

around the Vatican's initiative. I therefore ask you all to sign our [Open Letter](#), which began with an initiative from Latin American parliamentarians to the Pope.

I know that many military leaders, in Russia, in France and elsewhere, consider that it is too late for this, and it won't work. And that only military means will decide the outcome. I think that this risk is too great. It can quickly lead to a global nuclear war, the outcome of which no one will be around to discuss. Instead, we need a new international security and development architecture that takes into account the interest of every country, including Ukraine, Russia, China and all other nations. To this end, I have introduced [ten principles](#) to the discussion, which I ask you all to read and

discuss. The main idea of the ten principles is that we, as human beings, are the creative species in the universe, and therefore we are able to find the higher level of reason at which any problem can be solved.

The first step must be to accept Pope Francis's offer. And a worldwide chorus of voices must be raised to demand that negotiations begin immediately in Rome without preconditions. Yesterday, President Putin said yesterday that Russia is open to negotiations, however, that we take into account whom we are dealing with. As I said, we are facing a shambles of international trust. That is why we need the worldwide mobilization of all people of good will to join our chorus.

Thank you.

## The Urgency for Trust: A Look at Germany and America in 1933, and Today

by Ray McGovern

*This is the edited transcript of the presentation by Mr. McGovern to the Schiller Institute's Jan. 10, 2023 symposium, "What About International Law, Mrs. Merkel?" Mr. McGovern is a former CIA analyst and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).*



Schiller Institute

Ray McGovern

I would like to start with the words of someone I respect very much. I used to brief him every other morning when he was Secretary of State: George P. Shultz. Let me just read you what Secretary Shultz said, when he reached the ripe old age of 100:

Now in my hundredth year, I offer my thoughts about what I have come to believe is crucial; namely, trust. We all know that good relations thrive when neighbors trust one another, and that life can become miserable if trust is replaced with suspicion and doubt. Trust is just as critical in determining whether cooperation or conflict—or even war or peace—will dominate relations between nations.

He said that just before he died in November 2020.

I mentioned that Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Burns in 2008:

Look, *Nyet* means *Nyet*. You allow Ukraine into NATO, that is a red line for us. We will probably have to invade. There will be civil war there. Don't do it! *Nyet* means *Nyet*.

How do we know that? We have the embassy cable from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and if I've seen one of those cables, I've seen about 405,000 of them, and they're genuine. And what they say here is what Ambassador Burns reported: that was Feb. 1, 2008. Two months later, April 3, 2008, the NATO, in its wisdom, so to speak, declared that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO.

Moving on. March 2012: then President Barack Obama is talking with Dmitry Medvedev, then President of Russia, and he's caught on the microphone at a summit in Seoul, South Korea, and Medvedev says, "Look, Vladimir wants you to address this missile system in Eastern Europe. He's really interested. Can

we talk about that?” And Obama says, “Well, let’s wait till I win my re-election, and then we can talk about it.” And then apparently, Obama forgot his promise to do that, and no negotiations really took place.

All right. Now, there was what I call a “cameo appearance of trust.” And that was in September 2013, after Vladimir Putin personally prevented a war in Syria. Easy: they just agreed to destroy all the Syrian chemical weapons on a ship outfitted for such destruction, a U.S. ship under UN supervision. There was no war. The neocons who wanted that war were very upset about that.

Why do I mention that? Because that was the last flash of trust.

Vladimir Putin had an [op-ed](#) in the *New York Times* on Sept. 12, 2013, where he said,

I really welcome avoiding war in Syria. I really treasure the growing trust not only between our nations, but between myself and President Obama, personally. There’s only one thing that I disagree with President Obama on, and he said just last week, in a speech, that the U.S. is “exceptional.” I don’t agree with that. I don’t think any one country is exceptional. I think big countries, small countries, countries that are closer to democracy, other countries not so close—but when God looks down on the world, He considers all nations equal.

