

# 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

## Are the western warmongers provoking a Third World War?

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

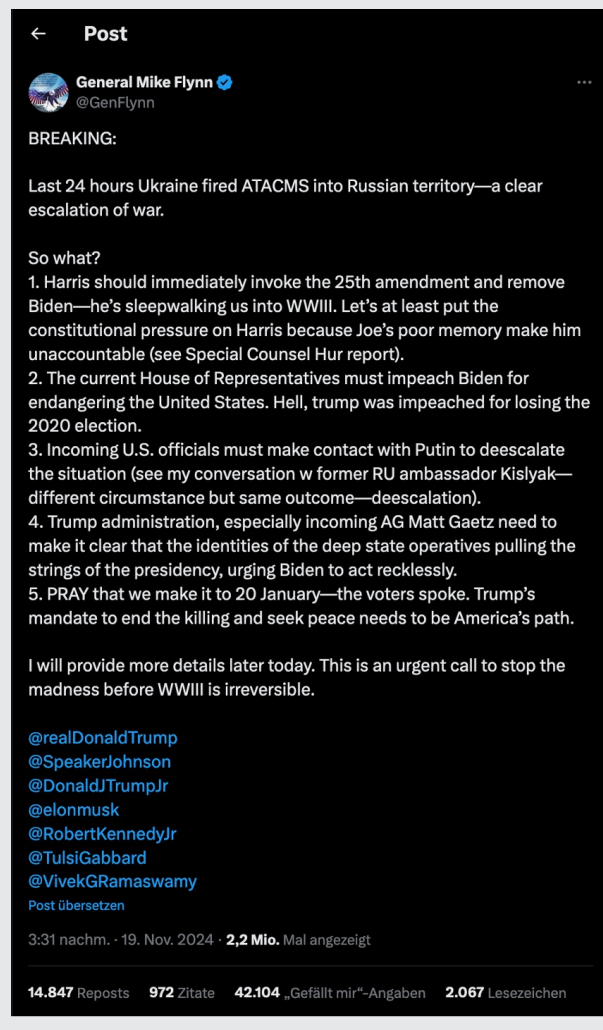
Donald Trump Jr's reaction came loud and clear. Following initial media reports on 17 November that outgoing US President Joe Biden had given his permission to target Russian territory within internationally recognised borders with US ATACMS missiles, he tweeted: "The Military-Industrial Complex seems to want to make sure they get World War III going before my father has a chance to make peace and save lives."

The president's son's warnings were followed by other well-known figures from the Trump team – and from personalities around the world who want to end the war in Ukraine as quickly as possible. Thus, it is not only from the Russian perspective that the latest development is a clear escalation – and a direct US entry into war that goes far beyond the previous war involvement of the USA and other NATO states. Russian President Vladimir Putin has made this clear in several statements since June of this year, most recently on 12 September:

*"Hence this is not about allowing the Ukrainian regime to attack Russia with these weapons or not. It is a question of deciding whether or not the NATO countries will become directly involved in the military conflict. If this decision is taken, it will mean nothing other than the direct involvement of the NATO countries, the USA and the European countries, in the war in Ukraine. That is their direct involvement, and of course it changes the essence, the nature of the conflict considerably. It will mean that the NATO countries, the USA and the European countries, will be at war with Russia. And if that is the case, then we will take the appropriate decisions in view of the changed nature of this conflict, based on the threats arising for us."*<sup>1</sup>

The Deputy Head of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, referred to this in his latest statement on 19 November. It talks about "striking back with weapons of mass destruction [...]" and also about "World War III":

General Michael Flynn, who served as Donald Trump's security adviser at the beginning of his first term and was forced to resign early by a campaign, posted on 19 November 2024:



*"The one thing that is really important is the statement that the head of state of Russia made on 12 September. Accordingly, today [19 November] a new version of the foundations of state policy in the field of nuclear deterrence [nuclear doctrine] was approved. The use of Alliance [Nato] missiles in this way would be categorised as an attack by the Alliance nations against Russia. In such a scenario, Rus-*

*sia reserves the right to strike back with weapons of mass destruction against Kiev and crucial Nato facilities, wherever they may be. That would result in a third world war."*<sup>2</sup>

### What is the purpose of the missile strike?

On 19 November, it was also reported that the first US ATACMS missiles were fired at Russian territory from Ukraine. Five of them were said to have been intercepted.<sup>3</sup>

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## Statement by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin of 21 November 2024

I would like to inform the military personnel of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, citizens of our country, our friends across the globe, and those who persist in the illusion that a strategic defeat can be inflicted upon Russia, about the events taking place today in the zone of the special military operation, specifically following the attacks by Western long-range weapons against our territory.

The escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, instigated by the West, continues with the United States and its NATO allies previously announcing that they authorise the use of their long-range high-precision weapons for strikes inside the Russian Federation. Experts are well aware, and the Russian side has repeatedly highlighted it, that the use of such weapons is not possible without the direct involvement of military experts from the manufacturing nations.

On November 19, six ATACMS tactical ballistic missiles produced by the United States, and on November 21, during a combined missile assault involving British *Storm Shadow* systems and HIMARS systems produced by the US, attacked military facilities inside the Russian Federation in the Bryansk and Kursk regions. From that point onward, as we have repeatedly emphasised in prior communications, the regional conflict in Ukraine provoked by the West has assumed elements of a global nature. Our air defence systems successfully counteracted these incursions, preventing the enemy from achieving their apparent objectives.

The fire at the ammunition depot in the Bryansk Region, caused by the debris of ATACMS missiles, was extinguished without casualties or significant damage.

In the Kursk Region, the attack targeted one of the command posts of our group North. Regrettably, the attack and the subsequent air defence battle resulted in casualties, both fatalities and injuries, among the perimeter security units and servicing staff. However, the command and operational staff of the control centre suffered no casualties and continues to manage effective-

ly the operations of our forces to eliminate and push enemy units out of the Kursk Region.

I wish to underscore once again that the use by the enemy of such weapons cannot affect the course of combat operations in the special military operation zone. Our forces are making successful advances along the entire line of contact, and all objectives we have set will be accomplished.

In response to the deployment of American and British long-range weapons, on November 21, the Russian Armed Forces delivered a combined strike on a facility within Ukraine's defence industrial complex. In field conditions, we also carried out tests of one of Russia's latest medium-range missile systems – in this case, carrying a non-nuclear hypersonic ballistic missile that our engineers named *Oreshnik*. The tests were successful, achieving the intended objective of the launch. In the city of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, one of the largest and most famous industrial complexes from the Soviet Union era, which continues to produce missiles and other armaments, was hit.

We are developing intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in response to US plans to produce and deploy intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. We believe that the United States made a mistake by unilaterally destroying the INF Treaty in 2019 under a far-fetched pretext. Today, the United States is not only producing such equipment, but, as we can see, it has worked out ways to deploy its advanced missile systems to different regions

of the world, including Europe, during training exercises for its troops. Moreover, in the course of these exercises, they are conducting training for using them.

As a reminder, Russia has voluntarily and unilaterally committed not to deploy intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles until US weapons of this kind appear in any region of the world.

To reiterate, we are conducting combat tests of the *Oreshnik* missile system in response to NATO's aggressive actions

against Russia. Our decision on further deployment of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles will depend on the actions of the United States and its satellites.

We will determine the targets during further tests of our advanced missile systems based on the threats to the security of the Russian Federation. We consider ourselves entitled to use our weapons against military facilities of those countries that allow to use their weapons against our facilities, and in case of an escalation of aggressive actions, we will respond decisively and in mirror-like manner. I recommend that the ruling elites of the countries that are hatching plans to use their military contingents against Russia seriously consider this.

It goes without saying that when choosing, if necessary and as a retaliatory measure, targets to be hit by systems such as *Oreshnik* on Ukrainian territory, we will in advance suggest that civilians and citizens of friendly countries residing in those areas leave danger zones. We will do so for humanitarian reasons, openly and publicly, without fear of counter-moves coming from the enemy, who will also be receiving this information.

Why without fear? Because there are no means of countering such weapons today. Missiles attack targets at a speed of Mach 10, which is 2.5 to 3 kilometres per second. Air defence systems currently available in the world and missile defence systems being created by the Americans in Europe cannot intercept such missiles. It is impossible.

I would like to emphasise once again that it was not Russia, but the United States that destroyed the international security system and, by continuing to fight, cling to its hegemony, they are pushing the whole world into a global conflict.

We have always preferred and are ready now to resolve all disputes by peaceful means. But we are also ready for any turn of events.

If anyone still doubts this, make no mistake: there will always be a response.

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75614>

### "Are the western warmongers ..."

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The deployment of the ATACMS missiles will not turn the tide of the war in Ukraine, but it will escalate it. *Volodimir Zelensky* is up to his neck in water. He is betting everything on escalation agreeing with the Western warmongers who are also in deep water since the US elections and have been seeking a direct military confrontation between NATO and Russia for some time. Do they sense their

last chance? ... But are they aware that their policy of demonising the supposed enemy, of loud threats, ultimatums and actual escalation is a highly dangerous dead end for mankind? If it has not yet come to an open world war, then we must attribute this above all to Russia's level-headed reactions. On 21 November, the Russian President responded to the Western attacks in a speech to the nation and explained Russia's reactions to the renewed Western escalation (see box).

### A hard war course also from Western-European

Since 6 November, the day the new US president was elected, the European faction of Western warmongers set the pace. Mainly to prevent a possible US withdrawal after the inauguration of the newly elected President Donald Trump. Although this was not in the interests of European states and peoples, it was in the interest of a further escalation of the war.

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### "Are the western warmongers ..."

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There was the foreign policy daredevil and SPD politician *Michael Roth*, who demanded in an interview with *Der Spiegel* on 6 November that EU Europe must now publicly declare that it will immediately assume all costs for a continuation of the war in Ukraine and is also prepared to buy the weapons needed for Ukraine in the USA – in order to pass them on to Ukraine. This was the only way to prevent a US-Russian "dictatorial peace" against Ukraine.<sup>4</sup>

There was the British Prime Minister *Starmer* and the French President *Macron*, who were working on the US President who was still in office. Both European politicians also want to direct British and French medium-range missiles against targets in Russia. They, too, want to escalate the war and sabotage an agreement between Trump and the Russian president.<sup>5</sup>

There is the EU leadership, sticking unteachably to its course of confrontation. Everyone should take seriously what Hungarian Prime Minister *Viktor Orbán* said in a conversation with former German Chancellor *Gerhard Schröder* and *Weltwoche* editor-in-chief *Roger Köppel* in Vienna on 31 October 2024. As rotating EU Council President, he had tried to initiate peace talks in July 2024 but had encountered a solid wall of resistance in the EU. Now he said he had "no hope for Europe. I've seen them up close and I don't want to say anything bad about them now. But they are set on winning the war. They want to defeat Russia. The main role is played by the President of the EU Commission. She is leading the way. She is to blame for the situation. She says the Russians must be defeated and Ukraine must be given everything to make that happen. Everything that concerns peace would be treason, anti-democratic, unacceptable, [is] pushed aside. That is the current situation in Europe." And *Gerhard Schröder* asked: "Since when have people been scolded for peace initiatives? What have we got into?"<sup>6</sup>

The majority of European politicians have now applauded the US decision. It is probably entirely in the interests of the British Prime Minister and the French President. Germany is the third Western European country to possess heavy, manoeuvrable medium-range weapons. Following the US decision, leading politicians from the CDU/CSU, FDP and *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* are pushing for a decision by the German Bundestag to also authorise the German *Taurus* missiles for attacks on Russian territory. Together, their three parliamentary groups have a majority in parliament. German Foreign Minister *Annalena Baerbock* expressly welcomed the US decision.

Soon-to-be ex-chancellor *Olaf Scholz* (SPD), on the other hand, reiterated his opposition to *Taurus* deliveries to Ukraine, stating that he could and would not take responsibility for this. Slovakian Prime Minister *Robert Fico* took a very clear stance against the US decision. "This is an unprecedented escalation of tensions, a decision that destroys the hope for the start of peace talks and an end to the mutual killing in Ukraine." He added: "It is astonishing how quickly some EU countries have welcomed the militant action of the US. This only confirms that the EU is not in a position to independently formulate fundamental foreign policy positions and that the West wants to continue the war in Ukraine at all costs."<sup>7</sup>

### Europe must not leave the field to the warmongers

But this must not be the last European word.

At this year's Waldei Club conference – just a few days before the renewed US escalation – Russian President *Vladimir Putin* recalled a conversation with former German Chancellor *Helmut Kohl* in 1993, three years after German reunification. It was a different direction from today's, one that had also been taken repeatedly in the centuries before. Germany played a special role in this, also as a bridge between West and East.

What did *Putin* say? "I have already said this, but I will indulge in recalling a conversation with former Chancellor *Kohl* in 1993, when I chanced to be present during his conversation with the then mayor of St Petersburg. I had not forgotten my German then and acted as the interpreter. He let the official interpreter go. 'Take some rest,' he said. I stayed with them to do the interpreting. As a man who only recently was an officer of the Soviet Union's foreign intelligence service, I was surprised by what he said. Frankly, I listened, interpreted and was surprised, to put it mildly, because my head was filled with Cold War clichés, and I was a KGB intelligence officer. *Unexpectedly, Kohl said that the future of Europe, if it wanted to remain an independent centre of the global civilisation, could only be together with Russia, that we must join our efforts.*"<sup>8</sup> [emphasis km].

### Can trust be restored?

However, the Russian President also made it clear that Western governments must step up to the plate today: "The lack of trust is the main problem on the Eurasian continent and in relations between Russia and European countries. You can criticise Russia as much as you want, and we probably make many mistakes as well, but when they tell us that they had signed the Minsk agreements on Ukraine only to give Ukraine an opportunity to rearm, and had not at all intended to settle the conflict

peacefully, what trust is there to speak of? [...] However, it is necessary to gradually revitalise the system of mutual trust. [...] this could be the first step towards creating a common system of Eurasian security. Can we do this or not? Mr *Kohl*, whom I mentioned at the beginning, believed that this is not just necessary, but absolutely indispensable. I share this view."<sup>9</sup>

*We are still miles away from this! How this can be changed is increasingly proving to be a question of survival for Europe and probably for all mankind.* •

<sup>1</sup> cited from <https://anti-spiegel.ru/2024/wollen-london-und-paris-vor-trumps-amtsantritt-mit-einem-krieg-vollendete-tatsachen-schaffen/> of 18 November 2024

<sup>2</sup> cited from <https://de.rt.com/international/226476-weisses-haus-bestaetigt-erstmalig-freigabe/> of 19 November 2024

<sup>3</sup> <https://de.rt.com/russland/226504-eskalation-nach-biden-ankuendigung-ukraine/> of 19 November 2024

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/us-wahl-2024-spitzengespraech-mit-jens-spahn-und-michael-roth-ueber-donald-trumps-wahlsieg-das-wird-richtig-wehtun-a-6904383f-9421-4d1f-8d4b-315735c93f35> of 6 November 2024

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/11/11/starmer-macron-trump-nato-ukraine-john-healey/> of 11 November 2024

<sup>6</sup> citations from *Weltwoche* No. 45.24 of 7 November 2024

<sup>7</sup> cited from <https://de.rt.com/kurzclips/video/226552-beispiellose-eskalation-fico-zu-bidens/> of 19 November 2024

<sup>8</sup> <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75521> of 7 November 2024

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

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# USA: playing poker with its own “first strike” capability

## Experts warn: this is madness!

by Peter Küpfer

*Prudent voices, including some in the United States, are urgently pointing out that the hectic US arms race has for certain influential circles become a highly threatening game with a global catastrophe. Despite this, the United States continues to spare no effort to be able to devastate in particular Russia and China with a surprise nuclear strike. Recently, the USA has apparently taken a decisive new step in this highly sensitive area. This is further proof of the faltering former world power’s iron will to assert its unchanged claims to dominance over the rest of the world, whatever the cost. It seems to be doing this even at the price of self-destruction, at least concerning some of its submissive European vassals.*

In March 2024, the outgoing American president gave, as an important official act, the green light to pursue the programme of a further massive increase in the impact of America’s nuclear potential. According to American sources, intensive research into the ultimate achievement of American nuclear first-strike capability has been underway for more than 20 years. The start of these efforts corresponds to the time when the USA withdrew from all peacekeeping agreements, especially those with Russia.

