



Culture of Peace

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

When we as physicians in the peace movement speak at this time, it is in the knowledge that the spirit of reconciliation is in the process of taking over from the spirit of war, which has had the world holding its breath as is still partly the case, since 11th September In 1952, seven years after Hiroshima, the Nobel committee in Oslo awarded the prize to the physician, Albert Schweitzer, who in his acceptance speech, called for radical rethinking and lamented: "We have changed from being supermen to brutes." "We are guilty of inhumanity." But he did not leave it at a protest, instead he left us a great positive message, namely as a principle to follow, his ethic of respect for life. When the inhuman nuclear threat to the world reached a further zenith in the 80's, the Nobel committee again honoured the physicians' spirit of reconciliation as the principle of turning away from the escalation in the very present threat of nuclear war.

The older people in this audience will remember that the then Kohl government did not think us worthy of this prize, because the Russian doctor, Chazov, who was jointly given the prize, had accepted the discrimination of the regime critic, Sakharov. But of all people, this Andrei Sakharov, who was the inventor of the Russian hydrogen bomb, and had in the mean time become an impassioned fighter against nuclear armament, became the most important fellow combatant of Mikhail Gorbachev for a nuclear free world. I got to know him in Moscow in 1987, when I was invited, with Hans Peter Dürr, co-founder of a small international initiative, which became the foundation, which was led from then on by Gorbachev. We called it the International Foundation for the Survival and the Development of Humanity. Along with the US Minister of Defence, McNamara, Sakharov entered this circle, where I saw him till his death in 1989, as a key figure in the intellectual circles of our time. In

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his person he represented the dilemma of the scientific, technical revolution at the peak of its success that was the creation of the hydrogen bomb, which led us to the border of extinguishing life on our planet. As a critically ill man he told us repeatedly: "We can not remain human, as long as we continue to prostrate ourselves before the destructive energy of nuclear weapons. We must see it as the first human right, not to have to live under the Damocles sword of the nuclear threat." He initiated a further two human rights organisations in his country. But the struggle against nuclear death remained his top priority. Accompanying him to presentations in the USA, I saw how Americans experienced what they expected to be a principle witness for the Stalinist terror, as Gorbachev's rousing ambassador for peace.

Personally, I see it as my great good luck to have been able to study at close quarters two of the pivotal guides to our future - Gorbachev and Sakharov - and to be able to convince myself that it was their shining humanity, that pledged them to our movement and to me. It was, by the way, at one of the sittings of our circle with Sakharov, that my comparative social-psychological study, researching Moscow and Giessen students, was approved. The aim of this survey was to discover the expected mutual prejudices resulting from the long hate propaganda there and here, in cooperation with Moscow scientists. 1000 Moscow and 1400 Giessen students studying the same subjects and in the same years of study judged how they saw each other, what they expected of each other, and what they feared and hoped would happen in the future in respect to politics, business and armament. What was the outcome?

There was not a trace of hate, very little suspicion or fear. Russians and Germans were more critical of themselves than of each other. In their descriptions of themselves the kinsman like closeness was astounding, though the aesthetically educated Russians assessed the importance of religion to them as greater than the Germans. Both parties stressed the importance of growing future cooperation. Only if you prosper will we prosper. They were in total agreement in demanding nuclear disarmament. In short, long-term hate propaganda had not etched the trenches in the souls of people that we had feared. It looked as if the fears of the Cold War had in fact brought to light an awareness of kinship and the need for reconciliation of peoples. Gorbachev was delighted when I was able to hand to him the book with the results of this survey.

