

Current Concerns

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Lost in Syria

The earthquake and the consequences of the sanctions

by Karin Leukefeld, Bonn and Damascus*



Karin Leukefeld
(picture ef)

The massive earthquake that struck the Turkish-Syrian border region in the early hours of 6 February has, according to the latest figures, claimed 44,000 lives. Tens of thousands were injured and thousands are missing. While people in the earthquake zone are struggling to survive, strong aftershocks continue to shake the region. It was said on Friday that there is an aftershock in the region about every four minutes. As of 17 February, there have been more than 4700 aftershocks, according to the UN agency for emergency relief (OCHA).



Aleppo in Syria – Rescuers after the earthquake. (picture Lama Khaly)

In both Turkey and Syria, survivors said they thought the end of the world had come as the earth shook beneath them, destroying their homes, neighbourhoods, families, daily lives, life's work and all their plans. This earthquake has been and still is an immeasurably terrible experience and a heavy burden for people on all sides of the frontiers. For war-torn Syria, internationally blocked by the West politically, economically and in the media, the burden is nevertheless even greater. War and economic war, flight and displace-

ment, death and destruction - since 2011, Syria has lost everything it had ever built up through its own efforts. When it comes to the internationally promised aid for the people in the devastated areas, major differences become apparent. The USA, the EU and also the German government are distributing their aid selectively.

Turkey

Turkey was promised help from 70 countries, millions were promised or have already been transferred. Planes with first aid supplies landed at Turkish airports not damaged by the earthquake. According to official information from Ankara, 36 countries are already on the spot with their aid, and more than 3300 rescue workers are in action. The EU alone sent more than 1,000 aid workers to the Turkish earthquake zone and initiated the Emergency Relief Mechanism, which makes stringent demands on EU member states. 21 member states sent rescue teams and heavy equipment to search for trapped people. Tents and beds have been delivered. Sweden and Romania sent emergency shelters as part of the EU Commission's aid (which has an additional fund at its command). NATO has mobilised more than 1400 soldiers to support the rescue forces - also with heavy equipment. More than three times as many take-offs and landings were carried out over the fol-

lowing days via the Incirlik military base - about 10 km from Adana, which was badly devastated in the earthquake - to ensure aid deliveries by plane.

In Berlin, Federal Interior Minister *Nancy Faeser* said: "We remain closely and steadfastly at Turkey's side." She promised that emergency generators, tents and blankets would be sent, and the *German Federal Agency for Technical Relief* (THW) would send rescue and recovery teams. Faeser said she had offered Turkey that THW would "provide camps with emergency shelters and water treatment facilities". The support would be "closely coordinated with Turkey". International media sent reporters to the scene to report on the misery around the clock. Donations were solicited through all channels.¹

Syria

Like Ankara, the foreign ministry in Damascus turned to "the United Nations member states" for help as early as on 6 February. Requests for help also went to the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC) and other humanitarian organisations to help Syria cope with the terrible effects of the earthquake. Syrian Foreign Minister *Faisal Mekdad* affirmed that the government would do everything possible to provide the international organisations with all the support they need-

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

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ed to assist the Syrians with humanitarian aid.

However, a spokesperson for the EU Commission explained the following day that no request for assistance had been received from Damascus. The Civil Protection Mechanism had therefore been triggered only for Turkey.²

The Syrian government then approached the EU directly and submitted a request for civil protection assistance. A "long list of common civil protection goods" had been received, said EU Commissioner *Janez Lenarcic*, who heads the crisis management department in Brussels. He said there was a demand for medicines, food and medical equipment. He encouraged EU countries to respond to the request from Syria, the Commissioner said. Holland agreed to transfer 10 million euros, and ten EU states are now participating in aid deliveries. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was triggered, with the Commission releasing 3.5 million Euro in emergency aid.³

However, little of this aid arrives directly in Syria, it is rather earmarked for the "north-west" of the country. The Foreign Office in Berlin said that the "already existing comprehensive humanitarian aid in north-west Syria by humanitarian NGOs and UN organisations" would be continued. The "locally existing and established partner network" would "also help in the current situation to react quickly and directly and to support the suffering people. Germany will prepare extensive further assistance on the basis of the UN emergency plan to be published in the next few days." A further 1 million euros has been pledged to the *Malteser International* organisation.

Earthquake relief and war spending

kl. Following the earthquake disaster in Turkey, the UN is asking its member states for one billion dollars in support. This money should "assist 5.2 million people and allow aid organisations to rapidly scale up vital support for Government-led relief efforts in a number of areas including food security, protection, education, water and shelter", said UN Secretary-General *António Guterres* in New York on Thursday (16 February). Earlier, the UN had asked for nearly 400 million US-Dollar in assistance for Syria.

By comparison, the member states of NATO and the EU have so far spent 190 billion US-Dollar on the war in Ukraine, according to their own figures. The amount now requested by the UN corresponds to less than 0.25 per cent of this war expenditure.



(picture *Lama Khaly*)

The German government, which repeatedly boasts that Germany is the second largest donor to the suffering Syrian population, is singling out those living in north-west Syria for help. The Syrian victims – more than 300,000 people have been made homeless in Aleppo alone – are being divided. Their destitution is being used to intensify political pressure on the Syrian government. The Syrian government is accused of not helping the people affected by the earthquake. Federal Foreign Minister *Annalena Baerbock* told journalists that in Syria, "where people cannot hope for help under the *Assad* regime", humanitarian partners will be supported and efforts to "push for humanitarian access" will be continued.⁴

Baerbock had already demanded on 6 February, immediately after the catastrophic dimensions of the earthquake had become known, that Syria should open its borders to Turkey to allow aid deliveries. In the Bundestag, Bundestag President *Bärbel Bas* (SPD) demanded free access for aid organisations to the affected regions in Syria. And Chancellor *Olaf Scholz* said Germany was delivering aid supplies to Turkey that could be brought to the Syrian earthquake zone (from Turkey) with the help of the United Nations. "Now we see once again how vital this cross-border access is, which we have been advocating [in the UN Security Council, *kl*] for years."

Scholz was speaking about Bab al-Hawa, a border crossing between Turkey and the Syrian province of Idlib, which is run by *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS), successor to the *al-Nusra Front*, which emerged from *al-Qaida* in Iraq. Under UN Security Council Resolution 2672, which was renewed for six months in January 2023, aid can be brought to Idlib from Turkey under UN supervision. Syria rejects the move because it takes away the country's sovereign control over the border crossing. Russia, China and other states support Syria and demand that the border crossing be closed

and that aid be distributed from Syria to all parts of the country. The armed government opponents grouped around HTS in Idlib, who are supported by Turkey and numerous foreign states, reject this.

UN spokesperson *Stephane Dujarric* pointed out in New York that the Bab al-Hawa border crossing and the road through it had been damaged by the severe earthquake. Politics should be "left aside", the spokesperson warned. What was needed was a solution on how to get aid to the people who had lost everything and had to hold out in the freezing cold.

If so wanted, aid could have been brought immediately via the airports of Damascus, Aleppo and Latakia and transported within the country to all affected areas. However, the US, EU and partners preferred to spend days pressing the Syrian government to open more border crossings from Turkey. The US and France wanted to get a new UN Security Council resolution for this. The media started a campaign against the Syrian government, saying it did not want to help the earthquake victims.

What remained unmentioned was that Syria controls only one border crossing into Turkey, in the far west of the country near Kassab. All other border crossings are controlled by Turkey or – in the north-east of the country – by US troops. Both countries have deployed troops along the Syrian-Turkish border, supporting armed government opponents who, from the northwest to the northeast, prevent the Syrian government from controlling the Syrian-Turkish border as well as resources in the area. In fact, US Secretary of State *Blinken* specifically thanked the Turkish government for opening the border into north-western Syria.⁵

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad eventually gave the green light for two more border crossings to be used by the UN for aid deliveries – Bab al-Salam and Al Rae'e. The aid deliveries via these two

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border crossings and via Bab al-Hawa only reach the areas occupied by armed government opponents and Turkey (Afrin, Azaz, al-Bab).

Within Syria, all affected areas should receive aid, it was said in Damascus. The aid transports were to be carried out by the UN, the ICRC and the *Syrian Arab Red Crescent*.

The head of the World Food Programme (WFP), *David Beasley*, said that Syria and Turkey had cooperated well at government level to make aid deliveries possible. However, there were problems with the "authorities in the northwest". These block the passage of aid transports coming from Syria, Beasley said. He does not know why they are blocking. "Why are they playing such games now? I will call them by name and not be silent about it."⁶

In the hour of need

While Germany, the EU and the US did not hear the call for help from Damascus "to the states of the United Nations" on 6 February, other countries reacted immediately. On 7 February, a plane from Iran landed in Damascus with 45 tonnes of relief supplies. Tehran offered both Turkey and Syria the help of the *Iranian Red Crescent* and of Iranian rescue teams. On 8 February, planes from India, Iraq and Algeria landed at Damascus and Latakia airports with aid workers, search teams and relief supplies. Relief supplies also arrived by plane from Egypt and Jordan. Oman announced an airlift, and Armenia also pledged help. The United Arab Emirates sent numerous aircraft and a rescue team and set up a field hospital. Russia sent rescue teams to help recover survivors and dead in Aleppo.

