

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,
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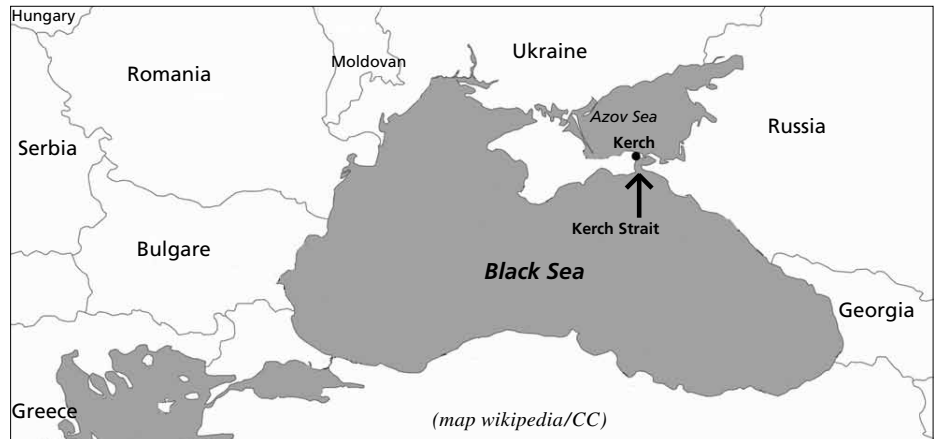
Ukraine stages new provocation in Kerch Strait: pursuing hidden agenda

by Peter Korzun, *Expert on wars and conflicts*

On 25 November, three Ukrainian naval ships made an unauthorised crossing through Russian territorial waters. The Russian Coast Guard took measures to force them to comply with the rules. They did not. There can be little doubt that Kiev sent those ships to deliberately provoke Russia. Every ship that passes through that waterway must contact the Kerch Sea Port authorities, report her route and destination, and be given permission to sail through. It's really that simple, but Ukraine's group of ships had not notified Russia in advance of their plans. Warnings to stop their dangerous maneuvering were met with a deaf ear. The Ukrainian vessels defiantly ignored the requests to leave Russia's territorial waters.

Kiev has rushed to accuse Moscow of "military aggression." The incident immediately captured the headlines, with Western leaders raising their voices to back Ukraine without even offering any details about exactly what had happened or what had sparked this dangerous turn of events. NATO Secretary General *Jens Stoltenberg* wasted no time to express the bloc's "full support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, including its full navigational rights in its territorial waters under international law." Canada, Poland, and Denmark, in addition to some other countries, were quick to join their voices to the anti-Russian choir. It serves their purpose to brush aside both the details as well as any attempts to try to gain insight into the real causes of this incident in particular or the deterioration of the situation in the Azov Sea in general.

On 26 November, Ukrainian President *Petro Poroshenko* signed a bill imposing martial law. Once approved by parliament, it will remain in effect for at least one month. Afterward it can be extended. The Ukrainian president did not raise the question of imposing martial law in 2014, when Crimea requested via referendum that it be incorporated by Russia. Nor did he take that step in 2015 during the battle of *Debaltsevo Bulge* in the heat of the fighting in the eastern part of the coun-



try. The ongoing conflict with the self-proclaimed republics has never prompted him to consider a state of emergency. But he found the recent sea incident grave enough to justify the imposition of martial law prior to the presidential election that polls indicate he has a slim chance of winning.

The move would curb civil liberties and give state institutions greater powers during the election scheduled for 31 March 2019, if it is not postponed. Presidential, parliamentary, and local elections, as well as strikes, protests, rallies, and mass demonstrations, are all forbidden during a time of martial law. The incident at sea may not be the only provocation that is planned. The situation along the border with the self-proclaimed republics began to deteriorate as soon as the reports about the sea incident started to pour in. Heavy shelling by Ukrainian forces of residential areas in eastern Ukraine was reported during the evening of 26 November.

Another motive – the provocation was staged to expedite the procedure of joining NATO. The 2003 Russia-Ukraine agreement, which states that the Azov Sea is considered to be the domestic waters of both the two countries, can be annulled. A bill to repeal the treaty was introduced in the Ukrainian parliament (Rada) last summer. It forbids any warship from entering the sea without the consent of both nations. If that agreement is torn up, the 1982 United Nations Con-

vention on the Law of the Sea would take effect. Russia's and Ukraine's territorial waters would extend for 12 nautical miles from their respective coasts. The interior of that sea would become international waters, allowing NATO ships to enter the Azov Sea without restrictions.

Kiev also hopes that military aid from NATO countries will increase, allowing it to build a powerful navy and coastal defenses. It would like to have an international monitoring mission stationed in the Azov Sea, probably under the auspices of the OSCE and with the participation of navies that are unfriendly to Russia. Another thing the Ukrainian president would like to see happen is for US President *Trump* to cancel his meeting with Russian President *Putin* at the G20 summit in Argentina [as has already happened].

What has prompted Kiev's actions? It was the backing of the West. On 25 October the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Azov Sea to express its support of Ukraine. On 19 November, UN High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy *Federica Mogherini* stated that the EU foreign ministers had discussed taking relevant "targeted measures" against Russia due to the situation in the Azov Sea. The US continues to expand its military assistance to Ukraine. The US already has a military facility in Ochakovo. Once the Oliver H.

Once again the escalation is taken to a higher level

German-French arbitration offers not credible

by Karl Müller

On 25 November the Russian coast guard has seized three Ukrainian marine boats which are now kept in a harbour on the Crimean peninsula. Ukrainian marines have been injured and, for violating the Russian border, the Ukrainian ship crews are to be brought to trial in Russia.

As soon as the next day Russia was accused not only by the Ukrainian government but also by the governments of various EU states, the EU itself, the NATO and the US government. Russia was charged with exerting illegal violence and planning to extend its power into the whole Sea of Azov. Once again Russia is threatened with sanctions and boycott measures; the Ukrainian government was demanding military support from NATO and in particular Germany.

None of the governments took into consideration that the Russian version might be correct, stating that the Ukrainian ships had violated the Russian border in order to provoke and were not willing to leave Russian territory.

As a historian I have learned that it is impossible to assess events the day after. It takes a thorough examination of many sources to acquire some kind of knowledge of what really happened. In the West's dealing with Russia, this care and diligence has long been neglected. But the political concept does not ask for dealing diligently with facts; the goal is not to find the truth but to weaken Russia.

Hardly credible

Thus it is not surprising that after the incident the German and French governments as well as the EU, the NATO Secretary General, the US Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to the UN and many other Western politicians and media want Russia to stand in the dock, pledging their support for the Ukrainian government – it is just another element in the longstanding campaign against Russia. And unfortunately we need to add: The alleged “fear”

“The protection of the Russian border is the task of the Coast Guard”

km. On 29 November, on the occasion of the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the German magazine *Cicero* asked *Frank Elbe*, the former German ambassador to Poland and India and head of the planning staff at the German Foreign Office under Foreign Minister *Hans-Dietrich Genscher*, for his assessment of the situation.

So *Cicero* asked: “But is not the Russian approach disproportionately aggressive? To ram a ship and shoot at people is not the way to help de-escalate the situation.”

Frank Elbe replied: “The protection of the Russian border is the task of the

coast guard. The Russians had also announced that they would act in the same way. If Ukrainian ships, under the acquiescence [with the approval] of the president, do not abide by the rules, they will trigger the current situation.”

Shortly before in the interview Frank Elbe had stated: “You also have to take a look at the situation of Russia: The American effort to bring Ukraine and Georgia into NATO, the development of a missile defence system, NATO's approach to the Russian border.

It is logical that this causes fear in Russia. And that Putin cannot simply let these developments happen.”

of an escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the call for “de-escalation” are not credible. Otherwise the approach would be a different one, taking the Russian version of the occurrence also into account. This is why the German-French offer to arbitrate in the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict is hardly convincing. Not a lot is “neutral” in German and French government politics.

Who is setting the tone in Ukraine?

In an interview with *Deutschlandfunk*, *Alexander Neu*, member of the German Bundestag for the party *Die Linke*, stated on 26 November: “Ukraine's sovereignty corresponds to the sovereignty of a three-year-old child, depending on his mum. Believe me. Ukraine itself has not much of a say.” Although the German radio journalist reacted touchy on this statement it is an occasion to start thinking. If, as the Russian side is claiming, the Ukrainian marine actions in the Kerch Strait had indeed been a deliberate provocation, the question arises: Who outside Ukraine is interested in such a provocation with all its potential consequences – while officially all meas-

ures are taken to prevent an escalation of the conflict?

The statement of the German government spokesman

That the position of the German government is hardly “neutral” regarding the current events was demonstrated by the statement of government spokesman *Stefan Seibert* on the morning of 26 November in the government press conference. Seibert negated Russian rights on the Crimean, again mentioned an “annexation of the Crimean against international law” and that the German government was also deeming the construction of a bridge to the Russian mainland as a breach of international law, closing: “From the standpoint of the Federal Government there are severe questions, mainly regarding the usage of military force by Russia for which we cannot see a justification on the basis of the facts hitherto known to us.” Thus he sweeps aside the Russian argumentation in passing. It is understandable that the Russian government

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“Ukraine stages new provocation ...”

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Perry-class frigates arrive in Ukraine, they will be followed by American naval instructors. The US presence and military infrastructure will gradually expand. Great Britain is doing the same thing.

The West's support is encouraging Ukraine to escalate the tensions. Ukraine's Constitutional Court has

just okayed an amendment to proclaim NATO and EU memberships as official foreign-policy goals. If approved by parliament, the Minsk accords will then become null and void, because Russia originally agreed to comply with them on the condition that Ukraine remain a neutral state.

No one needs such heightened tensions in an area with so much ship activity. All seafaring nations want shipping

lanes to be free and protected by law. The more political and military support Kiev gets, the greater the chance that a spark will kindle a fire in the Azov Sea that will spread further. The responsibility rests with those who are egging Kiev on and thus whipping up tensions in pursuit of political goals. •

Source: www.strategic-culture.org from 27 November 2018

"Once again the escalation ..."

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does not feel encouraged to let the German government "arbitrate".

The status of the Crimean peninsula

Regarding the "annexation of the Crimean against international law": Continuous repetition of this claim does not make it correct. As of now there is no final international law judgement regarding the accession of the Crimean to the Russian

Federation in 2014. Experts in state and international law are assessing the situation differently. And we need to remember that in March 2014, about one month after the coup d'état in Kiev which was also directed against the Ukrainian population tending towards Russia, an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the Crimean voted in a secret referendum for an accession of the Crimean to the Russian Federation. In a turnout of about 83%, almost 97% of the voters cast their vote in favour of this accession. The Crimean parliament has filed the application accordingly and the concerned Russian institutions have accepted it. All governments know that Russia is considering the Crimean as Russian territory which is why it is logical that it observes the corresponding rights and obligations. This includes the protection of the borders.

German politics and international law

Considering the manner in which over the past 20 years German politics has treated international law also suggests that the rhetoric of an "annexation against international law" is not due to a desire for legality but political interests.

As German citizen I am concerned with the question how we can succeed in bringing more Germans to take a stand for an honest review of the German-Russian history of the past 27 years and for improved

German-Russian relations. There many possibilities. From conversations and public statements to concrete steps in rapprochement, for example in German-Russian twinning arrangements of towns (cf. the interview at page 12).

The past days have shown that the campaign against Russia is not over. On the contrary, playing with fire is practised, sometimes more sometimes less intense. It is not sufficient to expect Russia to react in a calm and serene way towards permanent provocations.

Escalation plans of a US-American think tank

At <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russia-s-provocations-in-the-sea-of-azov-what-should-be-done> the US think tank *Atlantic Council* made the following recommendations in November 2018: "Ukraine should give careful consideration to a special operation that might disrupt the bridge that Moscow built over the Kerch Strait that joins Crimea to Russia. But that's not all. Ukraine should invite the United States and NATO to send a fleet of armed ships to visit Mariupol, the main city on the Sea of Azov coast and defy Russia to fire on or block NATO from exercising the right to visit Ukraine's ports. Those ships should be armed and have air cover but be instructed not to fire unless fired upon."

Gabriel criticises "new edition of the gunboat diplomacy"

"Former Foreign Minister *Sigmar Gabriel* campaigned for relaxation in the Ukrainian conflict. He told the *Tagesspiegel* that Germany should 'not allow itself to be drawn into a war against Russia'. Gabriel criticised Ukraine's demands for German warships against Russia and the proposal to close international ports for Russian ships from the Crimean region. Gabriel called this a 'new edition of the gunboat diplomacy'."

Source: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/g20-gipfel-streit-um-deutsche-reaktion-aufukraine-konflikt/23706972.html> from 1.12.2018

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When you want to sanction states, you call them “terrorists”

by Thierry Meyssan

The new unilateral sanctions by the United States against Iran, Russia and Syria add to the previous actions concerning the same three targets. They now form the most unforgiving embargo in history. The way in which they have been organised is illegal according to the definition of the Charter of the United Nations – these are weapons of war, designed for killing.

