

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*

German-Russian town twinning – a contribution to international understanding and peace

30th anniversary of the partnership between Volgograd and Chemnitz

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller, Klaudia Kruck-Schaer and Tankred Schaer



View of the city of Volgograd. Mamayev Kurgan with the famous statue *The Motherland Calls*. (picture ma)



Town hall of Chemnitz. (picture Wikipedia)

As part of this year's Leipzig Book Fair, two events focussing on German-Russian town twinning took place on 16 and 17 March, one in Chemnitz and one in Leipzig. The two events were designed to commemorate the importance of town twinning and to encourage establishing and intensifying such partnerships also to cities in Russia – especially in the present day.

Chemnitz (from 1953 to 1990 Karl-Marx-Stadt) and Volgograd (from 1925 to 1961 Stalingrad) are celebrating the 30th anniversary of their town twinning agreement this year. These cities founded their partnership in 1988, ie in a year when relations between the GDR and the USSR were still close. Fortunately, it has survived the turnaround of the years 1989-1991.

Prominent panel

The event in Chemnitz was titled, "The twinning of Volgograd and Chemnitz. A contribution to international understanding and peace". Hosts were the Chemnitz German-Russian Culture and Integration Centre "Kolorit" (see box on page 4) and the Chemnitz city councillors Dietmar Berger and Dr Ing. Eberhard Langer. From Volgograd there were present Yuri Starovatykh and Sergey Lapshinov. So with the two founders of the town twin-

ning, the then Lord Mayor of Chemnitz, Dr Eberhard Langer, and the then mayor of Volgograd, Yuri Starovatykh, the panel was prominently attended. The anniversary was celebrated together with the other panel participants, city councillor and long-time president of the *Mitteldeutscher Genossenschaftsverband* (Central German Cooperative Association) Dietmar Berger, head of the administration for international and regional relations of the city of Volgograd Sergey Lapshinov and the deputy chairman of *Kolorit* Dr Jochen Mette, as well as with around 80 participants from Germany, Russia and Switzerland.

An event took place at the Leipzig Book Fair on the following afternoon, with the same panel composition – at the invitation of *Zeit-Fragen* and on the topic: "German-Russian town twinning – a contribution to international understanding and peace". *Zeit-Fragen* would gladly have welcomed representatives of the other city council factions from Chemnitz at the Book Fair.

75th Stalingrad anniversary – German government officials stay away

75 years ago, from August 1942 to February 1943, one of the largest battles of World War II, and one involving the most heavy losses, raged in Stalingrad. It was a scandal that German government representa-

tives absented themselves from the commemoration ceremonies in Volgograd. It was all the more gratifying that the mayor of Chemnitz, Ms Barbara Ludwig, had visited the Russian twin town of Volgograd on the occasion of the 75th anniversary, at the invitation of its Lord Mayor *Andrey V. Kosolapov*. According to the "Neue Presse" of 1 February, she said there: "It is a great gesture that we commemorate the Russian and German victims 75 years after the Battle of Stalingrad. As a mayor, I am happy to take this outstretched hand and will keep hold of it."

In his introduction to the event in Chemnitz, Dietmar Berger pointed out the importance of town twinning as an important contribution to international understanding. He explained that it is very important to communicate in civil society – especially in our day and age. We should all cultivate our personal relationships. This is all the more important, because once again, a bogeyman is made out of Russia. Town twinning can help to counteract this.

Before town twinning: friendship between the people

Dr Eberhard Langer delineated the development of the twinning between Karl-Marx-Stadt and Volgograd. The

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friendship between the people had been developing for many years even before the official twinning of the cities. There were complex relationships, for example at the company level. The *VEB Germania Karl-Marx-Stadt* contributed significantly to Soviet petroleum production. There were children's holiday camps and friendly matches between football teams. In 1979 there was a friendship festival for the USSR and the GDR youth.

Due to Dr Langer's initiative, the official conclusion of the town twinning between Karl-Marx-Stadt and Volgograd finally occurred in 1988. For Chemnitz, the town twinning with Volgograd was a synonym for its friendship with Russia.

**World War II:
the experience of history**

Dr Langer then elaborated on his personal experiences with Russian soldiers at the end of World War II. He still vividly recalled the bombing of Chemnitz by American and British air raids on 5 and 6 March 1945. He would never forget how, as a child, he spent the night in the bomb shelter on the Kassberg. At the same time the child Yuri Starovatykh was evacuated from Stalingrad. For a long time, Langer said, he had lived in no man's land, which was occupied neither by Russian nor by American troops. When the Red Army finally arrived, the children saw it as the end of the war. There was bread and fruit again, and the children received small gifts.

3500 families with Russian roots

Eberhard Langer described how the founding of the Russian cultural society *Kolorit* came about. He had given a speech at the Soviet cemetery in Chemnitz to commemorate the end of the war. On that occasion, he recited a poem by *Heinrich Heine* in Russian, which had been translated by *Alexander Pushkin*. The fact that a German recited a German poem in Russian in a Russian cemetery touched so many of those present that they approached him with a request to help found a Russian cultural association. There are 3,500 families with Russian roots in Chemnitz, and many feel the need to cultivate the Russian heritage and to pass it on to their children and grandchildren.

Youngsters who love Russian people

He went on to say that the vibrant relationship between the twin cities in the days of the GDR is now almost completely asleep. This is an expression of the current political situation. So today it is all the more important to look for ways to maintain peace and to make friends through town twinning. Young individuals who love the Russian people would have to be found. And it would be the task of the older generation to pass on their experiences to the younger generation.

Common history builds bridges

Yuri Starovatykh, who was instrumental in the reconstruction of Stalingrad, began his speech by emphasising the similarities between the two cities of Chemnitz and Volgograd. Both cities were almost completely destroyed in World War II;

both cities were rebuilt and are becoming ever more beautiful, both cities are flourishing. In Chemnitz, only one of 64 schools remained after the war. At that time the newspapers wrote: "Saxon Manchester has fallen." On 2 February 1943, the Battle of Stalingrad came to an end: not one house remained standing. In April 1943, diplomats from 40 countries came and looked at the ruins. In their estimation, the city could never be rebuilt. At that time, they recommended fencing the city and leaving it as a memorial to future generations. However, the Stalingrad population decided differently and decided to rebuild the city. Civil engineer and honorary architect of Russia Yuri Starovatykh was visibly moved when he told the audience proudly that 45 years after the battle of Stalingrad, Volgograd already had a million inhabitants. He had personally handed over the apartment key to the 1,000,000th inhabitant of the city of Volgograd in 1987.

**Beginning of the international
town twinning movement**

Stalingrad founded the first city partnership worldwide, with the English town of Coventry, in 1944. In that year, women from Coventry, two-thirds of whose city had been destroyed, raised money and sent it to Stalingrad. In addition, a tablecloth with the embroidered names of 830 women was presented, on which the message could be read, "A little help is better than great pity." On 10 June 1944 the partnership agreement between Stalingrad and Coventry was then completed.

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On the importance of town twinning

ef. The idea to contribute to international understanding and peace through town twinning dates back to the years immediately after the end of World War II. Among others, it were three Swiss professors and authors, whose initiatives then led to the establishment of the *Internationale Bürgermeisterunion für deutsch-französische Verständigung (IBU)* (International Mayor's Union for Franco-German Understanding and International Cooperation). It was the objective of *Hans Zbinden, Eugen Wyler* and *Adolf Gasser* to strengthen the commune as the nucleus of democracy, in order to prevent another world war. That is how the first German-French town twinning between Montbéliard and Ludwigsburg arose in 1950, from the contacts of French and German mayors during the IBU conferences. In the following years, more and more cities in Germany established friendly relations with cities in other states, so as to create and

maintain international understanding from the bottom up.

Since then, many more town twinning projects have been arranged in many countries of the world – and also between German and Russian cities there are now about 100 examples. The oldest German-Russian twinning arrangement has been in existence between St Petersburg and Hamburg for 60 years now.

German-Russian relations are currently very tense. These tensions do not correspond to the will of the vast majority of the people of both countries. Town twinning is a way to counteract this. It is an important building block for the continuation of a German-Russian dialogue and can point out alternatives to confrontation at the level of civil society – from person to person. It offers the possibility of creating a broad base of equivalency, trust and mutual respect.

At the 14th German-Russian Town Twinning Conference in Krasnodar, June last year was the first time for two

high-ranking ministers to participate: Russian Foreign Minister *Sergey Lavrov* and his then German counterpart *Sigmar Gabriel*. With their visit, German-Russian town twinning was raised to a political level. Among other things, their joint statement says, "We want to raise public awareness of these partnerships and use the momentum they generate to promote further partnerships between Germans and Russians, thus fostering greater trust. We firmly believe that municipal and regional partnerships are an indispensable and fundamental component of Russia and Germany's bilateral cooperation. [...] We are united by a common desire to increase the number and intensity of direct contacts between Russians and Germans through numerous municipal and regional partnerships, thereby strengthening dialogue and understanding between our societies. Visible signs of cooperation are important especially in politically difficult times."

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It was the beginning of the international town twinning movement, said Yuri Starovatykh, who is honorary citizen of Volgograd and Hiroshima. Today Volgograd has 22 city partnerships worldwide.