In August 2024, the “New York Times” published leaked details from the dossier, which is kept under lock and key.<sup>1</sup> According to this, the US weapons programme to increase explosive power, which has been in place for decades, has recently progressed to the point where it should currently allow the US to “deter Russia, China and North Korea simultaneously”. However, the term “deter” in this context is inadmissibly trivialising. In fact, it means nothing other than what is the unstated main objective behind all this toying with a nuclear first strike: to carry out the first strike unnoticed by the enemy so quickly and efficiently that it will make the use of their defence system impossible. Of course, this will then be presented as a timely counter-strike because there were increasing signs that the opposing side wanted to carry out the first strike. This is a wide and tricky field for (deliberate?) misunderstandings and the like.

### Playing with fire

In this context, Dr *Theodore Postol*, Professor Emeritus of National Security at MIT, writes the following in a detailed re-

port on the American arms-critical platform *Responsible Defence* – here summarised:

The current qualitative improvement of American nuclear firepower for intercontinental missiles has been enhanced in recent years by revolutionary weapon technology additions to such an extent that their destructive potential has increased threefold. Both soil depth effect and targeting accuracy have been drastically increased. This was achieved thanks to the development of a highly effective explosive device as well as the technological enhancement of a new generation of warheads. With this increase in explosive power, the achievement of the objective, namely the elimination of enemy missile silos in the ground, has been significantly improved compared to previous generations. Together with the long-standing technical superiority in the detection of an enemy nuclear attack, the situation has thus changed decisively in favour of the USA. While the Russian Federation today needs 30 minutes to detect and react to an emergency, for the USA it is only half that time, 15 minutes. According to American nuclear wizards in the development of the new generation of nuclear-capable guided missiles, all this should enable the USA to take out all Russian, Chinese and North Korean land-based nuclear silos simultaneously, in one fell swoop, as Postol writes, citing corresponding official documents.<sup>2</sup>

### Experts’ warnings must be taken seriously at last

Professor Postol, who is intensively involved with analysing the effects of nuclear weapons, combines his detailed report on the new generation of nuclear warheads with a serious warning: “No matter how successful a planned pre-emptive nuclear attack might look like on paper, the reality of a nuclear war initiated with the *delusional* belief it could be won will be global destruction so great in scale that the very end of human civilization cannot be ruled out.”<sup>3</sup> [emphasis pk]

As early as 1962, the Cuban missile crisis clearly demonstrated that misunderstandings or systemic errors in the existing arrangements for the use of strategic nuclear weapons can never be ruled out. Even then, as the former US Secretary of Defence *McNamara* later publicly admitted, the world had “just lucked out”, as he put it. Both camps had suspected each other of wanting to trigger a nuclear first

strike. For *John F. Kennedy*, this was the reason to reach an agreement with *Nikita Khrushchev* on serious disarmament, and the latter agreed. This first serious attempt to improve the honest chances of peace in the middle of the Cold War and in the face of the permanent nuclear threat was thwarted by Kennedy’s assassination.

### Irresponsible recklessness prevails

Against this backdrop, the NATO decision to station such missiles in Germany becomes oppressive. It is incomprehensible that there are hardly any protests throughout Europe, neither from governments or the opposition nor from political parties. As far as Russia is concerned, whose defence is the primary target, alongside that of the People’s Republic of China and North Korea, at least *Vladimir Putin* has issued a clear warning. The West would do well to take this more seriously than has been the case so far, as the revealing statement by Secretary of State *Anthony Blinken* recently made clear. When asked by media representatives what Russia had to say about the new NATO decision to install nuclear-capable guided missiles on German territory, he replied that he was “not interested in what they say about it in Russia”.

Is it just recklessness and irresponsibility that speaks from such a public statement by a person highly responsible for America’s foreign policy, or is it an expression of American megalomania? If politicians are really convinced that, firstly, America should remain the global superpower, that secondly, the rest of the world should subordinate itself to its interests and that thirdly, the USA has the self-granted and armed prerogative to enforce this its claim to dominance over all others in the world by any means necessary, then finally among all those who still think rationally, including those in Europe, opposing forces should become effective. Better today than tomorrow. For the insight of every thinking fellow human being remains true: the concepts of a successful nuclear first strike with its effects on the whole world (including those who triggered the strike!) stem from a delusion, the delusion of omnipotence. •

<sup>1</sup> “Biden approved secret nuclear strategy”; in: *The New York Times* of 20 August 2024

<sup>2</sup> *Ted Postol* provides a comprehensive account of this on the American platform “Responsible Statecraft”, in: <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/biden-nuclear-strategy> of 28 August 2024

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

# Ukraine fires US missiles at Russia risking wider war

by Joe Lauria\*



Joe Lauria (picture screenshot)

## November surprise

As a result Biden is risking what he had previously warned would be “World War III, okay? Let’s get it straight here, guys. We will not fight the third world war in Ukraine,” he told reporters in March 2022 when he listened to the Pentagon and overruled his secretary of state *Antony Blinken* on a NATO no-fly zone.

Then just two months ago, in September, Biden deferred to Pentagon realists by opposing long-range British *Storm Shadow* missiles from being fired by Ukraine deep into Russia for fear it would lead to a direct NATO-Russia war with potentially unimaginable consequences.

And yet now, in a kind of November surprise, after American voters resoundingly sent his party packing from the White House, a dishonorable Biden, with just weeks to go in power, is at the roulette wheel piling humanity’s chips high on the table to save his reckless Ukraine gamble and to make it even more difficult for incoming president *Donald Trump* to end the war.

And when the war ends with the inevitable Ukrainian defeat Biden can then blame Trump and try to get himself off the hook for the disaster he created. [See: *On Way Out Reckless Biden Allows Deep Russia Strikes*]

## Did the Pentagon even know?

Whereas the Pentagon twice before restrained Biden from starting a direct war with Russia, this time it seems he didn’t even tell the Defense Department, defying it with his extraordinarily irresponsible move.

Asked point blank by reporters on Monday whether Biden had consulted with the brass before unleashing Ukraine with the ATACMS, Pentagon spokeswoman *Sabrina Singh* repeatedly dodged the question.

*“Q: So the White House has not notified the Pentagon that they’ve allowed Ukraine to start doing long range strike?”*

*Sabrina Singh: I just don’t have anything to add to the reporting over the weekend.*

*But can you confirm that the Pentagon, like that Biden let Secretary of Defense Austin know that this is greenlighted now?*

I cannot confirm the reports and I cannot go into more details about the reporting. All I can tell you is

that in terms of your second question on the ATACMS, we over the course of different presidential drawdown packages, we have provided Ukraine with, you know, ATACMS. Our support for Ukraine, you know, continues with different PDAs. But when it comes to the reporting that you’re referencing from over the weekend, I just don’t have more to provide at this time.”

The ATACMS the Pentagon provided previously were for use only within the pre-2022 borders of Ukraine, not to be shot into Russia. Perhaps Singh couldn’t provide any more details beyond the weekend’s reporting because the Pentagon may have only learned of this momentous decision by reading about it in the paper like everybody else.

## Russian restraint until Trump takes over?

Will Moscow resist following through on its warning to hit back at NATO targets until 20 January, when Trump takes over and possibly withdraws permission from Ukraine? It may depend on how many ATACMS Ukraine is given and how intense the strikes are.

Biden is evidently among those in NATO who thinks Putin is bluffing. With these ATACAM strikes today the 8-week president thinks he’s calling that bluff, playing poker with the future of humanity. As it happens, on Tuesday, the very day of Ukraine’s strikes, Putin unveiled Russia’s new nuclear war doctrine with two major changes.

The first says: “An aggression against the Russian Federation and/or its allies of any non-nuclear state with the participation or support of a nuclear state will be regarded as their joint attack.” That clearly would include Ukraine.

The second significant change reads: “The Russian Federation reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear arms and/or other weapons of mass destruction against itself and/or its allies ... if such an aggression creates a critical threat for their sovereignty and/or territorial integrity.”

The language “critical threat” was substituted for when “the very existence of the state is in jeopardy,” lowering the bar for using a nuclear weapon.

All this was brushed off by the White House in a statement from the US National Security Council that said it had observed

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Ukraine on Tuesday fired six US ATACMS missiles into Russian territory just two days after outgoing US President *Joe Biden* gave them permission to despite a Russian warning of a potential US-NATO war as a result.

Ukraine says its attack before dawn targeted an ammunition dump not in Kursk, which Biden had authorised, but in neighboring Bryansk, a region in southwest Russia, 110 kilometers from neighbouring Ukraine’s border.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it shot down five of the six ATACMS. According to “The New York Times”, a representative of Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council, said the strike hit depots containing “artillery ammunition, including North Korean ammunition for their systems, guided aerial bombs, anti-aircraft missiles and ammunition for multiple-launch rocket systems.”

Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei V. Lavrov* told a press conference: “The fact that multiple ATACMS were used last night against the Bryansk Region signals that they [in the West] want escalation. You see, it is impossible to use these high-tech missiles without the Americans, and [Russian President *Vladimir*] *Putin* has repeatedly said this.”

On Monday, the Kremlin spokesman had reiterated Putin’s warning that because NATO personnel were required to fire such missiles it meant NATO would enter into direct war with Russia, changing the meaning of the conflict. That has now happened.

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## On the Brink

by Scott Ritter



It is high time for everyone, from every walk of life, to understand the path we are currently on. Left unchecked, events are propelling us down a highway to hell that leads to only one destination – a nuclear Armageddon that everyone agrees can't be won, and yet the United States is, at this very moment, preparing to "win".

A nuclear "exchange" with Russia, even if the United States were able to execute a surprise pre-emptive nuclear strike, would result in the destruction of dozens of American cities and the deaths of more than a hundred million Americans.

And this is if we "win".

And we know that we can't "win" a nuclear war.

And yet we are actively preparing to fight one.

This insanity must stop.

Now.

The United States just held an election where the winning candidate, President-elect *Donald Trump*, campaigned on a platform which sought to end the war in Ukraine and avoid a nuclear war with Russia.

And yet the administration of President *Joe Biden* has embarked on a policy direction which seeks to expand the conflict in Ukraine and is bringing the United States to the very brink of a nuclear war with Russia.

This is a direct affront to the notion of American democracy.

By ignoring the stated will of the people of the United States as mani-

festated through their votes in an election where the very issue of war and peace were front and centre in the campaign, is an affront to democracy.

We the people of the United States must not allow this insane rush to war to continue.

We must put the Biden administration on notice that we are opposed to any expansion of the conflict in Ukraine which brings with it the possibility of escalation that leads to a nuclear war with Russia.

And we must implore the incoming Trump administration to speak out in opposition to this mad rush toward nuclear annihilation by restating publicly its position of the war in Ukraine and nuclear war with Russia – that the

war must end now, and that there can be no nuclear war with Russia triggered by the war in Ukraine.

We need to say "no" to nuclear war.

I am working with other like-minded people to hold a rally in Washington, DC on the weekend of 7-8 December to say no to nuclear war.

I am encouraging Americans from all walks of life, all political persuasions, all social classes, to join and lend their voices to this cause.

Watch this space for more information about this rally.

All our lives depend on it.

Source: Excerpt from the article "On the Brink" of 24 November 2024; <https://scottritter.substack.com/p/on-the-brink>

### "Ukraine fires US missiles ..."

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"no changes to Russia's nuclear posture." In a chilling article presaging a world sleep walking into nuclear annihilation, *David Sanger* of "The New York Times" wrote:

"It was telling that the reaction in Washington on Tuesday was just short of a yawn. Officials dismissed the doctrine as the nothingburger of nuclear threats. Instead, the city was rife with speculation over who would prevail as Treasury sec-

retary, or whether *Matt Gaetz*, a former congressman surrounded by sex-and-drug allegations though never charged, could survive the confirmation process to become attorney general.

The Ukraine war has changed many things: It has ended hundreds of thousands of lives and shattered millions, it has shaken Europe, and it has deepened the enmity between Russia and the United States. But it has also inured Washington and the world to the renewed use of nuclear weap-

ons as the ultimate bargaining chip. The idea that one of the nine countries now in possession of nuclear weapons — with Iran on the threshold of becoming the tenth — might press the button is more likely to evoke shrugs than a convening of the United Nations Security Council." •

Source: <https://consortiumnews.com/2024/11/19/ukraine-fires-us-missiles-at-russia-risking-wider-war/> of 19 November 2024; with friendly permission of the author

# Georgia and Moldova's "bad" elections

by Rafael Poch-de-Feliu\*



Rafael Poch-de-Feliu  
(picture ma)

*The West does not realise that its goal of sole dominance over Russia's neighbouring countries is no longer feasible.*

The exclusive orientation towards the West is over in the countries surrounding Russia. In Central Asia this is already an established fact, in Transcaucasia and Moldova there are different manifestations and variants, and if no major war intervenes, this will eventually happen in the Baltic states as well, and who knows if not even in Poland. This is not about the growing realisation that Russia will not lose the war in Ukraine, nor will it suffer the predicted "strategic defeat". Much less is it about Moscow becoming the new centre of gravity for these countries, as could be the case in Belarus. The danger of a new Russian autocracy of the "Soviet type" is one of the myths of Western propaganda. The simple reality is that Russia neither can nor wants to return there. On the contrary, for decades it has been open to a condominium with other powers, in which certain balances and respect for the sovereignty and integrity of these countries are defined.

## Neutral Ukraine as a bridge country between Europe and Russia

Many misinformed people will object here with regard to what happened in Ukraine, forgetting that the military invasion was Moscow's response to the West's clear objective of imposing exclusively Western domination in Ukraine with the aim of securing a direct strategic military

threat to the Russian regime. Moscow never intended to counter this with the same claim for exclusivity. The Russian leadership was content with Ukraine to be neutral, a bridge country between Europe and Russia, while the West insisted that, contrary to the clear and majority opinion of its population, the government in Kiev was given the choice of "either with us or with them". This decision was the aim of the trade agreements presented to Kiev by *Merkel* and *Barroso's* EU in 2013. There was also the invitation to join NATO in 2008, in violation of the basic principles of neutrality and non-alignment enshrined in the country's Declaration of Independence and Constitution. The results of all opinion polls also pointed to a clear geographical divide on these issues and clearly indicated the risk of civil war.

nese power is combined with the strategic experience that Russia inherited from the USSR. At the same time, a multitude of large and small players are demanding more autonomy. All this enables the BRICS to be independent of the West, to trade, to finance each other and even to protect themselves militarily. The world is in the process of reorganising itself, and the West is not part of it. And not only that: Brussels, Berlin and Paris do not seem to understand the situation. In today's world, there is a multitude of players (Iran, China, Russia, Turkey...) among which the Western powers will be just one of many. The small countries of the European periphery understand that they must adapt to this plurality, which, incidentally, gives them more room for manoeuvre and more opportunities to act

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"After a quarter of a century of unfulfilled evocation of a 'bright European future' with very negative results, in countries like Georgia and Moldova, and certainly not only there, it is not a question of 'either-with-us-or-with-them', nor of 'pro-European versus pro-Russian', 'democracy versus autocracy' and so on, but of access for these countries to a more open and freer playing field. In view of this situation, the EU is behaving like a short-sighted imperial hegemon in its subjugated periphery."