For his visit to Moscow on 8 November, ambassador *James Jeffrey* was tasked with explaining the current US obsession with the expansion of Persian influence in the Arab world (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen). Washington now wishes to formulate this question in geo-strategic rather than religious terms (Shias/Sunni), while Teheran is organising its national defence around forward posts composed of Shiite Arabs.

Moscow then considered the possibility of negotiating on Tehran’s behalf for the easing of unilateral US sanctions, in exchange for its military withdrawal from Syria. President *Vladimir Putin* confirmed his proposition, not only for his US opposite number, but also for the Israeli Prime Minister, during their meeting in Paris on 11 November for the celebrations marking the centenary of the end of the First World War.

He attempted to convince the Westerners that Russia alone in Syria was preferable to the Irano-Russian tandem. However, he could not guarantee that Iran would have sufficient authority over *Hezbollah* – as both Washington and Tel-Aviv pretend – to be able to order it to withdraw also.

Washington’s only answer, nine days later, was to announce the eleventh series of unilateral sanctions against Russia since the beginning of August. This was accompanied by a ridiculous speech according to which Russia and Iran had together organised a vast plot aimed at maintaining President *Assad* in power and expanding Persian control in the Arab world.

This rhetoric, which we believed had been abandoned, assimilates three states (the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran) as machines in the service of three men (*Bachar al-Assad*, *Ali Khamenei* and *Vladimir Putin*) who are united by the same hatred of their respective peoples. It ignores the massive popular support they enjoy, while the United States are profoundly torn apart.

We can leave aside the stupid assertion that Russia is aiding and abetting the conquest of the Arab world by Persia.

According to the US Secretary of the Treasury, *Steven Mnuchin*, who presented the unilateral US sanctions on 20 November, they do not form the economic section

of the present war, but are intended to punish the “atrocities” committed by these three “regimes”. However, on the verge of winter, they mostly concern the supply of refined petroleum to the Syrian people so that they may light their homes and keep warm.

It is not necessary to specify that the three states targeted deny the “atrocities” of which they are accused, while the United States pursue the wars that they started in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

The US sanctions were not decided by the United Nations Security Council, but by the United States alone. They are illegal in international law because in order to make them lethal, Washington is attempting to force third-party states to associate themselves with the motion, which constitutes a threat to the states targeted and therefore a violation of the *United Nations Charter*. The United States have the sovereign right to refuse to enter into commerce with other states, but not to exercise pressure on third-party states in order to harm their targets. At one time, the Pentagon claimed that inflicting damaging treatment on a particular nation would lead its people to overthrow its government. That was also the theoretical justification for the bombing of Dresden during the Second World War and the endless embargo against Cuba during the Cold War. However, in the space of 75 years, this theory has never, absolutely never, been verified by the facts. Now the Pentagon is considering using detrimental treatment against a nation as a weapon of war like any other. Embargoes are designed to kill civilians.

The ensemble of systems currently used against Iran, Russia and Syria constitute the most gigantic siege system in history¹. These are not economic measures, but – without any possible doubt – military actions implemented in the economic sector. In time, they will probably lead to a division of the world into two parts, just as in the period of USA-USSR rivalry.

Secretary Mnuchin insisted at length on the fact that these sanctions were aimed above all at the interruption of the sale of hydro-carbons, meaning depriving these countries – mostly exporters – of their main financial resources.

The mechanism described by Steven Mnuchin is as follows:

- Syria is presently unable to refine petrol since its installations were destroyed either by Daesh or by the International Coalition’s bombing raids against Daesh.
- For the last four years, Iran has been supplying refined petrol to Syria in violation of previous unilateral US sanctions. This petrol is transported by Western companies working for the Russian public com-

pany *Promsyrioimport*. This company is paid by the private Syrian company *Global Vision Group*, which is itself financed by the Iranian company *Tabir Kish Medical and Pharmaceutical*.

- Finally the Global Vision Group transfers a part of the money it receives to Hezbollah and Hamas.

This is a cock and bull story:

- The International Coalition has the official objective of fighting Daesh. However, numerous testimonies over the last four years attest that it had alternatively bombed the Islamic state whenever it exceeded the zone which had been allocated to it by the Pentagon (*the Wright plan*), and that, on the contrary, it had parachuted weapons to Daesh in order to maintain its position in the specified area. The two entities worked together to destroy Syrian refineries.
- What is the purpose of implicating the Russian government in the transfer of petroleum from Iranian refineries towards Syrian ports?
- Why would Iran suddenly need Syria to transfer money to Hezbollah and Hamas?
- Why would Syria transfer Iranian money to Hamas while the Palestinian organisation – whose leaders are members of the Muslim Brotherhood – is at war with them?

Steven Mnuchin doesn’t bother with long explanations. As far as he is concerned, Syria is a criminal state and Russia is its accomplice, while Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas are all “terrorists”. This is the most important point, the word that cancels out thought.

A French proverb assures that “When you want to drown your dog, you claim it has rabies.” So there’s no point expecting logic in Secretary Mnuchin’s answer to President Putin’s proposition of mediation.

Progressively, the United States are withdrawing their troops from the conflicts in which they were engaged, and replacing them with mercenaries on the ground (the jihadists) and economic sanctions, the modern version of the medieval siege. •

Source: www.voltairenet.org from 27 November 2018

(Translation Pete Kimberley)

¹ Although during the Middle Ages, Christianity accepted wars between the Catholic sovereigns, it condemned military actions against civilians. In the 13th century, the Catholic Church therefore condemned all sieges when they concerned not only soldiers but also populations. This ethic has remained that of the Holy See until today. For example, *Pope John-Paul II* opposed the United States when they applied economic sanctions against the Iraqis during the reign of Saddam Hussein. His successor, *Pope Francis*, remains silent on this question.

Endanger nationalists and neo-Nazis in Ukraine peace throughout Europe?

by Matthias Erne, lawyer, Zurich

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a kind of nationalism has emerged in its republics, hampering, in part even hindering the solution of various current problems on the Eurasian continent, with possible long-term effects on the security of Europe. In its most extremist form, this nationalism is presently manifesting itself in Ukraine. It is an expression of an identity crisis in this country. However, this article is not about revealing the history of the newly formed republics in 1991. Rather, the connection between nationalism and European security are to be illustrated.

With the Soviet Union disintegrated 1991 a multi-ethnic state, in which lived about 100 ethnic groups. The political elites in the successor states then faced the problem of creating an independent national identity in order to protect themselves in the long term against reintegration into a successor realm. For ideological reasons, the leadership of the Soviet Union never paid much attention to the question of nationality. Relations between Soviet republics were close in every respect, and especially Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians played an important role in many smaller constituent republics. Many territorial issues remained unresolved. That was the difficult starting position at the end of 1991, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

The handling of the nationality problem did not succeed equally well everywhere. While Russia and Kazakhstan, with their more than 100 resp. 50 ethnic groups, regard themselves as multi-ethnic states, other former republics began to demarcate themselves sharply.

Development in the Baltic republics

This was especially easy for the Baltic republics, which had little in common with Russia in language, religious and cultural respects. The basis of their national understanding was and is their language. However, Estonia and Latvia in particular quickly began to disadvantage their Russian-speaking minority systematically. This minority today accounts for about a quarter of the population in both countries. The problem took on such proportions that the OSCE was obliged to appoint a special envoy. However, these states will not have to fear any criticism

* Matthias Erne is an established lawyer in Zurich and Wil. He has a sensorium in international law and follows geopolitical affairs as a Swiss citizen under this aspect.



from the *High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM)*: Diplomats from EU and NATO countries probably made sure that the HCNM did not become too active. More recently veteran associations of former members of the SS have become increasingly active in the Baltic republics, appearing in public in uniform, organising commemorative marches, erecting monuments and rejoicing at the high prestige they enjoy in these countries. Today they receive state pensions. And the younger generation is fully involved in this tradition. The official representatives of these countries sometimes show difficulties in distancing themselves from these activities.

Central Asian republics

The republics of Central Asia also succeeded in demarcation on the basis of linguistic, religious and cultural characteristics. But they coped well with the Russian minority and the Russian language. In Central Asia, unresolved territorial issues and the influence of radical Islamists – especially from the Gulf region – play a destabilising role.

South Caucasus

The situation is completely different in the South Caucasus: In Georgia as well as in Armenia and Azerbaijan, political elites believe that only a person speaking the state language can be a citizen. Georgia in particular, under the leadership of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, expressed problems in dealing with national minorities. In the Djavacheti region, with its pre-

dominant Armenian population, a new minority problem is growing, because these people are not allowed to run Armenian language schools and they have to hold services in their churches according to the rites of the Georgian Orthodox Church. For the Armenians, for whom religion is part of their self-image as a nation, this is hard to bear. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, even before the final collapse of the Soviet Union, conflicts arose and pogroms occurred in some places. This severely hampers the search for a solution to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh.

Belarus

The Republic of Belarus also faced the problem of demarcating itself from the big neighbour in the East. But Belarus approached this problem with a sense of proportion, and after the events on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev in 2014 and later on, hardly anyone believes that the Ukrainian way is worth following.

Ukraine

Ukraine in its present form is a result of the secession from the former Soviet Union. Its territory was determined after the Second World War according to political and military criteria. Since independence, Ukraine has pursued a policy of Ukrainianization based on the understanding that a national understanding must be on the basis on the Ukrainian language. This culminated in a statement by former President Vik-

“Endanger nationalists and neo-Nazis ...”
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tor *Yushchenko* that his goal was to make the use of the Russian language in Ukraine disappear within two generations. The Russian minority, which made up about a quarter of the population, became the first target of the political elite in Ukraine. This did not only apply to the Crimea and Donbass, but also to the cities on the Black Sea coast, especially Odessa, with its mixture of Russian, (Crimean) Tatar, Greek and Jewish populations. It did not bode well for the Romanian, Hungarian, Slovakian and Belarusian minorities in the country, any more than for the autochthonous Russians in the Carpathians, who are not officially recognised as an ethnic group of its own.

A first attempt to secede Ukraine from the Soviet Union was made by Ukrainian nationalists under the leadership of *Stepan Bandera* and *Roman Schuchewitsch* in the summer of 1941, after National Socialist Germany invaded the Soviet Union. During the whole war Ukrainian nationalists made a common cause with National Socialist Germany, put guards in concentration camps and participated in the brutal fight against partisans in Ukraine and Belarus. Since then, Ukrainian nationalists have always struggled to distance themselves from National Socialism.

The followers of *Bandera* and *Zhuchevich* were now very much in demand with the outbreak of the conflict in Donbass. Their volunteer organisations had been important for Ukraine in 2014, one often hears, and the rulers in Kiev tolerate them. On the other hand, Ukrainian officials are always happy to point out that the nationalists can only win a few per cent of the votes in elections. On 14 October of this year, about 10,000 supporters of the Nationalist Volunteer Battalions gathered in the city centre of Kiev to commemorate the establishing of the so-called

“Western countries, too, not only tolerate these goings-on, they even promote them: Neo-Nazis from the Ukraine were trained in military camps in the Baltic States, in Poland and Georgia. US, Canadian and British instructors trained these volunteers at the so-called Peacekeeping Operations Centre near Lviv. Gladly, one uses the universal argument of neo-Nazism against political opponents in one’s own country. But when Ukrainian and other Nazis fight against Russian citizens in Donbass and against Russia in general, Washington, Brussels and Berlin are happy to turn a blind eye.”

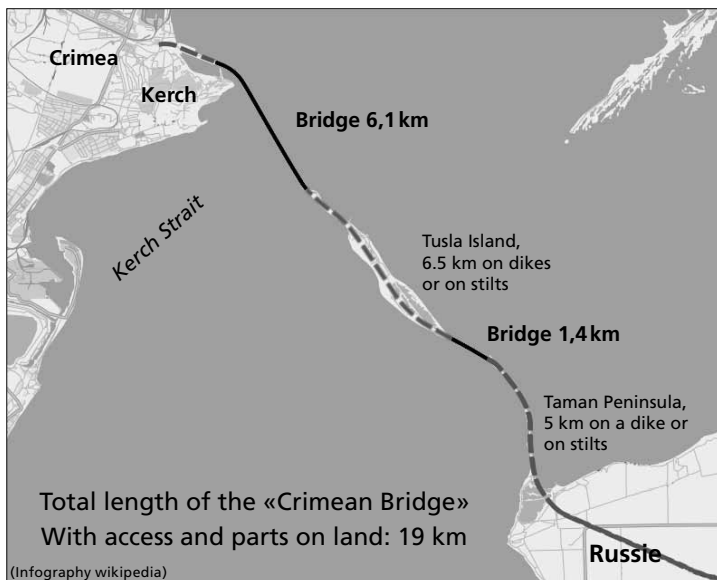
Ukrainian Uprising Army in 1942. If they are able to arm themselves from the large number of illegally circulating, unregistered weapons from the various wars of the first half of the 20th century and from the disintegration of the Soviet Army in the early 1990s, they represent a power in the state that is not to be ignored. This is also causing concern in the neighbouring states of Ukraine. And to this mass of violent protesters, the Ukrainian police held against with a ridiculous number of 200 police officers. This clearly shows that Interior Minister *Arsen Awakow* is happy to let these thugs act as they please.