Across all ideologies: relationships from person to person

It was, he went on, a great pleasure and honour to enter into a partnership of this kind with Karl-Marx-Stadt. After all, 1988 was only the year when the contract was signed, but there had been manifold relationships, friendships and projects, youth exchanges, pioneer camps, and economic exchanges since the seventies. And a few months after the signing of this contract, after four attempts, Yuri Starovatykh succeeded in winning Cologne as a twin city. There are also lively contacts with this city. He also mentioned the *Partnerschaftsverein Köln-Wolgograd* (Cologne-Volgograd partnership association), which does a very good job at the local level. He had to work hard to establish the partner relationship with Cleveland (US), where 100,000 Ukrainians lived just after the end of the Soviet Union. Now, for reasons of age, he would have to pass on the work to good hands, in order to intensify the town partnerships. They should be run more actively again and filled with new content – and that is achievable, we can do that, said Starovatykh.

These examples show that town twinning is not about ideological harmony, but about relationships and friendships from person to person, across all ideologies.

"Do you want something like what happened then to happen again?"

To the great applause of his audience, Yuri Starovatykh thanked the participants of the event for their coming, especially in this turbulent time with its questionable developments on an international level. "We have great respect for the Germans, great respect. After the war, the writer *Simonov* said that he had no hatred towards the Germans. But we cannot understand why the members of the German and the European Parliament agree to the sanctions. Do you want us to die or something like what happened then to happen again?"

"... a chance to counteract the madness"

Dr Jochen Mette, deputy chairman of the German-Russian Cultural Centre *Kolorit*, emphasised the importance of direct human relations between Germans and Russians. He had himself visited St Petersburg's Piskaryovskoye Memori-



Town twinning event Chemnitz-Volgograd at the Leipzig Book Fair with Dr Jochen Mette, Sergey Lapshinov, Juri Starovatykh, Dr Eberhard Langer. (picture cc)

al Cemetery as a student. It had been an indelible experience for him to see the graves of hundreds of thousands of victims of the Leningrad blockade. This is still the motivation for him today to pass on all his experiences with Russia to the younger generation. Only through direct contact, when people talk to each other and exchange views, looking each other in the eye, understanding and friendship can grow. Russians are people like us, with whom we can and want to live together, and he would strive to carry this idea forward. This important work should be in young active and strong hands. Then there would be the chance of counteracting the oncoming anti-Russian climate, this madness.

Many projects successfully completed

Sergey Lapshinov, who is in charge of 45 town twinning arrangements in his office, praised "the child that both these senior mayors gave birth to and raised". Many projects were carried out successfully as part of the city partnership between Chemnitz and Volgograd: In the area of sport, the swimmers, the boxers and the footballers met. In the cultural field, folklore groups visited each other. The occasion of the 20th anniversary of the partnership in 2008 was festively celebrated both in Chemnitz and in Volgograd. There were mutual visits. A jazz band from Volgograd visited Chemnitz, and in 2004, a year specially dedicated to German-Russian exchange, *Egon Bahr* and other high representatives travelled by ship from Moscow to Volgograd.

Student exchanges with a high school in Chemnitz had taken place since 2014. If there were more funds available, these

exchanges could take place every year. A task group of members of the municipalities of Chemnitz, Dusseldorf and Volgograd was founded after the turnaround. Officials from the municipalities of the participating cities met at the end of the nineties. Mr Lapshinov hopes that soon, the representatives of the cities will come up with a lot of ideas to keep up their exchange and to realise many projects.

Eberhard Langer added that in recent days he had visited numerous companies in Chemnitz and had campaigned for an expansion of contacts with Russia. These efforts were successful.

How to improve relations between Russia and Germany?

In the ensuing discussion, there were many suggestions on how to improve relations between Russia and Germany. One participant described her experiences with adolescents who worked on a military cemetery as part of a programme initiated by the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (German War Graves Commission). She held personal relationship between the people to be an antidote to the anti-Russian smear campaign. By staying in the host country, the young people were motivated to also engage more intensively with history. The present event she also held to be an example of a successful cooperation between West and East Germans. She emphasised how important it was for people in East and West to get really close to each other after the reunification, and how important an honest analysis of GDR history would be.

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Harassment around the Electricity Agreement Switzerland – EU

by Dr.-Ing. Ernst Pauli

An integrated European electricity grid has existed for more than 50 years. The Star of Laufenburg, which connected the European high-voltage grids for the first time, is an example of European cooperation, to which 24 nations have joined over time. At that time, each country could produce its own electricity, but in the event of a power plant outage, it wanted to be able to draw on electricity from a neighbouring country. So there has already been European-wide cooperation and, since 1975, a steadily increasing volume of electricity trading starting from small amounts, long before an Electricity Agreement with the EU was under discussion. Still a new Electricity Agreement was fully negotiated in 2014, when the EU stopped the negotiations for political reasons and made the institutional framework agreement a mandatory prerequisite for further negotiations and the conclusion of the Electricity Agreement. However, cooperation

in the area of electricity supply and also electricity trading currently works without an Electricity Agreement.

For decades, European electricity trading and supply to Switzerland was coordinated through voluntary cooperation within the UCTE (Union for the Coordination of the Transmission of Electricity), legally protected by the 1972 Free Trade Agreement and the GATT Customs and Trade Agreement to which Switzerland is a party. The Electricity Agreement as it is now planned, described by many Swiss politicians as “mandatory”, doesn’t contribute to the perfectly functioning electricity trade. It is like “bringing coal to Newcastle”. However, it is meant to serve as a means for Switzerland to ultimately bring its sovereignty to Brussels. For Swiss politicians, there seems to be no alternative but to completely open up the Swiss electricity market via the Electricity Agreement in an important area

of public service, both for large consumers, as has already happened, and for private households, who can then obtain their electricity from private providers at home and abroad.

Switzerland will need more electricity imports

Due to the 2050 energy strategy, more and more electricity imports into Switzerland will become necessary. This is referred to as the “electricity gap”, which is said to arise around 2020. However, by 2015 Switzerland was only in a position to produce significant electricity surpluses in three summer months and to hardly achieve a reasonable balance of electricity imports and exports over the year. The situation will worsen if the Swiss nuclear power plants are shut down as planned and the expansion of new renewable en-

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Switzerland and Russia connected by a long-lasting friendship

A Swiss participant stated that the history of town twinning as an important and central component of international understanding was still insufficiently recollected and reappraised. Town twinning as a permanent peace movement is an invaluable contribution to international understanding. As a Swiss, he was proud that relations between Switzerland and Russia have not been broken off, even in the current situation. Switzerland and Russia have a long friendship. The smear campaign should not be allowed to drive a wedge between the two friendly nations. This might be prevented by people arranging their relationships personally.

“Here we need something like that, too”

A participant of the *Stiftung West-Östliche Begegnungen* (Foundation West-Eastern Encounters) suggested that the two founders of the Chemnitz-Volgograd partnership go to schools as witnesses. She claimed that historical education was lacking, and the accounts of contemporary witnesses would be of enormous importance. On 6 May, the anniversary of the signing of the town twinning agreement, the existing contract should be confirmed in the town hall of Chemnitz. Twinning conferences like the one in Krasnodar in 2017 should be held again increasingly.

Even from the German side unexpectedly many participants had signed on there. She brought to mind that the German-Russian Year of Local and Regional Partnerships had been proclaimed for the year 2017/18 (see *Current Concerns* No 17/18 of 25 July 2017). After the German reunification, many initiatives had collapsed and should now be revived.

Another participant from southern Germany said that when the mayor of his village saw the note about the events about German-Russian town twinning, he spontaneously said: “We need something like that here, too!”

A mayor, who had come to the event from Lusatia, congratulated the organisers of the successful event and congratulated the city of Chemnitz and the city of Volgograd on the anniversary of their twinning. Every year, her municipality offers recreational holiday breaks to the children of Chernobyl, with growing participation of its citizens.

But she had not yet got over that day’s news, that the German Chancellor had sided with *Theresa May* in the *Skripal* affair. *Merkel* had spelled it out so very sharply and had condemned the Russian President *Putin* without paying any attention to the principle of presumption of innocence.

We are experiencing a historical moment

One of the participants said, visibly moved, that those present were experiencing a historic moment. The historical images presented at the event were ex-

Kolorit e.V.

ef. Around 3,500 families with Russian roots live in Chemnitz. The Kolorit e.V. was founded in 2006 on the initiative of Russian-speaking emigrants from Russia. Kolorit is a cultural organisation, which also operates in the social sphere. It strives to cultivate both Russian culture and tradition, offers integration opportunities to Russian-speaking immigrants, introduces them to the culture and life in Chemnitz and gives them social support.

tremely significant and had to be further thought through. It was shameful that the politicians who represent our democracy are unable or unwilling to adequately appreciate German-Russian history, and turn away from it instead. The speaker was very thankful to the people who consistently work for a good partnership with Russia with such extraordinary strength of will.

In the summary of the event, the concrete results achieved by the two delegations from Volgograd and Chemnitz were also appreciated. This kind of work for partnership relations with Russia can be done everywhere. Often, suggestions for such a partnership come from individual citizens. Often these are people who already have a personal relationship with people in the other country. Other people join in, and they can all walk the path together. Anyone can make this important contribution.