Lebanon was among the first countries to send rescue workers from the Lebanese Civil Defence, *Red Cross Society* and private aid volunteers, as well as mil-

itary technicians and engineers to Syria on 6 February. On 8 February, a delegation from the acting interim government, led by Transport Minister *Ali Hamieh*, followed. In addition, the country also opened its airspace and ports for aid shipments to Syria, explicitly overriding the unilateral punitive economic measures imposed on Syria by the EU and the US. This has allowed emergency aid to the country to be accelerated. On 7 February, it was announced in Beirut, that all companies transporting supplies and equipment for Syria were exempt from port charges. The same would apply to air cargo arriving in Beirut via *Rafik Hariri International Airport*. Aid flights from European countries – Italy and Cyprus – could not land in Damascus due to EU sanctions against Syria. They landed in Beirut – which had suspended sanctions – and from there flew on to Damascus. "This is the least we can do for our brother country in its hour of need," said *Ali Hamieh*, Lebanon's acting transport minister.⁷

In the name of humanity

The most direct way to help the people of Syria would be through the airports in Damascus, Latakia and Aleppo. This would require the EU and the US to lift or suspend their unilateral punitive economic measures against Syria. After a twelve-day stay in the region and dozens of talks in November 2022, *Alena Douhan*, UN Special Rapporteur on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the human rights of the population of an affected country, specifically Syria, had called for the immediate lifting of the sanctions. Their impact on the population amounted to a "war crime".⁸

In response to the author's question as to whether the German Federal Government was prepared, within the EU framework or unilaterally, to comply with the UN Special Rapporteur's request in view of the earthquake, the Foreign Office referred to a "supplementary submission to

the government press conference on 11 November 2022":

"We have taken note of Ms Douhan's statements. We do not know how – i.e., under which impressions and with the help of which methodology – the Special Rapporteur reached her conclusions. What is clear to us is that the Assad regime bears responsibility for the catastrophic situation in Syria. The regime continues to wage a brutal war against its own population, it consistently commits human rights violations and blocks any political solution to the conflict. We also know that the regime and its supporters – such as Russia – cynically keep blaming the EU sanctions for the suffering in the country. The truth is that the EU sanctions are specifically aimed at those who are guilty of serious crimes in Syria. And at the same time, they provide for very clear and far-reaching humanitarian exemptions."

Reality tells another story. There is a lack of everything that Syria had originally produced itself. On the other hand, the sanctions and trade restrictions encourage smuggling and corruption at and across all borders to Turkey, Iran, Jordan and Lebanon. There is a shortage of gas and oil because US troops occupy the Syrian national oil fields in the north-east of the country and deny Syria access. A border crossing to Jordan and Iraq is blocked by US troops with its illegal military base Al-Tanf (trijunction Syria-Iraq-Jordan), so that aid transports from Iraq or Iran cannot reach Syria by land. The Syrian-Iraqi border crossing at Al-Bukamal is repeatedly being attacked by Israel – which does not comment on this. Recently, a convoy from Iran carrying medicine and food was bombed to pieces.⁹

Individual, local and long-distance transport in the country has almost come to a standstill because drivers and buses cannot find enough fuel or cannot pay the high prices on the black market. Inflation is high, prices are rising, people are looking for food in the rubbish. Christian and Muslim aid organisations and foundations give people something to eat at their gates. A falafel sandwich, which before the war was a popular snack everyone could afford for 25 Syrian pounds (about 50 US cents at the time), now costs 10,000 liras (about 1.50 US dollars), and hardly anyone can afford this snack anymore. The consequences of the sanctions can be read in detail in the Douhan report.¹⁰ The fact that the Western, rich states are not prepared to renounce their unilateral punitive economic measures and the ongoing demonisation of the Syrian government in the face of the misery and concerns of the people and local authorities in Syria is commented on in the country with bitterness.

"We don't want their money, we don't want charity," says a family man who does

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(picture Lama Khaly)

Rising up against the US war machine

by Scott Ritter*

Note: I was going to speak at the Rage against the War Machine rally, scheduled for Feb. 19 at the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, D.C. For personal reasons, I will no longer be speaking.

In short, I have decided to take one for the team.

I wish all participants and attendees at this rally to have a very successful event, and hope that it can serve as the start of something even bigger down the road.

This is the speech I was planning to deliver at the rally. I think it would have done the event proud. [Ritter had been invited, then disinvited and then after pressure re-invited before declining to take part.]

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to address you today.

I speak to you from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, a place of history filled with gravitas worthy of the task we have set for ourselves at this time in our collective history: to stand up – no, to rage – against a war machine that has perverted the very definition of what it means to be an American.

We stand here today at the very nexus of this war machine. To our right, just over the Potomac River, lies the Pentagon, a structure built at a time when America called upon its collective might to defeat the scourge of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, but which has since then morphed



The Kuban region mentioned by Scott Ritter is a North Caucasian region of Russia with a very chequered history. It stretches from the main ridge of the Caucasus in a northerly direction to the Kugujeja River in the Kalmyk Steppe. (picture ma)

into the very symbol of evil itself, a breeding ground for weapons and plans that are used by the other partners, in what has become known as the military-industrial complex, to spread malfiance around a world we once protected, but now enslave through a process of perpetual conflict used to sustain the American war machine.

And who are these other partners? Before us, past the monument to our found-

ing father, George Washington, stands the Capitol of the United States, where the people's representatives fund, in great secrecy, the nefarious schemes cooked up in the bowels of the Pentagon.

And to our left stands the White House, the seat of executive authority, where individuals we invest with singular authority betray the trust of those who put them

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not want to give his name. "We just want them to lift the blockade on our country; then we can help ourselves." The Americans should leave Syria, then Syria would be able to use its own oil resources again, he continues. "They accuse us of not wanting to help and of enriching ourselves with relief supplies. But they are the ones occupying our land and getting rich through our need, through our resources, the oil, the wheat, the cotton."

For so many years, he said, people had endured the war and tried to protect their land. "We have clung to the earth of Syria so as not to lose our homeland." Now, he said, the earth itself had turned against the very people who had tried so hard to protect it. "How are we to understand this," the man asks, perplexed. "After the war, after the economic blockade, after the attacks on Syria from abroad - now our earth is killing us. Why?"

It was "like the Last Judgement", says Fadi I. from Aleppo, who sends photos: People trying to form a ladder to retrieve a dead child hanging between fallen chunks

of stone. "In the name of humanity – end sanctions against Syria," it says underneath. Another photo shows the bodies of a man and a child stuck between concrete slabs – they cannot be recovered. Another photo shows two people. The man has his arm protectively over the head of someone who is nestled against him and has an arm around the man's face. It is not possible to tell if the person is his wife or child. Both are dead, buried by rubble and debris.

"It was really terrible, very terrible," says Anas B., a student of architecture in Aleppo, in an unsteady voice. He says his family is fine, "thank God". Anas lives in New Aleppo, where the houses are not built as high and sturdy. Less was destroyed there during the war than in the east and centre of the city, where there was the most loss of life due to the earthquake. Because of the many aftershocks, his family slept in their car for two nights, Anas says. Now they are busy helping the survivors, he says. "We are collecting blankets, warm clothes, preparing food – I hope we can help. But it's so much, so terrible." Anas is in the final exams of his studies, but now he does not

know where they might study. The Aleppo city council has declared schools as emergency shelters, and the universities are closed. "We are at a loss, we don't know how to continue our studies," Anas says, and then falls silent.

- ¹ <https://www.evangelisch.de/in-halte/212095/07-02-2023/erdbeben-faes-er-sagt-tuerkei-hilfe-durch-thw-und-bundes-polizei-zu>
- ² <https://lostineu.eu/syrien-bekommt-noch-keine-eu-hilfe/>
- ³ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/earthquakes-turkey-and-syria-eu-emergency-assistance_en
- ⁴ <https://www.handelsblatt.com/video/politik/erdbebenhilfe-baerbock-zum-erdbeben-unsere-gedanken-sind-bei-den-angehoerigen/28968048.html>
- ⁵ <https://www.state.gov/assistant-secretary-for-european-and-urasian-affairs-karen-donfried-on-secretary-blinkens-upcoming-travel-to-germany-turkiye-and-greece/>
- ⁶ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2023/02/18/wfp-boss-criticises-northwestern-syrian-authorities-for-slowing-quake-aid/>
- ⁷ <https://tass.com/world/1573073>
- ⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/node/104160>
- ⁹ <https://english.almayadeen.net/news/politics/israeli-attack-on-al-bukamal-targeted-food-medicine-convoy-f/>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/node/104160>

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there by conceiving and implementing policies designed to further the Pentagon's war efforts.

The very nexus of evil

This is the very nexus of evil, an unholy trinity of terroristic madness, which some 61 years ago *Dwight D. Eisenhower*, an American warrior turned political leader, warned the American people about, cautioning that "in the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."

In the history of the United States that has transpired since that speech, no truer words have been spoken by an American president, and no greater wisdom has been disregarded by those whom Eisenhower entrusted with that message – we, the people of the United States.