In keeping with this, on the same day in Kiev, a convention of ultra-right nationalists from all over Europe and North America was held, star guest of which was the notoriously known *Greg Johnson*, a white nationalist who wants to build an ethnically pure state in the US whose citizens are of white skin colour only. His understanding of the state coincides with that of many nationalists in the former Soviet Union.

The list of state-tolerated abuses against national minorities in Ukraine is long. Also in the future, the rulers in Kiev want to utilise the gangs of hooligans to help establish their understanding of the state. If Ukraine is to be maintained with its present-day borders and in its form of state, then the government will have to take coercive measures, call for martial law or resort to other provocations.

Western countries, too,

not only tolerate these goings-on, they even promote them: Neo-Nazis from the Ukraine were trained in military camps in the Baltic States, in Poland and Georgia. US, Canadian and British instructors trained these volunteers at the so-called Peacekeeping Operations Centre near Lviv. Gladly, one uses the universal argument of neo-Nazism against political opponents in one’s own country. But when Ukrainian and other Nazis fight against Russian citizens in Donbass and against Russia in general, Washington, Brussels and Berlin are happy to turn a blind eye.●



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Extremist nationalism in Ukraine

me. Since 2014, Ukraine has been experiencing an increase in National Socialist crimes, which represents a serious threat to the security of the entire European area.

The accelerated Ukrainisation was one of the causes of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine four years ago. Meanwhile, not only nationalist formations and organisations, but also law enforcement agencies have become instruments for the government to suppress law-abiding citizens of Ukraine.

Here are a few facts:

1. With regard to the Hungarian minority in Ukraine

On 27 February 2018 an unknown person deposited an explosive device on the windowsill of the office of the Hungarian Cultural Bureau of Transcarpathia in Uzhgorod. The explosion caused a fire which destroyed the entire interior of the building.

Previously, on 4 February 2018, a Molotov cocktail had been thrown through the window of this office.

Source: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/articles/2018/02/27/7078141>

In July 2013 an arson attack was carried out on the Hungarian Cultural Centre of Transcarpathia in the city of Beregovo. The building was set on fire at night when nobody was in the office. After throwing a brick through the window of the Union of Hungarians, the unknown perpetrators poured a flammable mixture into the room and set it on fire. The perpetrators of the attack have not yet been identified.

In April 2013, the monument to *Sándor Petöfi* on the Ferenc Rákóczi II square in Beregovo burned. What had been the background of the arsonists – vandalism or provocation – could not be determined. In 2007 the monument was covered with black paint. Here also the perpetrators have so far remained unknown.

A similar thing happened to the monument to *Sándor Petöfi* in Uzhgorod, which was desecrated more than once: In March 2009 it was covered with white paint, and the sword was broken off four times, in 2016, 2015 and 2011.

In March 2014, at the height of the civil commotions in Kiev, a monument dedicated to the 1100th anniversary of the arrival of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin was set on fire on the Veretskij Pass in Transcarpathia. Ever since its installation in 2008, this monument has become a constant object of vandalism. In 2011 an arson attack was carried out on

it, suspects were three local functionaries of the party “Svoboda” (Freedom). In 2012, the monument was smeared with the words “Death to Magyars”, “Here is Ukraine”.

In Budapest Ukraine was asked to “leave the Hungarians alone”. There was no official comment from the Ukrainian side.

At the national level, Ukrainian Defence Minister *Stepan Poltorak* discussed with Transcarpathian Governor *Gennady Moskal* the development of military infrastructure in Mukachevo and Uzhgorod and the possibility of stationing the 128th mountain brigade in the city of Beregovo. This brigade belonging to the Ukrainian army actively participated in the hostilities in the Donbass, especially in the Debaltsevo battles. In 1956 it had been part of the Soviet troops that suppressed the Hungarian uprising in Budapest.

A full statement was made by *Bogdan Chervak*, head of the *Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists* (OUN). He described the Budapest actions as interference in the internal affairs of a neighbouring country, and for something like that, he declared, people got “their face smashed” (“За это бьют по зубам ...”). Decisive steps were needed to demonstrate that Ukraine had to be respected. This could be done by stationing Ukrainian troops in Transcarpathia and carrying out a military pacification (боевое слаживание).

2. with regard to the Romanian diaspora

On 22 May 2018, the Ukrainian intelligence service SBU opened an investigation due to the suspicion of separatism. On 11 June, twelve members of the Ukrainian intelligence service searched the Romanian Cultural Centre in Chernivtsi. Some historical maps dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the modern Romanian state were the reason for initiating this criminal case. Among them was a map of the so-called *Romagna Mare* (“Greater Romania”) from 1918-1940, which included part of today’s Czernowitz region.

The Romanian Cultural Centre in Chernivtsi accused the security services of discrimination based on ethnicity. They alleged that the Ukrainian intelligence service SBU was trying to create fear and discouragement in the public organisations of Romanians in Ukraine, so as to accelerate Ukrainisation, said the head of the centre, V. Teritsanu. SBU staff had spent the whole day on the Centre’s premises, confiscating books, newspapers

and magazines published by the Centre, computer equipment and correspondence with representatives of local authorities, Kiev authorities and diplomats.

Source: <http://alternatio.org/events/all/item/60245-sbu-stremitsya-seyat-strah-i-unynie-sredi-obschestvennyh-organizatsiy-rumyn-ukrainy-dlya-bezuslovnoy-i-uskorennoy-ukrainizatsii>

Representatives of the Romanian community described the Ukrainian law enforcers’ actions as “a return to KGB practices” and accused the Ukrainian security service of harassing the Romanian cultural centre “Eudoxio Gurmuzaki” on ethnic grounds, by means of visitations.

Source: <https://ru.tsn.ua/ukrayina/v-rumynskom-kultcentre-vozmutilis-iz-za-obyskov-sbui-obvinili-silovikov-v-diskriminacii-1171221.html>

3. With regard to Poles

In January 2017, a monument to Poles who had been murdered in the course of a joint punitive expedition of the SS divisions “Galicia” and the UPA was blown up. The rubble was painted with pictures of blue-yellow and red-black flags as well as with SS runes.

After the restoration of the monument in the middle of March 2017, it was again smeared with the “Wolf hook” of the SS division “The Reich”, which is now also a symbol of the battalion “Azov”, with swastikas and the Ukrainian trident, as well as with slogans like “Death to the Poles” (“Смерть ляхам”).

Source: <https://odnarodyna.org/content/luckyi-vystrel-iz-granatomety-v-evropu>

In February 2017, the building of the Consulate General in Lviv was painted red and smeared with the inscription “Our country”.

<https://ukranews.com/news/477908-zdanye-genkonsulstva-polsky-vo-lvove-oblyly-krasnokraskoy-myd-vystupyl-s-zayavlenyem>

In March 2017 the Polish Consulate General in Lutsk was bombarded with grenade launchers.

Source: <https://nv.ua/ukraine/events/strelba-iz-granatomety-v-lutske-mestnye-smi-soobshchili-o-vzryve-v-genkonsulstve-polshi-884389.html>

The SBU remains in the dark about the motives of the perpetrators: Either it is a terrorist attack, hooliganism [sic] or the revenge of an individual who has been denied a visa.

Source: <https://odnarodyna.org/content/luckyi-vystrel-iz-granatomety-v-evropu>

4. With regard to Belarussians

In April 2018, provocative inscriptions could be read in the streets of Chernig-

"Extremist nationalism..."

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ov, the contents of which were directed against Belarusian citizens.

Source: <https://0462.ua/news/2006038>

Yuri Goncharov, head of the Chernigov regional SBU, appealed to the residents of Chernigov and the region to stop attempting to incite ethnic hatred.

5. With regard to Jews

On 30 June 2017, the anniversary of the Lviv Pogrom, Ukrainian nationalists held a festival in Lviv in honor of *Roman Shukhevich*, a collaborator with the National Socialists and with members of the "Nightingale" battalion, which was directly involved in the murders of Jews during the Second World War.

On 26 April 2018, unidentified persons set fire to a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust in Ternopil, where more than 100,000 Jews had been killed during the Second World War.

Source: <https://apostrophe.ua/news/society/accidents/2018-04-27/v-ternopole-oskvernili-pamyatnik-jertvam-holokosta-opublikovano-vid-eo-s-momentom-podjoga/128453>

On 2 May 2018, when Odessa called to mind the victims of the fire at the House of Trade Unions in 2014, in which 48 people were killed, *Tatyana Soikina*, head of the Odessa branch of the "Right Sector" and veteran of the so-called "anti-terror operation" in Donbass, promised to create "genuine Ukrainian order" in Odessa. Ukraine belonged to the Ukrainians, not to the Jews and not to the oligarchs, she said, and chanted "fame for Ukraine".

Source: <https://www.dni.ru/society/2018/5/4/397200.html>

Other anti-Semitic acts were the smearing of anti-Semitic slogans on the synagogue in Chernivtsi in November 2016, the desecration of Rabbi Nachman's grave in the city of Uman, on which the head of a pig with a swastika carved in it

was thrown in December 2016, and the attempt at arson in a synagogue in Lviv in June 2016.

Source: https://ru.molbuk.ua/chernovtsy_news/136060-vandaly-yaki-splyundruvaly-synagogu-v-chernivcyakh-vchynily-ryad-inshykh-zlochyniv-po-vsyy-ukrayini-avakov.html

6. with regard to Sinti and Roma

On 1 July 2018, a 30-year-old woman was killed with a knife stab to the neck on the premises of the railway depot in Beregovo. The Ukrainian police opened criminal proceedings, but allegedly found no motive for murder related to sex, race or other forms of discrimination. This was also the statement of the Transcarpathian regional administration.

In the night from 23 to 24 June 2018, a group of young Lviv Nazis attacked a village of Sinti and Roma in one of the suburbs of Lviv and killed one of its inhabitants – a 23-year-old man from Transcarpathia. The Pogrom participants were members of the ultra-right organisation "Трезвая и злая молодежь" (literally: "Sober and Wicked Youth"), a suborganisation of the Nazi group "Misanthropic Division", which is closely associated with the volunteer battalions and especially with the battalion "Azov". The group's online social media accounts are full of quotes from *Hitler* and *Mussolini* and clearly show the racist views of its members. According to human rights activists in Lviv, these neo-Nazis went to the camp only to kill, and if there had been no intervention of the police, there would have been more casualties. They injured a ten-year-old child with knives, and also his mother who tried to protect her son.

Source: <https://ukraina.ru/opinion/20180625/1020524252.html>

On 21 April 2018 the Nazis of the "C14" group destroyed a camp of Sinti and Roma in Lysa Hora, in the territory of the Kiev district Pechersk, where almost all national authorities of Ukraine are

located. During the pogrom there were also police representatives present who called the ongoing lawlessness, during which a group of Nazis beat Roma children and women out of their homes, "subbotnik" (Saturday work).

Source: Youtube: "Представники Нацдружини Огнений захищають табір ромів у Голосіївському парку - відео Київ Київ LIVE", "Відео цыганского рейд погрома в Києве", "Огненный Лысой Лысой: кто и почему сжег лагерь ромов ромов на Лысой горе?"

Under pressure from international human rights organisations, the interior ministry opened criminal proceedings in respect of the pogrom – but nothing happened. The ultra-right, who felt themselves to be immune to prosecution, immediately began new pogrom actions:

- On 9 May 2018, the nationalist youth burned down a camp of Sinti and Roma in the village of Rudnoje near Lviv;
- On 22 May 2018, Nazis attacked a camp of Sinti and Roma in the Ternopil region;
- On 27 May 2018, activists from various ultra-right organisations staged a pogrom against Caucasian and Turkish stalls at the Kiev market near Lesnaya metro station, in order to show that not only Roma could become victims of nationalist attacks;
- On 7 June 2018, the activists of the "National Brigade" destroyed Sinti and Roma houses in Goloseevsky Park.

Source: <https://ukraina.ru/opinion/20180625/1020524252.html>

The acts of violence against Sinti and Roma are an important indicator of the creeping nationalist tendency in Ukrainian politics.

The Ukrainian Nazis benefit from the total defencelessness of the national minorities on the territory of present-day Ukraine and from the tacit support of the Ukrainian government and authorities.

Federal Council and Parliament show unusual resistance

Stocktaking at the beginning of the 2018 winter session

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

The federal referendum on the self-determination initiative (SBI) is over. Only one third of the voters voted in favour. One of the main reasons for the disappointing result is once again an extremely sharp counter-campaign, which was largely based on untruths that were deliberately set into the world. For example, the slogan “No to the anti-human rights initiative” or the absurd claim that acceptance of the initiative would result in the “automatic termination” of hundreds of important contracts for the economy. That and why these statements do not apply has already been explained in detail in Current Concerns. Part of the counter-program was also the propaganda against the authors of the initiative, because the SVP (Swiss people’s party) has been in the way on the path to Brussels for 26 years (EEA vote 1992).