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All of this is well known, and the West is now trying very similar means in countries like Georgia and Moldova. But it won't work. Not so much because Russia will not lose the war in Ukraine, although that does play a role, but because of something higher, more general and more fundamental: because the balance of power in the region and in the world is changing.

## BRICS summit marks the beginning of the end of US dominance

The BRICS summit on 22–24 October in Kazan (Russia) marked the beginning of the end of the international system that has been dominated by the United States since 1944 (Bretton Woods) and has since been used aggressively against the global majority. Kazan shows that a large number of countries are prepared to take a different path. This is something that was not possible in the past, e.g., at the Bandung Conference in 1955, but is feasible today because the dwarfs of that time have grown and some have even become giants. The weight of Chi-

more freely than vassalage to an exclusive power would allow them.

After a quarter of a century of unfulfilled evocation of a "bright European future" with very negative results, in countries like Georgia and Moldova, and certainly not only there, it is not a question of "either-with-us-or-with-them", nor of "pro-European versus pro-Russian", "democracy versus autocracy" and so on, but of access for these countries to a more open and freer playing field. In view of this situation, the EU is behaving like a short-sighted imperial hegemon in its subjugated periphery.

## Referendum on Moldova's accession to the EU financially supported by the EU

In order to steer votes towards the Brussels-backed candidate *Maia Sandu*, a referendum on the country's EU membership was held at the same time as the presidential elections in Moldova. With an abstention rate of 50 percent, only 50.4 percent

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**“Georgia and Moldova’s ‘bad’ elections”**

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were in favour. However, accession to EU requires a two-thirds majority to amend the constitution, which Sandu does not have. This means that the referendum has failed. The referendum was accompanied by European financial aid amounting to 2 billion euros (800 euros per inhabitant, with a minimum wage for Moldovans of less than 300 dollars), which the President of the European Commission, *Ursula von der Leyen*, announced on the spot to support Sandu’s victory. This obvious interference could not prevent Sandu from losing the election in the interior of the country and only winning in the second round on 3 November with the votes of the Moldovan diaspora in the EU – a highly controversial episode that was hardly mentioned in our media.

dova, where nine of the ten directors in the last thirty years have been American and which is already a NATO apparatus. However, no Russian or CIS (*Commonwealth of Independent States*) observers were present.

The heads of the Moldovan government are of Romanian nationality: President Maia Sandu, the speaker of parliament, the prime minister, the foreign minister, the vast majority of ministers and parliamentarians from the ruling party, most of the heads of department, the members of the Constitutional Court and the head of the secret service. Moldova is a multinational and multilingual country. 53 % describe their language as “Moldovan” and 23 % as “Romanian”. The difference between the two is minimal, but the nuance is identity-forming. The remaining third of Russians, Ukrain-

and American money has colonised entire sectors of the country’s public sector and services, such as education, health, justice reform and infrastructure. It is these unelected bodies in Western hands that are eroding sovereignty and democracy and buying off entire populations that depend on them with projects and grants. For this reason, and because of their open hostility to the ruling party, the Georgian Dream has stipulated that organisations that receive more than 20 per cent of foreign aid must register, as is the case in the United States, which, however, are presented as “Russian law” and “*Putin’s* influence”. In reality, interference is mainly Western. They do not want to recognise the defeat of the opposition in the parliamentary elections on October 26th.

**The President of Georgia is French**

While in Moldova the highest government officials and the President Sandu are of Romanian nationality, the President in Georgia, *Salome Zurbishvili*, is French. She served as a French diplomat in charge of post-Soviet affairs at the Quai d’Orsay [French Foreign Ministry] and French ambassador to Georgia in 2003 and 2004. Under the disastrous Georgian President *Mikhail Saakashvili*, the protagonist of the military attack on Russian forces in South Ossetia in August 2008 – often referred to in our media as the “Russian attack on Georgia” – she was Foreign Minister. In any case, this European figure, reminiscent of the colonial era, does not recognise the result of the elections of October 26 in Georgia and supports the calls of the EU and the US for an uprising in the streets.

As Ambassador *Varga* says, the EU and the USA do not want to accept Georgian reality as the basis of the country’s foreign policy. This reality is based on the fact that Georgia is a successor state to the Soviet Union, shares a border with Russia, its economic interests, tens and even hundreds of thousands of family and friendly relationships and the logically resulting cultural and linguistic overlaps with its neighbouring country. The West does not understand that times have changed and that its goal of dominating Russia’s environment alone and even mobilising it for a direct conflict with Russia is no longer possible because it contradicts the new realities in the world, which go far beyond the logic of “either with us or with them”.

Source: <https://cxtx.es/es/20241101/Firmas/47843/Rafael-Poch-Georgia-Moldavia-Rusia-elecciones-Occidente.htm> of 1 November 2024 (Translation *Current Concerns*)

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“The West does not understand that times have changed and that its goal of dominating Russia’s environment alone and even mobilising it for a direct conflict with Russia is no longer possible because it contradicts the new realities in the world, which go far beyond the logic of ‘either with us or with them.’”

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**Moldovans in Russia could hardly participate in the elections**

40 percent of the Moldovan working-age population live abroad. The majority of these emigrants, around half a million, work in Russia. These emigrants were able to register to take part in the elections until 6 September. As the Hungarian ambassador explained, the majority of people registered on these lists came from Russia (38 per cent), followed by people living in Italy (11.5 per cent), Germany (9 per cent), the United States (6.6 per cent) and Romania (5 per cent). Despite this, only two polling stations were opened in Russia (exclusively in Moscow, compared to 17 in various Russian cities in the 2020 elections), while there were 60 polling stations in Italy, 26 in Germany, 20 in France, 17 in the United Kingdom, 16 in Romania, 16 in the United States, 11 in Spain, 10 in Ireland and 6 in Portugal. Previously, “Sandu had blocked pro-Russian television stations and barred a number of politicians from participating in the election because they had violated electoral law or illegally received funds from abroad,” according to the Wall Street Journal. The election was observed by the OSCE delegation in Mol-

ians, Bulgarians and Gagauzians consider “Moldavian” to be the national language. In such a country, the government declared “Romanian” and not “Moldovan” as the national language... Despite all these inconsistencies, which illustrate the EU’s methods in its oppressed periphery, Russian electoral interference has been denounced by the EU.

**Showdown in Georgia**

In Georgia, the elections were portrayed as a showdown between a “pro-Russian” ruling party (*Georgian Dream*), which wants to restrict freedoms through the control of NGOs, and a “pro-European” democratic opposition. The *Georgian Dream* is not “pro-Russian” but is pragmatically oriented towards the balance of power mentioned above. That is, they neither support sanctions against Russia nor participate in the hostile climate towards Moscow that is common in the Baltic republics or Poland, preferring instead to stabilise relations with Russia, with which Georgia has not even maintained diplomatic relations since 2008. There are 25,000 NGOs operating in Georgia, 90 per cent of which are financed from abroad. These organisations’ access to European



# Switzerland-EU Framework Agreement: Growing resistance

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

There is a lot of hustle and bustle in the federal administration. For months, armies of civil servants and diplomats have been 'negotiating' diligently with the EU Commission on 'open points' in the controversial negotiation package. On 6 November, the Federal Council assessed the situation internally. However, the Federal Council then refrained from going before the media and informing the public. The reasons for the Federal Council's silence are not hard to guess.

Fortunately, there is growing resistance to Switzerland being co-opted by the EU. Following the neutrality initiative, which opposes the de facto integration of our country into NATO, *Kompass Europa*, an association of Swiss entrepreneurs with around 2,500 members, has now launched its popular initiative against Switzerland's institutional integration into the EU. A survey conducted by the gfs opinion research institute in Bern comes to a similar conclusion. According to the survey, the majority of Swiss voters want good relations with the EU countries (which nobody questions), but they do not want to sacrifice the Swiss state model to the 'bureaucratic monster of the EU'.<sup>1</sup> This survey will be reviewed later on.

## The Federal Council 'taking stock' without a stance

The Federal Council's press release of 6 November consists of a lot of warm air and little substance.<sup>2</sup> Negotiations are "well advanced" on most dossiers, while others are "continuing apace, with the aim of achieving a convergence of positions". And so on and so forth. In reality, since the publication of the "Common Understanding" in December 2023, it has been clear on the table that there is nothing left to negotiate. The outcome of the negotiations is in this document, the EU Commission stated unequivocally from the very beginning. A "negotiation result" in the style of the Brussels bureaucracy: a paper written by the Commission itself, in English and in the unmistakable EU style that is difficult for citizens to understand. Its contents were presented in *Current Concerns*.<sup>3</sup>

By relaunching talks with Brussels in March 2024, the Federal Council has manoeuvred itself into a dead end against all reason and contrary to the interests of the country and its population. As was to be expected, the EU has shown no willingness to make concessions, not even in absolutely essential areas such as wage protection in line with Swiss standards or

 Kompass/Europa



**Eidgenössische Volksinitiative  
«Für eine direktdemokratische und  
wettbewerbsfähige Schweiz –  
keine EU-Passivmitgliedschaft  
(Kompass-Initiative)»**

**Jetzt Initiative  
unterschreiben!**

## Federal popular initiative "For a direct democratic and Competitive Switzerland – no EU passive membership (Compass Initiative)"

*mw.* The initiative text sometimes seems a bit complicated, especially because it consists of several changes to various constitutional articles and also contains a legally and stylistically demanding transitional provision. The latter is explained in the subsequent commentary. The arguments cited by *Kompass Europe* are a helpful guideline to the initiative.

(Link to the signature form: <https://kompass-europa.ch/kompass-initiative/unterschriften/>)

### Initiative text

The Federal Constitution is being amended as follows:

Art. 101 paragraph 1 second and third sentences

1 [...] It [the federal government] pursues an independent foreign trade policy that takes into account the needs of Switzerland as an internationally networked business location. In doing so, it protects the democratic rights of the people and the independence of the cantons.

Art. 140 [Mandatory referendum] paragraph 1 [...]

1 The following are submitted to the people and states [majority of the people and the cantons] for voting:  
b<sup>bis</sup>. international treaties that provide for the adoption of important legislative provisions;

Art. 164 paragraph 3

3 The adoption of important legislative provisions must be expressly provided for in a federal law or an international treaty that is subject to mandatory referendum and limited to a narrowly limited subject area.

Art. 197 paragraph 17

17. Transitional provision to Article 140 Paragraph 1 Letter b<sup>bis</sup> and 164 paragraph 3 (adoption of important legal provisions)

Federal laws and international treaties in force at the time of adoption of Articles 101 paragraph 1 second and third sentences, 140 paragraph 1 introductory sentence and letter b<sup>bis</sup> and 164 paragraph 3 by the people and states, which provide for the adoption of important legislative provisions, remain excluded from the principles for such a takeover. An institutional framework agreement and comparable agreements between Switzerland and the European Union are only covered by this guarantee of existence if they have been approved by the people and the states through the obligatory referendum.

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*Regarding the transitional provision: The first sentence contains a guarantee of the existence of previous federal laws and international treaties with important legal provisions adopted from abroad. This means that these decrees remain valid, even if they were not subject to the mandatory referendum at the time. The second sentence contains a retroactivity clause: If the Federal Council and Parliament decide on an agreement with the EU and only subject it to the optional referendum, a second, obligatory referendum on this agreement must later take place with a majority of the people and the cantons if the Compass Initiative is accepted by the sovereign.*

moderate control of excessive immigration. According to the press release, the Federal Council is therefore continuing its efforts to work with the Conference of Cantonal Governments, the social part-

ners and business organisations in order to push through an 'internal implementation' of the requirements from Brussels in Swiss legislation. However, his dialogue

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### “Switzerland-EU Framework ...”

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partners will not forget that the Swiss people will ultimately decide.

We must not be distracted from the essentials by the many individual work-sites (14 thematic negotiating teams are involved): The elephants in the room remain the de facto mandatory adoption of EU law and the case law of the European Court of Justice ECJ, not to mention the ban on state aid - three no-goes in Switzerland, which is fundamentally federalist and characterised by direct democracy.

Surprisingly, even the domestic editors of the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” are asking themselves after the Federal Council’s unconvincing media release: “What’s the point of all this?” After all the warnings from the EU turbos that our economy and Switzerland itself would hardly be able to survive without a framework agreement, editor *Fabian Schäfer* has to admit today: “Apart from the universities and some export industries that are suffering from the EU’s political pressure, there are hardly any acute problems to be felt today”.<sup>4</sup> Compared to companies in EU countries struggling to survive, the Swiss economy is much more resilient (see Box 2: It’s obvious: Independence and innovation are the key).

#### Swiss entrepreneurs: sovereignty and direct democracy come first

After *economiesuisse*, the organisation representing primarily large Swiss corporations, had long been claiming to speak

for “the” Swiss business community, for some years now the two business groups *autonomiesuisse* and *Kompass Europa* have been raising their voices, with thousands of members who are not willing to relinquish Switzerland’s sovereignty and direct democracy for (perhaps) slightly fewer pinpricks from Brussels.

On 1 October 2024, *Kompass Europa* launched a popular initiative aimed at preventing an institutional agreement with the EU (see Box 1: Federal popular initiative “For a direct democratic and competitive Switzerland”). The fact that the independence of Switzerland is more important to many successful Swiss entrepreneurs than closer integration into the EU economic area is causing considerable unrest in the federal parliament and the mainstream media. And that’s right!

#### The arguments of *Kompass Europe* against an institutional agreement

Reading the entire line of argument is highly recommended in order to better understand the content and, above all, the deeper meaning of the initiative as a whole and its individual parts. The authors show a high level of education in constitutional law and politics, which unfortunately can no longer be taken for granted today, and a deeply rooted Swiss ethos. A lesson in political science at its best.<sup>5</sup> Here are some excerpts with additions.

– *Preserving direct democratic participation.* The aim of the initiative and the initiative text are explained here in an overall view: “Switzerland has a unique

political system characterised by direct democratic decisions and a high degree of stability. This system has contributed significantly to our great social consensus and today’s prosperity. The automatic adoption of law and subordination to EU jurisdiction provided for in the Framework Treaty now jeopardise our self-determination to the highest degree. We are fighting against this. The initiative relies on the people and strengthens democracy. Far-reaching treaties in which Switzerland cedes part of its sovereignty in determining the applicable laws to third parties should be judged by the people and the cantons. Only those who are afraid of democracy are afraid of popular decisions.”

– *The people should be free to decide.* The new Art. 164 para. 3 is explained here. It does not want to authorise the adoption of laws as a general rule with unpredictable content, but only in relation to a narrowly defined set of facts and specifically enshrined in a law or agreement: “The EU wants Switzerland to adopt all EU legislation relevant to the internal market, now and in the future. If we oppose this with a referendum, for example, we will be de facto forced to adopt them by means of compensation payments and political pressure. This is what we want to prevent with our initiative. The people should be able to decide before equalisation measures are threatened. The adoption of important legislative provisions should therefore be submitted to the people first. Because anyone who has to make a decision under threat of punitive measures cannot make a free decision.”