For me it reinforced then as later, my impression that people are very often in advance of politics as far as the willingness to seek reconciliation goes. To the greater part, they feel disgusted by the political power-games, which tacitly accept international nuclear risks. At that time, they had a Gorbachev and a Sakharov on their side. It appears that only in very extraordinary crisis situations are politicians with great hearts and the will to reconciliation allowed to rise to the top and take power. That was the case when German despondency brought to power a Willy Brandt, who himself said that he had committed himself to a politics of compassion. That was also the case when the Russians fled from the tyranny of Stalinism to the humanitarian Gorbachev, who made place for the Eastern block to free itself and created the space in the GDR, which made the reunification of Germany possible. It was also the case in South Africa, which was teetering on the brink of a disastrous civil war and needed a Nelson Mandela, who, in his own words – believed in the unifying power of goodness of heart to bring Black and White together.

Those are the pauses in which lurking self-hate in our culture, gives way to the spirit of reconciliation and the breaks the disease, that the recently deceased physicist and

philosopher, Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker called „the psychological disease, peacelessness“. It is the illness, in which that lack of oneness with oneself always leads to the search for enemies, in order to project one's self-hatred onto them and abreact it. This mechanism runs through our entire intellectual history since the Inquisition and the crucifixions of the Middle Ages to the present nuclear time, which threatens all life on this planet with extinction.

The psychic disease, peacelessness has a history, which I have tried to interpret analytically in my major work "The God Complex". It is the vicious circle of weakening of belief and the compensatory will to control, of the egotistical pursuit of total power and panic stricken fear of helplessness, which had its beginnings in the Middle Ages. The suppression of awe and sensitivity has brought us to the point where our leading power, the USA, to this day maintains that the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with 200.000 dead, were glorious patriotic acts. The fading of compassion and feelings of abhorrence in the face of insane atrocities are signs of the immanent danger of our mutual self-destruction, noted the Nobel Prize winner and friend of Einstein, Max Born. In 1981 in my real-satire "All talked of peace", I played this horror vision through to its end. The book was printed in three parts in the SPIEGEL. It was a warning cry, similar to Spielberg's "Jurassic Park", as I understand it.

But now, after the Iraq disaster, we again have a crisis situation before us, which in the examples named, makes clear the chance that exists for the present, to stop the spirit of destruction and the disease, peacelessness. So, we physicians offer this congress as an opportunity for a public to exchange ideas as to how the long due self-healing process can be pushed towards the goal of a new way of thinking. That is why we have chosen a framework, which makes clear our partnership with the globalisation-critical movement

This healing requires impulses from the grass-roots, as was the case with the movement for social reform in the seventies, then in the yearning for de-Stalinization, brought about by Gorbachev, as in the rethinking by ANC leaders in South Africa, which gave a Mandela the mandate for the freeing of South Africa. But where today is a Willy Brandt, a Gorbachev with Sakharov or a Mandela linked with the grass-roots initiatives for self-healing?

Let us think of the recent sensational performance at the victory column (Siegessäule) in Berlin. 200.000 gathered around Barack Obama, as if the American presidential candidate were already the enthroned Messiah, willing not only to create another America, but a new world politics of reconciliation. If one merely looks at the enthusiasm of the people, it reveals a real longing for a visionary (Läuterer) who in the way Gorbachev did, is willing to subordinate the present international extremes to a constructive cohesion of the world family and take the goal of a nuclear free future seriously.

He has voiced the latter intention so often that it cannot be eradicated from people's minds. True, it is not clear whether Obama will win the election. It is also an open question to what degree he will remain firm against the persistency of the power-cult alliance. And what is undoubtedly an open issue, is how dependable the endorsement of the masses is after the Obama-mania, with its present, unmistakably hysterical elements, has died down.