Well, there was the key. U.S. exceptionalism was going to prevail, and it only took six months or so, before the neocons, who were really running Obama’s policy, as they are Joe Biden’s, staged a coup on the Maidan in Kiev, overthrew the duly constituted, duly elected government of Kiev, and put in a group very heavily influenced by pro-Nazis. That’s what’s started it all, and you don’t hear anything about that in the Western press—it’s very curious. So that was the last part of trust. After the *coup d’état* on Feb. 22nd, 2014, trust evaporated.

Now, if you have any doubts about the U.S. orchestrating this coup, the reason it’s called the most blatant coup in history is because the plotters were intercepted in a telephone conversation, two and half weeks before the coup, and that was put on YouTube! One of the plotters, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs at

the time, Victoria Nuland, was saying, “We’ll put ‘Yats’ (Arseniy Yatsenyuk) in, we’re going to nail this down, Vice President Biden will come in, to solidify this,” and then the ambassador in Kiev, our Ambassador [Geoffrey Pyatt], asked, “Well, what about the EU? They won’t like this.” And famously Nuland uses the F-word, which I’m not going to use here. She says, “F— the EU!” Now, I think Germany is part of the EU, so is France. There were no complaints about that, that I know of. If somebody said that to me, I would remonstrate.

What happened next? Kiev was occupied by these people. Crimea was annexed by Russia, as one would expect, given the provocations. And the whole thing was just provoked. Well, the annexation of Crimea—I mean, if you don’t think this was provoked, it doesn’t matter what Sen. John McCain or others said at the time, it was sure as heck provoked by the coup in Kiev. I wrote a [letter](#) to the editor of the *Washington Post*, which says: Look, McCain is really wrong here. There is not one scintilla of evidence, that it came into Putin’s head to annex Crimea before the coup on the 22nd of February 2014 in Ukraine.

Well, next we have Minsk, which really has been given a good explanation, what happened in Minsk. We see the treachery; we see the bragging about, “Wow! Wasn’t that clever? We held the Russians off.” Ukraine was in no shape to face down the Russians. But we sent John Brennan, head of the CIA, to Kiev in April 2014, and he gave them the go-ahead: Go ahead and bloody those people in Lugansk and Donetsk, give ’em a good bloody thing, and then we’ll have a false kind of agreement in Minsk.

We’ve talked about what happened in Minsk, and how Angela Merkel and François Hollande and Petro Poroshenko himself said, this was an old trick, when this occurred! And we know how Putin feels about that.

## **The Reaction in Germany**

So, what I would like to do now is simply focus in on what I know about the reaction in Europe, and specifically in Germany—I lived in Germany for five years; I served there. I know a little bit about German history, or maybe more than a little bit. And I’d like to reflect on where we stand now with respect to the German people and their government.

I have a very, very instructive book here. It’s by Sebastian Haffner, the pen name for Raimund Pretzel. He

was a judge in training in Berlin in 1933. He was an eyewitness to so much of what happened there. And he wrote this diary which was only discovered by his children, after he died. He was quite a famous journalist, or writer in Germany after the war, Sebastian Haffner. And what he wrote is very revealing to me, and it really raises the question—here it is: He’s talking about what happened in 1933, and how all of a sudden, things fell apart. I’ll read it in German and then I’ll translate it:

*Wie kann man erklären, das scheinbar Unerklärliche? ...die völlige Abwesenheit von... eines festen, durch Druck und Zug von außen nicht zu erschütternden Kerns, einer gewissen adligen Härte, eine allerinnerste, gerade erst in der Stunde der Prüfung mobilisierbaren Reserve an*

hour of trial—Germans do not have that... March 1933 proved it. At the moment of challenge, Germany... gave in and capitulated, in short: a nervous breakdown.

—from Sebastian Haffner’s  
“Story of a German,”  
published in English as *Defying Hitler*.

That was 1933. Now that was 90 years ago—[it is now] more than 70 years after World War II ended. I don’t know if Raimund Pretzel’s diagnosis of what most Germans felt in 1933 is correct or not. I haven’t seen a better explanation for “*Erklären die Unerklärbar*” [“explaining the inexplicable”].

