mendacious hypocrisy full of empty words. Now – a little more than 80 years after the start of the German war of extermination against the Soviet Union – German tanks are once again to fire on Russian soldiers. A disgrace for a country to forget its history.

There is currently nothing to suggest that there are voices of reason and moderation within the established political class in Germany. This leads to fears of even worse things to come. What a turnaround can bring is not yet foreseeable. Peace will not be achieved in this way. Yet that is precisely what the majority of Germans are striving for.

Atrocity propaganda is a special form of information warfare. It is a branch of

“cognitive warfare” of “strategic com-
continued on page 9

should engage in a high-level dialogue with other global powers in order to agree on peace, cooperation and collective security.

“It takes time to prepare summits or high-level meetings, but it is necessary to talk about this and to prepare concrete initiatives for dialogue, negotiations and the cessation of the conflict,” Jovanovic said.

In his opinion, peace could be pursued through acknowledging the equali-

ty of countries in security, peace and cooperation. “Everybody in the West must make peace with this: the era of expansion, dictates and commands, and the pyramidal arrangement of global relations are a thing of the past. The world is clearly striving for a multipolar world order based on mutual respect, partnership and the acknowledgment of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.”

Source: *Xinhua* of 25 April 2022

Oliver Stone: “Putin always acted in the interest of the Russian people”

ef. On the occasion of the presentation of his new documentary film about the assassination of *John F. Kennedy* at the *BCN Film Festival* in Barcelona, the well-known film director *Oliver Stone* also commented to the Spanish newspaper “*El Pais*” on Russian President *Vladimir Putin*, whom he last met three years ago: “The man I knew had nothing to do with the irresponsible and murderous madman that the media are now making him out to be, comparing him with *Hitler* and *Stalin*,” Stone said. In reality, he is a “good son of his country who wants to protect his people. The man I knew was rational, calm, always acting in the best interest of the Russian people, a true son of Russia, a patriot, which doesn’t imply he’s a nationalist.” Stone told “*El Pais*” that it was a long-term US plan to install a pro-Western, anti-Russian government in Ukraine, with the aim of making Ukraine a useful antagonist of Russia. Possibly the ultimate goal was to destabilise Rus-

sia and bring about regime change “to take Putin out and install another Yeltsin”. He described the USA as “a predatory dog” that would not stop at Russia and could later target China. He deplored the way in which Russia is portrayed as “the bad guy” and the US as “the good guy”. Stone went on to say: “The only thing the United States is concerned with is continuing to sell enormously expensive weapons to regimes with which it cooperates because that’s how its economy keeps growing”.

Also, red-hot today are his 2017 four-part documentary “*The Putin Interviews*”, as well as “*Ukraine on Fire*” (2016), a documentary on the background to the 2013–2014 Maidan protests, as well as the follow-up “*Revealing Ukraine*”, together with *Igor Lopatonok*, which continues the research about the ongoing Ukraine crisis (all still on YouTube so far).

Sources: *El Pais*, 26 April 2022; popnews247.com

"Atrocity propaganda does not serve ..."

continued from page 8

munication"¹. Like information warfare, atrocity propaganda has existed since wars began, and in fact everyone knows that it exists. Nevertheless, atrocity propaganda is practised in every war. It is possible because, as a rule, in a war no independent and objective verification is possible and because an emotional ground has been created for it beforehand. The atrocity propaganda is preceded by other types of information warfare, so that a fair amount of uncertainty and fear as well as hatred has been created for the one against whom the subsequent atrocity propaganda is directed, which in turn is intended to make people even more uncertain and to increase fear and hatred.

Perfidy

Atrocity propaganda is not a step towards peace. On the contrary, it serves to escalate a war. It is particularly perfidious because there are also actual atrocities in wars. The perfidy is increased even more when supposed "experts" express themselves in such times, pretending to be independent and objective, but in fact are neither.

Also, since 24 February 2022, one must assume all this. In concrete terms: The many years of work in our states on the image of Russia as an enemy and, above all, the demonisation of Russian President *Vladimir Putin* have prepared the ground for reports of atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine to be believed – even if so far none of the claims have been proven by independent and objective investigations.

Allegations of Russian atrocities have become commonplace. Just one example among many: On 23 April, the Swiss "Tagess-Anzeiger" stated – without any evidence – "That one should have sympathy for a dictator who massacres the civilian population in Ukraine and has targeted civilian

objects bombed in order to achieve a maximum number of victims and refugees remains incomprehensible." (emphasis km)

Suspicion

There are good reasons to suspect that the atrocity reports available so far are atrocity propaganda:

Anyone consulting not only our media and official statements, but also Russian media and Russian official statements – which are also (still) accessible in German – will quickly realise that the atrocity reports circulated in our country are countered by Russian statements which are factually formulated, substantiated and comprehensible. All this is no proof of the correctness of the Russian position, but it could nevertheless move us – if we are serious about the search for truth – to quote the rebuttals just as seriously and in as much detail as the claims about wartime atrocities. In this way, citizens in our countries who do not have the time or the opportunity to seek Russian statements could get a better picture.

It is understandable that the government of Ukraine, as a party to the war, will have no interest in an objective picture. *However, the behaviour of the leadership of our countries only makes sense if one assumes that our countries are also parties to the war.*

Representatives of institutions such as the OSCE or the *International Criminal Court (ICC)* usually present themselves as independent and objective and committed only to the law. In doing so, they want to give special weight to what they claim. But are both institutions so independent and objective? The ICC has forfeited its reputation for some time because it has never consistently investigated war crimes committed by members of NATO states. Why did the British chief prosecutor at the ICC immediately accuse Russia following

the atrocity reports and the gruesome pictures from Bucha, but failed to immediately initiate investigations on the ground? Or why does the OSCE under Polish chairmanship investigate Ukrainian accusations against Russia rather than Russian ones against Ukraine? The spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry credibly explained this using the example of *Kramatorsk* in her briefing of 13 April.²

Cui bono?

