

Being Salt of the Earth... And the Plight of Children of the World. Prof. Siegwart-Horst Günther

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“We live in an age of fear, caused by disinformation and reinforced by absolute tyranny. (...) Is this the kind of ‘democracy’ we are passing on to future generations.” These are the words with which the “Newsletter” of the global platform “Global Research” of 8 July 2022 begins.

“Every human being possesses a greater or lesser sphere of influence in an apparently hopeless situation”, wrote Albert Camus at the time of the Second World War in a “Letter to a Desperate Man”.

That is, every citizen can be the “salt of the earth”, as it is written in Matthew (Mt 5:13). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares his followers to salt, which was important and precious at that time, and says: *“You are the salt of the earth.”*

Salt is the sustaining principle that counteracts corruption or rot. The imagery of the “salt of the earth” was recently expressed by a wonderful interviewee, which immediately won me over. The topic of discussion was the human sense of community as the unshakeable logic of human coexistence and the question: Will human sense of community and the spirit of responsibility overcome greed for power and violence?

We agreed that we have to be patient: Many fellow citizens are slowly waking up and beginning to think and act for themselves: see the encouraging reports of anti-government protests by farmers in the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal, and the increasing protests in other parts of the world.

A “shining example” of the appeal to be salt of the earth was the former co-worker of Albert Schweitzer in Lambaréné, Prof. Dr. med. Siegwart-Horst Günther, one of the medical role models of modern times, who, beyond his humane medical work on the individual, was also incorruptibly committed to scientific truth and humanity in our world.

Focusing on the victims of war and taking responsibility for the mothers and children of the world

When the highly toxic defoliant “Agent Orange” and the incendiary weapon “Napalm” were used in the Vietnam War, the people of the world were horrified. This was no longer war, but butchery of civilians and nature.

Since Vietnam, the arms industry – including the nuclear weapons industry – has rapidly developed its business behind the back of all international agreements, so that the illegal wars of aggression have become ever more murderous, insidious, widespread and genocidal. Or, as the US empire says, “more efficient”.

In the Near Eastern Republic of Yemen, a mother and six babies now die every two hours.

Back on 19 February 2019, the author published the article *“Aiding and abetting genocide. Saudi Arabia’s Western-backed war in Yemen could mean starvation for millions of children.”* (1)

Today we have war in Ukraine – and: *“Those who have forgotten how to cry are learning it again in the bombing of Ukraine.”* (2)

All citizens of this planet must urgently begin to consider the consequences of these wars, that is, the victims of the global arms trade.

Multiple forms of carcinomas and malformed newborns have not existed in the civilian populations of Iraq, Afghanistan and former Yugoslavia (Serbia) in the past. They are the result of barbaric wars.

We all have a responsibility to the mothers and children of this world. Let us look and begin to alleviate the suffering, prevent further suffering and work towards ending the wars.

“Every human being possesses a greater or lesser sphere of influence.”



Nobel laureate in literature Albert Camus, one of the most important intellectuals of the 20th century also commented in his diary on the Second World War and the role of the individual in a situation perceived as hopeless. These are thoughts that document and deeply touch Camus’ relevance to our own day (3).

Immediately after the outbreak of the war, he wrote: *“Nothing is more inexcusable than war and the call to hatred of nations. But once war has broken out, it is futile and cowardly to stand aside under the pretext that one is not responsible for it.”* (4)

What he thinks the individual has to think about and do in such a situation is described by

Camus in a *“Letter to a Desperate Man”*:

“You have a task, do not doubt it. Every man possesses a more or less large sphere of influence. He owes it to his defects as much as to his merits. But be that as it may, it is there, and it can be used immediately. Do not drive anyone to riot. You have to be sparing with the blood and freedom of others. But you can convince ten, twenty, thirty people that this war was not inevitable, nor is it, that all means have not yet been tried to stop it, that it must be said, written if possible, shouted out if necessary! These ten or thirty people will spread the word to ten others, who will in turn spread it. If inertia holds you back, well, start all over again with others.” (5)

In conclusion, Camus encourages the advice-seeker not to despair of history, in which the individual is capable of everything: “Individuals are the ones who send us to our deaths today. Why should other individuals not succeed in giving peace to the world? Only one must begin without thinking of such great goals. Remember that war is waged as much with the enthusiasm of those who want it as with the despair of those who reject it with all the strength of their souls.” (6)

Elsewhere in his diary entries, Camus reiterates his point: *“There is one doom, death, and beyond that there is none. In the period that extends from birth to death, nothing is fixed: One can change everything and even put a stop to war and even preserve peace if one wants it fervently, strongly and for a long time.”* (7)

Prof. Siegwart-Horst Günther

Prof. Günther (1925-2015) was one of the most impressive medical personalities of our time. Throughout his life he was active in the war and crisis areas of the Middle East. He helped thousands of people on the ground in a very concrete way. He was also the founder of the association *“Yellow Cross International”*, an aid organisation for children in need all over the world.