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ergies continues as slowly as today. The political manoeuvring, the current uncertainty has led to a situation that not even the trump card of the Swiss electricity generation, the hydropower, is being rapidly expanded. Federal Councillor *Doris Leuthard*, head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, does not see this a problem. She wants to secure Switzerland's power-supply with electricity from abroad. Logically, the Electricity Agreement is "mandatory" for her. However, in situations of widespread electricity shortages, each country will use up its own power with priority, and electricity imports from abroad will then no longer be ensured. The abundant capacity available in Germany today will be significantly reduced with the planned shutdown of the last nuclear power plants and of existing coal-fired power plants. Switzerland's now planned "strategic reserve capacity" will also only be a drop in the ocean in an prolonged shortage period, especially towards the end of winter, when the water reservoirs are empty, and will not even suffice for short-term supply.



Small power station on the river of Thur. In a liberalised EU-power market there would be definitely no place for the over 600 independent small and middle-sized electric power companies owned by the communities and the cantons. (picture mt)

The Electricity Agreement with the EU is intended to regulate all requirements for an open market in Switzerland. It had already been practically completed by 2014.

against its EU Commission colleagues, who apparently pursue politically far reaching plans, namely to bring Switzerland very close to full EU membership by means of the Institutional Framework Agreement and to realise an open market on their terms.

Contrary to popular opinion, Switzerland with its pumped storage plants and reservoirs is not even really interesting for the EU as a reserve electricity supplier. Switzerland's storage capacities are rather small in view of the huge quantities of volatile wind and solar power that might have to be substituted in the EU. It's not about the power anymore. It is about economic liberalisation and the institutional framework agreement.

Electricity Agreement and the EU's third Internal Market Package

The content of the Electricity Agreement, as it was probably negotiated, is not public. However, it can be expected to adopt the objectives listed in the EU's Third Internal Market Package. These are ambitious environmental targets to be achieved by 2020, namely a 20% share of renewable energies, a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions (1990 basis) and a 20% reduction in energy con-

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"The idea of self-sufficiency and public service has no place in the numerous studies and expert opinions. It seems to have been abandoned by the Federal Council."

Harassment around the Electricity Agreement Switzerland – EU

The planned market opening gives the opportunity for more turnover and profit, above all to the large and also foreign companies. It endangers the existence of Switzerland's electricity supply system, which has grown over decades having more than 600 utilities at municipal and cantonal level. It is thus intended to ensure the supply of electricity to a Switzerland that can no longer fully rely on its own electricity production. This also means that potential foreign suppliers can supply electricity to the end customer in Switzerland, can participate in water concessions, offer in all Swiss projects and, for example, can buy Swiss power plants. In preparation for the required free market and the free choice of the utility company, the Swiss electricity grids have already been transferred to an independent grid company "Swissgrid" in anticipatory obedience. An electricity supply company may no longer have its own supply grid, as it was the case in the past. Access to a private customer or a major customer by other companies, including foreign companies, must not be hindered or prevented.

In this situation, after the vote on the mass immigration initiative, which did not go according to Brussels' taste, Brussels introduced the coupling of the Electricity Agreement to an institutional framework agreement as a purely new politically motivated demand, and thus the Electricity Agreement was put on hold at that time. The EU negotiator and EU Commissioner *Miguel Arias Cañete*, apparently satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations, tried his best and proposed a provisional agreement in 2015 on the basis of the fully negotiated Electricity Agreement with Switzerland's immediate participation in Europe-wide electricity trading, even without prior clarification of institutional issues, i.e. without the framework agreement. However, he was not able to assert himself

"Ultimately, in addition to the desired open market, the electricity agreement is a means to force Switzerland closer to the EU by linking it to the institutional framework agreement and to increase the pressure on Switzerland to conclude it. But the Electricity Agreement is definitely not needed for Switzerland's electricity supply and electricity trading."

A voice of humanity

Farewell to SRF foreign correspondent Iren Meier



Iren Meier
(picture ma)

mw. After 37 years as a Swiss radio journalist, Iren Meier takes leave of her professional life. Reason enough to appreciate this impressive personali-

ty. Over the long years of wars and conflicts in Yugoslavia and the Middle East, many of us listeners have appreciated her contributions, reports and discussions particularly because they were not coloured by preconceived attitudes and judgments about the states and ethnic groups involved but were supported by personal compassion and journalistic diligence. From the wars in Croatia and Bosnia in the early 1990s to the recent conflicts in the Middle East, Iren Meier not only reported on events but also tried to bring us closer to the lives and everyday life of people in other countries and cultures. She gave a voice to people who lost their families, their homeland and their belongings in the war. Her personal dismay was expressed by the horrors and injustice of wars, and most importantly, she passed on her conviction that wars are man-made. Iren Meier spoke to us fellow human beings and as an exemplary journalist. We will miss her voice on Swiss radio.

“I think, it is an inner emotional security. Over time I realised: Wherever you go, all over the world, all want the same: a normal, worthy life, work, a house, a family, liberty – this is an enormous affiliation to each other. I always have felt this: this is a world where you care about each other and if you feel like this you are actually at home.”

In the “Tagesgespräch” of 29 March 2018, Iren Meier looked back on her time as foreign correspondent. We are presenting excerpts of this conversation.

Barbara Peter, SRF: Iren Meier, you went to Prague as a young journalist for your first assignment abroad. [...] The real question would have been how Eastern Europe would have developed after the political change. And suddenly overnight you become a war correspondent [in the Yugoslavia conflict, mw.]. Can you learn that anyway?

Iren Meier: I wouldn't call myself a war journalist today. We never went to the front, I only wore a splinter jacket we had borrowed from the ICRC once in all these years. We tried to observe and mediate the war, but from a relatively secure position, and above all our task was to report on what the war does to the people it affects.

“Try to see what is, not what you think you see or have heard.”

And yet a jump in at the deep end. If you compare it to working in the studio, you probably cannot estimate in advance how you will deal with this situation.

No, but it was good, there was no time to think, should I go out there again? I was overwhelmed, overburdened, but at the same time it was quite clear: I am staying there. As a young journalist, I had to find my way around somehow. One tries to stick to something, to patterns and opinions, to what one has read or heard, what others say. But development begins when you realise that things may not be the way you see them. I really thought then, I know it, I know what is right and wrong. [...]

So you want to form your own opinion and represent it, even to the editorial staff in Switzerland?

No, I don't mean that at all, not an opinion of my own. Just walk with your eyes open and try to see what really is and not what you think you see or hear. To perceive what is, in all facets, in all blurriness: one says this, the other that. [...] And at the same time take an attitude of not serving something to the listeners – make your own picture – but letting it shine through again and again: It's not all that clear, we

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sumption (1990 basis). These targets will probably be revised upwards again for Switzerland due to its good starting position. Fully open markets will also be included as a major and important objective. As already mentioned, the unbundling of ownership of electricity production and grids is already anticipated in Switzerland. The State Aid Act excludes certain subsidies and tax privileges, which must also be interpreted as aiming for privatised utilities which *must* no longer be owned by the municipalities or cantons. All activities in the field of electricity supply will have to be put out to international tender. In return, Switzerland will be able to sit at the table in all European regulatory bodies on the subject of electricity and at least find out what is planned in detail. Access to European regulatory bodies is still partially denied today. There are no more advantages for Switzerland.

The Federal Council is now pursuing an open market

The Federal Council has been supported by a large number of consultancies in these matters. These are companies whose profile and history directly show the proximity to market liberal ideas (*Frontier Economics*), which from a purely economic point of view see the open market positively (*Polynomics*) or companies under clear American influence (*Booz Allen Hamilton*). There is a voice lacking that supports good Swiss policy and supports the interests of national utilities in Switzerland today, to keep them as granularly structure as possible. All consultants are pursuing the idea of a free market, other solidary, cooperative or communally organised forms are not taken into account. Nowhere is it mentioned that the supply contracts and capacity reservations with French nuclear power plants, which will soon expire, will no longer be possible in the liberalised market, and thus a significant pillar of to-

day's Swiss electricity supply will be lost. The idea of self-sufficiency and public service has no place in the numerous studies and expert opinions. It seems to have been abandoned by the Federal Council.

What is the Electricity Agreement?

Today, there is a well-functioning electricity trading, even with an office of the Swiss branch of the European electricity exchange EPEX in Berne. Switzerland has long been a transit country for large quantities of electricity to Italy. The links with the neighbouring EU-countries Germany, Austria and France work perfectly. Ultimately, in addition to the desired open market, the Electricity Agreement is a means to force Switzerland closer to the EU by linking it to the institutional framework agreement and to increase the pressure on Switzerland to conclude it. But the Electricity Agreement is definitely not needed for Switzerland's electricity supply and electricity trading. •

"A voice of humanity"

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don't know for sure. It is very easy to classify and assess, but it is not about getting an opinion across. At the last two stations I have been, in Iran and Turkey, I have noticed: I have gone to these countries like new. On my first trip to Turkey I thought: I will never understand this country! It is so highly complex: its history, the ethnic groups. Or Iran, it's a separate planet. But if you haven't been there for a long time, it becomes exciting, you know and then you declare: This is an excerpt I see.

As a journalist, you have to have an attitude, but above all a compass

I see an excerpt, it may not be the whole truth – is that compatible with journalism?

I think this is very important, especially in a conflict or war, because it is simply not possible to keep an overview. You are always restricted somewhere, you are on one side, with one party. That has to be declared. And on controversial topics, where many people have an opinion and believe they are right, it seems very, very important to me as a journalist that you have an attitude, but above all a compass.