Finally, when looking at atrocity reports, the important question arises: *Cui bono?* – Who benefits?

In other words, why and for what purpose should Russian forces commit atrocities in Ukraine? What "benefit" would they get from it? And: who is really benefiting from reports of Russian atrocities?

Atrocity propaganda, according to *Wikipedia*, "is a common means of psychological warfare and can be used in war to motivate one's own forces and population or to influence world opinion". (emphasis km) Doesn't this rather suggest that Russia cannot have any interest in atrocities committed by its armed forces? But others do.

Even those who accuse the Russian armed forces of atrocities are aware of this problem with their claims and therefore resort to auxiliary constructions. An example of this is the German historian *Bernd Greiner*, who had his say in an interview with the "Tagess-Anzeiger" on 22 April. He is asked about the "usefulness of massacres and atrocities" and answers: "War crimes are part of psychological warfare. They push the purpose of every war to the extreme: to spread fear and terror. To threaten the living with the dead."

But apparently all Russian statements on military action in Ukraine go in a completely different direction: The country is to be "demilitarised" and "denazified" and

continued on page 10

Open letter to the German Chancellor: De-escalating instead of escalating!

km. Not only the German Easter marches have shown the great concern of very many people about the war in Ukraine that is not coming to an end and instead – not least due to the massive war effort of the NATO states – will escalate into a major European or even world war. Other prominent voices have also spoken out, including former high-ranking generals of the Bundeswehr such as *Erich Vad* or *Harald Kujat*.¹ It is not possible to go into the multitude of these initiatives here. As a representative example, quotations from an open letter to the German Chancellor *Olaf Scholz*, which was published in the "Berliner Zeitung" on 22 April and whose co-signatories include the author of *Current Concerns* and *Hans Christoph Graf von Sponeck*, the former Assistant Secretary General of the UN.

The letter states, among other things: "We are united in warning against an uncontrollable expansion of the war with unforeseeable consequences for the entire world and in opposing a prolongation of the war and bloodshed with arms deliveries. By supplying weapons, Germany and other NATO countries have made themselves a de facto party to the war. And thus, Ukraine has also become the battleground for the conflict between NATO and Russia over the security order in Europe, which has been escalating for years. [...] The war carries the real danger of an expansion and uncontrollable military escalation [...]. If responsible people, like you, dear Chancellor, do not stop this development, we will end up with another big war. Only this time with nuclear weapons, widespread devastation and the

end of human civilisation. Avoiding more and more casualties, destruction and further dangerous escalation must therefore have absolute priority. [...] Arms shipments and navy leverage from NATO will delay the warfare and take diplomatic evaluation too far. [...]

The prevailing Logic of War must be replaced by a bold Logic of Peace, and a new European and global architecture of peace must be created, including Russia and China. Germany must not stand on the sidelines here, but take an active role."

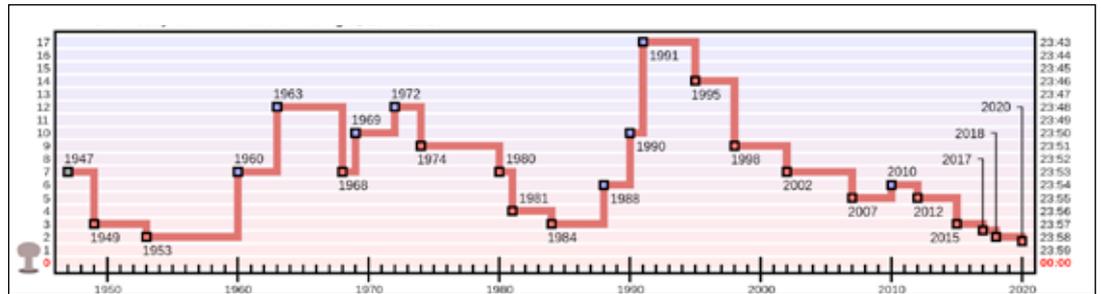
¹ cf. *Current Concerns* of 26 April 2022 as well as the detailed interview with *Erich Vad* in *Zeitgeschehen im Fokus* of 24 April 2022 (https://zeitgeschehen-im-fokus.ch/de/newspaper-ausgabe/nr-7-8-vom-24-april-2022.html#article_1351)

The Doomsday Clock Shows 100 Seconds to Midnight

The ABM Treaty and its termination by the US – an open declaration of war in the era of nuclear weapons – Russia reacts

by Tobias Salander

Recently, the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” reported how close humanity is today to a nuclear war.¹ In 1947, “the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists” in the USA developed the Doomsday Clock, known to us as the Doomsday Clock or the Atomic War Clock. The clock showed seven minutes to midnight when it was first presented in 1947; two minutes to midnight during the Cuban Missile Crisis. And today? For the third year in a row, the hands stand at 100 seconds to midnight. As of May 2022, however, it will not be recorded until early next year. To what do we owe this? The Western narrative has quickly found the culprit. But does a look at the history of the development of an eventual nuclear warfare allow this



The course of the Doomsday Clock 1947–2020. Should the curve arrive at the very bottom of the graph, it would be 00:00, midnight (i. e. nuclear war). (graphic Wikipedia)

narrative to stand as the only one? Reason enough to engage in the logic of warfare in the nuclear weapons era — and to hope fervently that personalities with a rational approach and expertise will be able to prevail over deluded ideologues.