– *Remaining sovereign, competitive and successful in the long term.* The main issue here is the mandatory referendum (Art. 140 para. 1): “[...] The EU wants Switzerland to commit to adopting the law. But we do not want the EU to make our laws. We do not want to pay for the EU’s mistakes. That is why we must not become an EU member or a passive EU member. We guarantee this by stipulating in the constitution that Switzerland will always hold a mandatory referendum on international treaties of this scope.”

– *We are politically and structurally incompatible with the EU.* “The Swiss political system (direct democracy, federalism, subsidiarity principle, concordance) is not compatible with the hierarchically organised EU. Our liberal and decentralised economic and social order is also in stark contrast to the EU. The same applies to Switzerland’s legislative powers in comparison to the centralised authorities of the EU. [...]”

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### It doesn’t beat a goat: independence and the ability to innovate do the trick

mw. The figures published by the *Handelszeitung* newspaper a few weeks ago under the title “Far better than Germany and the EU. Swiss industry leaves everyone behind” are impressive.

A chart based on figures from the *Bloomberg* financial agency “shows that Swiss industrial production has risen by around 40 per cent since 2011, while it has fallen by 5 per cent in Germany and remained roughly the same in the EU”. And this despite the fact that “the Swiss franc appreciated by 25 per cent against the euro in the same period, which should actually slow down exports”. According to the newspaper, the secret of the country’s success is the fact that production is highly specialised and has high added value, particularly in some sectors (pharmaceuticals, chemicals and watches).<sup>1</sup>

The strong franc is not a disadvantage, according to a similar article in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, but “nothing more than a seal of approval for the fitness of the Swiss economy - even if it sometimes causes exporters sleepless

nights. Conversely, it is to be hoped for Germany that the long tradition of the hard Deutsche Mark / D-Mark will not be completely forgotten in the euro”.<sup>2</sup>

It should be added that other factors contribute significantly to the secret of the Swiss economy’s success: the greatest possible political and economic independence, an innovative and small-scale economy based primarily on SMEs (more than 99 per cent of companies) - which is also strong in rural areas - and high-quality dual vocational training. All of this is supported by the direct democratic decision-making power of citizens and a pronounced federalist structure from the bottom up.

<sup>1</sup> *Knupfer, Gabriel.* “Um Längen besser als Deutschland und die EU. Schweizer Industrie hängt alle ab” (*Far better than Germany and the EU. Swiss industry leaves everyone behind*). *Handelszeitung* of 29 September 2024

<sup>2</sup> *Steck, Albert.* “Die Abschaffung der D-Mark war ein Fehler” (*The abolition of the Deutschmark was a mistake*). *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* from 12 November 2024



# OMV against Gazprom

## How Austria is harming itself in terms of energy policy

by Hannes Hofbauer\*

On 13 November 2024, an arbitration tribunal sentenced the Russian gas giant *Gazprom* to a fine of 230 million euros plus interest “under the rules of the International Chamber of Commerce” – as it reads on the homepage of the Austrian multinational integrated oil, gas and petrochemical company (OMV), headquartered in Vienna. On the same day, the OMV Executive Board announced its intention to offset this sum against currently outstanding receivables. This is out of the question for *Gazprom*, which is why the Russian company stopped supplying gas to OMV on 16 November.

What looks from a distance like a normal court dispute between financially strong companies is in fact the result of a long-term provocation against Russia by Austria’s largest partially nationalised company. In this way, Vienna wants to end a supply and purchase agreement for Russian natural gas to Austria that is valid until 2040 and a 57-year energy partnership between the two countries. The OMV lawsuit before the Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce was deliberately planned and executed in a self-damaging manner.

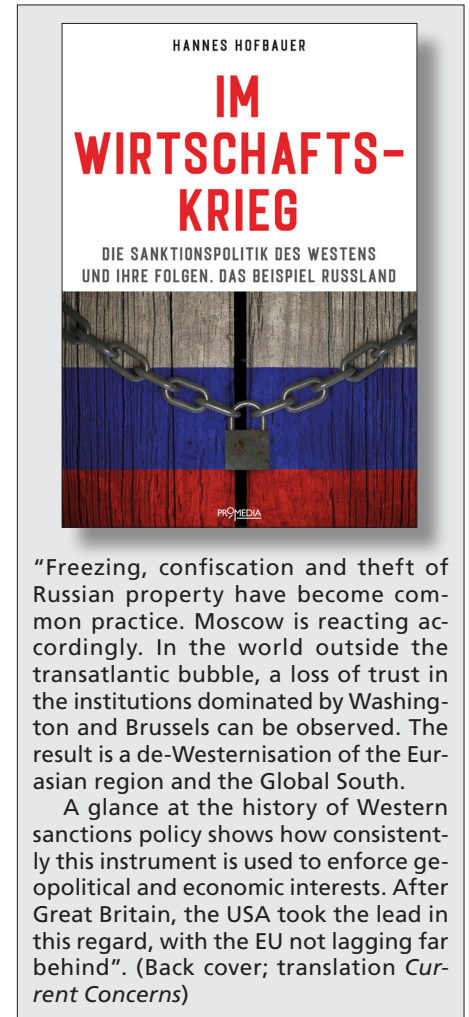
### SMV since 1945, Soviet gas since 1968

In 1968, Austria was the first Western state to conclude a natural gas supply contract with the Soviet Union. The “Baum-

garten an der March” deposit served as the hub for this. Located directly on the Slovakian border, the site was particularly suitable because crude oil and natural gas had already been extracted in the area – albeit on a much smaller scale. Pipelines were built from Baumgarten to Italy in 1974, to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1980 and to Hungary in 1996.

However, the Austrian-Soviet energy partnership goes back much further into the past. After 1945, Moscow took over small energy production sites in eastern Austria in accordance with the Potsdam Treaties, according to which German property could be confiscated for the purpose of reparations, and expanded these into a large company: the Soviet Mineral Oil Administration (SMV). After the withdrawal of the Allied troops, the company passed into the hands of the nationalised industry and became the Austrian Mineral Oil Administration. The SMV became the OMV. This is still partly state-owned today: 31.5% of the public limited company is held by the Austrian state, 24.9% by the Sheikdom of Abu Dhabi.

In early June 2018, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet/Russian-Austrian energy partnership, *Alexey Miller*, the CEO of *Gazprom*, and *Rainer Seele*, the CEO of OMV, signed an extension to the gas supply contract that has existed since 1968. In the presence of Russian President *Vladimir Putin* and Austrian Chancellor *Sebastian Kurz*, the simple signing ceremony turned into a celebration. The new agreement, which also included a purchase obligation in addition to the supply obligation, is valid until 2040, guarantee-



“Freezing, confiscation and theft of Russian property have become common practice. Moscow is reacting accordingly. In the world outside the transatlantic bubble, a loss of trust in the institutions dominated by Washington and Brussels can be observed. The result is a de-Westernisation of the Eurasian region and the Global South.

A glance at the history of Western sanctions policy shows how consistently this instrument is used to enforce geopolitical and economic interests. After Great Britain, the USA took the lead in this regard, with the EU not lagging far behind”. (Back cover; translation *Current Concerns*)

\* *Hannes Hofbauer's* most recent publication is: “Im Wirtschaftskrieg. Die Sanktionspolitik des Westens und ihre Folgen. Das Beispiel Russland”; (In Economic War. The West’s sanctions policy and its consequences. The example of Russia); Promedia Verlag Vienna, 2024, ISBN 978-3-85371-533-8

### “Switzerland-EU Framework ...”

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– *Switzerland as a business location must not be weakened.* Regarding the beginning of the initiative text (Art. 101 para. 1): “The sustainable strengthening of Switzerland as a business location can only succeed if Switzerland continues to pursue an independent economic policy in the future and democratic control over independent economic regulation is maintained. The free choice of trading partners should be ensured and the threat of a monopoly relationship with the EU prevented”. This is the argument that will probably cause the Federal Council and *economiesuisse* the most stomach ache: An independent Swiss economy based on direct democracy and federalism is actually

better off than one that is integrated into the EU.

– *For the Swiss economy, the rest of the world is becoming increasingly important compared to the EU.* [...] With regard to the latter argument, it should be noted: It is not only for the economy that the ‘rest of the world’ is becoming increasingly important. Our country as a whole would do well to remember its history as a cosmopolitan, neutral country with four linguistic cultures that is open to all peoples. This has enabled Switzerland to prosper not only economically. It has taken its place in the world in particular through its peace policy as a neutral location and mediator, through the indispensable humanitarian contribution of the ICRC and its good offices. This needs to be emphasised again. ●

ing both partners long-term planning security. Even at this early stage, there was opposition to the contract renewal from EU

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<sup>1</sup> *Europa im Alltag. 25 Jahre Bilaterale Verträge: Die Sicht der Schweizer Stimmberechtigten.* (Europe in everyday life. 25 years of bilateral agreements: the view of Swiss voters.), *gfs.bern*, 24 Oktober 2024

<sup>2</sup> *Schweiz-EU: Der Bundesrat nimmt eine Standortbestimmung vor.* Medienmitteilung des Bundesrates vom 6.11.2024 (Switzerland-EU: Federal Council takes stock.) *Press release* of the Federal Council dated 6 November 2024)

<sup>3</sup> “Alles ganz anders – oder alter Wein in neuen Schläuchen? Untauglicher Neuanlauf des Bundesrates für Verhandlungen mit Brüssel”. (A completely new approach – or just old wine in new bottles? The Federal Council’s failed attempt to restart negotiations with Brussels.) In: *Current Concerns* No 1, of 16 January 2024

<sup>4</sup> Schäfer, Fabian. “Die Schweiz soll 150 Rechtsakte der EU übernehmen – der Bundesrat stellt die Weichen für das Finale der Verhandlungen”. (Switzerland is to adopt 150 EU legal acts – the Federal Council sets the course for the final round of negotiations.) In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6 November 2024

<sup>5</sup> <https://kompass-europa.ch/kompass-initiative/initiative/>



**"OMV against Gazprom"**

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circles, as Brussels had been engaged in a small economic war with Russia since 2014. EU member states were prohibited from exporting oil and gas production technologies to Russia, but the raw material itself was not yet affected by coercive economic measures.

The major economic war against Russia launched by the USA and the EU following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army also put increasing pressure on the Austrian-Russian gas contract. OMV boss Rainer Seele was the first to experience this. The German-born manager is known for his pragmatism and has repeatedly defended himself against morally charged anti-Russian political voices. As President of the *German-Russian Chamber of Foreign Trade*, he stood for continued economic exchange between East and West. At the same time as his contract as OMV CEO came to an end, the majority of the Group's Annual General Meeting in 2022 voted against him. The representatives of the state and the shareholders from Abu Dhabi refused to exonerate their CEO in a highly unusual international move. In doing so, they followed the recommendation of "International Shareholder Services" – an American proxy advisory firm (what is not all there in this world). The accusation was that compliance rules had been disregarded, citing, for example, a sponsorship agreement with the Russian football club *Zenit St. Petersburg*. But the main focus was on the supply contracts with *Gazprom*. After a year of intense wrangling, the next OMV Annual General Meeting in June 2023 retrospectively expressed its confidence in Rainer Seele, who had already left the board, and discharged him.

**Whatever the cost:  
Get out of Russian gas**

The anti-Russian battle then shifted to the courts – or more precisely, to various international arbitration tribunals. In January 2023, OMV filed a lawsuit against

*Gazprom* at an arbitration tribunal in Stockholm because the Russian company had cut back and temporarily suspended its gas deliveries to Germany. Austria was not affected at any time. Amount in dispute: 575 million euros. In April 2024, *Gazprom* was able to successfully reject this claim through an arbitration tribunal in St. Petersburg. According to the Russian company, the supply difficulties were due to the European Union's sanctions policy and cannot be attributed to *Gazprom*.

In fact, at the end of February 2022, in response to the Russian army's invasion of Ukraine, Brussels put together several packages of sanctions against the Russian economy (Brussels launched a sweeping attack on the Russian economy with several packages of sanctions), including the freezing of USD 300 billion in Russian central bank funds and the exclusion of Russian banks from the SWIFT system. The German government had already prevented the commissioning of the completed Nord Stream 2 pipeline with bureaucratic manoeuvres. Russia saw itself pushed against the wall economically and – in order to increase the pressure on Germany and the EU – reported difficulties with the transport of gas through Nord Stream 1. A – real or fictitious? – turbine damage meant that only 60 per cent of the contractually agreed gas reached Germany, and later only 40 per cent. The *Siemens* turbine could only be repaired at the site in Canada, which meant that Ottawa refused to export it to Russia after the repairs had been completed – turbines were on the Canadian sanctions list. After German Economics Minister *Robert Habeck* obtained a special export licence, the Russian customs documents were a long time coming. In this way, the battle for Russian energy for Germany continued until 26 September 2022, when a naval unit – presumably from the USA – put an end to the German-Russian energy partnership by blowing up three of the four Nord Stream pipes.

On 13 November 2024, an arbitration tribunal of the International Chamber of Commerce awarded OMV 230 million euros plus interest as compensation for the losses suffered on the German gas market in 2022. On the one hand, this is remarkable because the sanctions machine against Russia was in full swing at the time and this arbitration tribunal was of course aware of this, but treated the "case" as if it had occurred in economic peacetime. Secondly, the supply shortfall in Germany does not affect the Austrian market in any way, nor does it affect the long-term supply contract, which runs until 2040. This makes it all the more incomprehensible that OMV's executive floor announced the day after the arbitration court's rule that it wanted to offset the 230 million euros against future gas deliveries to Austria. This approach is only understandable if it was deliberately designed to torpedo the Austrian-Russian energy partnership in this way. And this is precisely the rationality behind the provocative behaviour of the new OMV team and the government behind it as the owner's representative.

Three days later, on 16 November 2024, *Gazprom* stopped supplying gas to OMV. This gave the latter an argument that Russia had broken the contract valid until 2040, which was probably the point of the whole flood of lawsuits.

In future, OMV will rely on LNG gas from the USA – contrary to its own philosophy of wanting to operate as sustainably and with as little CO<sub>2</sub> as possible. This gas will be pumped up through the Alps via Italian ports and then flow back into the Baumgarten storage facility east of Vienna. There is also talk of intermediaries already being found to bring Russian gas – relabelled as Azerbaijani gas – to Austria via the pipeline, which has existed since 1968. Calculators are currently expecting price increases of 20% in the coming year, which is being recognised by politicians and OMV. According to them, the fight against Russia must be worth it. •

(Translation Current Concerns)

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# Human lives in Lebanon

by Karin Leukefeld, Bonn and Damaskus

The flight was quiet. The flight attendants were friendly as always, the passengers were lost in thought, sleep or quiet conversations. Only two babies protested loudly during take-off and landing – when the pressure on the little travellers' eardrums is said to be painfully high.

The pilot could not have been quieter. Apart from the scheduled instructions to the flight attendants before take-off and landing, nothing was heard from him during the entire flight. The slow approach to Beirut International Airport led from the Turkish Mediterranean coast over the island of Cyprus.

Gigantic towers of cloud loomed over the island, the northern part of which has been occupied by Turkey since 1974. In contrast to the black clouds that the air strikes by Israeli fighter drones and fighter jets cause to rise over Lebanon, the cloud towers over Cyprus in the late afternoon were coloured in a warm red by the setting sun.