What I’m wondering about here is, would it not be possible to go, in 90 years, to realize who is deceiving



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McGovern: “My good friend, Norman Birnbaum (left), who was a really close friend of a fellow named Frank-Walter Steinmeier” (right), arranged through him for me to have a meeting with a high-level government official in which I could discuss the coup d’état in Ukraine of Feb. 22, 2014.

*Stolz, Gesinnung, Selbstgewißheit, Würde. Das haben die Deutschen nicht... Der März 1933 hat es bewiesen. Im Augenblick der Herausforderung, erfolgte in Deutschland... ein Nachgeben und Kapitulieren — kurz und gut: ein Nervenzusammenbruch.*

—from Sebastian Haffner’s  
*Geschichte eines Deutschen*.

And, in English:

How to explain it, the seemingly inexplicable? ...The complete absence of... a firm core that cannot be shaken by pressure and pull from the outside? A certain aristocratic hardness, a very innermost reserve of pride, attitude, self-assurance, dignity that can be mobilized just in the

whom? To face up and ask questions? I have two questions that your [Germany’s] Foreign Minister, [Annalena Baerbock] might ask: one would be to address to Washington, “Do you know who blew up Nord Stream 2? I mean, John Brennan says it was probably the Russians. Doesn’t make a lot of sense, but maybe it was Russians. So you know—? But, we don’t.”

I’m certain that we know. Is Baerbock afraid to ask?

Well, I have three things that I would like to point out and they go back to 2016, the last time I saw important people in Germany. If you have *Beziehungen* [connections], then you get to see important people.

The first was facilitated by my good friend, Norman Birnbaum who was a really close friend of a fellow named Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Now, Steinmeier told one of his chief lieutenants to receive me and to talk about whatever I wanted to talk about. And so, a col-

league and I went into this very august office, a very senior official, maybe not the deputy, but close to it, as you could tell by the size of the office. And we started talking—I'm used to talking in candid terms as you may know—and we talked about the *putsch*, the *coup d'état* in Kiev. His name was Philipp Ackermann. He looked at me and he said, "What coup?" And I said, "Well, the coup on the 22nd of February 2014. Steinmeier, your boss, was there."

"What coup? What coup?"

I got up and walked out. That was one example.

Later I was received by the chairman of the armed services committee of the Bundestag. His name was Wolfgang Hellmich, a very nice fellow. Again, you worked the *Beziehungen*. So it happened to be the same day that Operation Anaconda, the biggest operation since World War II—allied forces, NATO forces right close to the Russian border—had started. And so, I said to him, "Sir, what do you think about Anaconda?" and he looked this way, and said, "Ach! Germany is not involved." And I said, "but Herr Hellmich, your soldiers are participating in it." "Ah, yeah, but it's not—er, uhm—"

Well, it was very clear from his body language, if from nothing else, that he was dead-set against it, that he felt it was foolish. And, indeed, it was foolish, in the extreme. The same kind of array of forces before Hitler invaded Eastern Europe.

So, my question was, "Well, Herr Hellmich, can you not do something about this?" And the answer was, what I fully expected, in effect, "No."

On the same trip, I was asked to address a *Fraktions* meeting of *Die Linke* [a meeting of the parliamentary group of the German *Die Linke* party—ed.]. I was given 10 minutes, because the matter of the shooting down of [Malaysian Airlines] MH17, on 17th of July 2014, was very much in the air. And so, I explained to them that, "You know, there's real, real doubt with respect to who shot that plane down, and that I'm convinced that if the evidence the U.S. is advertising is valid—well, let me put it this way—they would show it!"

Here's Secretary of State John Kerry, at the time, in one of the interviews he gave:



CC/Karl Marten

*On the same day that Operation Anaconda began, the biggest operation since World War II, with NATO forces right close to the Russian border, Wolfgang Hellmich, when confronted with the fact that German soldiers were participating, simply lied.*

We saw the takeoff of the missile, we saw the trajectory, we saw the hit, we saw the airplane disappear from the radar screen, so there's really no mystery about where it came from.