That nuclear weapons kill indiscriminately and thus violate the Geneva Conventions,

is well known today. Whether the possession of nuclear weapons and their production constitute a crime against humanity is disputed in international law circles. If even common sense quickly finds answer to this question, it is all the more challenged when it is confronted with reality. And the reality of nuclear weapons brings with it a logic of their own, a logic any peace-loving person would rather avoid because it is so appalling. But burying one’s head in the sand does not solve the problem.

The USA is the only power to have used nuclear weapons, and that over a country, of whose cities the majority had already been destroyed by incendiary bombs – in Tokyo, for example, more civilians died as a result of the American bomb than in Hiroshima. The fact that the “Enola Gay” with its mass-murdering cargo over Hiroshima was accompanied by an airplane packed with scientific instruments for the exact measurement of the deadly incident. The fact that the pilot showed no remorse until the end of his life is one thing. That the airdrop was not necessary from a military point of view, but a demonstration of power, especially against the Soviet Union, is another. *Florian Coulmas, Paul H. Johnstone* and others have long since meticulously demonstrated this.²

The Doomsday Clock then set the hands to three to twelve in 1949, when the Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear weapons test. And to two to twelve in 1953, when the two former allies tested the hydrogen bomb against the Nazis. Not everyone agreed with the pointing, however. *Klaus Fuchs*, for example, revealed U.S. atomic bomb plans to the Soviets in order, he said, to make the world a safer place. How so? This puts us in the middle of the logic of nuclear weapons and peace-keeping in the nuclear age, the “balance of terror.” The Cuban Missile Crisis made it clear: U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey, Russian nuclear weapons in Cuba were

“Atrocity propaganda does not serve ...”

continued from page 9

the two Russian-recognised republics of Donetsk and Luhansk are to be protected from further Ukrainian attacks, but there is no mention of “shock and awe”³ among the civilian population. On the contrary, the civilian population is to be protected – as far as this is at all possible in a war. Even if one dismisses all Russian statements as propaganda: what logic is there in explaining that one does everything to protect civilians and at the same time spreads “fear and terror” and “threatens the living with the dead”?

For the Russians, the Ukrainians are a Slavic “brother nation”. Why and for what purpose would the Russian forces want to achieve a “maximum number of victims” among the Ukrainian civilian population? That makes no sense.

War against Russia “to the last Ukrainian”?

There are some voices, not only from Russia, who claim that the US government and NATO want to wage war against Russia “to the last Ukrainian”. Atrocity propaganda would fit such an inhuman strategy. And, unfortunately, so would the indications that further, escalating stagings (“false flag operations”) are planned for further, even worse, atrocity propaganda.⁴

There are also growing indications that NATO states are already directly involved in the war, not only with arms deliveries but also with operations on the ground in Ukraine.⁵

The international “war council” held by the USA on 26 April at its military base in Ramstein, Germany, also points in the direction of further escalation and – practically – direct NATO involvement in the war.

Russia will take countermeasures. Not only against further atrocity propaganda, but also against the attempts of NATO states to further prolong the war in Ukraine with arms deliveries and other means. On 25 April, Russia’s foreign minister once again stressed Russia’s will to reach a negotiated settlement with Ukraine’s government. But he also spoke of how the danger of a Third World War is real if the NATO states do not stop actively escalating and prolonging the war.

¹ Cf. *Current Concerns* of 1 March 2022 (“Taking a stance against political lies”); <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/archives/2022/no-5-1-march-2022/taking-a-stance-against-political-lies.html>

² https://mid.ru/de/foreign_policy/news/1809211/

³ Other than the US troops in their 2003 war against Iraq. They openly termed their actions as “shock and awe”.

⁴ Thus since 24 February 2022 the Russian authorities have published statements on planned stagings e.g., by the Ministry of Defence on 23 April 2022. It “had information regarding the preparation of provocations by the United States with the goal to blame the Russian forces for the usage of chemical, biological or tactical nuclear weapons.” (cf. <https://seniora.org/politik-wirtschaft/lagebericht-dringendes-briefing-des-russischen-verteidigungsministeriums-ueber-neue-provokationen> of 24 April 2022)

⁵ cf. “are British special units active in Ukraine?”, *Tages-Anzeiger* of 25 April 2022. The article is referring to British newspapers openly reporting on operations by British special SAS commands.

“The Domsday-Clock ...”

continued from page 10

not to be tolerated by either side, since the reaction time in the event of a real or perceived attack would have been fatally short. *Khrushchev* and *Kennedy* came to an understanding, fortunately. But as the then US Secretary of Defense *Robert S. McNamara* put it in his lifetime confession “Fog of war”, it was really pure luck, “it was luck. It was luck that prevented nuclear war.”

ABM Treaty 1972 – keeping the “window of vulnerability” open

A red telephone was installed, because the development of intercontinental missiles demanded rapid communication between the two commanders-in-chief.

So, the 1970s dawned, the situation had not become cosier on our planet. And in this situation, the leaders of the two superpowers managed to reach an agreement, the ABM Treaty. The *Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty*, concluded on 26 May 1972, followed the logic of warfare with nuclear weapons: Both sides wanted to keep the so-called “window of vulnerability” open. In other words, after a nuclear first strike, both sides deliberately refrained from being able to repel the expected counterattack by the enemy with missiles set up especially for this purpose. Why so complicated? Quite simply, if both sides were in a position to retaliate and also wipe out the other side, both sides would refrain from a first strike. Because that would be mutual suicide. So, they would grant each other the so-called “second-strike capability”. If this seems simply crazy to you: Et voilà, that was also the abbreviation of

this nuclear weapons logic: MAD, which, in addition to the word for crazy, is also the acronym for “Mutual Assured Destruction”. This was the basis of the highly shaky “security” architecture in the Cold War. There was also talk of the “balance of terror”.