But the real challenge in the run-up to this and many other referendums in recent and future years is the uniquely strong position of the sovereign in direct democracy. The bringing down of the SBI is merely a piece in the mosaic of the big business game with the aim of breaking open the sovereign states - not just Switzerland. Ultimately, it is therefore the Swiss people themselves who must constantly oppose attempts to crack the system embodying the Swiss model.

It is the task of every citizen to maintain and strengthen this resistance. We expect our representatives of the people to be attentive and persistent in safeguarding the rights of the people and parliament. After the vote is before the election: The federal elections in autumn 2019 will certainly come - and are already showing some effect!

UN Migration Pact: Council of States demands vote in parliament

On 29 November, the Council of States, as first chamber, refused with 22 no to 14 yes with 4 abstentions to drop the signing of the Pact entirely.¹ After all, it clearly decided with 25:15 votes that the Federal Council has to submit the Pact to parliament for approval.² On 6 December, the National Council will decide on two identical motions.

The migration pact aims at a worldwide free movement of persons, in the sense of global capital, and thus at the weakening of sovereign states and democracy (see *Current Concerns* from 14 November and 28 November). Already five EU members and other states reject this idea. Switzer-

land would do well to follow their example. On 29 November, even in the *German Bundestag*, the proponents of the Pact only very narrowly prevailed (372 in favour out of 644 votes, 153 against, 141 abstentions).³

Actually, the Federal Council is solely responsible for the decision to sign the Pact, because it is so-called “legally non-binding”. Shortly before the referendum on the SBI, however, this prime example of the dominance of executive power rattled many parliamentarians. The Parliament has now taken this important business into its own hands, and Federal Councillor *Ignazio Cassis* has cancelled his trip to Marrakech.

It is to be hoped that the National Council will at least join the Council of States and thus support the serious objections of its own *Political Institutions Committees*. The effects of the migration pact on our sovereignty and public welfare would be so serious that the Parliament should actually subject the decision to a popular referendum. That is not yet the case - but it can still be done.

Cohesion billion: A clear sign from the Council of States to Brussels - a fine democratic political lesson!

On 29 November, the Council of States, as first chamber, approved the payment of a further CHF 1.3 billion over ten years to the EU Cohesion Fund⁴ only on condition that the EU renounces discriminatory measures against Switzerland - and this practically unanimously, with 38 votes to 1 and 2 abstentions.⁵

Background: As is well known, last year’s President of the Confederation *Doris Leuthard* promised EU Commission President Juncker 1.3 billion Swiss francs in November 2017 in front of running cameras - without having been authorised to do so by Parliament and without demanding any consideration in return!

In the summer of 2018, the Federal Council led – after that! – a consultation procedure (*Federal Council press release* of 29 September 2018). Many participants, including a whole number of cantonal governments, demanded that the Federal Council and Parliament only pay the money “if Switzerland’s interests are safeguarded in the dossiers that are central to their relations with the EU”, for example the Glarus state councillor.⁶

Along this line, the Political Institutions Committee of the Council of States voted 6 to 4 in favour of a temporary suspension of cohesion payments: “In the view of the

PIC new contributions to the EU will only be considered if the EU grants unlimited recognition to Swiss stock exchanges and visible progress is made in bilateral relations”. The *Finance Committee* followed suit. The *Foreign Affairs Committee* (FAC), on the other hand, recommended that the Council of States approve the payment with 6 votes to 6 and the President’s deciding vote.⁷

In the Council of States debate from 29 November, the proposal of the minority of the FAC (six members of the FDP (the Liberals) and SVP parliamentary groups) *surprisingly* prevailed. The following condition was attached to the federal decree on the framework credit for cohesion: “Obligations may only be entered into on the basis of this framework credit if there are clear signs of improvements in bilateral relations with the European Union and the EU does not adopt any discriminatory measures against Switzerland”.

The Council of States finally voted almost unanimously in favour of this minority proposal from the “centre-right” (by the way, the no vote and the two abstentions came from the SVP parliamentary group, because the latter is fundamentally opposed to payments of cohesion funds). Such a thing rarely happens in the Council of States! According to an insider, this astonishing result is also related to the forthcoming elections: Most voters do not want people’s representatives to fill the EU coffers with our billions in tax revenue for nothing.

For the National Council, which will probably deal with the framework credit for cohesion in the spring session, the stakes have been set.

Negotiations on the framework agreement between Switzerland and the EU are deadlocked

A unique farce has been taking place between Brussels and Berne for four years now. The EU wants to create a “roof” over the more than 100 agreements between Switzerland and the EU in order to create “common rules” (= EU law) and thus “legal certainty” (for whom?). In fact, such a construct was doomed to fail from the outset because the EU system happens to be incompatible with the Swiss state structure. Accordingly, the parties are getting increasingly entangled in the negotiations.

Now the EU Commission has once more painted the town red: According to

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the press, EU Commissioner *Johannes Hahn* has once again set the Federal Council a "final date", 7 December.⁸ For its part, the Federal Council has postponed the meeting planned for 30 November to 7 December. Because it is now in a completely new situation: For the first time its majority has fallen - against the framework agreement. (The Federal Council is a collegial government and takes its decisions according to the opinion of its majority).

Majority in the Federal Council has turned: No to the current version of framework agreement

For some time now, the discussion in Berne has mainly revolved around the *accompanying measures for the free movement of persons*, which - not only from the point of view of the trade unions - are indispensable for the protection of domestic jobs from wage dumping and sham service companies. The EU, on the other hand, insists in principle on the adoption of EU law, which protects employees far less against immigration from other EU states. On 27 November, three Federal Councillors met for the umpteenth time with the heads of trade unions and employers' associations and with cantonal representatives. The programme on the *Swiss television news "Tagesschau"* lasted 1:02 minutes and brought nothing new: The trade unions insist on the Swiss wage protection measures, the Federal Council

wants "to reach agreement with the EU on the framework agreement before the end of the year".⁹

But what is absolutely new is that the two SP (Swiss Social Democratic Party) Federal Councillors *Simonetta Sommaruga* and *Alain Berset* - who have actually always been in favour of closer integration of Switzerland into the EU - do not want to leave the trade unions out in the rain now and have therefore taken sides with the two SVP Federal Councillors *Ueli Maurer* and *Guy Parmelin*, who have always been opposed to a framework agreement. This means that four Federal Councillors are opposed to the other three from the FDP and CVP (Christian Democratic People's Party), i.e. the Federal Council as a whole is opposed to the current version of the agreement and to Brussels.

Wage protection discussion distracts from actual legal nature of Framework Agreement

Despite these new majorities, the Federal Council has still not disclosed what should really be in the treaty. For the mysterious framework agreement would have to overcome the high hurdle of a popular referendum, which would understandably give the EU turbos in the Bundeshaus a headache. However, keeping the contents of the treaty locked up for this reason does not comply with the rules of direct democracy.

Anyway, the essential contents have long been known: Switzerland would have to automatically adopt past and future EU law, and the *EU Court of Justice* would

decide how EU law is to be interpreted. A court of arbitration could at most decide on a few important disagreements. Whatever legal content the *Federation of Trade Unions* or the Federal Council today refer to as red lines - something quite different is of real central importance: If Switzerland were to commit itself to adopting laws that the EU would not adopt for another 5 or 10 years, we as citizens would waive our political rights in advance. And that applies to an unknown number of laws with unknown contents. Whether in 5 or 10 years EU leaders will allow restricting themselves by the red lines, they once promised Switzerland, is most questionable. It is also still unclear for how many and for which bilateral agreements Switzerland would have to adopt EU law.

So the real reason why the Federal Council won't tell us what exactly is included is obvious: If we could read it in black and white where Brussels wants to intervene, then the federal government of Berne can forget about signing the framework agreement.

Trade unions want to prevent a yes to Limitation Initiative

On 31 August 2018, the SVP and the *Auns (Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland)* submitted their popular initiative "for a Moderate Immigration" ("Limitation Initiative"). This initiative calls for the termination of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (FMPA) if the Federal Council is unable to negotiate a cessation with the EU within one year. This is why, according to recent newspaper reports, union leaders are insisting so firmly on the Swiss accompanying wage protection measures. Not that their trade unionists should come up with the idea that by managing immigration independently they could protect themselves even better against wage dumping.

By the way, the limitation initiative is the result of the parliament's failure to implement the constitutional article on controlling immigration (mass immigration initiative). And the reason for the non-implementation is that the majority of our elected representatives have stared transfixed like rabbits at every frown of the ladies and gentlemen in Brussels when formulating their changes to the law.

The small state of Switzerland is much more flexible than some people think

In fact, the EU states themselves have a great interest in a neighbourhood on good terms with Switzerland. Although it is small, it has a great deal of purchasing power and, above all, financial solvency. Brussels would also be reluctant to fore-

An institutional framework agreement with the EU must be subject to mandatory referendum

The Federal Constitution stipulates

Art. 140 Mandatory referendum

1 The following must be put to the vote of the People and the Cantons: [...] b. accession to organisations for collective security or to supranational communities:

If the National Council and the Council of States should ever approve a framework agreement - which we hope will not happen - then, from the point of view of constitutional law, an obligatory vote by the people and the cantons is necessary. For although the Framework Treaty is not identical with EU accession, it would result in massive restrictions on the direct-democratic and federalist rights of citizens in broad areas of law that are not yet known. The expected cutbacks in people's rights are comparable to those that would occur if we were to join the EEA. In 1992, Parliament therefore made this subject to a *mandatory referendum*.

This classification under constitutional law is confirmed by the current pre-

liminary draft of the Federal Council for an extension of the mandatory referendum to

"international treaties whose implementation requires an amendment to the Federal Constitution or which contain provisions of constitutional rank in one of the following areas [...]" (Federal Constitution Art. 140 para. 1 b to new).¹ It is to be expected that some parliamentarians hope that the optional referendum (without a majority of the cantons) will reduce the risk of failure somewhat. But keeping the people's rights small in the election year is not a favourable option. And to postpone the referendum beyond autumn 2019 for tactical reasons would be too transparent a manoeuvre. So, either an obligatory referendum - or much better: an abort of the whole exercise.

¹ "Mandatory referendum for international treaties of a constitutional nature; implementation of Motion 15.3557 Caroni". Explanatory Report of the Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP of 15 August 2018

Rostock – Centuries of experience in dialogue with Russia

Interview with Roland Methling, Lord Mayor of Rostock (Germany)

cc. Rostock is a member of the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities (IAPMC). The Lord Mayor of Rostock, Roland Methling, attended the 29th General Assembly in Volgograd from 29 October to 2 November. At the same time the V. International Forum “Dialogue on the Volga: Peace and Mutual Understanding in the 21st Century” was held. Representatives of cities and municipalities from 20 countries of the world took part to discuss the preservation of peace and the possible role of municipalities.

On the sidelines of the two events Roland Methling gave the following interview to *Current-Concerns*.



Since 1991 traditional sailing ships from all over the world meet once a year at the Hanse Sail in Rostock. (picture wikipedia)

Current-Concerns: Mr Methling, Rostock and Kaliningrad in Russia - until the end of the Second World War it was Königsberg in East Prussia – have been involved in a town twinning cooperation since 1991. How did you start, and what motivated you personally to become active in this field?

Roland Methling: Rostock is an internationally oriented city. It's coming from our history. As a Hanseatic city and seaport, we are situated waterfront and have always been dependent on trading and maintaining relationships with our neighbours. The city of Rostock currently has 14 official city partnerships and maintains

close cooperation with another 10 cities worldwide.

Our town twinings began in 1957 with Szczecin, formerly named Stettin. At that time it was taboo in the GDR to name it Stettin, that sounded like revanchism. This actually shows that it was not taken for granted; Szczecin was a German city until 1945. In the meantime, however, a deep friendship has developed. It is the oldest German-Polish town twinning.

There are now more than 500 town twinings – contracts between municipalities and local authorities in Germany and Poland. In 2017 we invited all German-Polish town twinning partners to Rostock

to draw the balance and to encourage each other to continue these partnerships.

And especially the partnerships with Russian cities are very important.

Why is this so?

Rostock's relations with Russia already begin in the Hanseatic period, for example with Nizhny Novgorod. Skins from Russia were an important trading commodity of the Hanseatic period in the 13th and 14th centuries. Novgorod was the northernmost Hanseatic trading base. The sailors heading for Novgorod are also a legend in the history of the Hanseatic League.

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go most bilateral agreements. In addition, the small state of Switzerland has the enormous advantage of being very flexible and, thanks to direct democracy and a certain inherent thrift, is usually able to make ends meet better than other countries. We could live well without an FMPA and especially without the land transport agreement. We can certainly also live without EU stock market recognition, just as we found a viable way after being thrown out of Erasmus+

to organise student exchanges much less bureaucratically and even cheaper – and in addition we were even able to financially support foreign guest students. It goes without saying that we want to continue to engage in a lively economic and cultural exchange with the other European states and their peoples, as we have always done, but please on an equal footing.