We stand here today to announce to this terrible trinity, this military-industrial complex, this war machine, that we hear you now, President Eisenhower – we hear you, and we will act on your warning to bring this nexus of un-American conspiracy to an end.

The madness of nuclear weapons

Of all the weapons produced by the military-industrial complex, of all the evil schemes hatched in the minds of the so-called national security experts – most of whom are unelected by, and unknown to, we, the American people – none reek of madness more than nuclear weapons.

"Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds," the father of the American atomic bomb, *Robert Oppenheimer*, said at the time of the first American nuclear test.

Destroyer of worlds.

This is the ever-present reality that we all live in today – that from this nexus of evil we call the military-industrial complex comes the very weapons necessary to bring the words of the Hindu sacred text that Oppenheimer quoted – the *Bhagavad-Gita* – to life and, in doing so, bring about our collective deaths.

Most Americans, including many of you assembled here today, live in blissful ignorance of just how close the world has come to being destroyed by Oppenheimer's progeny.

By a hair's breadths

On Sept. 26, 1983, a Soviet Officer, Lieutenant Colonel *Petrov*, was on duty at a nuclear early-warning station when the system reported that five nuclear armed missiles had been launched from the

United States. Colonel Petrov disregarded protocol requiring him to report this detection as a factual launch, an act that would have triggered a Soviet response, and in doing so bought precious time for the error to be identified, and nuclear war averted.

In November 1983 the United States and NATO carried out a command post exercise code-named "Able Archer 83" which tested the launch control procedures for the release of NATO nuclear weapons against Soviet and Warsaw Pact targets. The Soviets, believing this exercise to be a cover for a first strike, placed its nuclear forces on high alert. Later, the C.I.A. assessed that the Able Archer 83 exercise brought the U.S. and Soviets closer to nuclear conflict than any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

And on Jan. 25, 1995, the Soviets detected the launch of a Norwegian atmospheric test rocket that mimicked the track of a US Navy *Trident* submarine-launched nuclear weapon. Fearing a high-altitude nuclear attack that could blind Russian radar, Russian nuclear forces went on high alert, and the "nuclear briefcase" was delivered to Russian President *Boris Yeltsin*, who had to make a split-second decision whether to launch a retaliatory nuclear strike against the United States.

These three incidents underscore the razor's edge we all walk daily when it comes to living in a world where nuclear weapons exist. One mistake, one error or judgement, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* becomes reality.

The importance of arms control

We were saved from the inevitability of our collective demise by one thing, and one thing only – arms control. The deployment into Europe by both the U.S. and Soviet Union of intermediate-range nuclear armed missiles in the 1980s only increased the possibility of a mistake or misunderstanding that could trigger a nuclear conflict.

The fact that these weapons could reach their respective target in five minutes or less once launched meant that the 30–40-minute buffer of time that existed regarding the use of strategic nuclear forces was no longer there.

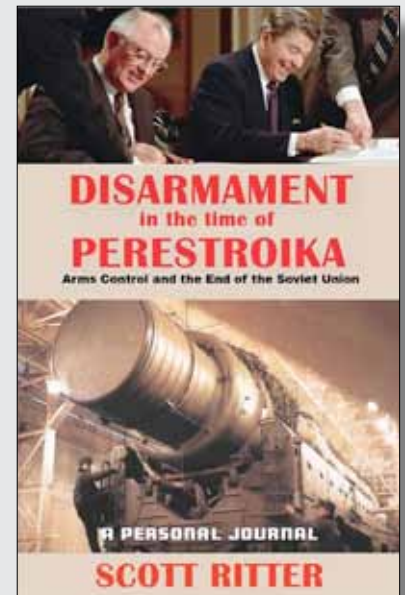
To put it more starkly, if it were not for the implementation of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty in 1988 that eliminated these new and dangerous weapons, the January 25, 1995 atmospheric rocket incident would have more than likely resulted in a general nuclear war, simply for the fact that Boris Yeltsin would have been denied the luxury of time to decide not to launch his missiles.

Everyone standing here today should reflect on this statement and say a quiet word of thanks to those men and women,



Scott Ritter (picture ma)

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American and Soviet alike, who made the intermediate nuclear forces treaty a reality and, in doing so, literally saved the world from nuclear destruction.

"Arms control is no longer part of the U.S.-Russian dialogue"

Arms control, however, is no longer part of the U.S.-Russian dialogue. The American war machine has conspired to denigrate the notion of mutually beneficial disarmament in the minds of the American public, instead seeking to use arms control as a mechanism to achieve unilateral strategic advantage.

When an arms control treaty becomes inconvenient to the objective of American global domination, then the war machine simply quits. America's record in this re-

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gard is damnable – the *anti-ballistic missile treaty*, the *intermediate nuclear forces treaty*, the *open-skies treaty* – all relegated to the trash bin of history in the cause of seeking unilateral advantage for the American war machine.

A new arms race

In a world without arms control, we will once again be confronted with a renewed arms race where each side develops weapons that protect nothing while threatening everything. Without arms control, we will return to a time where living on the edge of the abyss of imminent nuclear annihilation was the norm, not the exception.

The war machine has allowed the principled position of peaceful coexistence regulated by mutually beneficial treaties governed by the time-tested maxim of "trust-but-verify" to be replaced by a new posture defined by a war machine that uses the nuclear weapons establishment, and the billions of dollars it costs to maintain it annually, as a means of buying off politicians at the expense of the population our government is sworn to protect.

And the people are excluded

This is the final corruption of the military-industrial complex – its conversion to the military-industrial-congressional complex, where we the people are excluded from every consideration, whether it be funding or consequence.

The key to sustaining this inherently un-American mechanism is the ability of the military-industrial-congressional complex – the war machine – to generate fear amongst the American people derived from ignorance of the true nature of the threat or threats these nuclear weapons are designed to address.

The function of Russophobia

In the case of US-Russian relations, this fear is produced by systemic Russophobia imposed on the American public by a war machine and its compliant minions in the mainstream media. Left to its own device, the collusion between government and media will only further reinforce ignorance-based fear through a process of dehumanising Russia and the Russian people in the eyes of the American public, until we have become desensitised to the lies and distortions, accepting at face value anything negative said about Russia.

It is here, in such a situation, that we can turn to scripture, *John 8:32*, for some guidance: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Mainstream media's bodyguard of lies

But what truth? The truth as told by the government? As promulgated by the main-

stream media? That is no truth, but rather a bodyguard of lies constructed on behalf of a war machine that wants every American to accept without question the legitimacy of weapons the only known utility of which is the destruction of all mankind.

Some 60 years ago, on these very steps, in this very place, a man of peace gave a speech that captured the imagination of the nation and the world, searing into our collective hearts and minds the words, "I have a dream."

Dr. *Martin Luther King's* historic address confronted America's sordid history of slavery, and the inhumanity and injustice of racial segregation. In it, he dreamed "that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

All men are created equal.

These words resonated in the context of America's desperate internal struggle with the legacy of slavery and racial injustice.

My American dream

But these words apply equally, especially when taken in the context that we are all God's children, black, white, rich, poor.

American.

Russian.

You see, I too have a dream.

That the audience gathered here today can find a way to overcome the ignorance-based fears generated by the disease of Russophobia, to open our minds and our hearts to accept the Russian people as fellow human beings deserving of the same compassion and consideration as our fellow Americans – as all humankind.

I too have a dream.

That we the people of the United States of America, can unite in common cause with the Russian people to build bridges of peace that facilitate an exchange of ideas, open minds closed by the hate-filled rhetoric of Russophobia that is promulgated by the war machine and its allies, and allow the love we have for ourselves to manifest itself into love and respect for our fellow man.

Especially those who live in Russia.

Newton's Third Law, that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, applies to the human condition every bit as much as it applies to the physical world.

Love thy neighbor as thyself is applicable to all humanity.

Overcoming hate and Russophobia

I too have a dream.

That by overcoming the hate generated by systemic Russophobia we can work with our fellow human beings in Russia to create communities of compassion that, when united, make a world filled with nuclear weapons undesirable, and policies built on the principles of mutually beneficial arms control second nature.

I too have a dream.

That one day, whether on the red hills of Georgia, or the black soil of the Kuban, the sons and daughters of the men and women who today operate the Russian and American nuclear arsenals will be able to quote Dr. King, "to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

This is not an impossible dream.

I have lived it. I once was corrupted by the hatred that comes from fear generated by the ignorance about the reality of those whom I was trained to kill.

My remarkable journey of discovery

But I then embarked on a remarkable journey of discovery, facilitated by the implementation of the very same intermediate nuclear forces treaty that ended up saving humanity from nuclear annihilation, where I came to know the Russian people not as enemy, but as friend. Not as opponent, but colleague.

As fellow humans capable of the same emotions as myself, imbued with the same human desire to build a better world for themselves and their loved ones, a world free of the tyranny of nuclear weapons.

I too have a dream.

That the people gathered here today will join me on a new journey of discovery, one that tears down the walls of ignorance and fear constructed by the war machine, walls designed to separate us from our fellow human beings in Russia, and instead builds bridges that connect us to those we have been conditioned to hate, but now – for the sake of ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren – must learn to love.

This will not be an easy journey, but it is one worth taking.