Well, OK: Let's see the evidence! Long story short: I told the *Fraktions* meeting that there is evidence. I'm 90% sure: I know enough about U.S. intelligence collection capabilities in that area, to know that the United States knows who shot that plane down. Then why are they reluctant to release the evi-

dence? And I fully expected, "Oh wow, let's ask"—but what I got was, "Let's go to the next agenda item." I mean, this was not inconsequential! It wasn't the seizing of Crimea, it was the shooting of MH17 that led to the sanctions, the sanctions that were put in, big time, in earnest by Europe and by the United States against Russia, Russia being blamed, or pro-Russians being blamed for the shoot-down.

What I'm saying here, is that those three experiences, with Herr Ackermann, with the *Fraktion* with the *Die Linke*, and with Herr Hellmich, made me wonder whether things had changed very much in the last 90 years. I don't know. I hope so. But if they haven't, then we're in more trouble than anyone really expects, because Germany is the fulcrum. There's a very different world now, with the lily-white West against the rest of the world, mostly of people of color: China, India, the whole rest of the world.

And so, Germany can act as a fulcrum there, can act as a sensible country, interested and friendly, at least, non-hostile, relations, and the way it has to do that first, is to recognize what's going on in Ukraine, and what the reasons are for the lack of trust Putin has.

The last thing I'll say on that is: Joining NATO, well, yeah, that's a big deal for Ukraine. But it was already becoming a *de facto* member of NATO, by having the next to the strongest army in Europe, trained and equipped by the West. And also having just everything it needed to pursue this misbegotten effort, to seize not only the eastern territories but Crimea.





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Courtesy of Ray McGovern

*Daniel Berrigan (left) spoke 40 years ago during Holy Week in South Africa and called on people “to do racial justice.” When he was asked, “But Father Berrigan, if we speak out, we may end up being detained, and what will become of our children?” Dan answered: “Well, if you are not speaking out, if you’re not detained, what, then, becomes of your children?” At right, Ray McGovern wrestled to the ground in Congress for speaking the truth.*

## Be Not Paralyzed, Speak Out for Peace

I spoke out in our Congress and said, “If you approve the nomination of Gina Haspel, ‘Torturer in Chief’ at the first CIA black site, then this will be a blot on the CIA and on the nation.” I spoke out very loudly, and I said: “You know she ran that torture chamber, with waterboarding and other heinous crimes. Will you approve her nomination [as CIA director]?”

I was taken to ground (as they say) [by security guards] when I spoke. And of course, they approved her.

Now, torture! I mean, tomorrow is the anniversary of when the first prisoners were brought to Guantanamo, with no redress, with no way to challenge their captivity.

Let me just finish by this: Daniel Berrigan, who is one of my patrons and one of my teachers, wrote this and it has to do with what we do, besides getting educated, besides listening to what’s going on; here’s what Dan wrote:

“Let us have peace!” we cry. But at the same time, let everything remain normal. Let our lives stand intact. Let us know neither prison nor ill repute nor disruption of ties with family and friends.... There is no peace because there are no peace-makers. There are no makers of peace, be-

cause the making of peace is at least as costly as the making of war—at least as disruptive, at least as liable to bring disgrace and prison and death in its wake.

And so, such are the words of Daniel Berrigan.

And the last thing I’ll say is that when he spoke over Holy Week in South Africa, and told people there that they had to do racial justice—this is 40 years ago, now—the faithful came up to him after his homily, after his sermon, and they said, “But Father Berrigan, if we speak out, we may end up being detained, and what will happen to our children? What will become of our children?” And Dan answered very quickly, he said: “Well, if you are not speaking out, if you’re not detained, what, then, becomes of your children?”

I think we need to do what was not done in 1933, and we need not to be paralyzed by the powers that be. We need to speak out, and have a certain faith, a certain trust, not only American people, but the German people. And once they know the truth, well, the truth will set them free, and avoid a war.

I applaud Helga and others for putting this seminar together. I just hope that all who are listening can think about what they can do, rather than simply sit back and say, “Oh, wasn’t that interesting?” like the *Linke Fraktion* did, back in 2016.

Thank you very much.