Only shortly before reaching the Lebanese coast did the pilot steer the aircraft southwards to head for Rafik Hariri International Airport. Lights flashed along the coast, over the harbour of Beirut and over the city that the plane reached at Ras Beirut. The passengers were silent, all trying to catch a glimpse of their battered country through the windows. The landing was hardly noticeable, only the sharp braking indicated that the pilot did not want to let the aircraft continue southwards. Deep darkness prevailed to the south and east of the airport. This is Dahieh, the southern suburbs of Beirut, which the Israeli army has been attacking since the end of September.

## Target number one for Israeli attacks

Not a single shot, rocket or mortar shell has been fired at Israel from here, and yet the population of these neighbourhoods has become Israel's number one target. More than a million people from Dahieh and the south of the country now live as internally displaced persons in the north and east of Beirut, in villages in the Lebanese mountains or north of the port city of Tripoli. Tens of thousands have fled across the border to Syria, along with more than 400,000 Syrian refugees who initially fled to Lebanon to escape the Syrian war. Now they are returning to their war-torn homeland to seek safety from Israeli attacks. Israel has bombed two of the three official border crossings between Lebanon and Syria. In Syria, the Israeli bombardments continue. In north-east Syria, the Turkish army is bombing Kurdish positions, and in eastern Syria along the border with Iraq,



*The house of the Syrian Baath Party was hit by missiles from an Israeli drone. The third floor was destroyed. Mohammad Afif, head of the Hizbullah media office, and five other people were killed. (picture Karin Leukefeld)*

the US army is bombing. Depending on the situation, the attacks are justified with weapons smuggling by Hizbullah (Israel), a threat to national security (Turkey), attacks by Iranian militias or an attack on the Islamic State (USA). The security of the population in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq has long ceased to play a role. And if they fight back with so-called “non-state” actors – because their national armies are too weak and poorly equipped – they are released for shooting down as “terrorist organisations”.

It all began with the division of the region after the First World War and the destruction of Palestine by the Zionist colonial settler project called Israel, which began at the end of the 19th century and whose brutal character is clearly visible in the Gaza Strip today. Israel is supported by its great role models Great Britain, France, Germany and above all the USA. Their colonial past is the textbook of the war of annihilation that is being waged against the Palestinians and the Lebanese before the eyes of the world.

## A day in Beirut

The flight lands in the early evening hours of 17 November 2024. Entering Lebanon with a German passport is normally not a problem. But during the war, foreign travellers are asked about their profession, and journalists must first present themselves to General Security – the Lebanese secret service – in order to present their letters of accreditation. During the waiting time,

dozens of blue helmet soldiers arrive in the waiting hall and pass – past the waiting author – in orderly rows through the passageway for diplomats and UN personnel. The small flags sewn onto the shoulders of their uniforms identify the soldiers as Spanish.

On the journey into the city, driver A. and the author exchange the first news. Mohammad Afif, head of Hizbullah's media office, was murdered in a targeted drone attack in the early afternoon. In the evening, an Israeli drone attacked a flat and a computer shop below it with missiles in the densely populated Mar Elias neighbourhood. A. and his brother B. – the names of both are known to the author – have found refuge in a village in the mountains east of Beirut. Their parents' house in a village south of Sidon was partially destroyed in Israeli air raids. They have had no news from their hometown for more than a month. The brothers are receiving support for themselves and their families from relatives living abroad. A common saying in Lebanon is: “To whom Allah loves, he gives relatives abroad.” As young men, A. and B. supported their families during the civil war by working abroad. Now it is the task of the next generation of the family to help their relatives.

## Destruction everywhere

Every free space along the roads from the airport to the city is parked up with cars. The internally displaced persons from

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### “Human lives in Lebanon”

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South Lebanon and Dahieh are not poor; many have worked for decades somewhere in the world in order to build a house back home with the proceeds of their labour. They have opened shops, a hotel or sports facilities, or they have planted fruit plantations to supply the local market. The most important thing for people was and is to invest their hard-earned money in such a way that it enables them, their children and their parents to have a better life. Now they are spending their savings on emergency accommodation.

The night remains restless. Israeli drones and fighter jets unload their deadly cargo over the southern suburbs of Beirut in two heavy waves of attacks. Due to the massive and deadly attacks the day before on the neighbourhoods of Mar Elias and Ras el Nabeh, not far from the French embassy and the French hospital, the Ministry of Education declares the closure of all schools in Beirut for two days. Both neighbourhoods are within the official administrative boundary of Beirut and the bombings were carried out by Israel without any warning.

In Mar Elias, the main router for the internet supply of the affected street and side streets was destroyed in the attack, reports C., who had to flee with his family from a village in the southern province of Nabatieh. His name is known to the author. He was finally able to attend school online again, as he told the author. As it is his last school year before the Baccalauréat, comparable to the German Abitur, the lessons are of existential importance to C.. Now the connection to the online lessons has been cut, and it will be a while before the responsible organisation can repair the damage.

The first trip of the morning takes the author to a photocopy shop to make copies of her passport with an entry stamp and the newspaper’s credentials for the Ministry of Information’s press centre. On the way, the skies over Beirut open their floodgates and it pours so heavily that buying an umbrella (made in China) is the order of the day. The internally displaced people, especially the men sitting outside the houses where they have found refuge, retreat into the entrances. How will the families who are holding out in homemade tents on the seafront or along the streets protect themselves? Where will they sleep when the rainy season begins in winter?

Equipped with the necessary official papers, A. travels with the author in the afternoon to the places that were bombed the day before. In Mar Elias, the building with the computer shop and the flat where two people were killed by the Israeli drones is covered in black soot. As if it had been enveloped by a fireball. Cars parked in front of the building are destroyed, the police



*Kazim Issa, a returned teacher, is 80 years old. He is standing in front of his destroyed house. Next to it is the destroyed house of the Syrian Ba’ath Party in Ras el Nabeh. (picture Karin Leukefeld)*

and army have cordoned off the street, where passers-by stop to look at the destruction. Everyone here knows the computer shop. It is said that the owner was the brother of an official in Hizbullah. Apparently reason enough for Israel to destroy both men and their life’s work.

#### Dying has become commonplace

Finding the site of the attack in Ras el Nabeh/Ras Nabaa is like searching through a labyrinth. The neighbourhood, which is close to the French University of Saint Joseph, the French hospital and the French embassy, consists of seemingly countless narrow streets and alleyways in which high-rise buildings of up to 20 storeys tower over low, historic Lebanese townhouses. Finally, A. finds the alleyway that has been cordoned off by the police and army in front of the destroyed building. The target of the attack was the house of the Syrian *Baath Party*, a three-storey historic building with green shutters. The Israeli missiles hit the top floor, fired from a drone that had identified its target without warning. *Mohammad Afif*, head of the Hizbullah media office, was killed. Five other people died with him.

Afif was an intrepid journalist and media professional who had been using his knowledge and courage in favour of Hizbullah for many years. Western journalists were outraged by his public press conferences among the rubble of Dahieh. Hizbullah’s media office had also been the target of Israeli attacks. Only a few days before his assassination, he had held another open-air press conference there, knowing full well that Israel had threatened to assassinate him. Referring to Is-

raeli threats to destroy Hizbullah, known in Lebanon and beyond as the “resistance”, Afif had declared: “The resistance is a nation, and a nation will never die.” On the website of the news channel *Al-Manar*, which Afif had helped to set up, it was said in memory of Afif that he had been “a lion in the media sector”, an outstanding personality.

#### Injustice, injustice, injustice

Articles in the Lebanese media raised the question of whether such a vulnerable person should even be allowed to live in neighbourhoods where they “endanger everyone”. *Kazim Issa*, an 80-year-old retired teacher and neighbour of the house attacked, said in response to a related question from the author: “If someone is accused of a crime – rightly or wrongly – it is not permissible to attack a house, a crowd or anywhere in civilian life at will in order to kill that person.” In other states, there would be an arrest warrant, an arrest and a trial to determine the person’s guilt. He grew up in this neighbourhood and learned from his parents as a child what respectful and peaceful coexistence looks like. “There we have a church, there we have a mosque for Sunnis, and here we have a mosque for Shites,” says the man, describing his neighbourhood. He has learnt – and also taught his students – that there are rules for warfare and for peaceful coexistence.

“Let’s say I want something from you, then I can’t just take it. I can’t just kill your family who live there.” Today, these rules are obviously unknown to the powerful and rich, the teacher continues. They

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# City of Zurich – Contribution to humanitarian aid in Gaza

by Eliane Perret



*What perspective does this boy have for his future, in view of the hunger, the bombs and the death in his everyday life and a world that tolerates it? (picture screenshot)*

According to a press release<sup>1</sup> dated 14 November 2024, the city of Zurich wants to support the Swiss aid organisations *Médecins du Monde* and *Terre des Hommes*, as well as the *United Nations relief and works agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East* (UNRWA) through contributions to the suffering civilian population in the Gaza Strip. In verbatim:

“The City Council is concerned and dismayed by the development of the humanitarian situation. Within the humanitarian aid provided by the city of Zurich the City Council is making a contribution

of CHF 580,000 to support the civilian population in the Gaza strip.”

The two aid organisations *Médecins du Monde* and *Terre des Hommes* will each receive CHF 100,000 to fund projects on the sexual health of women and girls<sup>2</sup> as well as for the psychological and social support of children respectively. The city will give an additional contribution of CHF 380 000 the city makes in favour of the UNRWA. As the backbone of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip, this UN aid organisation is indispensable. The structures it has built up over many years and its lo-

gistics are used by various local and international aid organisations, and the organisation enjoys the trust of the population. With the decision of 13 November 2024, the City Council (executive) fulfilled an urgent proposal (postulate), which was approved on 10 July 2024 by the parliament (municipal council) by 58 votes to 47 votes in favour (with 5 abstentions) to the City Council. The postulate was submitted on 5 June 2024 by three parties from the political left left-wing spectrum of the parliament – SP, Greens and the *Alterna-*

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are greedy, they steal, they use people only for their own interests, and they don’t care about their lives or their fate. Faith and conviction are unknown to them, they are only interested in money and power. When asked whether the “powerful and rich” have a nationality, Kazim Issa waves it away. They have no nationality, no religion, no values of the kind that human civilisation has produced for living together. He then thanks the author for travelling a long way to talk to him, a simple Lebanese man, and to hear what he has to say. “It’s good that you don’t just believe what the media report.”

It is slowly getting dark when the author and A. reach a camp for 3,000 internally displaced persons in the newly

restored historic centre of Beirut “Downtown”. The people are housed in an office building of the former *Antra Bank* and are being carefully looked after. In conversations with a group of students, a teacher and the head of the centre, many details and problems are mentioned that will be reported on later.

In the evening, the author again receives news of an Israeli rocket attack in the centre of Beirut. The student C., who has found refuge in Mar Elias, reports that he was on his way back from the mosque when two rockets, fired from a drone, hit a nearby building in Zokak el-Blat. “Again, this horrible noise and terror”, writes C. And another acquaintance reports shortly afterwards: “The target was the headquarters of the aid organisation *Al-Zahra*. The building contained food, mattresses and

blankets for the displaced people.” The Lebanese Ministry of Health reported five dead and at least 18 injured people who had been working in the facility.

18 November 2024 in Beirut comes to an end with the news that Israeli missiles have once again struck the city centre. This time it hit a building not far from the headquarters of Lebanese Prime Minister *Najib Mikati*, who is only temporarily in charge until a new president will be elected. Mikati and his team were presumably preparing for a meeting with US President *Joe Biden*’s special envoy, *Amoz Hochstein*, who is expected in Beirut on Tuesday 19 November. The meeting is rumoured to be about a ceasefire. •

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Letter to  the Editor

## A plea for more humanity and sense of responsibility at Swiss Television and in the general media

Thank God that the experienced geriatric psychiatrist Dr *Raimund Klesse* from Chur and president of the *Swiss Hippocratic Community* participated in the TV discussion “Club” on SRF regarding: “Sarco-assisted suicide for all?”

Klesse mentions the good suicide prevention for younger people in Switzerland. However, he also argued with professionally and humanely convincing manner that in comparison to Germany and Austria, there is a sharp increase in suicides with elderly people in this country. In our country, there is a veritable suicide epidemic due to assisted suicide! The lasting impression remains, that the liberal practice of assisted suicides in the

Mother *Helvetia* country is out of control.

One learned a bit about the “Werther-effect” (copycat effect) due to continual media reports about suicide. Therefore Klesse challenged rightly and directed the media: “this hype about assisted suicides muss be stopped!” How is it actually possible, that people with such problems regarding life are always on their own in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? That they due to questionable business models are being persuaded and supported to end their lives? It would be more humane to *help* them confront their life problems. As privileged people, we are called upon to, use our hearts and minds, healthy compassion and sense re-

sponsibility to better perceive and to provide help for one another in the interpersonal humane areas. The medical ethicist Professor *Giovanni Maio* has raised the question “Are we not overwhelmed that a person wants to go in such a way?” I personally can only answer: Yes, it overwhelms me. And yes, I am ashamed for such a commercial-program on TV for assisted suicide and its technical realisation. It would be more reasonable to make the viewers more familiar with psychological support for people with emotional distress.

*Lic. phil. Elisabeth Frey, Psychologist, Switzerland*

### “City of Zurich – Contribution ...”

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*tive List*. It emphasised the fact that Gaza is facing a devastating famine, with probably thousands of civilian victims, and that an external evaluation had confirmed UNRWA’s neutrality.

With this step, the city of Zurich joins the executive of the canton of Geneva. The latter has set a special credit of four million Swiss francs for the years 2024 and 2025 in view of the devastating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the need for immediate aid to humanitarian organisations. These will be given to organisations providing emergency aid in Lebanon and neighbouring countries. The highest amount of one million Swiss Francs goes to the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC). UNRWA, the *Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR), *Médecins sans frontières* (MSF) and the *Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue* (HD) each receive funding of 500,000 Swiss francs from the canton of Geneva.<sup>3</sup>

### Humanitarian disaster relief is the order of the day

The decisions of the governments of the city of Zurich and the Canton of Geneva will help at least a little to alleviate the terrible situation of the people in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Lebanon – because the human catastrophe is far from over. A peace agreement is a long way off. These decisions are an expression of human responsibility and outrage when you look at the injustice that the people in these areas have suffered for years and are still suffering. The prevailing silence, the misinformation, and the propaganda

strategies that have been used to trivialise the killings and murders that have been going on for months are unbearable. The figures are well-known, and anyone who wants to can also find out how many children, women, old and young people lost their lives since 7 October 2023.