This is my journey, your journey, our journey, where we will embark, literally, down the road less travelled.

And yes, it will be the one that will make all the difference.

It will take us, as Dr. King once cried out from these very steps, to the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, the mighty mountains of New York, the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania, the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado, the curvaceous slopes of California ... to every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

Advocating for peace and justice

This is an American journey – a journey of Americans, united in the cause of peace and justice, and a world free from the tyranny of nuclear weapons. Our numbers will grow, from two thousand, to twenty thousand, from twenty thousand to a hundred thousand, and from a hundred thousand to a million or more.

And who knows? Maybe in June of 2024, on the anniversary of the 1982 gathering of a million people in New York

continued on page 7

Peace efforts

zf. In many places around the world, voices are speaking out in favour of peace. What the conditions are for this is judged differently. There are initiatives supported by many "celeb-

rities", for example in Germany the petition by Sarah Wagenknecht and Alice Schwarzer, but also many initiatives with only little media echo, two of which are documented here. Not

everywhere can the initiators agree on common ground beyond other political views. But in some places, including the USA, this is already succeeding better.

Instead of NATO expansion, Hungarian Peace Forum demands a compromise with Russia

The Hungarian Forum for Peace, a socio-political alliance created to preserve the peace of our country, asks the Parliament not to ratify the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO.

The expansion of NATO would not serve peace, but would hinder the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the political development. According to the conviction of the cooperators in the Forum for Peace movement, Hungary is not interested in continuing the war, but in making peace. The government and the Parliament would do a good service to the cause of Peace if, in accordance with the will of the vast majority of our people for peace, instead of expanding to

the east, they encouraged NATO to come to an agreement with Russia and fulfill Moscow's demand for security guarantees presented to Washington and Brussels on December 15, 2021. The Hungarian Forum for Peace considers Russia's demand for security to be legitimate, and that neither NATO nor its leading power, the USA, may threaten it along its borders. The Hungarian government must stand on its heels and demand from its allies that NATO end Ukraine's military support against Russia and prove its ability to guarantee mutual security and peaceful East-West cooperation within the framework of the proposed pan-European conference. According to

the Peace Forum, Hungary could only realise its old dream in the system of pan-European cooperation: true self-determination and national development free from foreign interference.

Association for the Rule of Law, Hungarian Anti-Fascist League, Labor Party, Hungarian Community for Peace, Balog István, Bognár Tibor, Fehérvári Zsolt, Hajdú József, Hetényi Balázs, Hirschler Tamás, Kleinheincz Ferenc, Krajcsovics Gyöngyi, Nagy Zsolt József, Petráss László, Salga István, Simó Endre, Thürmer Gyula

Source: www.selbstbestimmtes-oesterreich.at

Appeal — Rise up for Survival

Deeply concerned about life and survival in the centre of Europe, we address this appeal primarily to the people of German-speaking European countries. With a diversity of socio-political views, we are sustained by the common conviction that at no time since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 has our world been so close to catastrophe. If the delusional enthusiasm for war currently being fomented in the mass media is not effectively countered, there is a great danger that the Ukraine war will lead to the use of nuclear weapons in Europe.

The multi-layered confrontations between the forces seeking unipolar world domination and those in favour of a multipolar world order have already caused devastation in Yugoslavia, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Yemen, among others. The military clashes in Ukraine since 2014

represent a part of this global development.

In the midst of the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis was a wake-up call. Unlike today, the two great powers at that time sought a concession in their mutual interest. Thus, among other things, the Ballistic Missile Defence Treaties and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaties, which have since been discarded, were negotiated.

Negotiated peace agreements are based less on trust than on the mutual understanding that the alternative found is in the interest of both sides. We raise our voices for immediate peace negotiations and against the war drummers who demand a continuation of the war "until Ukraine wins" and the corresponding arms deliveries.

Our fate is on a knife's edge!

Now it is important to counteract the omnipresent war drumming in an en-

lightening way through diverse actions, so that survival can be secured.

V.i.S.d.P.: Wolfgang Effenberger, Dorfmoos 12, 82343 Pöcking, Germany (written on 31 January 2023, published on 4 February 2023)

Comment

It was not the aim of the initiators of the appeal to start a new petition, to create a signature campaign or to call for concrete protest actions. The aim was to set a sign in the sense of survival. Every person who feels addressed by this call should, taking into account his or her own abilities and possibilities, "counteract the omnipresent war drum in an enlightening way", "so that survival can be ensured".

Source: <https://afsaneyebahar.com/2023/02/13/206947771> (with update of the list of signatories on 17.2.2023)

"Rising up against ..."

continued from page 6

City's Central Park, where they rallied in favor of nuclear disarmament and an end to the nuclear arms race, we can come together and send a similar message to the war machine.

A million people or more demanding that their government act in a manner that preserves and protects the lives and future of all Americans – of all humanity.

The 1982 rally set in motion events that led to the implementation of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty in 1987 – a treaty that literally saved the world from nuclear destruction.

I too have a dream.

That together, we can harness the same energy, the same vision, the same passion as those who have gone before us and create a movement of people united in the principles of peace that will lead to a future arms control agreement between the United States and Russia that will preserve our collective futures.

There will be forces that will try to disrupt us, to dissuade us – to destroy us.

Not allow ourselves to be intimidated

We cannot allow ourselves to be intimidated.

We must not go gently into that good night, but instead rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Rage, rage against the war machine.

Rage, rage so that together we may breathe life into the words of President Lincoln inscribed on the memorial behind me:

"... to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Let us get to work. •

Source: ScottRitterExtra.com of 10 February 2023; with friendly permission of the author

Totalised ignorance

by Patrick Lawrence*



Patrick Lawrence
(picture ma)

It has been an eventful few months for American newspapers and network broadcasters and the millions of people who no longer trust them to take up their civic responsibilities in good faith.

The Twitter Files, Jeff Gerth's investigation of mainstream media's Russiagate coverage, Seymour Hersh's exposé of the Biden regime's operation to detonate the Nord Stream I and II pipelines: Three significant developments that tell us a lot about the world we live in and how our corporate-owned media cover the world we live in.

These reports confront us with matters that can no longer be refuted, dismissed, or elided. There is a certain conclusive finality in them. We are now able to see in the starkest black and white the extent of the corruption and lawlessness that are rampant among institutions that are key to shaping the world we live in.

Mainstream media no longer informs us

As to how mainstream media inform us of the world we live in, there is no longer any avoiding the reality that they don't. I have just named the three most important news developments of the past three months – and arguably for some years. The major dailies and broadcasters have had nothing to say about any of them; the very few exceptions are those that have resorted to distortion and obfuscation.

We must now conclude these media have not merely strayed. They have ceased to understand informing us of the world we live in to be their function. Since 2001 – and I will shortly explain why I select this date – media have taken as their purpose the creation of an alternative reality within which the reading and viewing public is to be confined to the fullest extent possible. The intent, shared collaboratively among media and the very institutions they purport to report upon, is to create a condition of totalised ignorance.

* Patrick Lawrence is a writer, commentator, a long-time newspaper and magazine correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the "International Herald Tribune". He is a columnist, essayist, author and lecturer and writes often on Europe and Asia. Patrick Lawrence has published five books; his most recent book is *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century*. His new book *The Journalists and Their Shadows* will be published shortly by Clarity Press. His Twitter account @thefloutist has been permanently censored without explanation. His web site is patricklawrence.us. Support his work via his Patreon site.

After many decades in corporate media, I wrote my first commentaries for an independent publication, *Salon* back when *Salon* could be taken seriously, in the spring of 2013. I had concluded some time earlier that nothing more of worth could be accomplished within the mainstream of U.S. media. It was either get out or surrender one's integrity. If anything, I was late to this judgment.

But lurking somewhere in your columnist's obdurately optimistic mind was the thought that a day of reckoning was to come, a day when the lights would go on and some process of recovery or restoration would begin. Publishers, broadcast executives, editors, producers, reporters – they would all come alive once again to the idea that they have a high purpose and must serve it as an independent pole of power.

No such thought any longer lurks.

Twitter-Gate

Elon Musk, newly in charge at *Twitter*, began in mid-December to release internal memos revealing in black and white the extent to which the *social media platform* cooperated with the *Federal Bureau of Investigations* to censor the accounts of dissidents, those of all stripes who declined to conform to the liberal authoritarian orthodoxy. Lining up the chronology as best I can, my

Twitter account, @thefloutist, was permanently blocked last year because it was on one of the lists the FBI routinely gave *Twitter* when it ordered *en masse* cancellations.

The Gerth Report on the Russiagate hoax

Of Jeff Gerth's exposure of the media's corruption start to finish throughout the *Russiagate hoax* – a word I do not mind using – I have already written¹ And again, the paying-attention among us knew from the first that the press and broadcasters were collaborating closely with the *Democratic Party* hierarchy and various government institutions – the national security apparatus, law enforcement, the *Obama White House* – to create and sustain this corner of the alternate reality I have mentioned. The *Gerth report* was nonetheless stunning for the finality it bought to the matter.² "It is done," I said to myself as I finished reading it.