As a young man, Günther was an opponent of Adolf Hitler and was therefore sent to Buchenwald concentration camp until the end of the war. From 1945 to 1950 he studied medicine, philosophy and Egyptology. As a finished doctor, he worked for Albert Schweitzer in the jungle hospital of Lambaréné. Schweitzer greeted him with the words, *“It’s good of you to come and help us.”* (8)

From 1990 to 1995, Prof. Günther taught and worked at the university and university hospital in Baghdad (Iraq). In his acceptance speech for the *“Nuclear-Free-Future-Award”* on 18 October 2007, he said: *“When I discovered in 1991, after the 1st Gulf War, that the Allies had used uranium shells in this war, which to me was illegal under international law, with all the terrible consequences known to them even then, I was deeply outraged because of this monstrosity. War should be obsolete anyway, but the use of these depleted uranium munitions and bombs is a human and environmental monstrosity.”* (9)

This monstrosity that Professor Günther had uncovered brought him a lot of trouble, especially in the Federal Republic of Germany, where he was virtually discredited and persecuted for it in the 1990s. But when asked by a friend on an arduous and not harmless car journey in Iraq, the already 79-year-old replied:

“You know, my young friend, I am a doctor and I am bound by my Hippocratic oath, and

this oath knows no age limits." (10)

Günther's name and his findings on the "Gulf War Syndrome", which he discovered, will be remembered for the film "The Doctor and the Radiated Children of Basra" and the film "Death Dust" (2004-2007), among others (11).

In his 2007 book "Hunger und Not der Kinder im Irak" (Hunger and Need of Children in Iraq), Prof. Günther wrote: *"As a former employee of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, I have been active for many years in the context of humanitarian aid in areas of tension and see the great need and dying of people, especially children, there every day. In Kosovo, as in the Gulf region, UN discussions have been renewed recently, but the hunger and dying continue."* (12)

Albert Schweitzer was convinced that the danger of new wars of extermination cannot be averted by international agreements or any institutions, but only by the morally determined attitude of all those responsible. He unshakably believed that only from the spirit, in the moral attitude of individuals and nations, can that decisive effect take place which secures peace for the world (13).

In the epilogue of his book "Hunger and Need of the Children in Iraq", Prof. Günther wrote: *"As a participant in the Second World War, who had to witness many crimes and was himself a sufferer, I have followed the crimes of the new wars and their consequences with growing compassion. Not least, my friendship with Albert Schweitzer and our joint work in the jungle hospital in Lambaréné prompted me to do so. I will therefore never tire of appealing to all people to keep the peace and provide help where it is needed. In the Gulf, in former Yugoslavia, in Africa, in Latin America. And if these thoughts should evoke even a lasting effect in the reader, already then the effort would have been worthwhile."* (14)

"Uranium bullets: after Zyklon B, a new German combat and mass destruction technology"

Finally, it is the German author's concern to report on the moving personal encounters with Prof. Günther in Switzerland, which have etched themselves deeply into his consciousness and will therefore not be forgotten:

Prof. Günther was also present at many ideological or pedagogical-psychological discussion evenings – at almost 90 years of age, his health was a bit frail. If the scientific discussion was about the topic of Depleted Uranium (DE) and the use of the highly toxic and radioactive uranium shells in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan or former Yugoslavia, then Prof. Günther always stepped briefly to the speaker's table, sat down and said calmly but firmly:

"Uranium shells are a German technology, a German invention! After Zyklon B, a new German combat and mass destruction technology!" (15)

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He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Notes

(1) "RUBIKON"

(2) "Global Research", May 01, 2022

(3) Marin, L. (ed.). (2013). Albert Camus – Libertarian Writings (1948-1960).

(4) op. cit., p. 268

(5) op. cit., p. 273

(6) op. cit.

(7) op. cit., p. 267

(8)

<https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/archiv/2015/nr-34-3-februar-2015/zum-tod-von-professor-dr-dr-siegwart-horst-guenther>

(9) op. cit.

(10) op. cit.

(11) A. a. O.

(12) Prof. Dr. Dr. Günther, Siegwart-Horst (2007). Hunger and hardship of children in Iraq. Zurich, p. IV

(13)

<https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/archiv/2015/nr-34-3-februar-2015/zum-tod-von-professor-dr-dr-siegwart-horst-guenther>

(14) Prof. Dr. Dr. Günther, Siegwart-Horst (2007). Hunger and the plight of children in Iraq. Zurich, p. XV f.

(15) op. cit., p. IV

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