¹ Motion Germann 18.3935. UN Migration Pact. No signature by Switzerland. On the decision of the Council of States: *SRF News* of 29 November 2018

² *Motion Political Institutions Committee of the Council of States PIC-S 18.4103 and Motion*

Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of States FAC-S 18.4106. UN Migration Pact. Submitting the approval decision to the Federal Assembly

³ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* from 30 November 2018

⁴ *FDFA. Business 18,067* “Economic and social disparities in the enlarged EU. 2nd Swiss contribution to selected EU countries”.

⁵ *SRF News* from 29 November 2018

⁶ Consultation response Canton Glarus 19 June 2018 https://www.admin.ch/ch/d/gg/pc/documents/2948/Zweiter-Schweizer-Beitrag_Stellungnahmen.pdf

⁷ *Press releases of the PIC-S* from 12 October 2018, of the *FC-S* from 19 October 2018, from the *FAC-S* of 26 October 2018

⁸ *St. Galler Tagblatt* from 30 November 2018

⁹ *SRF News* from 29 November 2018

"Rostock – Centuries of experience ..."

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After 1945 we established very close relations, because the Rostock port was an important connection for shipping to the Soviet Union. At that time, the economy was very closely linked: First and foremost, these were reparations that had to be rendered. Ships were built for the then Soviet Union. The first ships were ships that had been sunk in the Baltic Sea. We recovered them, restored them and handed them over to the former Soviet Union. The exchange of goods between the Soviet Union and the GDR was very intensive. They were the main trading partners, and many goods came by sea. Rostock's economy at that time existed from close relations with the Soviet Union. Rostock was the sea trading centre for the Soviet Union and the gateway of the GDR to the world. As is well known, however, this gate was only open to people in one direction until 1989.

And then what happened to the town twinning agreements?

In the decades following the war, town twinning was also to a certain extent state-run. Our first partnership towards the Soviet Union at that time was Riga. Today Riga is our Latvian twin city. Just like Rostock, Riga is over 800 years old, a Hanseatic city, and we are still very, very closely connected today. We are happy when we meet in Riga an international assortment of other Baltic Sea cities and international partners, because that is of course also one of the upsides of town twinning, that one gets to know the town partners of one's own twin towns. If one were to continue such a card system: We have 14 town twinings, Riga has 10 town twinings. If you now add 10 more each, then 140 cities would come together, and in five steps we would probably be able to reach the whole world.

On such occasions you can build up a lot of initial contacts that may be helpful. And this is of course always important for municipalities, especially if someone is interested in Rostock, from Russia or Poland - or from cities in Norway, Denmark, China or the USA, with which we also have partnerships. Then you have a first contact and can inquire: Do you know him, is it worth getting in touch with him? What do you have to pay attention to?

But of course, it also helps if one plays football like in Rostock. When FC Hansa Rostock was still playing in the first Bundesliga, we wanted some contact with Sweden. Within 5 years we had up to six Swedish players in our football-team at that time, who have contributed over 15 years to the fact that we played in the first



(picture: mm)

Roland Methling (independent) was born in Tessin, district Rostock-Land, in 1954. He graduated at the University of Rostock in 1972 with a degree in engineering. From 1978 he worked in various areas of responsibility in the International Seaport of Rostock. In 1990 he moved to the administration of the Hanseatic City. There he led the interna-

league and later in the second league. That, too, can come from town twinning.

But I think it's particularly important for town twinning that one continues promoting trust, that these encounters show that we all have the same tasks, similar worries in the family or in the municipality itself, which, of course, also has a strong unifying effect.

You mentioned earlier the importance of Rostock as a city of shipbuilding - also for town twinning. Can you explain this in more detail?

The port in Rostock was, as already mentioned, more open in one direction in the decades after the war. At the turning point in 1989/1990 we made the decision in Rostock that we wanted to invite to a tall ship meeting in Rostock in 1991. At that meeting, the *Hanse Sail*, more than 100 traditional sailing ships came to Rostock - also ships under steam, which also belong to the world cultural heritage - at that time from 13 nations. The wonderful thing was that we could say for the first time: We invited you. If you invite us, we are prepared to come. We also bring our ships, and we come in person. For forty years it was just a phrase if someone from Denmark or Holland invited us.

Where do the ships come from attending the Hanse Sail today?

From the US, from Sweden, from England, from Holland, from Spain. The *Hanse Sail* has become an annual meeting. These ships are wooed stars, they delight your eyes. By all means, you have to visit us and have to see it. You have to have seen it: when these ships are visible on the horizon, also the Hanseatic cogs that come regularly. With these seven cogs in front of the old town scenery you actually have the feeling that you are thrown back into a somewhat former time. This takes place every year on the second weekend in August.

Do any ships come from Russia?

Russia has the largest traditional sailing ships in the world. These are the sailing ships, the real stars of every regat-

tional meeting of the traditional sailors "Hanse Sail". He has been Lord Mayor of the Hanseatic City of Rostock since 2005. He won the elections twice at the first attempt, most recently in 2012 with 53.8 percent. During his term of office it was possible to completely reduce the deficit in the municipal budget of formerly around 230 million euros with the support of the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. The largest and economically strongest city in the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has thus fully regained its financial power to act.

ta - these ships were originally German ships that were delivered to the Soviet Union as reparations after the Second World War. These ships are also today the stars of our *Hanse Sail*. We are courting them. We court them all year round and have offered these ships a home for many years, for example in the nineties, when things went very badly downwards in Russia. These ships were once the pride of Soviet shipping, these "white swans", but at that time they were very run-down.

Even the crews, who used to walk through the cities in ironed uniforms and white sailor suits, to show the naval power of the former Soviet Union. After 1991, all this was very rundown. We also took care of these ships. We brought them over the winter in the nineties, in the truest sense of the word.

With all the crew?

With the crew. And of course, we built up a piece of friendship and commitment, so that these boatmen feel very comfortable with us. We are envied for that. This is such a small piece of history. They love to come back, and they come when we invite them and when we need them. One always has to acknowledge, that these skippers have hard sailing schedules, they are in training, in the nautical college in Kaliningrad or in Rostock itself. We tell them, for example, that it would be nice if they could come to our *Russia Day* on 17 October. And the Nautical College adapted its schedule and they came to Rostock on 17 October and "provided a scenery" for 850 participants on the third *Russia Day*.

Exactly, only recently Russia Day took place in Rostock for the third time.

Russia Day is an initiative of the state government of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. It was held for the first time four years ago, in 2014. At that time there were - also with a very sceptical eye - some representatives from the German Foreign Ministry. The conflict in Ukraine put a heavy strain on relations between Germa-

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"Freedom, Democracy and ..."

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ny, Western Europe, NATO and Russia. But while many politicians only talked about the fact that one should not break off contacts, we actually maintained these contacts. We continued to cultivate our contacts, and so the third Russia Day this year with 850 participants had even more guests than in previous years. 10 contracts were concluded between economic entrepreneurs and institutions, which underline that nothing will work without Russia. Without Russia, we do not want to shape Europe nor the future.

It is important that we play an active role here, and we support this. The partner region for Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is Leningrad Oblast, in other words the district around St Petersburg. But it is still called Leningrad Oblast. There are also top cultural achievements there. We have invited the *Taurida State Symphony Orchestra* of Leningrad Oblast to Rostock. This orchestra helped to shape the Russia Day. And we made it possible to have an avant-garde art exhibition in a new exhibition area of our Kunsthalle, which we built in Rostock this year to celebrate our 800th birthday. The first exhibition came from Russia. Also this is a symbol, a small sign.

We would like to take another look into recent history. What significance did Rostock have in the GDR?

Rostock was the exposed point of the former GDR to achieve recognition as a GDR state on an international level. Until 1975, Rostock organised the *Ostseewoche* (Baltic Sea Week), an international festival held annually from 1958 to 1975. It usually took place at the beginning of July in the Rostock district and was held under the motto: "The Baltic Sea must be a Sea of Peace".

The Baltic Sea Week then had "seven sisters": Denmark, West Germany, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Poland and the GDR. To repeat an important sentence again and again: "The Baltic Sea must be a Sea of Peace." This sentence, I think, is still true. It has been possible to preserve the Baltic Sea as a Sea of Peace for seventy-five years. This must be continued.

In 1975, at the *Helsinki Conference*, the CSCE, East and West decided reduce propaganda efforts mutually to some extent. That is why there was no longer a Baltic Sea Week as an event to unite nations; because in East and West it was also regarded as a propaganda event. Instead, there were summer festivals. The Kunsthalle, which I mentioned, was built in 1968 for the 750th birthday of the city, but also in connection with the Baltic Sea Week, as a cultural site for the Biennale of the Baltic Sea Countries. There has been an exhibition of avant-garde culture

"Trust and truth are basic values for living together. This includes knowledge about our history, as well as knowledge about the issues in history that still cause mutual distrust today. We must also do something about the very current reservations that still exist towards Russia – but also in the opposite direction. Russia is the largest country in the world, but it has had to experience time and again that nations dared to cover the country with war."

from the seven sister countries since the end of the seventies, and we continue to do so today. That's why it was a bit symbolic that we set up an exhibition area, an extension, next to the Art Gallery. We are also dedicated to art in the Baltic Sea Region. But we also have a focus on Eastern European art in order, together with the University of Rostock, to scientifically research the art of socialist realism, i.e. as an element of Eastern European culture. It is also part of European culture, a culture that is more than a thousand years old. But many still associate Eastern Europe with predominantly communist art.

One notices that you hold your city so dear. Here in Volgograd you have represented your city. How could one raise awareness of the importance of town twinning?

I would like to come back to something I said earlier that is close to my heart: The friendship with the ships has given rise to the idea and now also the Russian's wish to celebrate the 100th birthday of the *Sedov* – a Russian four-mast barque built in Kiel in 1921 and now used as a sailing school ship – in Rostock. Of course, we are trying to give *Sedov* a present, that is, to contribute a little to the fact that this ship can be on the way as an ambassador on the world's oceans for another hundred years.

And perhaps a story will explain the importance of town twinning or internationality. I grew up in the GDR, but what I mean has little to do with communist education, but with a basic humanist attitude: we belong together in this small world.

It can only be peaceful if it is peaceful all over the world. In fact, one can only live well in Europe if the other almost 8 billion people on our planet can live in peace, freedom and dignity as well. I believe this is a challenge. We must work to ensure that, over the next thirty or forty years, these humane living conditions are created at every point on this earth. This is how I grew up, and this is my basic attitude: Everyone is part of it.

Trust and truth are basic values for living together. This includes knowledge

about our history, as well as knowledge about the issues in history that still cause mutual distrust today. We must also do something about the very current reservations that still exist towards Russia – but also in the opposite direction. Russia is the largest country in the world, but it has had to experience time and again that nations dared to cover the country with war.

This is why Volgograd, the former Stalingrad, is such a special place. Anyone who wants to form an opinion from the outside about Russian politics, Russian decisions, Russian behaviour, even today, should have been to Volgograd. He should be a little concerned with history, and he will understand much better that Russia, of course, acts in its own interest out of experience in history. But I have the impression that this interest is always directed towards having equal conditions in the world, and that presupposes that Russia is also acknowledged in such a world.

Back to your question: Town twinning is an international task. Because it is voluntary work, because most cities in Germany are indebted, the work on it is often neglected. Even if the mayors and of course the people in the cities get involved in this international work, the international work does not get the rank it deserves because of our duties and daily tasks, namely to provide kindergarten places and to organise the school and to maintain the streets and to secure the social tasks.

How could that be resolved?

The closing event of the *German Russian Year of Local and Regional Partnerships* took place in Berlin in September. It was noted that last year there were over a thousand activities between German and Russian municipalities. Opportunities to meet at eye level and reduce reservations, but also to shape a piece of multipolar world together. That gives us hope, and that is what we should be guided by.

Mr Methling, thank you very much for the interview and continue to enjoy and succeed in your important work.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Children Accuse – Children-Victims of NATO aggression against FR Yugoslavia”

by Dr phil. Barbara Hug



The NATO war against a small Balkan country is soon celebrating its 20th anniversary. Serbia and Kosovo-Methochia today, then already the fragmented Yugoslavia, experienced a “blitzkrieg” that *Hitler* could not have done better. Novi Sad, Belgrade, southern Serbia and Kosovo have been bombarded with cluster bombs and mini-nukes bringing forth to this day their cruel trail of destruction of life.

The *Commission of the Revealing of Crimes Against Humanity* and against the International Law of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia reveals in the present book the fate of the children who were relentlessly sent to suffering and death. Author is Dr *Margit Savovic*, then Minister of Human Rights in the Yugoslav government. Only a few hundred copies of this documentary have been printed, although it provides substantial background for understanding the magnitude of attacks on the civilian population in April/May 1999.

In the fields, when harvesting or driving the cattle, when playing in the barn, at school, on the bus trip, at the weekend visit to relatives – death came mercilessly. Children were victims, as were their parents and grandparents – all civilian victims.