The treaty not only prohibited the construction of national (i.e., protecting the territory of Russia or the USA) defence systems against ballistic missiles, but it also included a ban on the stationing of system components for missile defence at sea, in aircraft and space.

It was clear to the signatories: without a treaty, each side would try to develop new nuclear missiles that could overcome missile defences – a mutual arms build-up would be the result.

The ABM Treaty was a great success – we were spared a nuclear war. Even though we came close to annihilation a few times: Cue NATO exercise “Able Archer” of 1983: NATO’s realistic simulated nuclear warfare let the Soviet Union get its bombers ready for take-off in Poland and the GDR and equip them with live nuclear warheads! And shortly before that, the courageous action of Lieutenant Colonel *Stanislav Petrov* on duty at the *Serpukhov missile defence centre* near Moscow, on the occasion of a false alarm, had prevented a Soviet nuclear strike back against a non-existent US nuclear attack. As *Mc Namara* had said: “At the end we lucked out. It was luck that prevented nuclear war.”

Jimmy Carter’s “Presidential Directive 59”: Winning the Nuclear War

But then in 1980, when *Jimmy Carter*, who had become famous for his pithy

words “What’s our oil doing under their sand”, moved into the White House. And the question is asked today: Did the peanut farmer from the American South understand the logic of nuclear weapons? Or was he deliberately playing with fire? For, what he did can only be understood as an open declaration of war against the Soviet Union. Or, after all, as a defensive measure? What was the logic of nuclear weapons? Carter, according to the politically unsuspecting, certainly not anti-U.S. online reference work *Wikipedia*, heralded the departure from the MAD doctrine: “On 25 July 1980, in Presidential Directive 59, US President Jimmy Carter spoke of a “*countervailing strategy*”. From then on, the goal of US planners was to be able to win a nuclear war. The declared target of the nuclear warheads was not the Soviet population, but first and foremost the command centres, secondly military targets. This was combined with the speculation that the Soviet Union would give up before there was total destruction of the USSR and the USA.³ Imagine how an identical Soviet declaration would have been received in the USA. The logic of nuclear weapons: It needs even better, faster, more efficient missiles and warheads to be able to prevent the first strike, the decapitation strike. So exactly what MAD had wanted to prevent. And further in *Wikipedia*: “US President *Ronald Reagan* banked on this direction and planned, with his *Strategic Defence Initiative* (SDI), to replace the balance of MAD with a new strategy of American superiority. By building a comprehensive missile defence, the US was to be protected from attack or counterattack from the Soviet Union, but retain its own first-strike capability.”

That the US under the Reagan presidency took this aggressive line toward the Soviet Union is also shown in the film already broadcasted in 2015 on ARD, “Operation Deception – The Reagan Method. Documentation by *Dirk Pohlmann*”⁴

The ARD website, staunchly loyal to the US, astonishingly states: “With Reagan’s rise to power, the strategy of the US in the Cold War changed fundamentally: attack instead of defence. His secret ‘Committee for Deception Operations’, whose existence is confirmed for the first time by contemporary witnesses in this documentary, plans brilliant and perfidious intelligence operations – against the Soviets, but also against the policy of détente of Swedish Prime Minister *Olof Palme*. Upon coming to power in 1981, Ronald Reagan redefines the US strategy in the Cold War: attack instead of defence. His ‘Committee for Deception Operations’ is one of the most important instruments in the fight against the Soviet Union, along with rearmament. Gas pipelines are sab-

continued on page 12

The USA destroys the disarmament treaties and rejects Russia’s proposals

Sergej Lawrow: “Today, few rules remain. We have the *New START* – the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. [...]”

At the same time, the other arms control and non-proliferation instruments have been destroyed. The *ABM Treaty* limiting missile defence systems and the *INF Treaty* – the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, no longer exist. The US has turned down our proposal to introduce a mutual moratorium, even though we proposed agreeing on verification mechanisms as part of this proposal. The main objection the West has is that they do not “trust” us that the *Iskander* systems in Kaliningrad do not violate the terms of the *INF Treaty*. Guided by the principle of reciprocity, we offered them to visit Kaliningrad, while we would visit US missile defence bases in Poland and Romania. This was an honest proposal, but they have been refusing it ever since. The *Open Skies*

Treaty has also run its course. It does not exist anymore.

The *New START* is the only remaining arms control treaty. [...]

The United States cancelled almost all contacts due to the fact that we were forced to stand up for the Russians in Ukraine. Those people lived under constant shelling for eight years without any response from the West. On the contrary, all the West did was encourage Russophobic and neo-Nazi actions by the Kiev regime. [...]

To follow up on ‘rules’, it’s a buzzword the United States and its allies use when they tell everyone to behave. They now insist on compliance with the *rules-based order* rather than international law. No description of these rules is available.”

Source: *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s interview with Channel One’s The Great Game political talk show, Moscow, 25 April 2022, https://mid.rulen/foreign_policy/news/1810694/*

“The Doomsday-Clock ...”

continued from page 10

otaged with smuggled-in computer chips and Trojans, air and sea manoeuvres are carried out in front of the Soviets’ most important base in Murmansk. The goal: to create uncertainty and humiliation while demonstrating strength and technical superiority. And how did such a humiliated person have to react? As we know today, the Soviet Union did not exist for much longer, deceived; economically down also due to the investments in armaments to ward off the Americans, the 1990s came with the sell-out of the country to Western corporations. This was an unparalleled humiliation, that Putin put an end to – one of the reasons, as we hear from Russian friends, that *Putin* still enjoys such high approval ratings among the Russian people.