But there is a recent hopeful sign from the USA. This is the initiative of four famous, elderly foreign and security politicians, proven hard-liners and realists. With one voice, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William Perry and George Shultz advocate, complete nuclear disarmament. Seventeen of the last twenty-four US defence secretaries and secretaries of state support the demand of these four. Seen from the ranking of the personalities involved, their initiative comes from above, but as they are pensioners it can be seen as coming from beneath. However, in NATO, they are causing some concern. Michael Rühle, head of NATO's Policy Planning and Speech Writing Section of the political department of NATO has been quick to declare the demand of the four to be unrealistic. Sometimes he refers to them as the "gang of four" and at other times he refers to "four seemingly nuclear purified old gentlemen". Their "geriatric pessimism" is "not a good guide for the way to deal with the second nuclear age" The language used tells one a great deal. Those caught red-handed react in this way. We would have loved to have had Sam Nunn here, but he unfortunately was unable to come. With regard to the reproach "geriatric pessimism": The misrepresentation is significant. Pessimism clearly is present in the idea that we could only contain our destructiveness by way of a kind of nuclear secure detention and this under the supervision of the super power that has just proved its own lack of trustworthiness.

But these four are obviously, like our movement, so optimistic that they believe in the ability of people to be responsible and capable of creating a culture of peace out of a sense of their own human responsibility. The idea that we should try to create security by the use of nuclear weapons and defend ourselves against a presumed incapability to be peaceful reveals acquiescence to the resignation and declaring oneself incapable. Precisely this is, as always denied pessimism, to which we as the peace movement resolutely respond by holding up our confidence in the humanisation of our living together that Gorbachev reminded us of.

This seemingly marginal controversy helps me return to point out the deep cleft that divides the stiff political, military thinking of the power-elite from the belief in reconciliation of our movement and large parts of civil society.

The government and the parliamentary majority have recently confirmed that they wish to maintain the stationing of 20 Nato nuclear bombs in Büchel. Apparently Minister for Defence Jung even wants to keep the Tornado fighter planes after 2020. These planes are designed to carry and drop the bombs, each of which has five times the power of the Hiroshima bomb. No one can say whom the Büchel bombs are supposed to deter. According to the latest Forsa survey, July 2008, 84% of Germans demand the immediate withdrawal of all nuclear bombs from German soil. 89% actually expect the nuclear powers to start breaking up their own nuclear arsenals as soon as possible, as a step towards a nuclear-free world. The voters in both parties of the coalition lie very close to each other in both surveys. The step-by-step increase in the German army's involvement in the war in Afghanistan also displeases the majority of our population. It is with similar reluctance that most people in this country view the gradual intensification of surveillance within the country. In 2006, R+V Insurance, which regularly surveys the 15 most frequent fears of German people, found that the fear of politicians being estranged from the public was in second place. The fear of terrorism only appeared in 10th place. It is clear that people fear the ministers of security and the interior more than that from which they purport to protect us.

The situation in Büchel makes it very clear: The security thinking related to the enemy is exposed as diseased, paranoid. The death of millions is being held in readiness. But there is no enemy in sight. The thinking is so much fixed upon the anti and the lurking evil in the world, that the putative, permanently hunted, is unable to see itself as the diseased hunter. It was the goal of our protest action in Büchel two weeks ago, to make this macabre situation clear.

But our movement must not exhaust itself in being anti, in exposing and in protesting. It is also not sufficient to be pleased by the advances made by peace studies and research at the universities and academies. The philosopher Max Scheler, my great inspiration, warned of the danger that the critical mind, like the protection of nature, can be frozen into a cage, where it does not make life difficult for those in power. One allows it to satisfy himself in the department of culture, which is carefully separated from business and politics and naturally, particularly from military matters. Because there the business of over-coming, ruling and winning, or getting side-lined, loosing and going-under is. The "Internals" can live out their humanistic sensitivity in their reserve, by studying, talking, writing texts, making art and music and also with demonstrations to celebrate their peaceful community.

So the great majority may complain in surveys about nuclear weapons and military activity in foreign countries, where the bombs and missiles kill more civilians than enemies. But no gap must be left for a plebiscite, which broadens democracy, so that 84% of the population, who are against nuclear weapons, do not become an overwhelming majority in the true sense of the word.