So draw a red line for yourself?

I would just call that compass: I know on which basis I am here, I am a Swiss journalist, I have certain values, I grew up as a journalist in this public medium. Palestine/Israel is a good example. That's where I always go with the attitude: There is international law, there are human rights, there are the Geneva Conventions. And according to these, Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are illegal. Full stop. That's a compass, for example.

However, there has also been criticism about your compass, about reporting from this point of view.

Yes, but that's supposed to be the case. I declare that's my base, and that's how I work.

"You try to be human and at the same time to verify the story you're told as well as you can"

How can one, for example, if one accompanies refugees, keep the distance and still remain human?

I can't tell you that – I think you're the person you are in every situation, whether you're a journalist or something else, and you react with your possibilities and abilities, but you're already trying to be that person and at the same time to verify the story you're told as well as you can. Today, when so much in journalism is vir-

tual, when so much is called information that is not information, it is so important to talk about experience. A correspondent is someone who is outside and experiences things, experiences them with his senses, with his mind, with everything. I think the discussion about this is very, very important. [...]

"War doesn't break out – it's man-made"

What I always was impressed about in all your coverage, about all misery: How could you beware your humanity?

Very easy, because I think, misery and war are not fate. This doesn't come from anywhere, this is politics, this is man-made, there are power interests, economic interests in these countries, in international politics. And this means, there you can't and must not give up, this is a reason for resistance. [...]

If we speak about war we for example say – and language is something incredibly important – "a war breaks out". War doesn't break out – it's man-made. I was in Beirut when the war between Lebanon and Israel ended. Thursday or Friday they negotiated a cease-fire and said, Monday morning at eight o'clock it will be put into force. In the night from Sunday to Monday – I never had witnessed something like that before – only bombs, only bombs, cluster bombs all over South Lebanon and dead on eight o'clock in the morning – deathly silence, dead on eight o'clock. This is a man-made scandal, this is not tragic, not a tragedy, but we make this. I have thought about this a lot and spoken with other people how important it is how we name things.

The warfare has changed in the last 20, 30 years. Has war journalism to change, too?

It has changed very much. Journalists have become part of war.

The «embedded journalists» ...

Yes, one nearly can't distinguish them from militias sometimes, they are simply still tagged – or sometimes even not, because this is dangerous, too. They have become aims of the belligerent parties. And war as a whole has become something completely normal, a means of politics, one isn't scared anymore. There are more and more wars. The diplomacy which should be first choice in warfare hardly exists any more. The last great diplomatic act was the nuclear agreement between the West and Iran. And this was so difficult to achieve, but they achieved it.

How could you deal with being our voice from the Balkans and later from the Middle East and that this at the same time

comes together with expectations here in Switzerland?

I got a lot of signals from auditors, critical ones but also a lot of appreciation and I recognised that all themes were of great interest in Switzerland, for example the Balkans but also the Middle East. With this appreciation responsibility grew, this strengthens oneself, it's a motivation and one knows, one is doing a work which really makes sense and gets echo.

[...] Once I wanted to make a contribution about everyday life in Syria long before the war. One morning I was in a house in Damascus where the women met once a week. For me it was very fascinating how they live, which problems they have. But my colleagues found this was too banal. I don't understand this until today and think, it is wrong. They said: This is no "story". But later Syria became a "story", but this is the story of war.

"All over the world people want the same: a normal, worthy life, a job, a house, a family, liberty"

Iren Meier, at the end I want to talk with you about terms as "at-home", "home-land".

In April 2004 I came to Beirut and I was really all on my own, I didn't know anybody there. I came to a dwelling I had rented, to a quarter where I didn't know anybody, and two or three days later I knew, here it is good, here I am. It is perhaps an inner emotional security; I realised the people in the quarter took notice of me, they look who is it. Many said: Who are you? Stay as long as possible. This is something you do not hear very often in other contexts. Sometimes they rang at my door: Do you need anything? There I understood: This is "at-home". And it was like this in all stages, even on the road, I think, it is an inner emotional security. Over time I realised: Wherever you go, all over the world, all want the same: a normal, worthy life, a job, a house, a family, liberty – this is an enormous affiliation to each other. I always have felt this: This is a world where you care about each other and if you feel like this you are actually at home.

You have time after time come back to Switzerland after your stays abroad. What was this "coming home" like?

I always was closely in touch with Switzerland and the people here and I never lost that, I never came back from "outland", certainly also because of my job. I also never had the feeling: Ui, what do they have for banal problems here – this appears arrogant to me. These are really different worlds and we live in one that is

The Skripal Incident – Another Anti-Russian Provocation

by Christopher Black*



Christopher Black
(picture ma)

cc. The following text was published on 9 March 2018, just a few days after the beginning of the “Skripal case” and before the subsequent escalation – which is already predicted. It makes clear how questionable the previous official version was and is and which questions arise that are not addressed by our governments.

The British government is talking war with Russia over a mysterious incident that is claimed to have taken place on Sunday March 4, just a few kilometres from the secrecy shrouded British biological

* Christopher Black is an international criminal lawyer based in Toronto. He is known for a number of high-profile war crimes cases, for example as a criminal lawyer in the trial of Rwandan Genocide and the former Yugoslavia. He recently published his novel “Beneath the Clouds”. He writes essays on international law, politics and world events, especially for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.

“I think we can expect that they will choose the right dramatic moment to name something and state that only Russian labs can make it. That is their modus operandi. They certainly do not want to state that VX was involved since VX was developed in 1952 at Porton Down near the sight of the incident; for that would lead to necessary investigations into security at that facility and whether personnel there were involved. However, despite the fact that Porton Down is in the business of manufacturing chemical warfare agents including nerve agents and that logic would dictate that the Porton Down authorities would be barred from being investigators into a case in which they could be involved the British government immediately assigned Porton Down to identify the substance that might have been used.”

and chemical warfare research and development facility at Porton Down in Wiltshire. I say claimed since we have very little information confirming what exactly took place outside of government statements and we have seen no photographs of the alleged victims in their hospital beds to convince us that the alleged victims did fall ill and are being treated. However, let us assume that the incident as described did take place.

No known threat from Russia

The mystery consists in the fact that the victims, former Russian colonel of military intelligence, *Sergei Skripal*, and his daughter, were not under any known threat from Russia. Skripal was charged and convicted in Russia in 2006 of being an asset of the British Secret Intelligence

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“A voice of humanity”

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very, very small with a lot of privileges, but the big world is different.

But I have always met people in Switzerland who are very committed and deal with the world very much. I have never felt that people in Switzerland isolate themselves.

“One is always close to all”

Do you think different today about terms like homeland, origin, belongingness?

I have realised how incredibly decisive it is where you are born. It is by chance if you are born in Switzerland, in Kosovo, in Syria and in which time you are born. Out of this really grows a responsibility. For example, in Kosovo I have a girlfriend who nearly is the same age than I and we always talked about: If you were born there, where I...it would be another life. Fate.

An issue which also runs through your life is farewell. Was it difficult for you to say goodbye to people you had developed love for/embosomed/grown fond of?

I have exercised many farewells in my life, I wandered about a lot. To leave Beirut was difficult for me, there I felt very,

very well /comfortable. This was the decisive/crucial farewell, the end of the life as correspondent, of the life abroad. But I have made the experience: The physical presence is gone and the everyday life is different, but what is really important doesn't go away at all. From all this stages I have kept friendships which are still very lively. The longing for places – I think, it is not so crucial where one is, one is always close to all.

This brings us nearly to the end, Iren Meier. Once again the question from the beginning. What remains?

It remains for me a feeling of a great gratitude/thankfulness for the richness I was allowed to live out/experience/undergo. And there were partly difficult situations where the experience, the feeling (??) is the most intensive. When I look back I remember a lot of people and I very often think of people I have met what they gave to me, their trust/confidence. I am really incredibly happy that I was allowed to do this job.

Iren Meier, thank you for this talk, for your job and all the best.

Source: SRF 1 “Tagesgespräch”, 29 March 2018, moderation Barbara Peter

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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"The Skripal Incident ..."

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Service, MI6, and handing over secret information to the British. He was jailed, but in a spy swap in 2010 was pardoned and allowed to leave Russia for Vienna, then Britain, where he has been living ever since. Why he was pardoned is difficult to determine, unless it was necessary legally to effect the swap with the British. In any event the Russians had washed their hands of him but it seems the British had other uses for him, as their expendable man for a provocation against Russia.

The facts as the British government states them are that Skripal and his daughter, visiting from Russia, met for lunch in Salisbury, the town outside of which Porton Down is located. The purpose of the daughter's visit is not known. According to ever changing media accounts witnesses in a restaurant reported that Skripal appeared to be agitated and angry and left in that state with his daughter following. Agitated and angry about what we do not know.

Guilt was immediately pushed on Russia

Half an hour later it is said that the two of them were found slumped over on a public bench. Some early media accounts state that it was thought they had taken too much *fentanyl* and were vomiting and that their illness may have been self-induced. But very quickly the British government claimed that they had been poisoned by some chemical or nerve agent and immediately cast the blame on Russia though the investigation had just begun. The incident was immediately taken out of the hands of the local police and handed over to the Counter-Terrorism Police, formerly known as *Special Branch*, though the government refused to call it a terrorist incident. A meeting of the British government high-level emergency committee, *Cobra*, was called. Why this was done for what appears to be an assault or attempted murder or a self-induced accident is a good question. But the answer lies in the immediate propaganda campaign mounted in the British press against Russia.