But what does the ARD portal say further about the actions of the US? “These actions bring the world to the brink of nuclear war. When in the 1980s the Swedish Social Democratic Prime Minister Olof Palme proposes his strategy of common security with *Willy Brandt* and *Egon Bahr* and no longer wants to make Sweden available to NATO as an ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier,’ he not only makes an enemy of the conservative power elites in his own country. His approach is also a thorn in Reagan’s side at an early stage, because a relenting of the Soviet Union in the Cold War arms race would be counterproductive for his strategy. Thus, the rapprochement talks are sabotaged and the person of Palme is discredited. In February 1986, Palme is assassinated by an unknown perpetrator. The film shows the significance of the secret warfare of the USA during the Cold War with reference to high-profile contemporary witnesses and exclusive film material. Once again it becomes clear that the USA did not stop at the sovereignty of democratic states in order to enforce its own interests. A topic that is of noteworthy importance, especially in view of the current political situation and the recent intelligence scandals.” So in 2015 – how much the tone has changed towards the USA since then...!

George W. Bush terminates ABM Treaty – “for the sake of peace”.

But back to the chronological sequence: Since Carter and Reagan, then, the USA had been endeavouring to build up a worldwide missile defence system, also including space components. This programme, especially strengthened by the administration under *George W. Bush*, would have violated the agreements of the ABM Treaty. 9/11 was then the appropriate occasion for Bush to unilaterally terminate the treaty in December 2001. The

termination took effect in June 2002 after a period of six months.

And what was the reasoning for the termination? “Today, our security environment is profoundly different. [...] Russia is not an enemy, but in fact is increasingly allied with us on a growing number of critically important issues. [...] Today, the United States and Russia face new threats to their security. Principal among these threats are weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means wielded by terrorists and rogue states.”⁵

George W. Bush was a master of political untruth – and so, even with this statement, one wonders how terrorists would come to possess intercontinental ballistic missiles. Where to place them? And with “rogue states”?

In 2001, the staunchly transatlantic magazine *Der Spiegel* wrote as follows: “For the sake of peace, Washington must defy the ABM Treaty, written ‘in another era for another enemy’, Bush declared at the Citadel Military Academy. Washington had to protect America and its friends against all forms of terror, ‘including terrorism that might arrive with a missile’.”⁶

The *Spiegel* reader then learns, after all, that political Washington was not at all united on this issue. The Democratic majority leader in the Senate, *Tom Daschle*, declared that “he was against the withdrawal from the agreement. He said this was a slap in the face to many people who had spent years, if not decades, advocating for arms control.”

Who, then, were the circles that delivered this slap in the face? *Der Spiegel*: “In Washington, the decision in favour of missile defence is seen as a victory for the forces around Defence Secretary *Donald Rumsfeld* and his deputy *Paul Wolfowitz* over the more moderate Secretary of State *Colin Powell*. According to government circles, Bush’s security adviser *Condoleezza Rice* initially wanted to mediate between the two sides, but then supported Rumsfeld’s stand.”

Remember: Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz belong to the group of neoconservatives whose present-day representatives such as *Robert Kagan* and *Viktoria Nuland* stir up aggressive sentiment against Russia. The neoconservatives, as can be read in *Norman Podhoretz* and others in their magazine *Commentary*, have always been opposed to the Soviet Union and subsequently to Russia.

And how did Russia react to this blatant renewal of Jimmy Carter’s and Ronald Reagan’s declaration of war? *Der Spiegel* squirms, but then formulates: “Russian President Vladimir Putin had threatened several times in recent months with nuclear rearmament if the USA unilaterally terminated the ABM Treaty. Most recently, however, the Russian leadership

had shown a clear concession in the talks with Washington on a disarmament of the nuclear arsenals of both countries.” What justifies the last sentence, however, remains a mystery to the reader, especially when one considers that US President *Trump* terminated the INF Treaty in 2019.

UN General Assembly 1999: Termination of the ABM Treaty is a threat to world peace

If you want to understand history better, you have to consult as many sides and perspectives as possible. So, it is now imperative to listen to the Russian side as well. To this end, I would like to give the floor to a journalist from *RT German* – a website that has been banned in the EU. A slap in the face of every historian! *Leo Ensel* points out that as early as the beginning of 1999, *Bill Clinton* had the “National Missile Defence Act” passed, aiming at a slimmed-down national missile defence, thus circumventing the ABM Agreement. And what happened? The United Nations General Assembly recognised the explosive nature of the issue and passed a resolution in December 1999 to the effect that the USA should abandon these plans. And who voted against? With the USA, only Israel, Albania and Micronesia. The world community had thus made it clear that the abrogation or circumvention of the ABM Treaty was a deadly threat to world peace because it made the waging of nuclear war possible again!

And Russia’s reaction? Withdrawal from the START II agreement. START II banned land-based intercontinental missiles with multiple warheads – particularly suitable for overcoming missile defence systems. Therewith, everything that had been painstakingly built up since 1972 seemed lost!