Isn’t the protection of the civilian population by the *Geneva Conventions* and international humanitarian law binding for all states who are involved in a war? In the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and in Lebanon, they are being disregarded by the attacking Israeli troops -knowingly and arrogantly – with thousands of innocent people killed by armed violence and starvation, as well as because of destroyed medical suppl. But apparently, they are not supposed to help, because of a denunciation campaign that has been going on for month. The UNRWA, the UN aid organisation that has been caring for the people of Gaza for decades, is to be silenced. How else can it be explained that its financial support has been stopped since the beginning of this year? That, after Israel, without ever having provided evidence, claimed the involvement of twelve UNRWA employees in the attacks of October 7 on Israeli civilians and had demanded an investigation by the UN. The most important donor countries – including Switzerland – “forgot” their humanitarian obligations and decided in January 2024 to immediately suspend their financial contributions to the aid organisation. And that’s not all. Even after the requested report had been published and had discharged UNRWA in all key points, the USA, the UK, and Switzerland (as depositary state of international humanitarian law and headquarter

of the *International Committee of the Red Cross* ICRC!) stuck to their refusal. Our country’s promise (made last May 2024) to pay at least half of the promised amount to the UNRWA (CHF 10 million) demonstrates an incomprehensible indifference to human suffering and a lack of statesmanlike responsibility too. Or what else can you call it? The fact that the Canton of Geneva and the City of Zurich have with their financial contributions set a counterpoint to this incomprehensible behaviour is encouraging and gives hope that other cities, municipalities and cantons will follow suit, even if – as the minutes of the Zurich municipal council debates show – you have to be prepared for the worst due to the hostile arguments and condescending distancing of the opponents<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Media release from Zurich City Council

<sup>2</sup> The term “sexual health” is a specialised term in sexology and, according to the WHO definition, includes both “a positive, respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships [...] and the opportunity for [...] safe sexual experiences, free from oppression, discrimination and violence”.

<sup>3</sup> “Geneva donates money to UNRWA and other organisations in Lebanon”. *Keystone SDA* of 6 November 2024; <https://www.nau.ch/politik/regional/genf-spendet-geld-an-unrwa-und-weitere-organisationen-im-libanon-66857915>

<sup>4</sup> Urgent postulates; [https://www.gemeinderat-zuerich.ch/dokumente/ad-d8750e031243a9b872ecb650b2dd75-332?filename=2024\\_0266Postulat](https://www.gemeinderat-zuerich.ch/dokumente/ad-d8750e031243a9b872ecb650b2dd75-332?filename=2024_0266Postulat)

Further sources:

Extract from the minutes of the municipal council meetings 102 and 103 of 10 July 2024

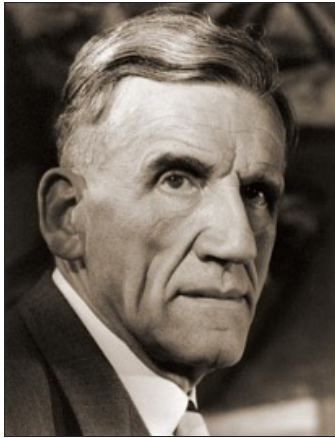
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# Zaccaria Giacometti (1893–1970): “Democracy as the guardian of human rights”

by Dr rer. publ. Werner Wüthrich



Zaccaria Giacometti  
(picture ma)

Today, the Swiss model of democracy is in danger. The dynamic adoption of law in Framework Agreement 2.0 would devalue the referendum. Neutrality has practically been abolished, the EU's free movement of persons takes precedence over the Federal Constitution, etc. Several popular initiatives are underway to stop this dismantling.

The oft-quoted adage “History does not repeat itself, but it does have parallels” applies here. After the Second World War, it was uncertain how Swiss democracy would develop. As early as the 1930s, the Federal Council and Parliament prevented the referendum 91 times by rashly declaring Federal Decrees urgent. Then came the plenipotentiary regime during the Second World War. After that, the federal authorities struggled to relinquish their powers altogether. Only the popular initiative “Return to direct democracy” in 1949 brought relief. Zaccaria Giacometti, Professor of Constitutional Law and Rector of the University of Zurich, was one of the leading figures in the debates on the restoration of democracy at the time. In 1954, he gave the seminal lecture “Democracy as the guardian of human rights” at the foundation ceremony of the University of Zurich. In my lecture at the autumn talks of the *Institut für Personale Humanwissenschaften und Gesellschaftsfragen* (IPHG), I pay tribute to this event.

With his striking sculptures, the artist *Alberto Giacometti* is probably the best-known representative of the Bregaglia family of artists. But there is another personality from this extended family who has left his mark on history: Zaccaria Giacometti who was a cousin of Alberto. He was a professor of constitutional law and rector of the University of Zurich. In

1954, he gave a widely acclaimed lecture at the foundation ceremony of the University of Zurich on the subject of “Democracy as the guardian of human rights”. This question is topical again today because democracy, and direct democracy in particular, is increasingly being called into question by certain circles. I am not only thinking of the dynamic adoption of law that the EU is planning for Switzerland. I am also thinking of the numerous recent wars in which democratic solutions have been deliberately sidelined. In the Yugoslavian wars, there was not a single referendum on nationality. Kosovo – a product of these wars – is still not at peace twenty years after the war. The situation is similar in Bosnia. In Ukraine, votes were held in Crimea and Donbass. But the votes, as clear as they were, are being pushed aside. Why doesn't the voice of the people carry more weight? The right to self-determination is also part of international law. – The votes could have helped to avoid war. Zaccaria Giacometti lived through both world wars and the great economic crisis of the 1930s. He always emphasised – even during the war – that the rules of democracy should be observed. One key sentence from his lecture illustrates his view of humanity particularly clearly.

“It stands to reason that the people and the people's representatives, as the beneficiaries of civil liberties, carry the guarantee of human rights within them to a certain extent. [...] For the people, as the bearers of civil liberties, the office of guardian of human rights should be a natural one.”

Zaccaria Giacometti believes that people, as social and rational beings, are capable of creating the order that corresponds to their nature. Why haven't diplomacy and a cultivated democracy with referendums – which Giacometti strived for – long since found their place in politics? After all, the results of war policy are catastrophic and unbearable.

The following fundamental legal, political and historical considerations show that human rights are best served by the people. Let me follow Professor Dr Zaccaria Giacometti, then Rector of the University of Zurich, through his lecture.

He began with a historical review: Around 500 years before Christ, Greek philosophers began to develop the idea of natural law. In the Renaissance – almost 2000 years later – natural law was further developed in connection with Christianity – within the framework of Christian doctrine (*Thomas Aquinas*, School

of Salamanca) and later after the Reformation also in Protestant countries (*Hugo Grotius*, *Samuel Pufendorf*, *John Locke*). Natural law became very important in the ideas of the Enlightenment, when it became the basis for the first democratic constitutions of the newly emerging nation states. Giacometti names the most impressive documents from this and more recent times.

## The US Declaration of Independence of 1776

“All men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights”, states the US Declaration of Independence of 1776. The US Constitution of 1789 specifies these freedoms in additional amendments: freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and the right to petition.

## The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in Paris

The guiding principle of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the battle cry of the French Revolution “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*” went around the world. The most important points of the Declaration are: “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights” (Art. 1). “The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression” (Art. 2). These guiding principles and guiding ideas were incorporated into the republican constitutions in 1793 – the *Constitution Girondine* and the *Constitution Montagnarde*. In addition to civil liberties, both also contained elements of direct democracy – both the referendum and the people's right of initiative. Due to the turmoil of the revolution, they were never applied.

## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the UN in 1948

After the horrors of the Second World War, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948. The articles of this declaration set out human rights in much greater detail than previous declarations: personal freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, the right to property, the right to education, the right to work and much more are listed in this comprehensive document.

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**“Zaccaria Giacometti (1893–1970) ...”**

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Today, human rights are included in the constitutions of all countries. But there are differences that are due to national characteristics, different cultures and political circumstances. The historical examples clearly show that it is not just a matter of enshrining human rights in a document and in national constitutions, but that the way in which human rights are enforced is just as important.

Giacometti pointed out that some politicians and contemporaries would spontaneously deny the question of whether democracy can be the guardian of human rights – because history has shown that even democratically adopted human rights can quickly be overridden or even swept away by political events. For example, the Jacobins under *Robespierre* established a reign of terror in the first years after the French Revolution on the basis of emergency law, without the Declaration of Human Rights of 1789 and subsequently the constitution of the First Republic of 1793 being able to prevent this. Unfortunately, there are many such examples in history. *Hitler* also succeeded in overriding the human rights contained in the Weimar Constitution relatively easily and permanently by invoking emergency law (Emergency Decree and Enabling Act). How can this be prevented?

The UN’s *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948 demands that human rights must be protected by the rule of law. Zaccaria Giacometti started at this point and gave the audience a brief introduction to jurisprudence: he divided law into two areas that are fundamentally different because they belong to different systems of norms – positive law and natural law.

**Positive law**

Positive law is written law. In Switzerland, it consists of the laws currently in force, i. e. the Federal Constitution, federal acts and ordinances. Subordinate to federal law is the law of the cantons, which stands above the decrees of the approximately 2,200 municipalities. Lawyers speak of a hierarchy of laws. As the constitutional court, the Federal Supreme Court reviews the cantonal decrees to ensure that they do not contradict federal law. Federal laws, on the other hand, cannot be reviewed by the Federal Supreme Court. The people exercise the highest level of control here with the referendum. In Germany and the USA, on the other hand, the Constitutional Court reviews federal laws and government policies for their constitutionality.

**Natural law**

Natural law, on the other hand, which underlies the various declarations of human

rights, is derived from the nature or essence of human beings and is based on philosophical, religious and psychological convictions. Behind this is an image of man and the world – and therefore a part of the world view. Natural law establishes ethical demands on the state. According to Giacometti, it is “thought and felt law”, i. e. not law in the sense of enforceable norms.

According to Giacometti, there are different approaches to natural law because it comes in different guises: as Catholic natural law (Thomas Aquinas), as Protestant natural law (Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf), as rationalist natural law (John Locke, *Immanuel Kant*, *Rousseau*, *Montesquieu* and many more), as liberal natural law (*David Hume*, *John Stuart Mill*). However, there is a common basis in the various schools of thought – the nature of man.

Giacometti explains that the development of law is optimal when positive law is combined with natural law so that the two systems do not stand in opposition to each other.

**“Can democracy be the guardian of human rights?”**

After these introductory remarks, Giacometti turns to the central question of who should protect and guarantee human rights so that natural law and human rights are actually enforced and practised. Can the legal system fulfil this task? – For Giacometti, the *principle of the separation of powers* is a cornerstone of democracy and human rights: state power should be divided into the executive (government), the legislature and the courts. These three branches of power inhibit and control each other, which prevents abuse of power and protects the civil liberties of citizens. In a direct or semi-direct democracy with referendum and popular initiative, the people are an important part of the legislature and the constitutional and legislative process alongside parliament. Giacometti explains: “The active citizenry, as a partial organ of the constitutional and legislative power, fulfils this inhibiting function vis-à-vis parliament and the administration.”

Giacometti then explained how direct democracy saved Switzerland from dismantling democracy and significantly restricting civil liberties in the difficult period between the two world wars – as happened in most countries at the time. Numerous popular initiatives were submitted.

**Federalism guarantees human rights**

Giacometti cites federalism as another principle of constitutional law that safeguards human rights: by dividing state power between the cantons and the Confederation, federalism protects the indi-

vidual freedom of citizens. A similar effect can also be observed in the cantons, where the communes have far-reaching autonomy with their own fiscal sovereignty and where citizens actively participate in communal affairs. The “people of the commune” themselves ensure the rights of freedom.

Giacometti pointed out an important point in federalism: “The smaller the community, the more intensive the participation of the liberal-minded active citizens in the fulfilment of public tasks naturally appears.”

**Can the people themselves be the guardians of human rights?**

According to Giacometti, democracy offers the greatest opportunity for the realisation of civil liberties: “The people must be prepared for liberal democracy, they must be politically mature. A people appear ready for genuine, direct democracy when it fulfils the following conditions”:

- a) *The idea of freedom*: “Firstly, the idea of freedom must be alive in the individual and in the people, and natural law under the rule of law must be effective not as a right, but as an ethical force.”
- b) *Political conviction*: “Liberal values must prevail, but not as euphoric moods born of the moment or opportunistic inspirations, but as deep political convictions that permanently dominate the consciousness of the people and are supported by the driving forces of political life.”
- c) *Historical awareness*: “The people must have a liberal tradition. Its liberal convictions must be rooted in such a tradition. Tradition, however, is historical consciousness, and liberal tradition is consequently liberal historical consciousness. Democracy possesses such a historical consciousness in the case that a liberal past continues to have an effect on it, i. e. that the previous generation has passed on to the living generation a treasure trove of liberal political ideas, views and experiences. [...] The poet’s words also apply here: ‘What you have inherited from your father, acquire it in order to possess it.’”
- d) *Political education*: “The living generation must acquire this inherited treasure of liberal political insights and liberal political experience, indeed, fight for it through appropriate political education, testing and proving itself as a constitutional legislator and as a simple legislator of a genuine democracy.”

**The referendum – a ‘great political means of education’ (Giacometti)**

In 1874, the Federal Constitution was revised with a fundamental innovation. If citizens did not agree with a federal law

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**"Zaccaria Giacometti (1893–1970) ..."**

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passed by parliament, they could demand a referendum with 30,000 signatures. That was revolutionary. The referendum was to become a pillar of the Swiss legal system. A little later, the right to a popular initiative was added. Since 1848, 672 referendums have been held at federal level, with 216 referendums on a bill and 234 referendums on a popular initiative to amend the constitution. There have also been numerous referendums in the cantons and countless in the municipalities. The figures are impressive. "Chaos" did not break out, as some had initially feared. Today, Switzerland is one of the most stable democracies. But there were some difficulties.

**Back door to bypass the referendum**

When the referendum against Federal Decrees was introduced in 1874, there was a problem. Anyone who read the constitutional article carefully, soon realised that there was a back door for parliament to avoid the referendum – the so-called urgent emergency law. Parliament could decide by a simple majority that the matter was urgent and that a referendum was not possible. Moreover, there was no definition of what "urgent" meant. Matters are almost always "urgent" in politics. When is urgency appropriate? Particularly in the difficult period between the two world wars, parliament very often used this back door to avoid a referendum. Far too often, Zaccaria Giacometti and like-minded people thought. That's how we are destroying direct democracy! And they wanted to solve the problem.

**An example**

In 1934, the federal government banned the opening of new department stores or new branches by emergency law. The ban came into force immediately and a referendum was not possible. The federal government wanted to protect the retail trade – the small and medium-sized shops. This measure was directed against *Gottlieb Duttweiler*, the founder of *Migros*. Duttweiler had begun to expand the *Migros* system across the whole country, threatening the existence of many retailers. The ban was repeatedly renewed and only lifted in 1946. "For heaven's sake, that can't be right. This is an offence against the freedom of trade and commerce. We are living in a free country", Duttweiler probably exclaimed. Giacometti agreed with him, it's not right. Economic crisis yes – but why shouldn't we vote on measures, especially those that help the people to overcome the crisis? Duttweiler founded a political party, the *Landesring der Unabhängigen* (National Association of Independents), prepared a popular initiative

and converted his public limited company into a co-operative by giving his employees and loyal customers share certificates worth 30 francs. Moreover, Duttweiler was not discouraged by the emergency law. He sent lorries as mobile sales outlets into the neighbourhoods and villages to provide the population with essentials at low prices. These mobile "shops" were still on the road until the 1980s. Today, *Migros* with its huge centres is the largest "retailer" in Switzerland.

Between the two world wars Parliament prevented a referendum 151 times in this or similar ways – mostly for economic reasons. The people compensated for this restriction in part with popular initiatives. During this time, 21 popular initiatives were voted on and seven optional referendums were held against bills, some of which were submitted with over 300,000 signatures – ten times more than required.

Nevertheless, Giacometti felt that direct democracy should not be circumvented in this way. Excessive emergency law is harmful. Giacometti and others thought about how the problem could be solved. Should emergency legislation be limited in time or should a qualified majority be required in parliament? These were open questions. There were several popular initiatives. There was no simple solution.