Contradictory stories

On Thursday the 8th of March the British government claimed that they had identified a "nerve agent" as the substance used. Yet the *BBC* quotes on the same day a woman physician who attended at the scene saying that she found Mrs. Skripal slumped unconscious on a bench vomiting and fitting. She had lost control of her bodily functions. The physician, who asked not to be named, told the *BBC* she moved the daughter into the recovery position and opened her airways as others tended to her father. The doctor stated

that she treated her for almost 30 minutes, saying there was no sign of any chemical agent on her face or body and that though she had been worried she would be affected by a nerve agent so far she "feels fine."

Yet, the British media published on Thursday a photograph of a police officer who they say attended the scene and who they claim was made ill and placed in intensive care but is now stable and recovering. The two stories do not add up, as it would seem the doctor was in closer physical contact with the two victims than the police officer yet the doctor has suffered no symptoms at all.

"I don't think that Mr Skripal would be targeted"

The "Guardian" quoted *Andrei Lugovoi*, another former Russian agent, accused of *Litvinenko's* murder by the British as stating that Skripal had been pardoned in Russia so no one from there is after him. "I don't rule out that this is another provocation by British. Whatever happens on British territory, they start yelling: 'He was killed, he was hung, he was poisoned!' and that Russia is to blame for everything. This is to their advantage." *Igor Sutyagin*, yet another Russian traitor flown to Russia in 2010 in an exchange of spies-also said, "I don't think that Mr Skripal would be targeted, because he was pardoned."

To add to the mystery the British government refuses to name the alleged nerve agent. To create more drama the British Home Secretary, *Amber Rudd*, stated that it was not Sarin or VX but something "very rare." I think we can expect that they will choose the right dramatic moment to name something and state that only Russian labs can make it. That is their modus operandi. They certainly do not want to state that VX was involved since VX was developed in 1952 at Porton Down near the sight of the incident; for that would lead to necessary investigations into security at that facility and whether personnel there were involved. However, despite the fact that Porton Down is in the business of manufacturing chemical warfare agents including nerve agents and that logic would dictate that the Porton Down authorities would be barred from being investigators into a case in which they could be involved the British government immediately assigned Porton Down to identify the substance that might have been used.

"The mass media acted in lock step"

That the Russians may be correct that this incident is another NATO arranged provocation must be seriously considered. Despite the fact there is no evidence whatsoever that Russia had anything to do with this incident, the British government was quick to label Russia as the villain of the

piece and the mass media dutifully acted in lock step and put out the word. *Boris Johnson* called Russia a "malign and disruptive force" and made threats about pulling the UK out of the World Cup to be held in Russia this year. The attempts by the NATO alliance to throw Russia out of the Olympics on trumped up doping charges were largely successful and now we see another attempt to disrupt a sports event that is important to world football fans and to Russia. Johnson added that Britain would act "robustly" of Moscow is found to be involved.

The Russian embassy in London stated the allegations of Russian involvement are untrue and that the "script of yet another anti-Russian campaign has already been written." It seems so and the script has some pages to run yet. One has to wonder what the role of the British intelligence services is in this for the *BBC* also reports that Skripal still kept the company of British intelligence agents. So one has to ask, for what reason? What was his continuing role as an asset of MI6? What was their role on that day?

Well-known pattern of British accusation

But that line of inquiry will not be followed. All the British media are linking this incident to the case of Alexander Litvinenko, another Russian who was supposedly poisoned with radioactive tea. Evidence that cronies of his were involved were ignored in favour of the line that Russia was behind it though no evidence has ever been put forward to support that claim. They are also making the claim that this "very rare" substance must be from a state military stockpile, so the statements to come from the British government can be predicted.

This incident has echoes of the case of *Georgi Markov*, the Bulgarian dissident killed in London in 1978 by a ricin pellet injected into his leg by means of an umbrella it was said, though it was no doubt done with an air pistol. That murder was quickly blamed on the KGB and Bulgarian government agents but there is evidence that in fact the murder was arranged by MI6 as was the murder of media magnate *Robert Maxwell* in 1991, who had documents relating to the Markov murder in his possession, according sources such as *Richard Cottrell* in his book "Gladio" and accounts by former British intelligence agent *Gordon Logan*.

One is reminded of the death of David Kelly

The Skripal incident also brings to mind the death of Dr *David Kelly* in 2003 whose mysterious death in woods near

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Learning from history!

Germany needs to improve its relationship with Russia

by Karl Müller

“Genocide” during the 1999 NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia violating international law; “Fight against Terrorism” during the NATO aggression against Afghanistan since 2001; “weapons of mass destruction” during the aggression of a US-led “coalition of the willing” against Iraq in 2003 which was not covered in this manner by the Security Council; “genocide” during the NATO aggression against Libya in 2011; “Assad is slaughtering his own population” during the covert and open support for armed jihadists and the open war participation of NATO states in Syria since 2011, violating international law – the list of false claims presented to the world community is long. Wouldn’t it have been a good idea to face the claims regarding an alleged poison attack in

Great Britain with a great deal of suspicion?

Unfortunately, the ruling governments of numerous NATO and EU states have not acted on this advice. They have heeded the statement of the British government and most probably also of parts of the US administration, following unproven prejudgements. In the already tense situation in the relation of NATO and EU with Russia, this was a targeted escalation and the question what might be the purpose of this escalation must be answered.

Prudent German voices

Now that it is starting to turn out that the accusations against Russia are most likely unfounded, it is time to be reminded, that

not only many citizens are deeply worried in face of the situation but also important voices of politicians, active or retired, are speaking a different language than their governments. The following quotes reflect voices from Germany.

Some still active politicians from the ranks of the German SPD have criticised the decision of their members of government, especially of the new German Foreign Minister *Heiko Maas*.

Of special interest is the speech of the previous Foreign Minister *Sigmar Gabriel* on the occasion of the celebration of the “*Deutsch-Russisches Forum e.V.*” (German-Russian Forum) “25 years German-Russian Forum e.V.” on 15 March in the Berlin Hotel Adlon, a speech that was

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Wolfgang Kubicki: We need Russia

“You cannot jointly demand clarification whilst at the same time declaring that you know who the culprit is. That is a contradiction in itself. As you know I am a defense lawyer, and the principle of the presumption of innocence applies in Germany, as elsewhere. [...]”

I have no better information, but neither has Heiko Maas any better information. The fact is that the identified poison was produced in the Soviet Union, but is not held only by the Soviet Union or not only by Russia. As a matter of fact, as stated, the organisation responsible for identifying where the poison cocktail was mixed is still investigating. And it is also a fact that the foreign ministers have said they de-

mand clarification. Only: If the perpetrator is already known no-one needs clarification, because that is a contradiction in itself. I stay calm and cool and say: Let us wait another fortnight. Then we will have certainty. And once we have certainty, we can respond accordingly. [...]”

The problem with the implementation of the Minsk II agreement is that our Ukrainian dialogue partners are not prepared to fulfill their obligations. The Ukrainian parliament has for example refused to establish a federal structure in Ukraine, similar to Germany, so that the areas of eastern Ukraine would have a certain degree of self-government. [...]”

We need Russia within Europe, also in the form of a security partnership, which we agreed on with the Russians over 20 years ago.

And if we just stand facing each other and always pointing the finger at one another, saying you have to start, we will not get any further. My suggestion is for us to take a first step in the sanctions regime, such as sanctions in the agricultural sector, and wait and see how Russia reacts. If there is a reasonable response, then we can intensify the discussions; if there is no reasonable response, then we can stay with the sanction regime. But one has to start to get out of speechlessness.”

Source: www.deutschlandfunk.de from 22 March 2018

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his home, was officially attributed to “suicide.” He is thought by many to have been assassinated by the British secret services and CIA to keep him from revealing secrets about the war in Iraq. He worked at Porton Down as head of microbiology.

He in turn is connected to other scientists at Porton Down who have died under questionable circumstances, for instance, Dr *Richard Holmes*, whose body was found in the same woods as Dr Kelly, in 2012, two days after going for a walk, and one month after resigning from Porton Down, and to *Vladimir Pasechnik*’s death in November 2001, another Russian defector, who allegedly died of a stroke. His

death was not announced until a month later and by British intelligence. Dr. Kelly had been involved in his debriefing when he left Russia.

Who has what motives?

Sir *Edward Leigh*, a member of the Parliamentary Defence Committee, in the British Parliament stated, “the circumstantial evidence against Russia is very strong. Who else would have the motive and the means?” The answer to that of course is that the British government has the motive and the means. What would Russia benefit from harming a has-been like Skripal and causing all this fuss? None. What benefit does Britain have and NATO? The answer again is provided by Sir Richard who went on to state “The only way to preserve peace is through

strength,” carefully echoing *Trump*’s foreign policy. He continued, “and if Russia is behind this, this is a brazen act of war, of humiliating our country and defence is the first duty and spending 2% of the budget on defence is not enough.” There is the motive right there. To justify an increase on defence spending and to hit Russia yet again with propaganda warfare to justify NATO’s continuing aggression against Russia.