And *Leo Ensel*: “What followed was a tortuous manoeuvring lasting almost twenty years about the US missile defence system *Aegis*, that is supposedly directed against approaching Iranian missiles and has two modules right on Russia’s doorstep, in which the USA – like most of its European NATO partners – always presented Russia with a *fait accompli* and studiously ignored Russian fears and all compromise proposals from Moscow. In the meantime, the decisive modules in *Devesulu* (Romania) and *Ślupsk-Redzikowo* (Poland) are ready for operation. The *Aegis* system is – according to official Western statements – purely defensive, can be converted into an offensive system merely by changing the software – the defence company *Lockheed Martin* unabashedly advertises this fact – and its Mk 41 VLS launch pads can also fire *Tomahawk* cruise missiles, i.e., offensive weapons. In short, modules of this system, the US has been working on for

continued on page 13

“The Domsday-Clock ...”

continued from page 10

over two decades, would have violated the INF Treaty a year and a half ago when it still existed!” The INF Treaty, valid from 1987–2019, was, in short, intended to help prevent the nuclear battlefield of Europe, especially the GDR and the FRG. Definition *Wikipedia*: “The *INF Treaty (Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty)* refers to a set of bilateral treaties and agreements between the USA and the USSR/Russia on the destruction of all ground/land-based missiles of intermediate and shorter range (between 500 to 5500 kilometres). The Treaty was signed on 8 December 1987 at the Washington Summit and, after ratification, entered into force on 1 June 1988 during the Moscow Summit. It was concluded for an unlimited period, but has been out of force since 2 August 2019.”⁷

Without the ABM Treaty and the INF Treaty, the world is once again at a point that we thought we had overcome in 1972, namely at the beginning of a phase of nuclear armament in order, according to nuclear logic, to retain second-strike capability. And this is how Vladimir Putin’s statements can be better classified when, on 1 March 2018, at the end of his annual State of the Union address, he opened up to the world public that Russia now had new types of weapons systems such as non-ballistic hypersonic missiles with a speed of up to Mach-20 and nuclear-powered cruise missiles against which Western defence systems were powerless. A second *Sputnik* shock for the West, according to Leo Ensel?

You can spin it any way you like: we are living in a phase of a second Cold War that could lead to a nuclear inferno at any time. When asked when the new arms race began – and it is undisputed that it did – the answers from East and West differ: Putin did it, according to the Western narrative, while Putin is convinced: “With the American termination of the ABM Treaty!”⁸

US Peace Council: Call for ceasefire – criticism of NATO and USA

This tour d’horizon through a truly crazy world, namely the world with nuclear weapons and their own, actually banal logic, is concluded with the call of the US Peace Council.⁹ Yes, there are also such voices in the USA – prudent voices that want to save the world from a nuclear war and know their friends in the State Department, less so in the Pentagon, who have been underpinning their planning with the use of nuclear weapons since 1945.

Said US Peace Council states: “NATO’s success in its effort to expand to the Ukraine-Russia border would create a hellish world and lead to the possibility of a nuclear war. Let us not forget that the

story would not end there, and Belarus could be the next target. So, it is imperative for the peace movement to do everything we can to guarantee Ukraine’s neutrality and US/NATO’s recognition of it.” And her assessment of responsibilities: “The US with its NATO allies have not only provoked this tragedy but have sought to prolong it in their refusal to engage in negotiations for a ceasefire. While no one wins in a war, the US has had the most to gain: further unifying NATO under US domination, reducing Russian economic competition in the European energy market, justifying increasing the US war budget, and facilitating sales of war materiel to NATO vassals. A Europe further divided between the EU/UK and Russia benefits none but the imperial US.” And then the demands:

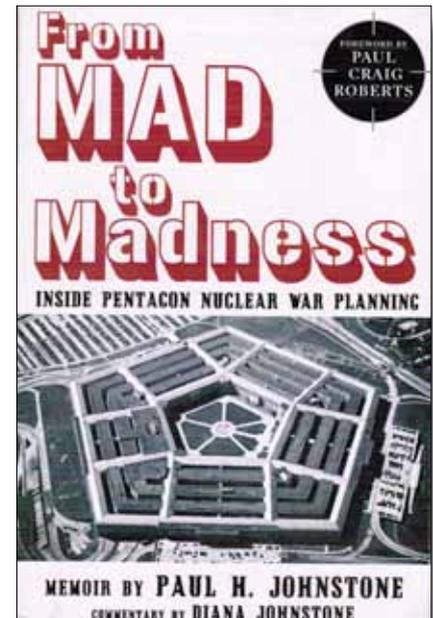
1. *Immediate ceasefire and dispatch of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including the self-proclaimed independent republics.*
2. *Recognition of the neutrality of Ukraine.*
3. *Withdrawal of foreign militaries, weapons, and equipment – including mercenaries – from Ukraine.*
4. *Resumption of negotiations for a permanent settlement of internal conflicts in Ukraine with the participation of all parties concerned.*

US Peace Council, 24 March 2022”.

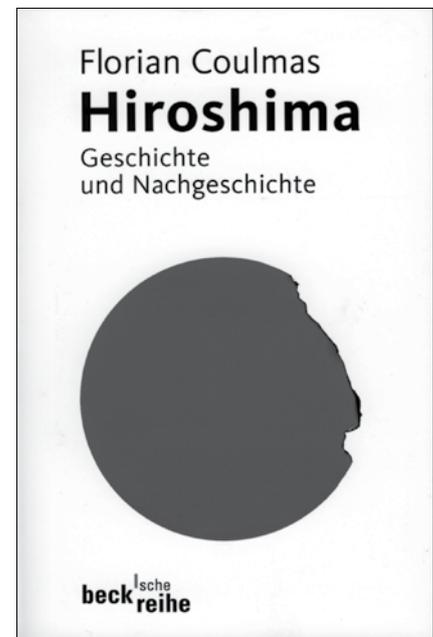
A call that can only be agreed with also from a European perspective, the next nuclear battleground, since the protection of the ABM and INF treaties have been removed. Or should the conflict be effectively resolved militarily, as *Josep Borrell – High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*, already once legally convicted for insider trading¹⁰ – demands? Would he then leave for California? Or to Mars, when the first nuclear missiles hit Poland and the Czech Republic, as Putin has announced? That is where the missile defence and attack batteries of the USA are located. And the nuclear bomb sites of the USA in Germany, southern Italy, etc., would also be targets for Russian nuclear missiles. Where would the American nuclear missiles be aimed? At eastern Ukraine? Or straight into Russia?