Seymour Hersh's report on the covert U.S. operation to destroy the Nord Stream pipelines

The extraordinary detail – the chapter-and-verse, the dollars-and-cents ticktock – of *Seymour Hersh's* account of how the *Biden* regime planned and executed the cov-

continued on page 9

"Russiagate hoax" and "Gerth Report"

ef. In 2019 the US-American Stephen Cohen († 2020), Russia expert, professor at *Princeton University* as well as *New York University* and former member of the *Council on Foreign Relations*, wrote about "Russiagate" – the alleged collusion of Donald Trump with Russia as he ran against Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election – : "allegations that the American president [Donald Trump] has been compromised by the Kremlin, which may even have helped to put him in the White House – is the worst and (considering the lack of actual evidence) most fraudulent political scandal in American history."¹

A major contributor to this campaign was the mainstream media with their assertions, lies, disinformations, cover-ups and spins. Even when all the "Russiagate" stories and the dossier by former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele commissioned by *Hillary Clinton* were exposed as lies, and the report by special investigator Robert Mueller ("Mueller Report") did not lead to any indictment of Donald Trump despite enormous effort, no apology from the press followed, but their unproven claims of collusion were

only reinforced, even in once reputable media.

Jeff Gerth, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, has worked for three decades as an investigative reporter at the "New York Times". On 30 January 2023 the *Columbia Journalism Review* has published with a four-part series the results of Gerth's one-and-a-half-year media investigation². With extensive documentation he has confirmed the criticism of the campaign.

Patrick Lawrence wrote in another article: "In exceptional detail, Gerth exposed more or less all of American media's utterly craven complicity in manufacturing out of sheer nothing all the nonsense about Donald Trump's collusion with Russia as he ran against Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election."³

¹ <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-did-russiagate-begin/> of 30 May .2019

² https://www.cjr.org/special_report/trumped-up-press-versus-president-ed-note.php

³ <https://consortiumnews.com/2023/02/07/patrick-lawrence-the-press-reckoning-on-russiagate/> of 7 February 2023

“Totalised ignorance”

continued from page 8

ert operation to destroy the *Nord Stream* pipelines with underwater explosives had a similar effect when Hersh published it on *Substack* several weeks ago.³ To me it was exactly the same as with the *Twitter* Files and Gerth’s report: Washington’s culpability seemed obvious beforehand, but suddenly it was irrefutable. There was no long any need to speculate or opine.

... and everything is hushed up

It is done, it is done times three. Where does this leave us? Not where we would be were ours a society that is honest with itself.

No one at the FBI, in the Justice Department, the Biden *White House*, no former Obama administration official has had anything to say about the *Twitter* Files revelations. No one in Congress, which relentlessly pressured *Twitter* and other social media platforms to increase their censorship programs, has felt called upon to comment. The big mainstream dailies and the network news broadcasters haven’t gone anywhere near the *Twitter* Files. *NPR*⁴, the only exception I could find, published a pitiful piece putting the *Twitter* documents down to Musk’s determination to spread “conspiracy theories.” A total absence of seriousness.

Some time after the Gerth report came out, *Glenn Greenwald* asked on his ever-active *Twitter* feed, “Remember 3 weeks ago when *Columbia Journalism Review* published a scathing 4-part investigative indictment of the corporate media’s serial lying and recklessness that drove *Russia-gate* – written by a *Pulitzer*-winning *NYT* reporter – and they all ignored it?”⁵

“They simply sit there, carrying on per usual”

In three weeks one of the great, consequential stories of our time sank beneath the waves of quotidian nonsense and it is a matter of “remembering.” I wondered for years how mainstream media would manage themselves when the truth of the *Russia-gate* ruse finally emerged. I figured they would slip out the side door one or another way. In the event they are not even bothering with the side door: They simply sit there, carrying on per usual with nothing to say, no notion of accountability crossing their minds.

As to Sy Hersh’s remarkable report, government officials dismiss it out of hand as “false” or “fiction,” and there has been no coverage in mainstream media. This is akin to sweeping a *Mack truck*⁶ under the carpet.

Seymour Hersh:**“Mainstream American press is now more interested in media gossip”**

Hersh distributed a note to subscribers after he published his *Nord Stream* re-

port that goes nicely to the point. I love the goofball *Times* reporter he mentions in it. Referring to *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, Hersh writes:

“Neither paper has run a word at this point about the pipeline story, not even to quote the White House’s denial of my reporting. Similarly, public calls by officials in Russia and China for a full investigation of the pipeline story have been ignored by the US media. (I cannot resist noting that a reporter from the ‘Times’ called me on the day the pipeline story appeared. I told him that I was not doing interviews. He asked if I would entertain one question. I acquiesced. He asked how many publications had I offered the pipeline story before coming to Substack. Such silliness is a sign that the mainstream American press is now more interested in media gossip than in national security or matters of war and peace.)”

Testify, Sy. Tell it like it is.

We are left to draw conclusions of a new kind – conclusions as stark as the hard evidence *Elon Musk*, *Jeff Gerth*, and *Sy Hersh* have put before us as to the nature of official and media power and how it is exercised.

“The U.S. government is fully committed to a regime of lawlessness”

One, the U.S. government is fully committed to a regime of lawlessness, internationally and on the domestic side. It is a fundamentally defensive posture and is all the more dangerous for this. I date this to the events of 2001, when the decline of the American imperium could no longer be denied – in private circles if not in public.

U.S. media obscure lawlessness of the government

Two, mainstream American media are equally committed to obscuring this official lawlessness. How else could *Washington* operate a global empire and simultaneously keep this so effectively hidden from the American public?

“The disinformation industry now operates with no apparent restraints”

Two A, what we are now calling a disinformation industry has taken shape over the past half-dozen years and now operates with no apparent restraints. At the core of this malign enterprise is the relationship, often unconstitutional, between media companies, notably but not only *social media* platforms, and various parts of the administrative state. *Russia-gate* was a combination of disinformation, legally actionable lies in the cases of some officials, and omissions. Media’s silence in response to the Hersh report amounts to disinformation by omission.

“Sequestration from the American public”

Three, the American government now operates in a condition of nearly undisturbed sequestration from the American public. American media, while making this possible, at the same time partake of the very same immunity and impunity. Both institutions, the reported upon and the reporting upon, are more secure in their indifference to public opinion than I would ever have thought possible even in our very troubled republic.

Only sheer force now?

Three A, in the matter of impunity, *Jeff Gerth* published 24,000 words. I have not counted Hersh’s, but *Sy*, let’s say, is generous when he sits down to write. We must now ask if we have reached that dreadful point in history when naked power, the power of force alone, has stripped language of its own power. To date – and my qualifier is essential – we must face the reality that this is so at least as far as language has any capacity to discipline power and hold to account those who exercise it corruptly.

“The media blackout has been diabolically effective”

Four, the media blackout of the three reports here at issue – and there is no other word for it – has been diabolically effective in keeping the majority of Americans unaware of the events these reports expose. Most of the *Russia-gate* true-believers with whom I am familiar do not even know all they took to be true has been disproven. And if they are not unaware of this, they are indifferent to it. This is the condition I name totalised ignorance.

“The crap on the wall”

Five and last, there is no precedent for our circumstances in American history. Our past cannot be our guide.

Sy Hersh headlined his letter to subscribers this morning “The Crap on the Wall,” after a denigrating remark a government official made about his coverage, and ended it with this admonition: “Stay tuned. We are only on first base ...”

Indeed. ●

¹ <https://consortiumnews.com/2023/02/07/patrick-lawrence-the-press-reckoning-on-russia-gate/>

² https://www.cjr.org/special_report/trumped-up-press-versus-president-ed-note.php

³ <https://seymourhersh.substack.com/p/how-america-took-out-the-nord-stream>

⁴ *National Public Radio* (NPR): a cooperative of non-commercial radio stations in the U.S. whose stations are legally and financially independent