**A constitutional court?**

In 1939 – shortly before the Second World War – a group of professors proposed a popular initiative to establish a kind of constitutional court. Elected judges were to decide whether or not emergency law was justified in a particular case or situation. A referendum was held. The people voted no with a three-quarters majority, and all cantons were against it. The people, not judges, should be the guardians of freedom and human rights. Giacometti later made his position clear: "A judge above the constitution – that is an intolerable idea." This was a fundamental shift in Switzerland's legal system. To this day, Switzerland does not have a constitutional court for federal law – unlike most other countries. But what was to happen next?

**Popular initiative  
'Return to direct democracy'**

During the Second World War, the Federal Council was granted far-reaching powers by Parliament, some of which it retained even after the war. In 1949, the people voted in favour of the popular initiative "Return to direct democracy", in which Zaccaria Giacometti had been involved in the background. Since then, the following rule has applied:

*Emergency legislation that comes into force immediately is still possible. But – if the constitution is violated, there must be*

*a mandatory referendum within one year. If a law is violated, an optional referendum is possible within one year.*

Zaccaria Giacometti explains that this means the people also control freedom and human rights in the case of urgent emergency law.

**The 'Corona' referendums**

"Can that work?", some will wonder. Yes – we experienced it a few years ago during the coronavirus pandemic. When the number of cases rose in 2020, Parliament passed an urgent federal law – the *Covid-19 Act*, which came into force immediately and gave the Federal Council far-reaching powers. I will just mention a few key words: compulsory vaccination, certificates, masks, quarantine, home office, home-schooling, etc. I don't need to remind you of this.

Opposition to the increasingly radical restrictions on personal freedom and liberties in general soon emerged – especially from central Switzerland. I remember the group of "Friends of the Constitution" from the canton of Schwyz, who stood up with cowbells against the massive restriction of personal freedom. But there were also doctors who questioned the measures from a medical point of view. Every time the Federal Council and parliament tightened the *Covid-19 Act* and ordered further, urgent measures (which came into force immediately), the opponents launched a referendum and a vote was held after a few weeks: on 13 June 2021 for the first time, on 28 November 2021 for the second time and finally, on 18 June 2023, voters voted on the respective amendments for a third time. Each time, around 60 per cent of voters voted in favour of the Federal Council's policy. Some will think: Why was there a vote? – Surely this was a matter for doctors and experts? The three referendums have strengthened the Federal Council's position and calmed the heated atmosphere somewhat.

These three votes in Switzerland were unique in the world. Nowhere else has the population been able to vote on the health policy of their authorities. Zaccaria Giacometti paved the way for this some seventy years ago. Even in dire emergency situations such as a pandemic, politicians involve the people – in the spirit of Giacometti – to protect freedom and human rights. I have counted fifteen emergency referendums since 1949. In all of them, the people voted in favour and backed the government. Another example: when the Bretton Woods system collapsed in 1972, a veritable rain of dollars poured down on Switzerland. The Federal Council was given the authority, together with the Swiss National Bank, to immediately take urgent

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defensive measures to protect the currency. In the referendum that followed, almost 90 per cent voted in favour.

Whether such referendums will still be possible in the health sector is questionable. The WHO has recently issued international health regulations and an international pandemic treaty is on the table, both of which are to take precedence over national law. In the future, the WHO and no longer the national authorities are to order urgent measures. These certainly do not provide for a referendum.

**Democracy as a learning process**

What do I want to show with this presentation? Democracy is a learning process that is not so easy – even for parliament and the government. This summer, the Federal Council and Parliament prepared the reform of the pension funds – a complicated story. Some people called for a referendum. On 22 September, "we the people" said no – and the work starts all over again. In a few weeks' time, the referendum on standardised financing in the healthcare system will follow – no less complex. Zaccaria Giacometti described the referendum as a "great political educational tool".

In the first decades after 1874, the Federal Council and Parliament did not yet fully trust the people. Politicians therefore repeatedly resorted to emergency law and avoided a referendum – which is incomprehensible today. Zaccaria Giacometti and like-minded people thought this was far too often the case and put a stop to this bad habit with the popular initiative "Return to direct democracy".

**The Federal Constitution as a permanent construction site**

The further learning process is only possible if Switzerland's sovereignty is preserved. Today, there are tendencies to restrict direct democracy again. Parliament, for example, tends not to implement popular initiatives. According to parliament, the free movement of persons within the EU has priority and takes precedence over the Federal Constitution.

The Federal Supreme Court has contributed to this paradigm shift without being legitimised by the constitution or the people. In October 2012, it placed non-mandatory international law above the Federal Constitution for the first time and justified this as follows: "If there is a genuine conflict of norms between federal and international law, Switzerland's obligations under international law take precedence. This even applies to agreements that are not based on human rights or fundamental rights." This is new and considerably narrows the legal framework

for direct democracy, and judges would be given a task that they did not have before. Critics are right to speak of a silent coup d'état.

We can only guess what awaits Switzerland if the *dynamic adoption of legislation*, as planned by the EU for Switzerland, materialises. The referendum would lose its character as a "great means of political education", as Giacometti described it. The EU would impose sanctions or equalisation measures if it did not like the result of a referendum. Outrageous – Giacometti would be turning in his grave! Swiss voters would no longer be the "guardians of human rights".

**Problematic judgements of the European Court of Human Rights**

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 and adopted the *European Declaration of Human Rights* (ECHR) in 1950. In 1959, the *European Court of Human Rights* (ECHR) was established in Strasbourg – but only with limited powers. Giacometti was sceptical. It was not until 1998 that today's Court was established as a full court, which intervenes considerably in the legal systems of individual countries. Switzerland ratified the ECHR in 1974 – without a referendum, because the Federal Council and Parliament assumed that human rights were already included in the Federal Constitution.

Recent examples show that Zaccaria Giacometti's fears were justified. The ECHR often plays politics with its judgements and thus weakens the nation state. The judges have decided whether a crucifix may hang in Italian classrooms, whether there is a human right to a minaret, whether Muslim schoolgirls must take part in swimming lessons and so on. The ECtHR's latest ruling against Switzerland concerns the complaint by the 'Climate Senior Women'. The women demanded before the Federal Court that the federal authorities do more to achieve the climate targets. The measures already initiated are insufficient. Their human right to life and their right to respect for private and family life had been violated, they argued. When the Federal Supreme Court did not respond, they filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights. The court ruled in favour of the applicants.

The Federal Council and Parliament protested for the first time. The Federal Council was of the opinion that Switzerland fulfilled the climate policy requirements of the judgement. In a statement, the Council of States and the National Council called the panel of judges to order and demanded that the court should limit itself to protecting fundamental rights and not engage in political activism. – My wife *Marianne Wüthrich* also

clearly expressed her unease in her Current Concerns article of 21 May 2024: "What does climate protection have to do with the right of older women to respect for their private and family life?", she asked. "People with common sense agree: nothing."

Such judgements, which are even intended to have an effect beyond the countries concerned, weaken democracy in individual countries and distract from the actual essence of human rights. Above all, they distract from the fact that the most basic human rights are being blatantly violated in many parts of the world today – especially in crisis regions and as a result of the intolerable war policies that are also being waged by countries that have ratified the ECHR. – What does Professor Zaccaria Giacometti, former Rector of the University of Zurich, teach us in his lecture?

**The closing words in the speech by the great constitutional lawyer Zaccaria Giacometti in 1954 are a warning for today's generation:**

"In Switzerland, the people act directly as guardians of human rights in a comprehensive manner, and our country is consequently characterised by a harmony of wide-ranging individual and political freedom. This harmony is conditioned by a liberal atmosphere based on political values, on ancient liberal tradition and on political experience and trial and error. Indeed, Switzerland is a unique case of democracy, where the people as legislators are themselves the guardians of human rights, and thus provides the most beautiful living proof of the possibility of the existence of a genuine, liberal democratic state."

Zaccaria Giacometti's presentation ended with the well-known words of the Zurich poet *Gottfried Keller*:

*"The country is just right,  
Is not too good and not too bad,  
Is not too big and not too small,  
To be a free man inside!"* •

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# 70 years ago: Albert Schweitzer gave his speech at the award ceremony for the Nobel Peace Prize

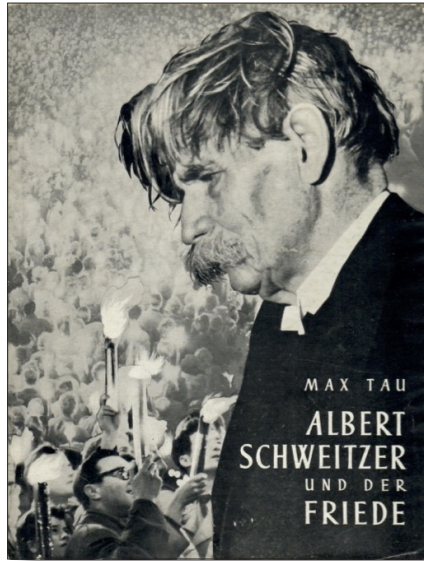
Max Tau paid tribute to the laureate and his work for peace

km. Hardly anyone will remember: 70 years ago, on 4 November 1954, one year after the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded by the Oslo Committee, Albert Schweitzer came to Oslo himself and gave his speech at the award ceremony. Albert Schweitzer needs no introduction; he is still a household name to this day. Max Tau<sup>1</sup> is a different story. With a doctorate in literature, he worked as an editor at Cassirer Publishers in Berlin during the Weimar Republic and became a mentor and patron to many young talents in Germany and Scandinavia. Being a Jew, he left Germany in 1938 because his life was in danger, so he went to Norway. He was able to live and work there until he fled to Sweden in 1942, as Norway was being occupied by the Germans. After the end of the war in 1945, Max Tau campaigned for the reconciliation with Germany of the countries invaded by the Nazis, including the reconciliation of Jews and Christians. He remained in Oslo until the end of his life, working there as an editor and writing books about his life. His autobiography "Trotz allem (Despite everything)", which is now only available in second-hand bookshops, deserves special mention. In 1950, he was the first winner of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. In his numerous speeches, he repeatedly spoke about understanding between people and peace between nations.

At the occasion of Albert Schweitzer's 80th birthday on 14 January 1955, two months after his speech in Oslo, Max Tau paid tribute to the Nobel Peace Prize winner in a major speech, which the Hamburg-based publishing house Richard Meiner Verlag kindly published in 1955, together with numerous impressive pictures relating to Schweitzer's trip to Oslo and which we will reproduce here, only slightly abridged. Max Tau gave his speech the title "Albert Schweitzer and Peace".

<sup>1</sup> cf. <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/archives/2022/no-34-16-february-2022/whoever-acknowledges-max-tau-acknowledges-understanding-and-brotherhood> of 16 February 2022

If you want to celebrate Albert Schweitzer, you must acknowledge humanity and everything it comprises. Most people look at man's inventions in amazement. They admire them as if they were miracles, but these people have not yet discovered the power that the miracle of humanity contains within itself, namely the power of counterpoise and of spreading peace. Man's inventions have already outgrown



his powers; he sees destruction in them, they create a fear of tomorrow, and no one can see any avenue of escape. Many are distressed and ask: Will all sacrifices be in vain once more and all suffering be in vain? The young ones are waiting. The experience of war is still flickering in their eyes. They are looking for a way to escape fear, so that their life will become worth living.

### What it is worth living for

Since the beginning of our century, writers and philosophers have paid homage to power or predicted annihilation in visions of doom. Albert Schweitzer portrayed the conditions in which we live with the visionary eye of the poet and with the penetrating gaze of the researcher, but he arrived at a different conclusion. Others told and showed us what it was that we should die for. Albert Schweitzer recognised what it is worth living for, and moreover furnished proof by his life. Most people still tremble in fear of what is to come. Most people are still convinced that nothing can be of any use to them, as their vision is narrowed by material things. But there is hope and renewal. This can only arise through ourselves and in our spirit. That is what Albert Schweitzer taught us. When the history of our century is written, I am certain that the legend of Albert Schweitzer will have to be included. I have dreamed a lot in my life, my hopes have often risen to the heavens, but all my hopes and dreams were surpassed by what happened in Oslo in November 1954 when seventy-nine-year-old Albert Schweitzer came to Norway to fulfill his duty.

In accordance with the statutes of the Nobel Foundation, he was to give his lecture on the problems of peace. But what happened?

### Young people honour Albert Schweitzer

From the moment he entered Oslo, everyone was filled with a single enthusiasm in their hearts. "He is the greatest man alive today!" young people shouted. After the press reception, one writer wrote enthusiastically: "There was little talk of God, but the spirit of God was felt all the more strongly in the room." Parents brought their children. They carried the little ones in their arms and lifted them up. It was a foggy November day outside, but inside, in the crowded town hall, youth paid homage to Albert Schweitzer. Students had decided to honour Albert Schweitzer with a torchlight procession. Albert and *Helene Schweitzer* stood on the balcony of the town hall. Both their faces reflected the same thing: their completion of maturity as well as their humility in the face of life. Slowly, the first young people appeared. In the beginning, only two torches could be seen, but then there was the impression of looking into a sea of light. More than thirty thousand people had gathered in front of the town hall, not called upon to do so, but in an unorganised way. No one shouted; everyone stood alone, looking up devoutly, and it was as if Albert Schweitzer was looking at humanity, and yet everyone standing below felt that Schweitzer was looking specially at him. It was different from a victory celebration where you shout hurrah and cannot shout loud enough. The young and the old stood there, moved, and then it happened: no one had intended it, but someone began to sing, and everyone joined in the anthem, which sounded like a plea to heaven: "Herrlich ist die Erde (Glorious is the earth) ..." And then they continued to sing: "Kämpfe für alles, was du liebst (Strive for everything you love) ..."

### A guardian angel for everything human

In the course of three days, the Norwegian people collected 315,000 Norwegian Crowns for Lambarene. Everyone realised that Albert Schweitzer's visit had fundamentally changed the atmosphere. It was as if all the people of the country had united and found themselves in a single family of understanding and love. The young and the old not only celebrated the great

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doctor from the jungle, the humanitarian, the great Bach player and theologian; they wanted to celebrate a guardian angel for everything human – Albert Schweitzer – the only person who may pronounce the word "peace" and thereby give it a new meaning and its truly profound content.

Albert Schweitzer believes that truth will prevail. He is zealous for justice, and he practises it everywhere. He believes in man, and no disappointment can dissuade him. He believes in what is good and seeks to realise it. He trusts in the power of goodness and peaceableness, and he is able to keep up the faith in peace for us all. [...]

**'Thou shalt not kill'**

The basic chords of his feelings and his cognition were already evident in his experiences as a boy and a young man. [...] Everyone knows the story of how he went bird shooting with his friend in the spring, during Passiontide. To the boy Albert Schweitzer, the suggestion seemed terrible, horrible, but he did not dare to object for fear of being laughed at. But when he heard the bells ringing, he threw down his slingshot and ran home. He later gratefully remembered how the bells rang the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill!" into his heart. This, the greatest experience of his childhood and youth, which made all other experiences pale in comparison, continued to be active in him. Even then, he could not understand how it could be possible that we be allowed to bring death and suffering upon other beings. He knew that many felt this way, but he also realised that most of them were afraid to say so, because they felt their feeling was too sentimental. He vowed, however, never to allow himself to become blunted and never to fear being reproached of sentimentality.