Precision weapons hit the tractor, where often the whole family was sitting. Craters show the violence of the impact. Who really knows the villages and areas where all this happened? Finding a map and locating the sceneries would be worthwhile. The testimonies produced by the regional police stations give an im-

Having been admonished and warned that he is obliged to tell the truth the witness gave the following statement:

Before NATO aggression I lived in Belgrade with my husband and two underage children in 241 Jurija Gagarina Street. I was an employee of ITM factory, more precisely I was working in tractor production section on technical preparation as mechanical engineer. My husband and I had a summer house in Rajja, with the estate of 70a, which my husband inherited from his father.

From the beginning of NATO aggression we had to hide in basements - our skyscraper did not have a shelter. The basements were damp, the atmosphere was tense, the danger warning sirens sounded too often, so we used to go to Rajja often to have a break - there were no sirens there, the atmosphere was relaxed. My husband and I thought it would be much better for the children to be there than in the town. From the beginning of NATO aggression till the bombardment of Rajja we went there 3 times - we would go to our summer house on Friday and come back on Monday.

I do not remember the bombardment, I cannot remember what happened that day. Even when I woke up in the hospital I did not know why I was there, but nobody - relatives, physicians - was strong enough to tell me what had happened. I tried later to remember anything in connection with that day. I could only remember that whenever we went to Rajja we would have dinner together, then I would bath the children, and then all of us would go to sleep together. We would lie in the same bed, we felt safer that way, and I thought that was the best for the children. That was all I could remember in connection with the event.

Later did I find out from my relatives that the bombardment happened in the night of May 26/27, 1999 around 23:30, when our summer cottage was directly hit by a bomb. Surely there were no soldiers in our house. They told me that my underage children Stefan, aged 7, and Dajana, aged 5, got killed, and that my husband had been pulled out of the ruins together with me, that he was had been taken to hospital, and that he had died 7 days after this event.

(Pavlović Branislava's signature)

pression of the circumstances of death, of the nature of the injuries, we see bodies

with torn heads, carbonised bodies, documented in the hospital, autopsy reports, the destruction of residential buildings, photographic images complete the testimonies of the survivors.

Branislava Pavlovics from Rajja for example, who lost her husband and her children, places on record (see above).

The Yugoslav Committee of *UNICEF* composed this collection – but it was not allowed to reach the public. The 500 printed copies disappeared, and only thanks to Dr Savovic posterity gets a copy thereof. The death of a child also destroys the lives of the parents and of the whole family. Every breath parents live with their children and for their children. The emotional connection is so close and unique that the parents, so to speak, die with their children. Who can gauge this suffering and injustice caused by the “blitzkrieg”?

In the meantime, Serbia and Kosovo are experiencing a constantly rising can-

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“Austria’s peace message to the world”

On the national exhibition “200 years Silent Night! Holy Night!”

by Urs Knoblauch, cultural journalist, Fruthwilen TG

The Christmas carol “Silent Night! Holy Night” sung in many languages worldwide celebrates its 200th birthday.

A song of hope on peace in hard times

It was born during hard times. People in Austria and Bavaria suffered for more than 20 years in the Napoleonic Wars. At the beginning of the 19th century French war troops were in the country, poverty and violent crime were part of everyday life in Austria. After Napoleon’s defeat, the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) led to a new order in Europe, which also affected Salzburg, Tyrol and Upper Austria. As from 1816, after changing of power relations Salzburg no longer belonged to Bavaria, but to Imperial Austria. In this situation of historical upheaval, the song strengthened the hope of togetherness, justice and peace and was intended to help people and countries to unite in mutual goodwill.

Austria will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the beautiful song, its genesis and history of impact at nine places worth seeing and in museums with exhibitions and events until 3 February 2019. In this context, a richly illustrated musicological publication was published “Stille Nacht. Das Buch zum Lied” by Thomas Hochradner and Michael Neureiter (Ed.) (ISBN 978-3-7025-0865-4). Founded as an association, the “Stille-Nacht-Gesellschaft” (Silent-Night-Society) was particularly proactive and has also published the “Stille-Nacht-Wegbegleiter” (Silent-Night-Guide).

It is the first decentralised regional exhibition in Salzburg, Oberndorf, Arnsdorf, Hallein, Hintersee, Wagrain, Mariapfarr, Hochburg-Ach and Fügen in the Zillertal. In most places, visitors can visit a “Silent-Night-Museum”, stroll along a peace trail designed for the exhibition or visit a spe-



Franz Xaver Gruber composing in Arnsdorf with Joseph Mohr, coloured lithograph by Franz Kulstrunk, around 1920 (Edition Tyrol). (Illustration from the accompanying book)

cial exhibition in the “Salzburg Museum Neue Residenz”, which was thematically designed according to the six song verses. At an international conference in St. Virgil, Governor Wilfried Haslauer recalled Salzburg’s commitment to be “ambassador of the idea of peace”. At the conference a variety of aspects of “200 years of peace message uniting the people” were discussed under the motto “culture(s) of peace”. The exhibition is accompanied by the book “Stille Nacht 200. Geschichte. Botschaft. Gegenwart” (Silent Night 200. History. Message. Presence).

Christmas and peace carol as UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage

The pleasant events make it clear that the people not only have a very close relationship to this people-uniting carol with the Christmas message of the birth of Christ, but that the carol is sung across all borders of religions and cultures worldwide. It has since been translated into 300 languages, interpreted in a variety of artistic ways and included in the *Immaterial Cultural Heritage of UNESCO* in 2011. The National Exhibition and the “Austria’s peace message to the world” focus not only on the creators and their biographies, but also on beautiful cultural landscapes, places and museums. The lyrics, originally a poem with six verses and the title “Silent Night, Holy Night”, were written in 1816 by the Salzburg priest Joseph Mohr and two years later musically

set to music by the Upper Austrian teacher Franz Xaver Gruber. He composed the deeply human melody in D major for two singing voices with guitar accompaniment. It was first chanted by Mohr and Gruber on 24 December 1818 at the end of the Christmas Mass. The song then went around the world.

Insights into the biographies of the two song writers

At the various exhibition venues, the visitor is introduced to the biographies of the two creators of the song. “Joseph Mohr was born in Salzburg on 11 December 1792 as an illegitimate child and was baptised in the Salzburg Cathedral. A cathedral vicar”, so the introductory text to the national exhibition, “recognised the abilities of the young man and helped him to become a priest. His first position was in Mariapfarr, where in 1816 he wrote the text of the song. In 1817 he moved to Oberndorf, where he met Franz Xaver Gruber and the fruitful cooperation began. On Christmas Eve 1818 the world-famous song was heard in the church of St. Nikola.” In the Salzburg Museum and the Oberndorf Silent-Night-Museum, visitors can gain an insight into the work of the two personalities, the creation of the song, the included message of peace and its dissemination throughout the entire world. In the Silent-Night-Museum in

“Children Accuse –”

continued from page 14

cer rate, caused by the ammunition used. A test area for new weapons, that was also the 1999 war. Nobody feels responsible, nobody wants to take responsibility. We should certainly take note of it. • Savovic, Margit. *Children Accuse – Children-Victims of NATO Aggression against FR Yugoslavia*. Ed. by Yugoslav Commission for the cooperation with UNICEF, Belgrade 2002, 490 p., ISBN 86-7552-013-1

The book can be ordered in its electronic form against a contribution towards costs at b.hug@thurweb.ch.

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"Austria's Peace Message ..."

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Hallein you can meet the composer Franz Xaver Gruber on theme walks and by a visit to the museum. From 1835 to 1863 he "stayed with his family in the Salinenstadt and worked as a choirmaster, as an organist of the city parish church and as a foundation administrator". Here he composed over 90 masses in addition to the Christmas carol. "The 'Halleiner Liedertafel 1849', founded by him and his son Franz, still exists today." Gruber died in 1863 and found his last resting place in Hallein. The F. X. Gruber memorial house in Hochburg-Ach, with a newly designed path of peace which leads to Oberndorf, takes visitors back to the life of Franz Xaver Gruber, son of a peasant linen weaver family.

You can also learn more about the composer in the Arnsdorf Silent-Night-Museum: "From 1807 to 1829 Gruber worked as a teacher, sacristan and organist in Arnsdorf. It was the first position of the young teacher who, soon after entering service, married the widow of his predecessor." The place has the oldest still used school building in Austria. Gruber must have composed the melody here. The traditional schoolroom suggests investigating the question of how the

school was like at the beginning of the 19th century under teacher Franz Xaver Gruber. At that time, learning was carried out so well with the simplest ways and means, with large classes and without professionalised pedagogy that admirable building-up work was possible in all areas of the country.

Mariapfarr is a famous place of pilgrimage with a Silent-Night-Museum, which was newly designed for the anniversary year and shall commemorate the heyday of pilgrimage as well. The purpose of religious pilgrimages is to find inner peace, reflection and orientation. Here the young priest Joseph Mohr wrote the text for the Christmas carol. It is also the birthplace of his father and Mohr's first office. In 1827, he moved to Hintersee. The village had only 272 inhabitants at that time. The position as a priest was financially poorly endowed. "Yet he tried to support the poor. According to tradition, he has passed on firewood of the parish and has purchased and given away meat from poachers. He also took special care of the children's education." This is an impressive example of how the church built up schools, hospitals and social institutions. After moving to Wagrain in 1837, Mohr also took care of the church, pastoral care, care of the poor, and education until his death in 1848. To his in-

itiative, Wagrain owed the construction of a school building". The Silent-Night-Museum is located in the "Pflegerschlössl", where visitors can enjoy the song melody in numerous languages and instrumentalisations or get to know Christmas dishes from all over the world.

In Fügen Castle in Tyrol, the notes of the Christmas carol were found in the luggage of organ builder *Carl Mauracher*, who was on his way to Zillertal. According to oral tradition, Silent Night! Holy Night! has already been sung in 1819 and three years later on the occasion of the visit of Emperor *Franz Josef I.* and Tsar *Alexander I.* of Russia in the castle of Count *Dönhoff*. "Tyrolean traveling vendors, jokers, dancers and singing families – predominantly from the Zillertal – spread this and many other songs and the alpine culture to the USA and St. Petersburg." The special exhibition in the castle shows the worldwide dissemination of the Christmas carol in more than 30 rooms. This cultural peace initiative of Austria is very meritorious. It makes the longing for peace and the manifold cultural contribution of the people obvious. It is to be hoped that the musical message of peace will sound around the globe. •

Further information: www.landesaussstellung2018.at, stillenacht@salzburg.gv.at, www.stillenacht.at

Cooperative founded – Future of the Peter-Sodann-Library now assured



ef. On 17 November 2018 the founding meeting of the cooperative "Peter-Sodann-Library eG – against transgression" was held in Staucha, Saxony.

By this founding Peter Sodann, whom many vividly recall as "Tatort"-Inspector [famous detective series in German TV], has provided a framework for his collection of GDR literature 1945–1990, to preserve his life's work for future generations. When in 1989 books from the GDR were to be disposed of by trucks, he was outraged: "You throw away your history" – and called for the books not to be destroyed, but to be stored. Many have responded to this call to this day (c.f. Current Concerns No 14 from

2 June 2015). In the meantime, more than 2.5 million books have been collected.

At the up-coming Leipzig Book Fair from 21 to 24 March 2019, Peter Sodann and the chairman of the cooperative's supervisory board, Dietmar Berger, will present the cooperative together with "Zeit-Fragen" on the topic "Peter-Sodann-Library – GDR Literature from 1945 to 1990".

With respect to the founding of the cooperative the following press release appeared:

On 17 November 2018, 46 interested and willing people met in Staucha at the place of the Peter-Sodann-Library and founded the "Peter-Sodann-Library eG* – against transgression".

The concern and goal of this unique cooperative is that the literature, which was published after World War II in East Germany, be collected, secured and be made available to the following generations. With their membership and without nostalgia, the members of the cooperative want to be given back its dignity for the literature of the GDR, which was taken to

rubbish tips or incinerated in power station furnaces in 1990.

In addition to this, the cooperative wants that the lifework of "Peter Sodann" and his wife be continued; Peter Sodann was almost the only one in the former GDR to recognise the incipient outrage at everything that was printed in the GDR as one of the most cultureless acts in unified Germany and to defend himself against it with his initiative.

The foundation meeting decided upon the statutes of the cooperative and voted for the committee. *Dietmar Berger*, Chemnitz, was elected chairman of the supervisory board; Peter Sodann, as deputy chairman will also be involved in the work of the cooperative library. Other elected board members are *Bernd Pawlowski*, Otterwisch, and *Klaus Lehmann*, Radeberg. •

* eG=registered cooperative

For further questions to
Dietmar Berger,
Tel. 0049 172 7983170

Art that leads into the centre of human life

Looking back on 60 years of work performed by Theo Dannecker

by Peter Küpfer

Zurich artist Theo Dannecker presents a comprehensive work documentary in three volumes: at the same time a biography of the artist, a contemporary testimony and a work of art. In the sumptuously crafted work, the artist tirelessly deals with the questions: What is man? Who am I? In which world are we living? And what is my contribution, as a fellow human being and as an artist, to make it more human? The impressive synthesis between biography, testimonial and art is in itself a work of art.