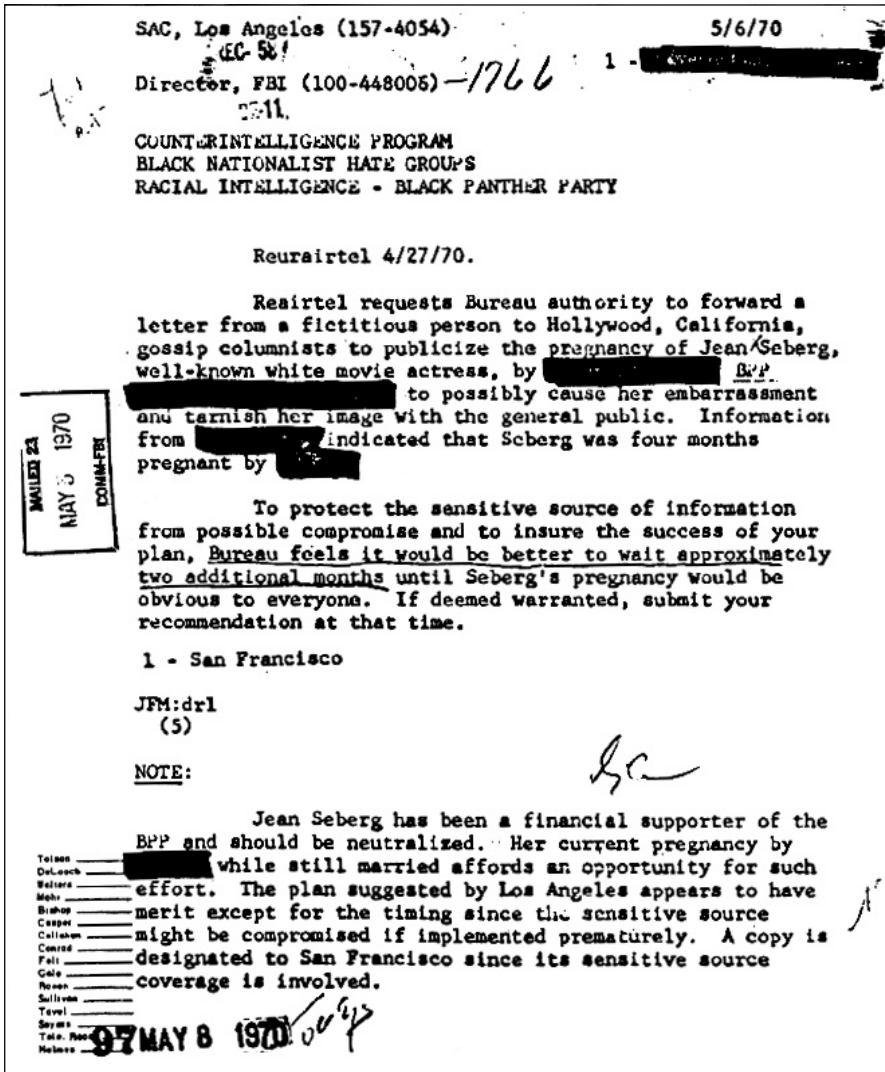
⁵ <https://twitter.com/ggreenwald/status/1625595631413633045>

⁶ *Mack Trucks*: a US commercial vehicle manufacturer; known primarily for heavy-duty trucks for long-haul trucking and construction with a reputation for producing rugged vehicles

Campaigns that are vicious and aim at “neutralisation”.

How the US powers (and their collaborators) dealt with people who think and act for themselves ... and still do

by Karl-Jürgen Müller



“Her involvement with the *Black Panther* movement in the US caused her to be targeted by FBI Director *J. Edgar Hoover* and led to FBI surveillance and a smear campaign against Seberg that should destroy her career. When she was expecting her second child in 1970, it was rumoured that Seberg had a liaison with a Black Panther activist who got her pregnant.”

Wikipedia also has a now declassified FBI document (see picture) which states quite openly that and how the FBI wanted to “neutralise” Seberg with a smear campaign.

All this is now more than 50 years ago. But nothing has changed in principle. However, the campaigns of the last decades have become even more vicious – and the US powers that be have also found docile pupils in Europe. State agencies – unlike in the USA of the sixties and seventies – are often activated only as “enforcers”. The public dirty work is done by

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“Take away the law – what is a state then but a great band of robbers?”

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Watching television from time to time is not bad at all. Not the news programmes, political magazines, talk shows or so-called documentaries – now almost everything we watch has been “brought into line”. A “line” that no longer has much to do with the facts and above all with the actual contexts – and is often dominated by (stage-managed?) hate-filled emotions. This is how a policy operates that wages wars with mendacity.

It can be a counterbalance to watch a good movie in between. For example, Wednesday evening, 8 February 2023 on Swiss television SRF2. The movie “Jean

Seberg – against all enemies”, produced in 2019, was broadcasted. It was released 40 years after the actress’s death, which remains residual to this day, and deals with Seberg’s life in the USA in the years following her worldwide success in *Jean-Luc Godard’s* film “Breathless” (1960). It ends in the early 1970s, when Seberg was placed under secret total surveillance by the American FBI because of public contacts and because of her support for humanitarian activities of the *Black Panther* movement. By this she was driven to despair, had an (unsuccessful) suicide attempt, and suffered a miscarriage.

The film is not just a feature film. Many of the storylines reflect reality. If you look up Jean Seberg on *Wikipedia*, you can read:

Declaration to the peace movement

Joint declaration of the organisers of lectures with Dr Daniele Ganser

The Swiss historian Dr Daniele Ganser has been researching the topics of international peace efforts (from 1945 to the present), geostrategy and covert warfare for over 20 years. The UN ban on violence and the honest will for peace, freedom and truth always mark the starting points of his analyses. Dr Ganser and his constant work stand without any doubt for peace, international understanding, mindfulness and non-violent coexistence in a liveable, honest, open and friendly society. In his lectures, he repeatedly emphasises that every human being belongs to the human family. He firmly rejects any form of violence, devaluation, oppression, discrimination, exclusion and racism. That is why Dr Daniele Ganser is rightly called a "peace researcher".

A war is raging in the middle of Europe and the governments of the NATO states, with the broad support of all the major media, are unanimously demanding the delivery of heavy weapons directly to the war zone. Russia is also increasing the deployment from day to day and has doubled its troop strength in the meantime. In doing so, both parties, NATO and Russia, risk prolonging and escalating this war. Peace activists who demand the immediate start of peace negotiations are defamed.

Dr Ganser gives a great many lectures in the German-speaking areas of Europe (D-A-CH) and repeatedly calls for peace. His events attract thousands of people who are also for peace and reject war. His analyses often go much deeper than the reports of the leading media and show the geostrategic and historical context of the conflict. Daniele Ganser always asks critical questions and speaks out clearly and open-

ly against violence, lies, war and terror every time. That is why some groups are currently trying to ban Dr Ganser's public appearances.

We observe with great concern that open criticism of government decisions is increasingly rare in the leading media. Media with a large circulation support arms delivery to Ukraine in the NATO states, thus accepting a prolongation and escalation of the war. Dissenting or admonishing voices are hardly heard in these media. It is particularly bad when people who criticise the government's course of war are defamed. This is exactly what is currently happening to Dr Daniele Ganser. He is a dissenting and admonishing voice. Through defamation, malicious slander and false allegations, big media and some politicians are creating a mood against Ganser and putting him in a bad light in order to prevent his lectures. All accusations, which in the end only aim to discredit Dr. Ganser, are usually copied from each other, not researched and completely baseless. The media are supposed to be civilising protective beams for a democratic society, helping to expose lies and corruption and effectively curb the excessive pursuit of power.

Dr Daniele Ganser now needs the help of the peace movement all the more! Support us in getting back into an appreciative dialogue. Help us to ensure that the honest will for world peace is once again considered the highest good. Resolutely oppose all warmongering and do not put up with Article 5 of the German Basic Law, which guarantees freedom of expression, being trampled on. Stand up for real democracy and human rights.

We, the organisers of Dr Daniele Ganser, are now taking decisive legal action against the politically motivated bans on appearances by the hall operators. Contracts cannot simply be arbitrarily cancelled when a speaker speaks out for peace in times of war. We will hold all lectures as promised. Please support us in continuing to bring Daniele Ganser's peaceful message to the world.

Dates for the Daniele Ganser Tour 2023 (as of 9 February 2023):

(CH) Kloten 10 February 2023
 (D) Rostock 7 March 2023
 (D) Kiel 8 March 2023
 (D) Hanover 9 March 2023
 (AUT) Hallein 16 March 2023
 (AUT) Wels 17 March 2023 (AUT) Graz 18 March 2023
 (AUT) St. Pölten 19 March 2023
 (D) Dortmund 27 March 2023
 (D) Aachen 28 March 2023
 (D) Offenbach 29 March 2023
 (CH) Basel 28 April 2023
 (CH) Kreuzlingen 4 May 2023
 (D) Nuremberg 10 May 2023
 (D) Munich 11 May 2023
 (D) Leinfelden-Echterdingen 12 May 2023
 (D) Dingolfing 23 June 2023
 (D) Bad Aibling 25 June 2023
 (LIE) Triesenberg 21 September 2023
 (D) Berlin 21 October 2023
 (D) Würzburg 28 October 2023
 (D) Regensburg 29 October 2023
 (D) Erfurt, Wednesday 15 November 2023
 (D) Riesa, Thursday, 16 November 2023
 (D) Magdeburg, Friday, 17 November 2023

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YO4eN4emq4

(Translation Current Concerns)

"Campaigns that are vicious ..."

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NGOs and subservient media funded by the state and moneyed "sponsors". The dirty work is then used to demand state action – not against the dirty campaigns, but against the defiled.

This has hit many independently thinking and acting personalities in the past

decades. Currently, it is hitting the Swiss *Daniele Ganser* in all German-speaking countries. The media are full of it, the accusations against Daniele Ganser are abstruse, it is classic campaign style – and there are very influential forces driving the campaign.

Daniele Ganser has a lot of success with his books and his lectures, especially

with young people. He is a man of peace and a profound critic of US war policy. That disturbs.

No one should believe that all this is only of concern to Daniele Ganser or others directly affected. Campaigns are always an attack against human coexistence. With their mendacity, sharpness and violence, they always subvert societies as a whole. •

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OSCE Annual Meeting in Vienna – Austrian government remains steadfast

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) convened for its annual session in Vienna on 23-24 February 2023. The Assembly is made up of 323 parliamentarians from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

At its annual session in 2023, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held a debate on the one-sidedly formulated topic “One year later: Russia’s continued full-scale war on Ukraine”, with speeches by several OSCE Special Representatives. Instead of being willing to listen to Russia’s point of view as well, 81 parliamentarians from 20 countries recently had written to the Austrian federal government demanding to “prevent the Russian delegation from attending the OSCE meeting in Vienna”. Austria should not issue visas to Russian (and Belarussian) MPs who are under Western sanctions, the senders said.