It is on this democratic deficit that we need to work. In Switzerland, where I spend some time each year, constitutional referenda make it possible for the electorate to be more actively involved in politics. The awareness of one's responsibility is furthered. And, before the referenda, the parties have to have intense discussions with the citizens. There, it would not be possible for a government to advance nuclear weapons politics against the expressed majority of 84% of the population. For the time being, we can only ask ourselves if we, in our movement are exerting enough pressure, within the framework of our present legal possibilities, to make the will if the people known. We, that means, what can be mustered in the community and individually in the way of courage and resistance?

When our first physicians' movement started in the eighties, many groups of physicians on the American east coast refused to keep hospital beds in reserve for a potential nuclear war. In Germany thousands of doctors, on entering our organisation, signed the Frankfurt Declaration, likewise refusing to take part in medical training for war situations, in order to talk politics out of believing in the workability of a nuclear war.

As the author of this declaration I had to defend myself in court against the accusation of the press, that I was deliberately infringing the Hippocratic oath, namely the obligation to offer help. This was only one case of personal defamation in many, where my work for peace forced me into non-feasant rebelliousness. Many colleagues have experienced similar things. I can only encourage the young colleagues who have recently joined us, to withstand all attempts at intimidation, but also to be aware of the danger of investing so much energy in protests, that too little is left for the pro, that is for the humanisation of present circumstances. Whether our movement flourishes or not, depends on our encouraging the growth of more peace, friendship and helpfulness within society. Because it is through this that we

experience the affirmation, that we can change things for the better. We reinforce our belief that we are, for example capable of creating greater closeness, where alienation or finally animosity threatens or has already come into being. For my part, I reiterate, that it nourished my optimism enormously to discover from young Russians and Germans in our research, who had been exposed to hate and disposition to violence, that they had maintained their humanity and friendliness steadfastly. It became clear to me that we do not have to convert people to more peacefulness, we just have to find ways to draw out of them what is already there. It is, as so often in our profession, that we strengthen the positive or healing elements which are present in order to protect the body from destructive elements.

The destructiveness with which we have to deal in the peace movement, is that of the self-defined fear of being pursued by evil, that throughout ones life one has to be staved off, fought and overcome. When one is lucky enough to get old, one constantly realises that evil vanishes from the place where one thought it to be, as for example for the Germans, the French, for the whites under Apartheid in South Africa, the black South Africans, for the Protestant, the Catholic Irish and so on. The destructive comes from within and attaches itself where it meets the desire to fight half way. But where is the healing counteracting force, which can act as a shield against destructive elements? Nelson Mandela dared to speak of "goodness of heart", which is in us all. Carl Friedrich von Weizäcker called it the power of reconciliation and added: "We do not become capable of inner peace by earning it, but because we are loved and because we can love God and God in other people." Weizäcker said this in his speech about the psychological illness, peacelessness. That is language which people seldom dare to use in the technical world, which becomes more and more silent about the inner world. And today it is said that reconciliation is certainly something, which one cannot easily call up in oneself. One can only find it in oneself. The process is made easier by getting closer to others. Closeness awakes empathy. And closeness makes us aware of our responsibility for each other. "Closeness is responsibility", says Zygmunt Bauman. What is meant is not the mere physical presence, but the nearness of inner openness, where it suddenly becomes clear: This person is like me, they are like we are.

Some of the older people among you may have had to learn to kill supposed enemies as soldiers and have had to experience and deal with death inflicted by enemy soldiers on your family members.

In any case we all in this country have come through an historical phase of inhumanity and have, directly or indirectly got the message and the charge to work to make that which we remember unrepeatable. Those of us who live this charge find it hard to comprehend, when the Chancellor or the Minister of Defence suggest or even demand that we look happily upon the nuclear bombs in Büchel and our part in the killing in Afghanistan as German military normalisation, instead of worrying about the abandoned help towards overcoming the disease, peacelessness. For us, German normality does not mean shooting with the others, but protecting the weak from the position of the ethic of respect for life, which we have taken to heart.