The present three volumes document, page for page, the development of the artist and his ever-moving work. At the same time, it documents his personal becoming, as a contemporary and as an artist, and his constant examination of our unfortunately most torn world. What holds it together, according to the irrefutable message of the artist *Theo Dannecker*, is man himself: the human element. Its traces and manifestations, at the same time the artist's unshakable belief that it will eventually assert itself in the humanitarian question of war and peace, and his knowledge of it, are tangible page for page in the three thoroughly arranged volumes.

Touching vernissage – Exhibition attracted many people

On that Thursday (04-10-2018), the evening of the vernissage, people crowded around the former schoolroom of the schoolhouse Brugg, now a cultural centre, where the art book was presented by Theo Dannecker. The artist had spent his first school years in this very building. The former mayor *Harald Huber* said in his opening speech that for Adliswil it was not the first exhibition of "their" Theo Dannecker, but a great honour that the artist had now also chosen Adliswil

to present his book. It could clearly be seen as an expression of the artist's attachment to his home town. The three-volume work was presented to the public by art historian *Dr Vera Zirotz Gut*, who has been following and commenting on the work of the Zurich artist for years. By giving an overview of the doc-

with a less crowded visit in the next few days and had the opportunity to meet the artist in person and talk to him about his art. It also led right into the middle of human life, its threats and its richness. The vernissage of the book and the Adliswil exhibition allowed close friends and art lovers to experience the artist up



To argue in peace. Theo Dannecker in conversation with exhibition visitors. (picture pk)

umentation she conveyed important stages of Theo Dannecker's impressive artistic career and the development of his art, on the basis of selected examples. The vernissage of the book was accompanied by an exhibition of the artist's central works. Following the presentation and appreciation of the book, the audience was able to indulge in a selection of key works by Theo Dannecker in the rooms of the neighbouring *Galerie Kunst Süd*, as far as the stream of interested visitors permitted. Many caught up

close, for many a visually moving, human encounter. Among the visitors were many who had also experienced the artist as an art teacher in his painting school at the heart of Zurich; it has "produced" whole generations of art lovers. Among the many visitors to the exhibition – as the guest book with its appreciating entries shows – was *Fritz Billeter*, who at the time had "discovered" the then little-known young Zurich artist and had recognised him as an independent personality. •

A construction site for peace

Book launch and exhibition of Swiss artist Theo Dannecker in Adliswil 2018

by Dr Vera Zirotf Gut

To mark his eightieth birthday, *Theo Dannecker* presents his lifework in a three-volume documentary, an art object itself. It was printed, numbered and signed in an edition of 100 pieces. It covers a working life, a period of 60 years. The documentary is far from showing all of the artist's drawings, paintings and objects, but it does contain a plentiful number of key works. On the basis of this publication, we can understand his development in drawing and sculpting during his studies, his inspirations from travelling, further education and study visits, which then lead to first successes and later to numerous exhibitions. But it also reveals doubts, crises and changes, which in turn feed into a continuous development dedicated to the most important issue of our time: building a peaceful world worth living in.

It all started in Adliswil

Theo Dannecker was born in 1938 in Adliswil, Zurichstrasse. He grew up as the youngest of four children of the Dannecker family. In Adliswil he attended the kindergarten with Aunt *Marta*, prima-

ry and secondary school, and then completed an apprenticeship as a decorator and upholsterer in Zurich. When asked, at what stage he consciously started to paint, he answers: *Max*, his older brother, was very good at drawing and skiing, he supported him in a way that he could learn both very quickly and well from him. In primary school – Theo adds modestly – there were colleagues who painted better than he did. But he was fascinated by painting and did not let it go. When in the new Kronenwiese primary school building the painter *Fis* executed the mural “Noah’s Ark” he had a great admirer in Theo and involved the boy in his reflections. As is well known, all species seek shelter on the Ark, and there are two ways to get in. In terms of the crayfish the artist asked Theo: Across which board did the crayfish get into the ark? Theo, of course, indicated the closest. “No,” said *Fis*, “the crayfish move backwards and therefore head for another board.” Theo mentions this childhood experience, because this answer made him realise that the artist not only paints what he sees, but reflects upon it too, and from that he concluded at the time: “I can do that too.” So the scene was set for him to become a painter.

Training

To be admitted to the “Kunstgewerbeschule” (School of Applied Arts in Zurich), a folder with drawings had to be submitted and a three-day entrance exam had to be sat by the applicants. Theo’s folder caught the eye and showed that he no longer belonged to the preliminary course. Thus he was allocated to a class of more mature students, led by *Heinrich Müller*, a well-known painter from Thalwil. This is where the documentation begins: It starts with a sheet from the drawing portfolio, showing a *Violin and the drawing of a top hat with gloves and flowers* (fig. 1). If



The farmer (fig. 2)



Statuette of the farmer (fig. 3)

we leaf a little further, travel sketches show what Theo learned during his study years. In Barcelona he spent the night in the youth hostel and painted a gouache picture of the mansion on the opposite hill in expressive colours. The *water carrier* and the *farmer* with his expressive profile (fig. 2) testify to the increase in liveliness and expressiveness. During his stay in Ibiza, the young artist retreated completely to solitude, convinced of reclusiveness being an indispensable precondition for the creation of great works



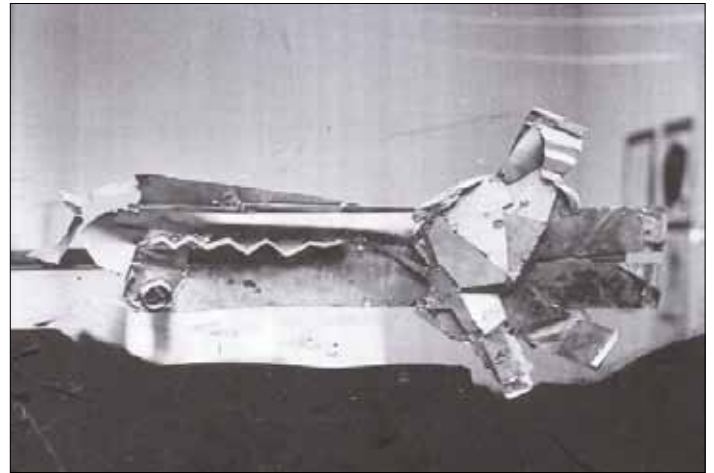
Violin and the drawing of a top hat with gloves and flowers (fig. 1)

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of art. Back in Adliswil he made a *statuette* of the farmer (fig. 3). With this statuette and a few other objects and drawings, he applied at the *Royal Academy of Arts* in Copenhagen, in order to further develop his sculptural skills. He was awarded a scholarship for the class of Professor *Eikoff*, a *Despiau* student. But more than by the *Despiau* school Theo then was intrigued by Picasso and cubist art. In his free evening hours he sculpted a cubist venus after the 1908 discovered 30,000 years old Venus of Willendorf. In addition, he collected aluminum waste and used it to make the sculpture *Dargebotene Hand* (*Helping Hand*, fig. 4). In 1963, still based in Copenhagen, he participated in the competition about a sculpture for the cemetery of Adliswil. It was good to have a classical artistic training as a prerequisite for correct pro-

portioning, spatial drawing and painting; but Theo Dannecker knew of course that the art scene had long changed. *Kienholz* e.g. had seized on issues such as discrimination and violence in his socially critical environments, and *Joseph Beuys* did his performances and as a sculptor called for social sculpture as a creative contribution to society and politics. After a year of studying, when Professor *Eikhoff* sent Theo Dannecker's best nude drawings to an exhibition, Theo moved on, in search of himself and his

*Dargebotene Hand* (*Helping Hand*, fig. 4)

art, drawing on his trips, in the open air or, like classical artists, in museums.

Rauma drawings

In 1964, Theo Dannecker was awarded a scholarship by the canton of Zurich and went to Dublin. This is where the first *Rauma drawing* (fig. 5) came into being, which, as was confirmed by his Zurich artist friend *Alex Sadkowsky* at the time, could be seen as a very special achievement. In Zurich, however, nobody wanted to exhibit these masterly, spatially complex pencil drawings, which the artist presented in black boxes. Until a gallery owner advised him to turn to the well-known art critic and cultural editor of the Zurich quality paper "*Tages-Anzeiger*", *Fritz Billeter*. Theo loaded his *Rauma drawings* in the black boxes on his moped and drove to where he hoped to meet *Billeter*. He recommended him a quite new gallery and wrote an excellent review under the title "*Die Phantastik des Alltäglichen*" (*The Phantastical of the Everyday*). It states: "Theo Dannecker, born in 1938 in Adliswil, where he has returned to after long travels to the Mediterranean, Ireland, England, Canada, and the US, exhibits, to our knowledge, for the first time in Switzerland, and his drawings give rise to the most beautiful hopes. [...] Dannecker shows front views of houses, of floors, which he alienates and raises into the fantastic. Walls expected to be strictly orthogonal are distended into caves and hiding places; rooms become canyons and unfathomable shafts [...] At first glance, Dannecker might be seen as a soft *Piranesi*; but in reality, the fantastic and the surreal recede toward the mundane. [...] Coming from the demonic and the dreamlike, he breaks into the light, but not into the brightness of higher insight and transfiguration, but of the pointless trivial." (translation *Current Concerns*) The comparison with *Pirane-*

*Rauma drawing* (fig. 5)

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si, the great Italian engraver of the eighteenth century, was quite true, because Piranesi's Carceri etchings, architectural fantasies, had impressed Theo very early. With this exhibition Theo Dannecker became known in one go. He sold well; now he was one of them. Several other exhibitions followed, together with other Zurich artists like *Richard P. Lohse*, *Wilfried Moser*, *Otto Müller*, *Hans Josephson*, *Alex Sadkowsky* and *Max Bill*.

The *Rauma* drawings thus play an important role in the development of Theo Dannecker's work, it was through them he became known. But they also lead to a comprehensive image analysis and to a more conscious self-analysis and dissection of the socio-political problems of our time.

Contribution to a better world

In 1967, during stays in Canada and the US, Theo Dannecker was confronted with the student protests against the Vietnam War, and the problem of war and peace has not let go of him – both as a person and an artist – ever since. When he heard that in Zurich these issues were being discussed in groups of the individual psychologists *Friedrich Liebling* and *Josef Rattner*, he went there, participated and asked his question - what he as an artist could contribute to a better world? Friedrich Liebling gave him a response that included a task for life, as

every psychologically trained person can see: If he was looking for a way to find an answer to his question, then he must learn to better understand himself and his fellow human beings.

For Theo Dannecker this was the starting point for a psychological study in the broadest sense. He took up studies about the importance of early childhood development and education at home, school and in society, about the constitution of society and much more. As a result, he wondered if the *Rauma* drawings could be related to his early childhood impressions. At first they had been brought into being far away from Adliswil, in Ireland, in self-imposed loneliness. When questioned further, however, it showed that visual and emotional childhood impressions had been aesthetically processed, places of childhood, places of experience ("Erlebnisorte"), as he calls them: the birthplace on Zurichstrasse, the parents' house in Austrasse, the mural from the Kronenwiese schoolhouse, the long wards of the children's hospital or the pipes of the Ritom power plant in Ticino. Many details appeared in these pictures. It was remarkable that in this series of images, man played only a minor role.

In two analytical photo spreads Theo captured the "places of experience". Thus, new, complementary works were created, which explain contextual and formal relations. Theo Dannecker has moved on, dealing with human history and capturing every step of his development, doubts and insights in textual images and concepts, presenting them in exhibitions and making them accessible in this documentary. For a few years, he completely renounced pictorial representation and developed his conceptual art.

In 1972, Theo Dannecker opened a private art school in Zurich. Since then, he has been teaching drawing and designing, turning to the younger generation as a teacher and, as he calls it, doing basic research.

In 1973, for the exhibition of Zurich artists in the *Aargauer Kunsthau*, he designed a text as a catalogue contribution that fascinated me as an art historian – at the time I got to know Theo Dannecker. "As an artist, I have to understand my intentions and my actions exactly, so that I do not run the risk of contributing to the great errors that torment people."

This way of working which he had gained through the analysis of the *Rauma* drawings has ever since been part of his creative process. To present a topic first of all out of the situation, out of a feeling that results from immediate life-context, to analyse it and, in addition, to check the composition in terms of flawlessness. And for quite a while, Theo Dannecker included this analysis right in the picture.

Lovers reading

In 1994, when Theo Dannecker resumed figurative painting, his themes and his painting changed and he then formulated his theory, following *Leo Tolstoy*: "Art should create formal and spiritual order". The artist vividly presented his new concept of art in his series of pictures "*Lovers reading*" (fig. 7) in his St. Moritz exhibition. Here, various painterly techniques are used to develop a vivid picture of a love relationship.