“International law must be respected, even if it is not popular”

The Austrian government, however, was not dissuaded from its lawful course. On 3 February Foreign Minister *Alexander Schallenberg* told a committee of the National Council that Austria was obliged under international law to issue visas and that he would certainly not break the law. International law must be respected, even if this is not popular.¹

This position was also confirmed by the OSCE *Parliamentary Assembly* itself. According to the press, it stated that the Headquarters Agreement requires Austria to facilitate the entry of participating delegations, “which means that the issuing of visas is not a matter of discretion but a matter of legal obligation”.²

In an interview with ORF, Foreign Minister Schallenberg also pointed out the importance that should be attached to the OSCE as a platform: “The OSCE has never been an organisation of like-minded people. [...] But we must remain in dialogue. Because at some point, diplomacy will hopefully be given space again.”

This was followed by Lithuania’s dramatic threat to boycott the meeting because its delegation could not be expected to “sit in the same room with the people who should be tried by a special military tribunal because these people are directly responsible for starting the war”. To this, the Austrian Foreign Minister calmly commented that it was “a pity” that the OSCE



Flags of different languages in front of the OSCE headquarters at the Hofburg in Vienna. (picture Wikimedia Commons)

Parliamentary Assembly, which brings together parliamentarians from OSCE countries, was so “emotionally overloaded”, while the meeting of OSCE ambassadors was held every Tuesday in the Vienna Hofburg.³

As a Swiss, one could almost become envious. Austria, which modelled its perpetual armed neutrality after the Second World War on that of Switzerland, is not dissuaded – despite EU membership! – from the path of neutrality and the rule of law. For the Austrian government, the duties of neutrality are apparently clear: do not supply weapons to Ukraine, no war transports through Austrian airspace and the duty, as a depositary state of the OSCE, to treat all member states equally. Perhaps we should send our foreign minister to Vienna for a while to be tutored? Because also the ICRC, which depends on the trust of all war and conflict parties for its beneficial humanitarian activities, must once again be able to rely on Switzerland’s neutrality as a depositary state.

“There must still be an organisation somewhere where people can still talk to each other”

In the *Echo der Zeit*, *Manfred Nowak*, Professor of International Law and Human Rights at the University of Vien-

na, expressed the same opinion: As the seat of the OSCE, Vienna had concluded an “Austria-OSCE Headquarters Agreement” and was therefore obliged to grant all 57 members of the OSCE, including Russia and Belarus, the right to attend OSCE meetings in Vienna. This headquarters agreement should be weighted higher than the EU sanctions, for example the entry ban on Russian politicians and diplomats, Nowak said. Unlike the Council of Europe, the OSCE cannot exclude Russia, he said, because it does not provide for an exclusion mechanism: “This has to do with the fact that the OSCE [then CSCE] was founded in Helsinki in 1975, during the Cold War, to try to find a basis for talks between the US on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, and the European states.”

Professor Nowak would not advocate an exclusion clause in the United Nations either, “because there must still be an organisation somewhere where people can still talk to each other. Isolating Russia would also mean that there would no longer be any possibility of concluding peace, and for this, the OSCE is the most important international organisation alongside the UN, because it’s also about security and cooperation in Europe. And it’s about

Federal administration: Confiscation of private Russian assets would be unconstitutional

mw. The Federal Council recently commissioned an internal administrative working group to clarify whether frozen Russian assets may be used for the reconstruction of Ukraine. The working group of the *State Secretariat for Economic Affairs* (Seco), the *State Secretariat for International Finance* (SIF) and the *Directorate of International Law* (DIL), headed by the *Federal Office of Justice* (FOJ), reported the results of its investigation to the *Federal Council* on 15 February.

It is positive to note that the Federal Administration reminds itself and us citizens of the fundamentals of the rule of law. The working group concludes that “the expropriation of private assets of lawful origin without compensation is not permissible under Swiss law. The confiscation of frozen private assets is inconsistent with the Federal Constitution and the prevailing legal order and violates Switzerland’s international commitments.” (Federal Council *media release* of 15 February 2023)

A document from Seco – which was already available in October 2022 – ex-

plains in a more detailed manner why Russian nationals may not be expropriated under Swiss law simply because they are on a sanctions list:

- A prerequisite for the confiscation of assets is criminal proceedings in Switzerland in which the unlawful origin of the assets has been established. (Criminal Code Art. 70)
- “Inclusion in a sanctions list does not per se mean that the person has committed a criminal offence, and the freezing of funds in no way implies that they were acquired unlawfully. For this reason, it would be highly questionable from the perspective of the rule of law to confiscate assets of Russian companies or citizens only on the basis of proximity to the state [?] or on the basis of existing sanctions.”
- “In fact, the sanctioned persons retain ownership of their blocked assets and economic resources [...]. They will get the assets back when the sanction measures are lifted.”
- The confiscation of assets constitutes “a serious interference with the guaran-

tee of property and other fundamental rights of the persons concerned guaranteed by the Constitution.” – “The compatibility of such a measure with the principles of legality and proportionality (Art. 5 BV) as well as with the guarantee of property (Art. 26 BV) is called into question.”

- In Swiss law, there is “no legal basis for the return of frozen assets to Ukraine”. Here’s another little reminder of Switzerland’s sovereignty (could be expanded ...):
- “While Switzerland has adopted the EU sanctions measures in many cases, it reserves the right to regulate the criminal law provisions autonomously. It has no legal or political obligation to align itself with current or future EU criminal provisions.” •

Source: *Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs Seco. Sanctions. “22-07 Blocking and confiscation of assets: limits of the legal framework”*. Statement for the attention of the Committee for Legal Affairs of the Council of States of 26 October 2022 (unofficial document translated by *Current Concerns*).

“OSCE Annual Meeting ...”

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the OSCE, which also had a large observer mission in Ukraine, becoming a platform again where peace negotiations might also be made possible.”⁴

Looking Back: Weakening of the OSCE by the West (2020) – cui bono?

One can only agree with Manfred Nowak: The OSCE could play an important role in today’s terrible wars in Europe, such as in Ukraine or Nagorno-Karabakh, to bring the parties to the table. *Could ... As Current Concerns* reported in August 2020, the NATO and EU states showed little interest in a strong OSCE even then. On the contrary, some of them, such as Norway and Canada, actively pursued the deselection of the energetic OSCE leadership crew, including Swiss Secretary General *Thomas Greminger*, who had proposed more effective instruments to de-escalate tensions between states.⁵

One of these instruments was the observer mission mentioned by Professor

Nowak, which was established after the coup on the Maidan in 2014. It recorded the violations of the ceasefire in the Donbass. Every single explosion was documented with a picture and exact time. The majority of these, as reported in 2020, came from the Ukrainian army. The fact that the observers were so impartial obviously went against the grain of some Western powers.

In view of NATO’s advance to the Russian border, the massive expansion of its military potential in Eastern Europe and the creation of an enemy image of Russia, Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei Lavrov* called on the OSCE to act as early as December 2019 at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting: “It is important to stop this dangerous trend and halt the further tendency towards confrontation. [...] The OSCE could and should play an important role in solving these tasks because of its vast geographical scope and all-encompassing approach to security, consensus principle and cultural dialogue.”⁶

The CSCE/OSCE was founded as a forum for exchange and bridge-building

between participating States with different political points of view. Allowing only the view of one side at the Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna may be in line with the will of the only superpower and today’s heated atmosphere, but certainly not with the basic idea of the OSCE. •

¹ Parliament Austria. *Parliamentary Correspondence* No. 111 of 3 February 2023. “Foreign Minister Schallenberg defends entry permit for Russian OSCE delegation.”

² “OSZE: Österreich rechtlich verpflichtet, allen Delegationen für Tagung Visa auszustellen” (OSCE: Austria legally obliged to issue visas to all delegations for meeting). In: *Der Standard* of 7 February 2023

³ Swaton, Chiara. “Österreich verteidigt Teilnahme Russlands an OSZE-Plenartagung” (Austria defends Russia’s participation in OSCE Plenary Session). In: *Euractiv.de* of 7 February 2023

⁴ Scheidegger, Christina. «Diplomatische Turbulenzen vor OSZE-Tagung in Wien». (**Englisch**) In: *Radio SRF, Echo der Zeit* of 10 February 2023

⁵ Wüthrich, Marianne. “The OSCE is only as strong as the global political climate permits”. In: *Current Concerns* of 8 August 2020

⁶ “Lawrow will OSZE-Friedensinitiative: Die Nato steht an unseren Grenzen und erklärt uns zum Feind”. (Lavrov wants OSCE peace initiative: NATO stands on our borders and declares us the enemy). In: *RT deutsch* of 6 December 2019

Contributing to a self-determined life

The work of the “Neven Subotic Foundation” in Africa

by Winfried Pogorzelski

Neven Subotić was born in 1988 in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1990, the family fled to Germany due to increasing political tensions. To avoid deportation to their home country after ten years of residence in Germany, the family emigrated to the USA. There, Neven began to play football in youth clubs, until 2007, when he moved to Germany's upmost Bundesliga and turned professional. Before the end of his career, he founded the “Neven Subotic Foundation” in 2012, which aims to help the people of Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania by means of drilling wells in order to supply them with drinking water and sanitary facilities. Meanwhile between 170,000 people benefit from this.