**Reflection and reason**

Very early on, he became convinced that denominational differences would one day disappear. He admired his teacher of religion, but he could not follow him when he tried to make him understand that all reflection must be silenced before faith. Already as a child, Albert Schweitzer became convinced that truth – the fundamental idea of Christianity – had to prove itself in the face of reason. "Reason," he said, "is given to us so that we can comprehend even religion's most sublime chains of reasoning." This realisation filled him with joy. Science lessons were exciting for him, but he felt a deep hatred of science textbooks with their explanations which were designed for memorisation but did not satisfy him in any way. Albert Schweitzer was hurt by the abso-

lute mystery of nature not being recognised. Even as a child, he was inspired by his grandfather *Schillinger's* spirit of enlightenment, that reason should take the place of thoughtlessness. Rarely have we met a man who experienced life with such an alert conscience, the imperative of preserving life. With a prophetic eye, he foresaw the reconciliation of the denominations and believed that through reason and the spirit animating us all, through restlessness and awakening, peace would be awakened in each individual. There is no peace without inner struggle. No one is capable of reconciliation who has not fought this battle within himself and has achieved peace within himself.

**Life as the highest gift ...**

For Albert Schweitzer, life is the highest gift, of which we can only prove ourselves worthy by the way we live our own lives. He was but a young student when, in 1896, he actually wrote down the most essential thing that can be said about the decline of culture to this day in one sentence. He wrote in his diary: "Science is not education." Proud of their inventions, enthusiastic about the idea that knowledge is power, people believed that ethical and human powers would develop equally with knowledge and inventions. They lulled themselves into a pipe dream and were incessantly talking about progress.

**... and the importance of ethics**

Albert Schweitzer, however, recognised that progress can only come about in our world if ethics are consolidated and man's humanity is developed. Anyone who reads his cultural philosophy today will recognise the deep pessimism with which he even then viewed the conditions in which we still find ourselves today. He warned people with the visionary eye of a poet and the thoroughness of an intellectual researcher. He knew that conditions had progressed far too far for any one individual to change them. But he felt that he was destined to bring peace to his fellow men. He studied theology so that he would be able to bring the spirit of *Jesus* closer to the people. He studied music and realised that the greatest thing about *Johann Sebastian Bach's* art was the spirit emanating from it. For Albert Schweitzer, Johann Sebastian Bach was a soul longing to escape from the restlessness of the world and to find peace, a soul able to pass the experience of this peace on to others. From the music of Johann Sebastian Bach resounds a peace that is higher than all reason. [...]

**Not keeping his life to himself**

At the age of thirty, Albert Schweitzer was known in the world. He was recognised as a teacher at the university and as a theo-

logical researcher in Strasbourg, as well as revered as a Bach player. He had already accomplished a work that for others would have been the crowning achievement of their lives. But he remembered his decision not to keep his life for himself, but to give it up for others. Most people know the story of how the brochure of a missionary organisation "Who will help us in the Congo?" called to his inner being. From that moment on, he felt somehow liberated. He saw his path in this calling. He decided to study medicine so that he would then be able to help black people. He saw the exploitation of black people by whites. He realised that it was more important to atone for the deeds of the whites than to notice the cultural decline in Europe. His decision turned to action. [...]

In his own writings, which most reliably show his life and work, one can read of all the difficulties he faced before carrying out his intention. What is decisive for his character is that he recognised helping others as the highest human vocation. His reports are characterised by simplicity, dedication and understanding for the foreign world. For Albert Schweitzer, there are only heroes of patience and renunciation. His writings show with what grasp of reality down to the smallest detail, with what instinctive certainty as well as human kindness and deep understanding he mastered life every day with the greatest sense of duty.

**Humanity that reconciles**

With everything he did, he sought to preserve life; he is a helper for others to live.

In the jungle, he experienced how the missions of the two denominations existed side by side in harmony. The fathers of the Catholic mission were his friends, too. Every person radiates a certain atmosphere. Wherever Albert Schweitzer worked, there was peace. His humanity compelled others to become reconciled. He was also always sure that renunciation ennobles people.

**Suffering caused by the First World War**

[...] But he stood against the times. He had been expecting the world war that broke out in 1914. In June 1914, he concluded his report with a warning to the world: "And where death is already striding in as the victor, the European states are skimping on the means to put a stop to it, instead through their senseless armaments creating prospects of a new harvest in Europe itself."

Just as *Fridtjof Nansen* hurried through the mountains, shaken because he could not bear the pain of war, so Albert Schweitzer suffered in Africa. He continued

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his work doggedly, but could find no inner peace.

The natives asked him their questions: How was it possible that the white men who had brought them the gospel of love could forget the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ to such an extent that they sought each other's lives? [...]

At the end of the war, Albert Schweitzer returned to Strasbourg a sick and broken man. Everything he had built up was lost. He had to start again where he had begun: as an assistant doctor and assistant preacher. The war, the senselessness of the people had destroyed his life's work of peace. Life often seems unfair. But no real deed is in vain.

In Sweden there lived a man who strove for reconciliation between the denominations and for peace for the people. He remembered what Albert Schweitzer had achieved as a theological researcher. We can never be grateful enough to one of the noblest people ever, the Swedish Archbishop *Nathan Söderblom*, for the way he invited Albert Schweitzer and his wife to Uppsala. There in the peaceful atmosphere his lost strength came back to him.

**Lambarene**

His actions were directed towards only one goal: through his own work, to raise the funds for a better, bigger Lambarene. Albert Schweitzer always considered it a blessing to be able to save lives and help when others were engaged with killing. But he felt abandoned, lonely and desperate when he saw how little he was able to do in relation to all the destruction. And yet, with Lambarene, he created a role model for humanity.

It is easy for most people to become enthusiastic about Albert Schweitzer's ideas. They see the most beautiful mountain on earth from afar, but they have no idea that they will find stones and only stones once they have climbed this mountain. Only then will they have to prove themselves and show what they were born for, prove through their actions that they are human in every step they take. Because of his charisma, Albert Schweitzer was able to win helpers from all over the world. They saw what he did, and they wanted to prove that in their lives, they were also ready to serve a higher purpose that made them richer. Most of them thanked him for what he did. But these deeds of the thinker, the peace-making, wise philosopher remained largely unknown until after the Second World War.

**Calling upon people for what is good**

We must call upon people for what is good. But we can only do so if we ourselves strive every moment to realise what

is good. We must create a Lambarene for the people of Europe. We must do what Albert Schweitzer did in the jungle. We must lead people from irresponsible fear to fearless responsibility.

Thirty years ago, Albert Schweitzer sent out his writings on cultural philosophy. At the same time, people were enthusiastic about and terrified by *Oswald Spengler's* "Decline of the West". Oswald Spengler saw no future for the individual. Everyone was condemned to become a servant of power and of the emperors he saw coming to power. Oswald Spengler believed that cultures come, grow, flourish and pass away. Today we know that there are no longer any different cultures. There is only one culture, to which all peoples contribute through their individual members who, born in the protection of their homeland, develop and flourish there.

Culture means bringing our inherited treasures of the past back into our consciousness, expanding them through our own deeds so that they become seeds for the future.

Hardly any other thinker was as concerned about humankind as Albert Schweitzer. He saw how efficiency and knowledge led to ever greater power, but also to ever greater one-sidedness and isolation, how every advance and every invention was in reality a step backwards, as these lacked a connection to everything that was alive and human. He feared that humanity could sink so low that it would thoughtlessly adopt any judgments and meekly and passively become a victim of power.

No one foresaw the doom more clearly. And no one else started to rebuild already in the hour of need, as did Albert Schweitzer.

**Realising through our actions what we were born to do**

Albert Schweitzer rejects any knowledge of the world based solely on the natural sciences. We cannot know the world. It shows itself to us with all its mysteries. We cannot fathom life, we cannot calculate life.

Coming from eternity, we are only able to realise what we were born to do through our actions. At birth, every human being receives a divine seed. This light can only shine through the love it receives from others. This power of the human being is stronger, more powerful than all weapons. It still lies dormant, undiscovered. But perhaps we must first pass all difficult tests before we can understand clearly the greatest of all powers. The power that one friend ignites in another is always greater than that which he himself possesses.

Recognising the decline of culture in Europe, Albert Schweitzer suffered painfully from the situation, and for years he

searched for a way out. Tentatively, unconsciously, he wrote down words. Then the door opened and in large letters there lay written in front of him: "Reverence for life".

**'Reverence for life'**

His life teaching of reverence for life gives responsibility back to each individual. We can reach it through a life-affirming way of thinking. Only through ethical strength and responsibility for others are we able to really live. Reverence for life promises no reward. Any merely material safeguarding of life impoverishes man. It may open the way to the treasures of the earth, but it cannot give him the shelter of heaven. In every human being lives the longing to achieve something through the work of his hands, through the power of his thoughts, in which the beauty of the eternal is reflected. The purely materialistic order robs man of the joy of what he has created himself, of the truth of what he has conceived and of the example that he is able to set through his work.

**The work of free people**

Albert Schweitzer knows, however, that material and spiritual freedom cannot be separated.

Culture does not fall into our laps like ripe fruit; the tree must be nurtured if it is to bear fruit. This can never happen under forced labour. It must be the work of free people. There is hope: we must turn back. We must free ourselves from the prison of prejudice and regain interest in the development and ideals of true culture. That is Albert Schweitzer's teaching. It is so simple that it has been too little academic for most people. But there is depth and luminosity in its simplicity.

Albert Schweitzer attained his philosophy through elementary thinking. He demands that we prove ourselves in our existence. He teaches us the basic principle of morality. This basic principle should give us direction, it should accompany us through our lives. It is good, he says, to preserve life, to promote life, to bring developable life to its highest value. It is evil: to destroy life, damage life, hold down developable life.

If people took this simple teaching to heart, they would allow it to renew their thinking and their willpower: The world would have a different face even tomorrow! [...]

**The youth ...**

It took thirty years for Albert Schweitzer's teaching to take root in the new youth growing up in Europe. Young people look at us with their enthusiastic and expectant eyes. Growing up, they want to develop ideals. They want to move towards

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## The Problem of Peace

### Albert Schweitzer's acceptance speech upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on 2 November 1954 (Excerpts)

"The statesmen who were responsible for shaping the world of today through the negotiations which followed each of these two wars found the cards stacked against them. Their aim was not so much to create situations which might give rise to widespread and prosperous development as it was to establish the results of victory on a permanent basis. [...] They were obliged to regard themselves as the executors of the will of the conquering peoples. They could not aspire to establishing relations between peoples on a just and proper basis [...]."

"We have learned to tolerate the facts of war: that men are killed en masse [...], that whole cities and their inhabitants are annihilated by the atomic bomb, that men are turned into living torches by incendiary bombs. We learn of these things from the radio or newspapers and we judge them according to whether they signify success for the group of peoples to which we belong, or for our enemies. When we do admit to ourselves that such acts are the results of inhuman conduct, our admission is accompanied by the thought that the very fact of war itself leaves us no option but to accept them. In resigning ourselves to our fate without a struggle, we are guilty of inhumanity.

What really matters is that we should all of us realise that we are guilty of in-

humanity. The horror of this realisation should shake us out of our lethargy so that we can direct our hopes and our intentions to the coming of an era in which war will have no place.

This hope and this will can have but one aim: to attain, through a change in spirit, that superior reason which will dissuade us from misusing the power at our disposal".

"War today means annihilation [...]. Decisive steps must be taken to ensure peace, and decisive results obtained without delay. Only through the spirit can all this be done.

Is the spirit capable of achieving what we in our distress must expect of it?

Let us not underestimate its power, the evidence of which can be seen throughout the history of mankind. The spirit created this humanitarianism which is the origin of all progress toward some form of higher existence. Inspired by humanitarianism we are true to ourselves and capable of creating. Inspired by a contrary spirit we are unfaithful to ourselves and fall prey to all manner of error".

"Today if we are to avoid our own downfall, we must commit ourselves to this spirit once again. It must bring forth a new miracle [...]. The spirit is not dead; it lives in isolation. It has overcome the difficulty of having to exist in a world

out of harmony with its ethical character. It has come to realise that it can find no home other than in the basic nature of man. The independence acquired through its acceptance of this realisation is an additional asset".

"Once more we dare to appeal to the whole man, to his capacity to think and feel, exhorting him to know himself and to be true to himself. We reaffirm our trust in the profound qualities of his nature. And our living experiences are proving us right".

"The only originality I claim is that for me this truth goes hand in hand with the intellectual certainty that the human spirit is capable of creating in our time a new mentality, an ethical mentality. Inspired by this certainty, I too proclaim this truth in the hope that my testimony may help to prevent its rejection as an admirable sentiment but a practical impossibility. Many a truth has lain unnoticed for a long time, ignored simply because no one perceived its potential for becoming reality.

Only when an ideal of peace is born in the minds of the peoples will the institutions set up to maintain this peace effectively fulfil the function expected of them".

Source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1952/schweitzer/lecture/>

#### "70 years ago: Albert Schweitzer ..."

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peace; they know that it must grow from within us. We have lost the great ideals of humanity. We must find our way back to them by being good, by being simple. We must learn to think for ourselves again, to work on ourselves, to strive for higher ideals. Each and every one of us. Self-knowledge and self-discipline are the path to growth, to inner peace and to peace among people.

#### ... and the discovery of humanity

We are living in the greatest crisis of confidence that humanity has ever experienced. We must try to prove ourselves trustworthy to one another. Evil seems to force us to mistrust. Let us finally overcome this prejudice! We can only inspire trust if we want what is good. Only those who have made peace with themselves can radiate peace. But peace is only created through the other person to whom we can entrust ourselves, to whom we can dedicate all our love.

Love only knows confidence. It knows nothing of fear, this love for people, for nature, for the universe; it is the long-ing radiating towards us from European

youth. This power, generated by the discovery of humanity, is boundless. It is able to change when no one believes in change anymore; it is able to ennoble and purify through devotion, through faith in man.

It is not true what the false prophets and sensation-seeking writers keep repeating, namely that it is only the evil forces that set our minds on fire and bring forth results. Albert Schweitzer's visit to Oslo has shown that a whole people, infused with good vigours, can be prepared to do good deeds.

What happened in Oslo can – I am sure – happen today in Berlin and tomorrow everywhere. [...] We must open up and we must try to prepare our minds for peace. Peace is not a permanent harmony, not a dream. It comprises all adventures, all transformation, all struggle and all, and there is also suffering to be found in it. But above all, it is important to discover what is human, to awaken enthusiasm in others, to open our eyes to the visible and existing richness in humanity. Then life becomes a new revelation. Everyone who is able to think can then have thoughts only for peace.

When Albert Schweitzer sent out his call for the "brotherhood of all those marked by pain", people were still silent. Their hearts

were still closed. Today, I believe the turnaround has already begun. Albert Schweitzer never had so many unknown brothers. I can already see the germs in Europe's youth. They want to realise their ideals without compromise. We can only sow the seeds and prepare the way for the young ones through our lives and our work. I believe that the early spring of the age of man has already begun. For the young poets of Europe, the reverence for life and the figure of Albert Schweitzer has already become a source of strength. [...]

#### Paving the way for peace

If we want to celebrate Albert Schweitzer, we must gratefully acknowledge our humanity. We must repent, atone and forgive; reconcile in order to prepare the way for peace. We must find the young people and, believing that we are called upon to be pioneers of peace, live, work and develop in the spirit of Albert Schweitzer.

Each of us has something of his potential. If we realise these innate possibilities, each in our own place, then we can change the world.

Let us not say goodbye to each other today without the firm belief that each of us is jointly responsible for what happens tomorrow.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)