Politicians, let the military tell you what nuclear war means. According to reports, influential circles in the Pentagon are against the plans of the neoconservative military greenhorns and warmongers. God grant that the levelheaded military there will prevail against windy politicians.●

¹ <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/menschen/die-weltuntergangsuhr-und-putins-angriff-17834025.html>



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² Coulmas, Florian. *Hiroshima*. ISBN 978-3-406-58791-7. München 2010; Johnstone, Paul H.; Johnstone, Diana. *From Mad to Madness: Inside Pentagon Nuclear War Planning*. Atlanta 2017. ISBN 978-0-9972870-9-7

³ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gleichgewicht_des_Schreckens#Abkehr_von_der_MAD-Doktrin

⁴ <https://programm.ard.de/?sendung=2872414477346630>

⁵ Announcement of Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. – Media release from the White House of 13 December 2001; <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/12/20011213-2.html>

⁶ <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/raketen-abwehr-usa-kuendigen-abm-vertrag-a-172585.html>

⁷ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/INF-Vertrag>

⁸ <https://de.rt.com/opinion/leo-ensel/128380-startschuss-zum-wettrusten-usa-kuendigen-abm-vertrag/>

⁹ <https://uspeacecouncil.org/u-s-peace-council-statement-on-russias-military-intervention-in-ukraine/>

¹⁰ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josep_Borrell

“Rats do sleep at night”

by Peter Küpfer

It is a good time to re-read Wolfgang Borchert. When I was a student, reading the works of Wolfgang Borchert, the author who sadly died far too early, was required. In his post-war short prose, he writes from the victim's perspective and relays a serious, deeply human warning. We should take it seriously.

He lived a short life. Born in 1921, *Wolfgang Borchert* was twelve years old when Hitler took power in Germany. During this time Hitler strengthened his control especially by nazifying the schools. In 1939, when he was 18, the war which was based on a lie, started (the lie was an alleged “Polish attack” on Germany faithfully and tightly spread by the film newsreels). He quit his apprenticeship as a bookseller and got into acting. After the initial German frenzy of quick victories and the defeat of the arch-enemy France came the battle of Stalingrad. And then came the “total war” provoked by *Goebbels'* diatribe in the Sports Palace where he manipulated the civilians into supporting this war. The young writer was drafted alongside other comrades in fate, and sent to the Russian front with the armored infantry even though he wasn't healthy. From the front he wrote critical letters to his mother in Hamburg. These letters were discovered and formed the pretext for arresting the irregular thinker as a deviant and “Wehrkraftzersetzer” (someone who undermines military force).

Race with death

At this point he was already diagnosed with the fatal disease. He succumbed to the illness in 1947. He was tried by a military court and was sentenced to death. The *Rilke* admirer escaped the death sentence due to extenuating circumstances. Instead, he was sent to the Russian front. Due to his frail health, this young man was not going to help to win a lost war. On the eve of his discharge from the Wehrmacht, a “comrade” blew the whistle on him because of his daring jokes about militarism. New incarceration, new procedures, this time in Berlin-Moabit. In the meantime, the Allied troops were moving closer. When the Red Army occupied parts of Berlin in spring 1945, he managed to escape. Protected by Allied tanks advancing to the northwest, the exhausted Borchert walked to Hamburg. Mentally and physically at the end of his tether, he arrived in the bombed-out city, “a man marked by death, but gratefully received as one freed from death”, as his friend and mentor *Bernhard Meyer-Mar-*

witz wrote in his epilogue to the 350-page one-volume complete works of Borchert, published by *Rowohlt* in 1949. This light and small book is a heavy read.

The hectic race for survival continued under different circumstances. This time the nascent writer had to contend with a war-shattered Germany as well as his progressing illness. Despite the most adverse circumstances in the year zero (fortunately he had supportive friends), the young writer mustered all his strength to write. The subject was the war; however it wasn't about the damaged souls. It was about what drove people to support this war. His sharp-edged poems, his fragmentary language had only one aim: to document the shattering of Germany, the inner as well as the outer. Somewhat linguistically reminiscent of Expressionism, which had attempted something similar in the face of Germany's first major catastrophe, the First World War, his writing was often a single cry. A veteran was not only describing what he had seen and suffered, he was the suffering itself in words. Many carried it within themselves, were marked by it, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether “wanted” or unwanted – a collective trauma.

The man outside

Even before the publishing of newspapers and books was possible post-war, the radio was broadcasting. Therefore, audio drama experienced previously undreamed-of triumphs on the radio. Thus, Borchert's play “The Man Outside” (*Draussen vor der Tür*), which was written in only eight days in a burst of energy, with the significant subtitle “A play that no theatre wants to play, and no audience wants to see”, was first heard on the radio as an audio drama. *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk* produced the play as a radio play in its Hamburg studio and broadcast it on 13 February 1947. It had an unexpectedly strong impact and was repeated several times. It met with harsh rejection (Nihilism!) as well as enthusiastic approval, especially in military and soldier circles (That's how it was, that's how it is!). Someone had found a language for the outer and spiritual world. Someone had found a language for the external and spiritual hardship of the time, both for those who stayed here and for those who returned home, for whom there was often hardly any room in the soul at the time. “All of us who still walk around in recoloured military clothes, wear gas mask goggles, clear rubble and go dancing [...], at whose bedsides the dead com-