In his book “Alles geben. Warum der Weg zu einer gerechten Welt bei uns selbst anfängt” (Give it all. Why the path to a just world starts with ourselves) the then 22-year-old successful top athlete describes how he made the decision to turn his back on leading a footballer's life and devote himself entirely to his humanitar-



(picture Neven Subotic Foundation)

ian cause. The book was published on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the foundation.

Strict education with sport at the centre

Neven Subotić first got to know about his home country in the Balkans during a visit there together with his father. The latter had foreseen the war in Yugoslavia and therefore flees with his family to Germany when Neven still is a toddler. The parents are not allowed to work, get by with moonlighting, this with the intention to send aid packages to the homeland. From an early age, Neven and his older sister help their mother clean toilets and their father with all kinds of jobs. They are brought up strictly. Neven plays football, his sister tennis. Both are trained by their ambitious father, a successful amateur athlete. Nine years later deportation threatens, and the family emigrates to the USA. The boy continues to play in various teams and becomes a junior player in the US youth national team.

Success as everyone gives it all one's got: Players, coaches and fans

Back in Germany, the seventeen-year-old Neven Subotić becomes over time firmly established in German club football. He achieves this – first with the German Bundesliga club “Mainz 05” and then with “Borussia Dortmund” – thanks to his mentor and coach Jürgen Klopp. In the eyes of Klopp he is “the most extraordinary play-

er I have ever worked with. Not in footballing, but in human terms”. (p. 13) The experiences of the young central defender with his coach gives him the assurance of complete reliability: Klopp: “We'll do this together, and I protect you. Everything that goes well is thanks to you. Everything that goes badly is on my head.” (p. 110)

This allows the young professional to outgrow himself: he delivers what is expected of him: Perseverance, reliability, fairness – virtues that already his father and mother taught him. He has arrived at the Olympus of football, enjoys the “togetherness, as if we were all brothers and sisters, to feel support and hope, and to grow together with the next challenge; the will to do your best in a competition; the force that a stadium alone can trigger [...], the feelings, that arise in each individual and make people form a unity – all these are undisputed values for me.” (p. 147)

The other side: “Performers in an artificial world” ...

Luxurious houses, fast cars, changing girlfriends, parties in the trendy clubs characterise life outside the football stadiums. What would come next does not concern him for the time being. “I was deaf to questions of that kind. [...] I did not know what steps I could take in the sense of: improving myself instead of only accumulating; even if I was definitely not the one with the biggest house and the most

Facts from the UN World Water Development Report 2020

wp. 2.2 billion people worldwide have no access to clean drinking water; about twice as many people lack any sanitary facilities. Due to population and economic growth, global water consumption today is six times higher than 100 years ago. The regions of the world affected by acute water shortages are constantly increasing. 90 % of all wastewaters seeps away untreated and pollutes the environment and drinking water supplies. Global warming further aggravates the situation: it leads to increasingly frequent extreme weather events such as heat waves and heavy rainfall. Higher water temperatures and less dissolved oxygen mean that rivers and lakes are less able to clean themselves. This leads to an increase in pollution and pollutant concentrations.

The authors of the World Water Development Report call on states to make a stronger commitment with concrete measures. Water should play a greater role in climate policy negotiations. By 2030, the goal is for all people to have access to drinking water and sanitation.

Source: UN World Water Development Report 2020: <https://www.unesco.de/kultur-und-natur/wasser-und-ozeane/un-weltwasserbericht-2020-wasser-und-klimawandel>

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cars among my teammates. Everything I lived was like a game, and I was like on a race track: Fastest car? Yes, I want it! The character in the game was grabbing at anything that glistened. *I sat in it, and I put my foot down ...*” (p. 92f., emphasis N. S.)

... and coercion to maximise success

But he soon learns about the other side of this system, “which does not see the individual, but only the maximisation of success, and thus exerts a pressure on all those working in it which doesn’t allow them any longer to act humanely. In the unequal power relations between the league and the clubs, between coaches and players, I experienced unfair behaviour and disrespectful dealings with each other.” (p. 147) He feels his dependence, his degradation to a commodity, so that his “love for this sport was unsettled again and again”, the “romanticisation waned” and he became “alienated from the pitch”. (p. 147) What was once exciting becomes boring, he asks the question of meaning, boredom spreads, and he feels an obligation that his growing fortune brings with it.

He asks himself who he wants to be, what his contribution to a more just world could be. Participating regularly in charity projects as a representative of “Borussia Dortmund”, sometimes helping his parents or his friends financially is all well and good, but he is becoming less and less satisfied.

The establishment of the foundation – the beginning of a success story

Neven Subotić is considering the idea of establishing a foundation. He wants to address the greatest need, where he can bring something about in a sustainable manner. “I had to decide which of the ten million problems that exist in the world I wanted to face.” (p. 176) Inspired by

the American NGO “Charity Water” he occupies himself with the fact that billions of people have no access to drinking water. Even during his time as a professional footballer, he immerses himself in specialist literature on the functioning of a foundation and about the water emergency in Africa; in 2012 he establishes the “Neven Subotić Foundation”.

Under the title “Donating Future” the foundation puts on the record in its mission statement: “For us, it is unbearable that millions of people worldwide have no access to clean drinking water and sanitary facilities. They are thus deprived of elementary necessities of life and the prerequisite for health, education and a self-determined future. This is beneath human dignity.” With education, the foundation gives people the opportunity to lead a self-determined life, and a real perspective for the future. The results are impressive: By now 20,000 donors have enabled the realisation of 484 projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. The work has an immediate impact: People’s chances of survival increase because they no longer are infected by contaminated water. Children, especially girls, can go to school instead of carrying water in jerry cans every day.

In the meantime, Neven Subotić has ended his sports career and devotes himself solely to his foundation. His book concludes with the sentences: “When I compare my life as I lead it now with the way it was during my best time with ‘Borussia Dortmund’ [...], when I see the figure, who, like in a reality TV show, delivers exactly what is expected of her, I feel shame.” (p. 262) In conclusion, he appeals to the readers “to accept the injustice of this world as a task”. (p. 270)

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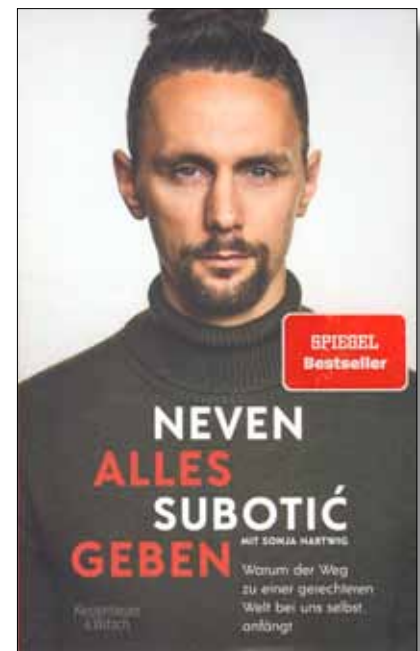
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The football career of Neven Subotić

wp. Neven Subotić has been playing football with enthusiasm since he was a teenager. After playing for youth clubs in the USA, he made it to the national youth team there. The successful German coach Jürgen Klopp (now Liverpool FC) in 2007 brought the 18-year-old to the German Bundesliga club “Mainz 05” and then took him to the traditional club “Borussia Dortmund” in 2008. In a duo with Mats Hummels as initially the youngest and best centre-back in the league, Subotić played a significant role in Dortmund becoming German champions twice (2011, 2012) and cup winners once (2012). He played 36 games with the Serbian national team from 2009 to 2013 and in 2010 took part in the World Cup. His fortune is estimated at 30 million.

Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neven_Subotić

Letter to the Editor

“Head, Heart and Hand” Abolished

How beneficial it is for me, a retired needlework teacher, to read the article by Eliane Perret about Jochen Krautz’s new book in *Current Concerns* No. 3 from 14 February 2023. In today’s school Pestalozzi’s “Head, Heart and Hand” has been abolished. Pestalozzi helped to set up a school to educate mankind who can independently assume their responsibilities in direct democracy. Our youth today can hardly read and write correctly after nine school years! The hand is abolished. There is no longer any training to become a needlework teacher. There is no crafting subject in school that still deserves its name. The heart has been abolished be-

cause the students are channelled through a program path on their own through self-organised learning and weekly schedules; the teacher is only allowed to be a coach and has to remain in the background. Artificial intelligence is programmed in a similar way. Teacher-centred instruction has been abolished, and so no class community can emerge. Our youth, left alone and homeless, are quickly losing their footing (because of Corona, they say) and are now filling the psychiatric clinics. Poor youth, the school has let them down too.

Marianne Bürkli, Bronschhofen