Russia has volunteered to cooperate in the “investigation” but to what end? The script is already written, the drama will unfold, the consequences will flow and they will lead not to peace and cooperation but to more hostility and war. •

Source: <https://journal-neo.org/2018/03/09/the-skripal-incident-another-anti-russian-provocation/>

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entirely ignored by the leading German media (see article below).

Matthias Platzeck: the spiral of confrontation is increasing the danger of war

No less admonitory was the statement of the former Minister-President of Germany and former head of SPD *Matthias Platzeck*, head of the German-Russian Forum. On 27 March he stated in a video interview with the German newspaper "Die Welt"¹:

"We are acting according to the motto: „First we shoot the suspect and then check the evidence.” According to Platzeck, the Federal Republic clearly violated the principles of a state of law. In addition, Germany, in face of the “many tragic occurrences” of its common history with Russia, had a particular obligation “to quickly return from escalation to objectiveness”.

He continued: “The confrontational spiral that we find ourselves in, is of no benefit to anyone, it just increases the danger of war.”

Günther Verheugen: this is a contamination of minds

Also the former EU Commissioner and SPD politician *Günther Verheugen* stated

in an interview with the German newspaper "Augsburger Allgemeine" dated 27 March:

"The argumentation in the Skripal case reminds me a bit of a passing of judgement according to the motto: ‘The act could not be attributed to the accused, but we think he would have been capable of doing it’. The attitude that Putin and the Russians are responsible for everything is a poisoning of the thought process which has to stop."

Vollmer: Merkel and her Foreign Minister are gambling away Germany's leeway

Many Germans also remember *Antje Vollmer*, the now retired Green Party politician and deputy Speaker of parliament. She spoke out on 30 March in an interview with the radio station *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*.

For *Antje Vollmer* the latest development is devastating. It is threatening to get out of control. She is addressing serious allegations mainly against the new Federal Government:

"Angela Merkel and also her Foreign Minister are gambling and losing the leeway which had been part of German politics from Brandt to Helmut Kohl. That is, to be clearly based in the West but to have a special interest in a good relationship with Russia."

She was appalled "that the new Foreign Minister Heiko Maas is apparently rejects this foreign political treasure of the SPD with a few sentences during his accession to office, when he stated that the reason why he chose politics was not the policy of détente, not Egon Bahr and Willy Brandt nor the Peace Movement but Auschwitz."

There will be no progress without understanding the other side. "And indeed, it seems like currently the Russians and the Russian population do not understand, why the country, which contributed crucially to the German reunification is now being pilloried and why the Germans, who carry a huge historical responsibility towards Russia due to two World Wars, do not understand that we have to interact as equals."

The German FDP is also not supporting the German government politics. *Wolfgang Kubicki*, deputy head of the party, criticised the German reaction in the Skripal case in an interview with *Deutschlandfunk* of 22 March adding that he knew that more than 60 per cent of the FDP adherents were supporting him in this issue.

Even before the interview with *Deutschlandfunk*, *Kubicki* stated in another interview that the common decla-

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Germany is the country in which the conflict would be carried out militarily

by *Sigmar Gabriel*, former German Foreign Minister

At this time we are experiencing with the murder of a former, this is in any case read what I had read, double agent in Great Britain one of the worst escalations which we had recently experienced. And naturally I understand each British citizen, who, with the indications that it concerns a chemical war weapon which was developed in the Soviet Union, and who primarily thinks of the questions: When was it developed and when it was produced in the former member states of the Soviet Union and if it is about a double agent, then there are possible indications that these weapons came from Russia [...].

However, I suggest to ourselves as Germans and Europeans not to get involved in a public discussion which is becoming ever more tense. In our legal system, there are relatively simple although effective methods to examine legal issues. These are: a person is innocent until a court has

proven otherwise. This assumption of innocence shall not push aside the scandal, in which the use of chemical war weapons in order to eliminate a human is naturally, and not the concern of the British to put this aspect aside. The way to achieve the solution can only be that the international committees receive the responsibility to examine this case and to provide us with the evidence which could be used for one or the other judgement of this murderous case.

We are members in a UN Organisation to control and to destroy chemical weapons. I believe, the smartest way can only be to mandate this institution for this examination and to give it all the information and after the examination to realise what political consequences we draw from this and not before this is done. This also prevents perhaps the worst poison in international relations as: the spiral of mutual suspicions and strange stories,

in which the oddest ideas are developed, why maybe the other side did this or that and go after all its own conspiracy theories. One feels reminded of a really bad James-Bond film.

Why am I pleading for such a reflected German reaction? Because we here know from our own history how quickly national narratives can be used against each other, because we know that in the end, civilians and the people pay the price for such developments in doubt with their health and their lives. And also because we know that confrontations always have a venue in the end. If it comes to the carrying out of confrontations, then it is the soil of the Federal Republic of Germany and of Europe. •

Source: Official speech on the occasion of the Celebration of the *German-Russian Forum e.V.* "25 Years German-Russian Forum e.V." on 15 March 2018 in the Berlin Hotel Adlon (extract).

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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ration of Germany, France, the USA and Great Britain regarding the neurotoxin attack in Britain was a mistake. He expressly criticised the German Foreign Minister's position and his statements, that he knew more. Kubicki also doubted the purpose and the justification of the sanctions against Russia (see box on page 10).

Frank Elbe: disturbing acts of political vigilante justice

The former German ambassador *Frank Elbe*, born in 1941, in war times, was senior clerk for the former Foreign Minister *Hans-Dietrich Genscher*, another important FDP politician. His statements were not published in the German key media, but *RT Deutsch* published his comment on 30 March 2018 (see article on page 11).

Former BND president Gerhard Schindler: who benefits from the process?

Finally, a reference to an interview of the *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk* MDR with the former president of the German foreign

secret service, (Bundesnachrichtendienst BND). The MDR reported on 27 March 2018:

"In the case of the supposed poison attack on the former double agent Sergey Skripal, the former president of the BND Gerhard Schindler does not see sufficient evidence 'to ascribe the responsibility' to Russia. Schindler told MDR Aktuell on Tuesday: 'Well, I think that the quality of evidence is not as high as could be deduced from the measures now decided.' [...] Schindler stated that we can possibly assume that the poisoning of Skripal could help the Russian secret service, e.g. by deterring potential perpetrators. 'But this is no benefit to Russian politics, for the Russian government as a whole. And therefore the question remains open, who benefits.'"

Willy Wimmer: it is a blessing that Russia is acting rationally and not escalating

On 27 March 2018 the MDR also interviewed *Willy Wimmer*, former German

Member of Parliament for the CDU, parliamentary undersecretary in the German Ministry of Defence and Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE. The corresponding MDR internet page reads:

"The CDU politicians spoke of an 'activity highly dangerous for peace', not for the first time started by London in the European Union or the NATO. When coming up with such accusations as Great Britain did in the Skripal case, the necessary evidence has to be disclosed. But nothing came from London. Instead the British government escalated all accusations against Moscow in NATO and EU. And it was appalling that half of the European Union including the Federal Government joined. In face of the statement from the new Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (SPD) who said that facts and evidence in the Skripal case pointed towards Russia, Wimmer stated: 'And if a youngster like Mr Maas comes and says that there was suf-

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Disturbing acts of political vigilante justice

by *Frank Elbe, former German Ambassador*

The poison attack of Salisbury is a horrible crime. Whoever is responsible for this infamous assassination deserves the contempt of the world community. The immediate clarification of the crime is required. There can be no consideration for the possible perpetrator. Where clarification is required, however, the Western world is being carried away to disturbing acts of political vigilante justice. It already imposes penalties on a suspected delinquent without even being able to be sure of his perpetration. All fingers point to Russia, partly to *Putin* personally. [...]

The passion with which the Western world expresses solidarity with Britain is already irrational. It covers up a lack of awareness. Worse still, it wants us to believe that coordination processes in the EU and NATO can take the place of evidence. This amounts to patronising the citizen. His right to form opinions on elementary, even existential developments of future security deserves more respect. He is entitled to plausible information. [...]

One of the few publicly known documents relied on by the British government to denounce Russia being responsible for the attack is the judgement of the Royal Court of Justice of 22 March 2018. The London judgment does not contain any indication of Russian perpetration as the British government intends to believe.

It is limited to the statement that the poison is a Novichok substance or a closely related one. This means that the poison has not been accurately identified. It is not said at all that the poison was produced in the Soviet Union.

In the 1980s, I was negotiator for the convention of the ban of chemical weapons at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament; I was also chairman of the Subcommittee on Verification. I cannot understand how the analysis of a neurotoxin necessarily leads to the perpetrator of an attack. [...]

There are three categories of deadly nerve gases: Sarin, VX and Novichok – the latter was developed in the seventies in the former Soviet Union. Sarin accidentally was discovered in 1939 by the German chemist *Schrader* during the research of a pesticide. The structural formulas of the toxins are widely known, even accessible on the Internet.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the inventories of Novichok have been disposed of by American chemical weapons experts at the request of the Uzbek government. It is noteworthy that Novichok was well known as a neurotoxin for a long time. It was subsequently further explored in Russia, the USA and England, but was not declared in the Chemical Weapons Convention. [...] As

a supertoxic-lethal chemical substance, Novichok has obviously gone on a long journey. [...]