“You. Man at the machine and man in the workshop. If they command you tomorrow to stop making water pipes and cooking pots and to start making helmets and machine guns, then there's only one thing to do: Say NO!” (picture ma)

rades squat at night and torment us with the gaze of their extinguished eyes, who are everywhere in the way and stand aside, we have once again heard our own voice, which one of us has formed into words,” wrote one of the German returned front-line soldiers in one of the numerous letters to the author. And another, in the face of the cheap consolation “In fifty years it will all be over”: “In fifty years it will not all be over. In fifty years, it will be as much the present as it was today and yesterday. It is not there to deceive us, not to forget it – forgetting is the worst thing for man, no, to master it.” (*Wolfgang Borchert. The Complete Works. Rowohlt 1947, Hamburg, epilogue p. 342 f.*) At the centre of the plot of “*Outside the Door*” is the former sergeant *Beckmann*. He cannot get over the fact that he lost eleven of his men in enemy fire during a so-called “suicide mission”. He does not want to and cannot take responsibility for this. One of the most impressive scenes is the visit of the homeless returnee to the undamaged villa of his colonel, who at the time had given him the order for the hopeless reconnaissance mission into the enemy lines. The commander is supposed to take back his responsibility and bear it, he himself can no longer do it now. He wants to sleep at least one night again, without nightmares. The colonel is completely focused on reconstruction, he has successfully suppressed his own war experiences. That's all over now, a little optimism, and then we'll get it done, that's his way, with which he fights unsuccessfully against *Beckmann's* stubbornness.

continued on page 15

“Forward, builders of peace!”



Demonstrators in Italy demand: “Nuclear bombs out of Italy!” (Pictures Marco Inglessis)

On 30 April 20,000 citizens took part in a march from Perugia to Assisi; participants came from a total of 156 municipalities, provinces and regions, from 53 schools, 88 national associations, 359 local associations. Rectors from dozens of universities, mayors, students and activists came. Well-known Italian personalities such as *Alex Zanotelli, Gherardo Colombo, Fla-*

vio Lotti and *Beppe Giulietti* spoke on stage.

Beyond the numbers, the pictures and the testimonies of the participants speak of a cheerful and relaxed atmosphere, a good mood, popular and current songs, many banners, a large catholic presence and many young people. All of them had come together to say *No* to arms deliveries

to Ukraine, to increased military spending and to all wars, including the forgotten ones that mortify humanity and destroy the planet. Put politics and diplomacy back at the centre, the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace. “Forward, builders of peace!” was the concluding salute and wish of this extraordinary march. •

Source: *Presenza Redazione Italia* of 30 April 2022

“Rats do sleep at night”

continued from page 14

Beckmann is told to go to the garage, wash and shave there, let the chauffeur give him an old one of his suits and then leave them alone: “First become a human being again!” he says to the physically and mentally burnt-out soldier. However, he has already left this place of strength of German reconstruction.

Borchert’s play shows the extent of the destruction in oppressive symbolism. It gets under your skin because this destruction is not only external, but also internal. All the stages of Beckmann’s return to normality fail because not only the soldiers, but also the inhabitants far from the fronts (on the “home front”, as it was called at the time) suffered from the war, also emotionally.

Unshakeable humanity

Borchert’s seismographic exploration of what nonetheless survived in terms of fellow humanity comes across as factual as his inventory of the suffering of the time. For me, this is most vivid in his short prose sketch, which was called a short story at the time, “*Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch*” (Rats do sleep at night).

The setting is one of those streets in Hamburg, Berlin or Dresden where heaps

of rubble on the left and right indicate that houses once stood here. Paths that the survivors have made lead through the rubble landscape. Nine-year-old *Jürgen* sits on a pile of rubble, his face defiant, holding a strong club in his hand. An old man laboriously makes his way through the rubble, a basket with a lid on his arm, sees the boy, pauses, speaks to him cautiously. The dialogue is as fragile as the surroundings and the boy’s soul, which the old man notices immediately. Little by little, chunks of content make their way through the fragile dialogue. The boy sits here because he must sit here. He doesn’t say why. But he must sit here, right here. Required. Yes, even at night, especially at night. The old man tries to make him curious. Whether he can guess what he has here in the basket. No problem for the boy, who already knows life: grass, rabbit food. That’s right. Whether the boy doesn’t want to see his rabbits, the hutch is not far away. And now there are young ones. No, I can’t. Well then ... When the old man turns away, the boy quickly says: “It’s because of the rats.” Rats? “Yes, rats. They eat from the dead. From people”. How would he know that? From his teacher. That’s his brother down there. A bomb hit the house. Everything was gone, and then his brother too. He was much younger than him, only four.

He must be down there somewhere. And that’s where *Jürgen* must sit and chase the rats away. The old man resorts to a white lie to save the boy and shakes his head at teachers who tell their children nonsense, even though it is common knowledge that rats sleep at night. Tired and relieved, the child sighs. When leaving, the possibility of coming along is looming. When the old man comes back, after feeding his rabbits. Then the boy can also go to the parents (because, as we know, the rats sleep at night). And before that he shows him his rabbits. He can then take one of them with him. A white one, the boy wishes...

Borchert’s legacy, his play “The Man Outside”, was performed after all. The premiere was on 16 February 1948 at the Hamburg Kammerspiele. It was soon included in the repertoires of thirty German-language theatres. Before the premiere in Hamburg, the play’s director, who had known Borchert personally, appeared before the audience. She had just received the news that Wolfgang Borchert had died the day before as a result of his serious illness in a private clinic in Basel, where he had been cared for by his friends. •

“The rats do sleep at night” translated from the German by Robert Painter: <https://exchanges.uiowa.edu/issues/topographies/rats-sleep-at-night/>