He chose a certain format and placed the lovers at the centre of his composition. In the first picture, the two figures are fixed almost abstractly with adhesive tape and executed in fast wide pink brush strokes. The two figures are embedded in a green nature, which is also briefly indicated with a broad brush. What is important: Already in this picture the woman is holding the book, a symbol of knowledge. Picture 2 concentrates on the naturalistic elaboration of the composition. The natural body contours are outlined with charcoal and worked out in pink. The man is prominently settled in the foreground in a natural position. The two persons have clearly taken on portrait-like features. In the third picture the relationship develops, the woman moves into the foreground, the man straightens up and turns towards her. The surrounding nature, the curved tree trunks and branches form a protective circle around the couple. The blue background, dense and compact, also suggests spatial depth and is complementary to the yellow bodies. The "disturbing" black rectangular frame says: the artist does not want to show an idyll, something else is happening here. Let us add what is written: they are reading *Frieda Fromm-Reichmann's* publication "Psychology". So the picture now says: Man, part of nature, becomes a mature individual only through his interpersonal relationships, through his dealings and relations with his fellow men, by getting to know the others. On the basis of eroticism, of mutual attraction, love is presented here as a mental and spiritual process, a process of education and human development, the result of which is a feeling of security and togetherness, i.e. happiness. The harmony found in the picture is depicted in panels four and



(fig. 6)

(fig. 6)

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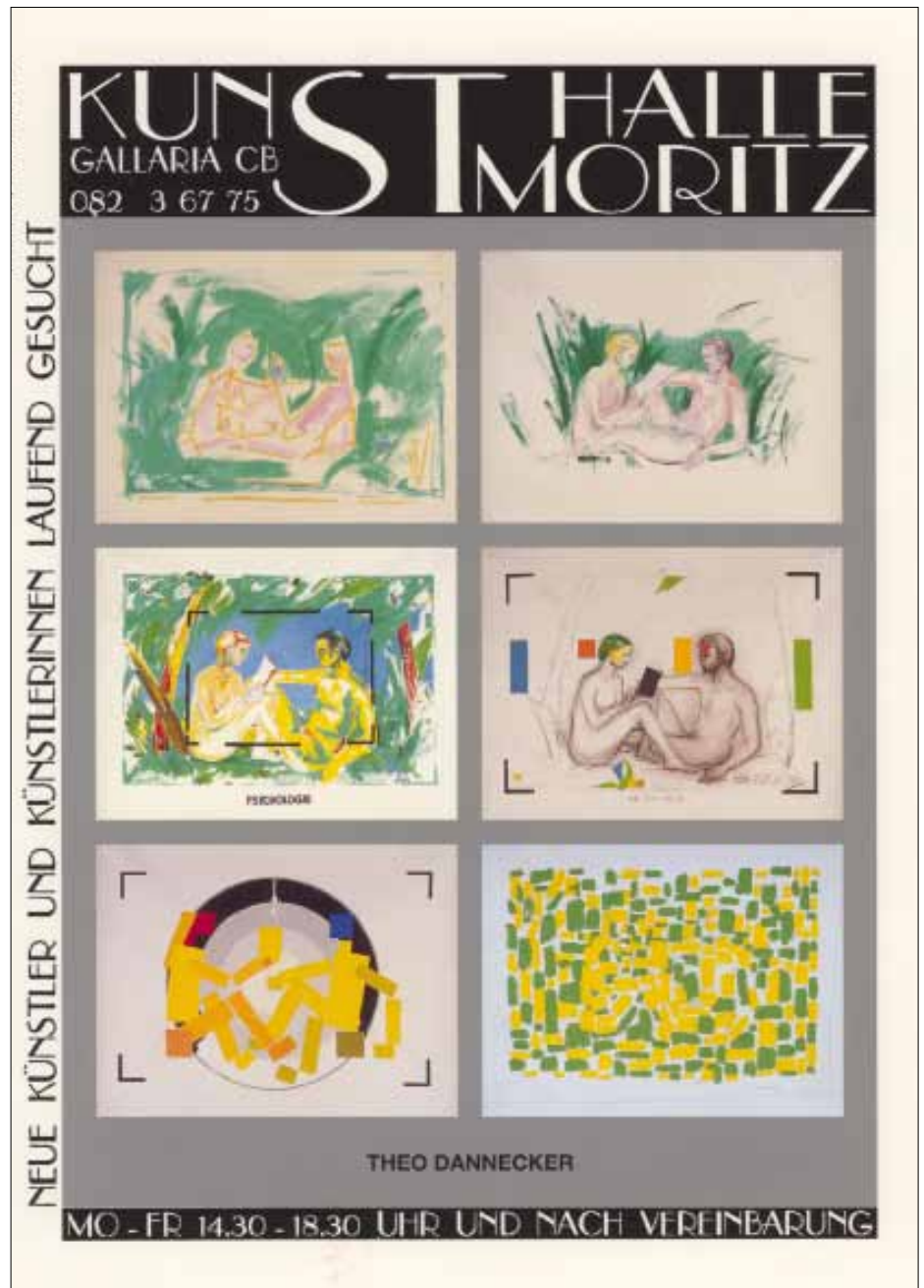
five through various painterly concepts, in confrontation with the *Zurich Concrete Art*. And in the last picture the found harmony, the found order is dissolved into a two-coloured flat structure, yellow the figures and the nature green.

Studio Painting 1996

Theo Dannecker demonstrates his new conception of art, his conceptual and organisational thinking in his first *Studio Painting of 1996* (fig. 8), on the subject of learning how to learn, to draw and to paint. Art is no longer created in solitude; it is taught and learnt. The artist presents his studio as an art school. The arrangement of the persons, the pupils and art students with the painter, who is their teacher, represent a first level of order: Within the circle there are those art students who are learning different techniques. The standing person in front on the left is using the classical articulated puppet for her drawing. The person standing behind her is holding up her pencil to take measurements. The male black-and-white figure, presented very plastically, is holding three chisels and a hammer in his hand; he embodies the work of a sculptor. The figure seen from the back sitting in front of the table is drawing the anatomical specimen of a stag beetle according to nature. Outside the circle are those concerned with art theory, art historical tradition and art education. Of course, it is very important to note what is read and what role models one deals with. The young woman is reading "The artist and his time" by *Camus*, a lecture rendered by Camus at the Nobel Prize ceremony in 1957. Here he warns the artist not to engage in a party programme; he should rather acquire an ethical attitude to his profession and to society.

At the front of the picture, stands Theo Dannecker as the teacher. With a string, he is pointing to the centre of the picture: to the beautiful self-portrait by *Albrecht Dürer*. Dürer wrote very encouraging words about creativity in his "Didaktika": "No man can create a beautiful portrait out of his own imagination, if he has not filled his mind by means of much painting according to nature. This can no longer be called personal, but has become 'art', won and learned through that practice which germinates, grows and bears fruit."

In a third room in the background of the picture, slightly above Dürer's portrait, we see in perspective extension Theo Dannecker as a painter at his easel, in the gilet rouge favoured by Cézanne. There are many allusions to major fellow artists, to Rembrandt, Cézanne, to the artists of Zurich Concrete Art; and in all these al-



"Lovers reading" (fig. 7)

lusions is expressed Dannecker's positive view of the world, a differentiated, constructive view of the world and of man. In this studio art is not a secret; it is taught and learned. But if art is to endure, the fundamental social values must be included in this process.

We are at war

The second volume of the work edition includes the works of the mature Theo Dannecker, if we want to stick to art historical terms. I do not know how to express this in a better way, but it is life itself that Theo Dannecker paints now. Almost all the paintings show people, and sometimes there are even flower paintings like the homage to *Manet*.

But there is news, not long in coming: *It's war*, delivered by a head that seems to have been borrowed from Picasso's anti-

war painting *Guernica*. Already in 1977, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Theo Dannecker had designed his portfolio "Wir Menschen und der Krieg" ("We humans and war"). *The Weeping Head* (fig. 9 on p. VI) from 1990, an expressive profile drawing, was executed after reading *Romain Rolland's* novel "Clérambault, the Story of a Free Conscience in War". It expresses grief over the condition of human beings like us, who cannot live together in peace even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, after the so-called collapse of the Soviet Union.

The memorial against war (fig. 9 on p. VI), a grey-black plaster head, was developed from a stone the artist found in Venice on the day the Americans began bombing Afghanistan. He laments the war

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Studio Painting of 1996 (fig. 8)

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victims of the past 25 years in Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Yemen ... In its destroyed parts, its torn surface and its hollows, the head on the one hand symbolises the suffering of the war victims, and on the other, in its protrusions and distortions the grimace of the aggressors.

Building peace

But Theo Dannecker does not stop at the graphic accounts of misery and war crimes; he wants to contribute to the construction and shaping of a peaceful world. "Progressing towards a humane society with the help of depth psychological insights into human nature" is the title of an exhibition that he is producing together with Urs Knoblauch and others. Dannecker's theme is now "Building peace". He creates an art campaign in form of 1000 numbered and signed wooden tablets displaying this inscription, which he distributes all over the world in the course of 10 years. One of these tablets can be found with the *Moscovitz* couple in Israel, one on the counter of the electrician's shop at the Kreuzplatz in Zurich, or one at the Fazer cafe in Helsinki. Under this motto, however, he also organises numerous exhibitions with an ever-changing focus. He creates images of human development and of the family, which on the one hand

provides *emotional security* (fig. 10), but also demands *humanity* (fig. 11) and the assumption of *responsibility*. Other pictures are dedicated to the school, to learning, to education, to the importance of the primary school in building direct democracy, and others again are dedicated to the cooperative, to self-sufficiency, to independence, to the economic and political construction of society, to the Swiss Con-

federation, and to the Swiss model. Theo Dannecker never forgets his fellows, those in need.

International law applies to everyone

Under the title "Building Peace – International Law Applies to Everyone" (fig. 12), Theo Dannecker shows an example of how humiliated and severely aggrieved peoples might be given back their dignity through the conclusion of peace. In the main picture, representatives of the western world meet representatives from Afghanistan, Iraq and from African tribes. In this historic meeting a Western politician comes to meet an Afghan with the words: "We have done wrong". So the first step is from the West. The admission of guilt, the willingness to make amends and to listen to another and to understand one another" are mentioned here as prerequisites for a genuine peace agreement.

2006 Studio painting

If we ask Theo Dannecker how he got there and how he came to be so certain in his will to create peace without war, without preventive wars, then we can find his answer in his 2006 *Studio Painting* (fig. 13). Here he has gathered all those people around him who encouraged him in the idea of "creating peace":

Immanuel Kant, for example, the German philosopher, called his writing of 1795, in which he developed a first sketch of international law, "Perpetual Peace". It is regarded as the most important treatise on war and peace in the German language. He concluded with the remarkable sentence "that perpetual peace

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The Weeping Head and the memorial against war (fig. 9)



Emotional security (fig. 10)

Pestalozzi, pedagogue and social reformer, adds an important humanitarian accent to the protest against war with the aid he gave to surviving war orphans. He wanted to strengthen their whole person through a natural upbringing and education.

The importance of education for peaceful coexistence is pointed out several times in this picture. The two prominent figures in the centre of the foreground, the elegantly dressed humanist *Erasmus of Rotterdam* with his scroll and Count *Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy* in his modest white cotton garb, represent the pedagogical idea. So does *Sibylle*, Theo Dannecker's wife and herself a pedagogue. Erasmus' scroll quotes the beautiful sentence from his pacifist "*Lament of Peace*": "Peace is hardly ever so unjust that it would not be preferable to the apparently most 'just' war". Erasmus devoted himself to the education of the regent, later *Charles V*, in order

to bring about a peaceful and beneficial policy; Tolstoy founded schools for his serfs, for the poorest, for the people. The contribution of artist colleagues *Pablo Picasso* and *Francisco Goya* and other personalities on the subject of "creating peace" can be supplemented here by the viewer. Here only as much: Theo Dannecker, the artist, is dressed in complementary colours to his wife *Sibylle* and is drawing a portrait of *Käthe Kollwitz* at his easel. *Käthe Kollwitz* - after herself losing a son in the First World War - worked for peace with all her might. Her famous 1924 poster "Never again War!" is well known.

So here in the studio painture people are gathered who, with pen and brush, in word and deed, protested against war, who contributed to the development of popular education, pedagogy, human rights, humanitarian international law, the founding of

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Humanity (fig. 11)

"A construction site for peace"
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is not an empty idea, but a task that must be solved bit by bit". At the right image edge of Dannecker's studio picture, Kant sits at a table. *Friedrich Schiller*, the partly cut-off figure viewed from behind standing near him, was a great admirer of the philosopher and was initially fascinated by the ideals of the French Revolution. However, when he learned of the executions, he turned away in outrage and disgust and even wrote a pamphlet defending *Louis XVI*. Thus he is portrayed here not only as the poet of personal and political freedom - as whom we all know him - but also as a man of balance. Close behind Kant the contemporary *Heinrich*



"International Law Applies to Everyone" (fig. 12)

"A construction site for peace"

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the *Red Cross* and the *Good Services*, and who deployed their vitality for political in-

dependence, for non-violent and peaceful coexistence.

Theo Dannecker has been performing his task as a man and as an artist for 60 years now, and he has fulfilled his respon-

sibility in this society. With this work documentation he hands over his life's work to us, so that we can gain inspiration and joy from it. And as he lets us go, he entrusts us with a task: *Rolling the Stone of Justice*. •



2006 Studio Painting (fig. 13)