Until clarification of further facts, political restraint in recriminations and penalties is required. This results from respect to our own value system, according to which the imposition of penalties without sufficient determination of guilt is inadmissible. From Article 26 (1) of the German Basic Law can be derived a directly applicable requirement for everyone to refrain from acts that are appropriate and intended to disturb the peaceful coexistence of nations. Unjustified suspicions are covered by this ban. The expulsion of intelligence personnel is not a violation of international law, but it has the character of an unfriendly act in this situation, which as a peace-disturbing act, according to Article 26 (1) of the Basic Law, would be unconstitutional.

The current situation is extremely dangerous because it contains the seed of a break in normal relationship with Russia and thus the collapse of the new European order created after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Some Western countries long for Russia's isolation. That can't be a German goal. •

Source: *RT Deutsch* from 30.3.2018 (excerpt)(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Switzerland does not expel Russian diplomats

rt. Switzerland does not expel the Russian ambassador. The pressure on the Federal Council to join the measures of the British government must have been huge. The "Aargauer Zeitung" of 30 March quotes a person close to the Federal Council: "The pressure, above all of the British, but also of the Americans is enormous." The Englishmen pushed Switzerland through diplomatic channels and indirectly via public statements to join the measures against Russia. Similar approaches towards Austria were also made known (see "Kleine Zeitung" of 6 April).

"At its meeting on Wednesday in St. Gallen, the Federal Council discussed and strongly condemns the Salisbury attack by means of a military-grade nerve agent of the Novichok class," said Ursula Eggenberger, Information Officer of the Federal Chancellery, after the meeting. "Once again Switzerland emphasises that all use of chemical weapons violates international law and is prohibited under all circumstances. The Federal Council urges a full investigation of the case." ("Aargauer Zeitung" of 30 March 2018)

The Federal Council states: "The investigation into the background of this crime

as well as the origin of the warfare agent by the British authorities in cooperation with the *Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)*, is of central importance. Those responsible must be held accountable."

Source: *Aargauer Zeitung*, 30 March 2018

* * *

Obviously, under the directive of the United Kingdom and the United States, some states have completely ignored the usual legal and international procedures and on grounds of unproven claims have relegated Russian ambassadors to their country. These measures must be considered premature and exaggerated.

But it is also clear that only very few countries worldwide have participated in these measures. Most countries expressed concern about the "poison attack" on the double agent *Skripal* and his daughter and emphasised to first wait for the official investigations. On 26 March the Swiss Federal Council also commented London in a similar way.

It is also clear that more than one third of the EU states have not expelled any Russian ambassador and emphasised to wait for the investigations and to keep the channels for negotiations open with Moscow.

Not without reason the Russian Foreign Minister ascertained that the propelled escalation of the relationship between the Russian Federation and Britain together with the United States, France and the Federal Republic of Germany had to be a long-planned action since such a massive diplomatic process usually could barely be noticeable at this speed. Hence, it has become known from government circles in different countries that the United Kingdom and the United States are exerting strong pressure to join the sharp measures against Russia.

The disappearances, ambiguities and cover-ups in the scientific research of the Skripal Case cast also no good light on the London government. Why not respond to the factual and clean international proposals of Moscow for scientific investigation or at least answer the official questions of the Russian government, when everything seems so clear?

The political damage caused by this escalating process is huge. The most valuable foundation of world peace, mutual trust, has been deliberately (!) massively disrupted. Why not involve the OSCE? The hope remains that the international community will repudiate against such practices in the future.

For small states and even more so for neutral ones, the situation between the power blocs is becoming increasingly difficult. It will take strength, courage and foresight to remain neutral under international law, despite the impending sanctioning measures by various "friends".

Bulgaria carries out no expulsions, either

Bulgarian Prime Minister *Boyko Borisov* stated that neither Russian diplomats nor technical personnel would be expelled from the country. "In practice, we have shown full solidarity with Great Britain. At the moment, as chairman of the EU Council, we believe that we should maintain a communication channel with Russia", Borisov said after the recent meeting of the country's Security Council. On Friday, a meeting of the Security Council of Bulgaria on the "Skripal case" had taken place. This council is headed by the Prime Minister. It also consists of members of the government, heads of the secret services and the deputy of the Bulgarian president. Borisov added that the ambassador of Bulgaria, Bojko Kotsev, who had been withdrawn for consultations last Tuesday, would stay on in Sofia for another week. •

Source: *Sputnik* from 30 March 2018

Military laboratory – no proof of Russian origin

According to its own reports, the UK Department of Defense research centre claims to have found no evidence that the nerve agent used in the attack on a Russian ex-double agent was manufactured in Russia.

"We have not identified its exact origin," Chief Executive *Gary Aitkenhead* of the government's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) told

Sky News on Tuesday, 3 April. However, the scientists were able to identify it as novichok, a military-grade nerve agent. They provided the scientific information to the government, who have then "used a number of other sources to piece together the conclusions that they have come to."

Source: *rtz-Reuters* from 3 April 2018

"Learning from history"

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ficient or interesting or what kind of evidence, I can only say: His predecessor Mr Gabriel would never have made such a statement.'

Asked if we were just watching the prelude for a new Cold War and how Russian diplomacy would react on the West's advances, Wimmer stated: 'Well, actually since the eastward expansion of NATO we are depending on a Russian president who is dealing with these

things rationally and not in an escalating manner. I do not want to give any recommendations from my point of view. But: if we didn't have Putin – with all the lust for war prevailing in the West, Europe would be a different place.'"

(Translation of all quotes in this article by *Current Concerns*)

¹ <https://www.welt.de/politik/video174931406/Plat-zeck-zur-Skripal-Affaere-Wir-erschienen-erst-den-Verdaechtigen-und-schauen-dann-nach-Beweisen.html>

Václav Klaus criticises expulsions

“The British government does not want to produce any evidence – if any other country did so, it would be annoying,” said former Czech President *Václav Klaus*. He sharply criticised the Western reaction in the Skripal affair. Britain owe clear evidence to Russia. The expulsion of Russian diplomats had been “a little childish,” said the longtime politician of the newspaper “MF Dnes” on Thursday. “Since Slovakia, Slovenia and Austria did nothing like that, I would rather be a citizen of these countries,” he added. The Czech Republic had declared three Russian embassy members personae non gratae under pressure from Britain.

Source: *Handelsblatt* from 5 April 2018

Austria does not expel anyone

In the Austrian programme *Puls 4 Arena*, the Austrian Chancellor *Sebastian Kurz* felt he had to emphasise once again that there is no “EU line”. On the question of diplomatic expulsion one could not speak of EU states brought into line, since “about one third of the states” had come to a different decision, among them also Austria.

The reasons given by Kurz in the Austrian case were its neutrality and that Vienna is the seat of many international organisations. In addition, the country has a tradition as a bridge builder to Russia. There is a cross-party consensus.

Source: *APA* from 4 April 2018

OSCE admonishes talks

According to the Russian newspaper “Moskovsky Komsomolets”, OSCE General Secretary *Thomas Greminger* has called to stop spinning the spiral of escalation in relations between the West and Russia and to engage in dialogue.

The relations between East and West are currently on the escalation path, Greminger said. This is also recognisable in the “eye for eye” logic. In his opinion, this vicious circle must be broken. Only a dialogue could help, the OSCE leader advised.

According to him, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly could become the platform for this because it represents a unique opportunity for inclusive dialogue under equal conditions.

Source: *Sputnik* from 3 April 2018

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Cain, where is your brother Abel?

by Moritz Nestor

Curious to read again my juvenile literature after half a century, some time ago in an antiquarian bookstore I took from a stack of the famous green Karl May volumes, which pile up next to the cash desk, each volume for five Swissfrancs, “Winnetou I and II”, “Old Firehand I and II” and the “Oil Prince”.

I belong to a generation that grew up with *Karl May*. “Exciting adventure novels” – in my memory there is not much more of the peace fighter and anti-colonialist of the German Empire. It is largely forgotten that on the eve of the First World War, Karl May was a committed comrade-in-arms and friend of *Berta von Suttner*.

Only Karl May’s preface to the first volume of “Winnetou, der Rote Gentleman” (Winnetou, the red gentleman”), as the original was called, brings back memories. I am back in those nights with a flashlight under my bedspread: the injustice outraging you at that time because the Indians, natives of America, the real owners of the land, are robbed of their land by whites greedy for gold calling themselves Christians. The sharp and incorruptible thinking of the two blood brothers, unmasking deceit, injustice, and lies, assisting the disenfranchised, precisely detecting tracks and ambushes. Every issue comes to the judgment seat of reason. There Karl May is enlightener of purest water.

Now and again the radical rejection of revenge and of the right of the fist: the two blood brothers do not attack, do not provoke a fight. However, with all their powers of spirit and weapons they repel any attack, killing, robbery, injustice, even and especially when it is done to others: the two friends as a living symbol of armed neutrality, deeply disliking of having to harm if necessary in self-defence. Those who, in awe of man as the image of God and in deep contempt for the greed for power and gold, the squalid filth, know only one goal: saving and protecting life wherever possible. Living humanity under the concentrated protective power of a sharp mind, butterfly hand, silver rifle, bear slayer and the 25-shot Henry carbine.

In this spirit, in the midst of seething colonialism and imperialism, the writer Karl May writes lively, exciting travel descriptions appealing to everyone and striving for an ethical purpose on hundreds and hundreds of pages: Educating the youth, on the eve of the First World War, when the plans for mass slaughter are already in the drawers and the armaments spiral is inexorably turning, on the basis of human models such as *Winnetou*, *Kleki Petra*, *Intschu Tschuna*, *Old Shatterhand* and others, in the spirit of peace, charity, humanity and international

understanding. Moreover, to abhorrence of colonialism, genocide and war!

The introduction to “Winnetou I” is Karl May’s political-human credo, who has been associated with Christianity and natural law:

“If it is right that everything that lives is entitled to life, and that this applies to mankind as a whole as well as to the individual, then the red man has the right to exist no less than the white man and may lay claim to the power of developing in social, in public relationship according to his individuality.”

In 1948, the first article of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* will say: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” This is the meaning of the blood brotherhood between the two main characters, white Old Shatterhand and red Winnetou. So much for adventure novel! In the German Empire, in the midst of colonialism, there is a writer creating a figure in his youth books every young person can identify with and who demands exactly what the war-mongering powers despise: the unrestricted right of self-determination of all peoples and all men, because, says May: “everything that lives, is entitled to life”.

The book cover of “Winnetou I”, edition 1904, was designed by *Sascha Schneider* (1870–1927) and depicts *Cain and Abel*: the fratricide. Winnetou is the memorial, being erected by Karl May to the “dying red man” being murdered by the white brother.

“He, the best, most loyal and most devoted of all my friends, was a genuine type of race from whom he came, and as he perishes, he, too, has perished, extinguished from life by the murderous bullet of an enemy. I loved him like no other man, and still today I love the dying nation whose most noble son he has been. I would have given my life to him to preserve his, as he dared to do for me a hundred times. This was not granted to me; he passed away, as he always was, a saviour of his friends; but he is said to have died only physically and to live here in these pages as he lives in my soul, he, Winnetou, the great Apache chief. To him I want to set the well-deserved monument here, and if the reader, who looks at it with his spiritual eye, then makes a fair judgment of the people whose faithful individual image was the chief, then I am richly rewarded.”

For the book “Winnetou II”, which appears in the spring of 1904, the artist *Sascha Schneider* chooses, according to the historical situation, the motif “The angel of God grieves over the fighting



Edition of 1904

“The angel of God grieves over the fighting races”. First World War is on the horizon! In 1905, the couple May will attend an event by *Bertha von Suttner*, from which they will go home moved to tears. From then on *Bertha von Suttner* counts beyond the death of Karl May to his intellectual colleagues. Deeply moved by his books, she felt how much he served the common goal: peace on earth, lay down your arms! The *Radebeuler Tageblatt* (*Radebeul* newspaper) wrote on 13 February 1913: “Mrs Baroness *Bertha von Suttner*, the well-known author of the work ‘Lay Down Your Arms!’ and representative of the peace movement, stayed in *Radebeul* today and paid a visit to the writer *Karl May*’s widow. As we all know, *Karl May* was interested in promoting the aims of the *Baroness von Suttner*.” And the widow *Klara May* noted in her diary on 12 February 1913: “*Bertha von Suttner* [...] speaks in the highest respect of *Karl May*’s work – that she is nothing against him.” In another place, a sentence from *Bertha von Suttner* has been handed down: “If only I could have designed one of these works, I would have achieved more!”

Only since the *Briand-Kellogg Pact* of 1928 and the *UN Charter* of 1948, war has been banned as a tool of politics under international law and disputes must be resolved peacefully – says the current international law. In particular, the war of aggression, including the genocide of the Indians, has since been doing violence to international law. In 1948, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (and its successor pacts) guaranteed for the first time the right to life to all people. In *May*’s words, “what lives is entitled to life.” Considering that in 1904, when “*Winnetou I*” appeared, *Wilhelm II*’s “Hun speech” (“No quarter will be given! Prisoners will not be taken!”) from 27 May 1900 in *Bremerhaven* on the occasion of the adoption of

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German troops to crush the Boxer Rebellion in the Empire of China belonged to the Zeitgeist repertoire, then Karl May was his time very far ahead. And in sharp contrast, the first sentences in "Winnetou I" accuse:

"Whenever I think of the Indian, I always remember the Turk; this, as strange as it may seem, has its justification. Even though there are so few points of comparison between them, they are similar to each other in that one concludes with them, but with the one less than with the other: one speaks of the Turk scarcely otherwise than of the 'sick man', while everyone who knows the circumstances must call the Indian the 'dying man'. Yes, the red nation is dying! From the Tierra del Fuego to far beyond the North American lakes, the gigantic patient is stretched out, prostrated by an inexorable destiny, which knows no mercy. He struggled with all his strength against it, but in vain; his powers have more and more disappeared; he has but a few breaths to do and the twitches that move his naked body from time to time are the convulsions at death's door."

Once again: so much for adventure. Karl May writes his Winnetou in the age of colonialism and imperialism and is unthinkable without this historical-political relationship. The "sick man on the Bosphorus" is the Ottoman Empire, which during May's lifetime is about to be wiped out by the British-European colonial policy, and finally smashed in the aftermath of the First World War to secure the rich oil resources of the imperial powers. In his book "A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order", William Engdahl describes the political connection Karl May addresses with the "sick man."

Winnetou, as Karl May wants it, is one of the dying nation of the natives of North America, in which the *genocide is being carried out* in his day. This is the historical framework without which Winnetou is incomprehensible. Not an adventure novel, but a tragic real story, cast in an exciting novel form and prepared to educate people, to awaken the hearts of young people out of ignorance and indifference to the land grabbing and the genocide of the rightful owners of the American continent. This is the starting point for the Winnetou stories.

While the colonial powers despise, rob and slaughter the "savages" and while the political philosophers of these imperial empires deny the coloureds the ability to reason and claim that the savages could not think and therefore could

not form states, but must therefore be suppressed, Karl May appears on the scene and announces in his foreword to "Winnetou I":

"I say no! [...] The white man has gradually developed from a hunter to a shepherd, from there to a farmer and an industrialist; many centuries have gone by; but the red did not find this time because he was not granted."

Human cruelty is capable of "either a mere apparent or capable of a Christian mitigation, because the eternal wisdom given by this law is eternal love at the same time. Can we now claim that such mitigation has taken place in relation to the dying Indian race? It was not just a hospitable reception, but also an almost divine worship, which the first 'palefaces' found among the 'Indsmen'. Which reward did the latter get for it? Quite indisputably, the country they inhabited belonged to them; it was taken from them. Anyone who has read the history of the 'famous' Conquistadores knows which streams of blood flowed and which cruelties occurred. Subsequently it proceeded further based on this model. The white man came with sweet words on his lips, but at the same time with the sharpened knife in his belt and the loaded rifle in his hand. He promised love and peace and gave hate and blood. The red man had to move, step by step, to retreat on and on. From time to time he was granted 'eternal' rights to 'his' territory, but after a short time he was driven out of it, farther, farther and farther. Land was 'bought' from him, but either was not payed for it at all or received worthless barter goods, which he could not use. However, the creeping poison of 'firewater' was brought to him the more carefully, as well as Variola and other, much worse and more disgusting diseases, which cleared whole tribes and depopulated entire villages. If the red man wanted to assert his right, he was answered with powder and lead, and again he had to give way to the superior weapons of the white men. Theron embittered he now retaliated against the single bleached face he encountered. The consequences were always literally massacres, which were done among the red men. Originally being a proud, bold, brave, truth-loving man, sincere man and always loyal to his friends, he became a secretly creeping, suspicious, lying man without

being responsible for it, as it is not his, but the white's fault.

Where have the wild mustang herds gone, from among their number he once had boldly fetched his riding horse? Where do you see the buffaloes that nourished him when they populated the prairies by the millions? What is he living on today? On the flour and the meat he is supplied with? Watch how much gypsum and other beautiful things are in this flour; who can enjoy it! And if a tribe is once awarded a hundred 'extra-fat' bullocks, on the way they have turned into two or three old, emaciated cows, from which a vulture can hardly tear down a bite. Or should the red man live on agriculture? Can he count on his harvest, he the lawless one, who is constantly being supplanted, to whom is not given a permanent site? [...]

Yes, he has become a sick man, a dying man, and we stand compassionately at his miserable bed to shut his eyes. Standing at a deathbed is a serious thing, but a hundred times serious if that deathbed is that of a whole race. Many, many questions arise, above all: What would this race have been able to do if they had been granted time and space to develop their inner and outer powers and talents? Which peculiar forms of culture will be lost to mankind by the downfall of this nation?"

The events, plots, tragedies and struggles of the Winnetou-narrations are woven from this: contemporary history, vividly cast in the form of a novel, dealing with the most terrible thing that Cain can do to Abel, but where people appear who testify: it does not have to be like that. Man is capable of more. He is capable of reason and humanity. He can overcome hatred and primitive greed for gold – no matter what skin colour he has. Again and again Karl May depicts scenes in which Winnetou is able to be more human than many white people. They belong to the most moving: Because he is a human being, for that reason alone, he is capable of what the colonial European only attributes to himself: charity, education, culture. Out of the spiritual and emotional community of the blood brothers Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, Karl May develops an example becoming alive to the reader for the mutual non-violent connection and understanding of two cultures. All people are capable of doing that, regardless of their skin colour, because they are human beings. This is Karl May's message.

Can a topic be more relevant today? Where do we find books of this kind for young people today? Would it not be about time to reread old Karl May? •