



# **The Revolt of the Children**

**Joachim Wernicke**

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## 1. The school strikes

The summer of 2018 was unusually hot in Europe. Sweden, which is usually cool and humid, experienced drought and large-scale forest fires. Greta Thunberg, the fifteen-year-old Swedish student, thought that the approaching climate catastrophe was created by the adults around her. The adults were stealing the future. Something had to be done about it, now.

What Greta Thunberg did was to go on school strike. Greta went on strike every Friday, with a big sign reading “School strike for the climate”. Why should students be learning in school if there was no future for them? The media became interested and began reporting on the strike. Students in other parts of Sweden and then other countries heard about Greta’s strike and organised their own under the banner ‘Fridays for Future’.

In December 2018, the UN World Climate Conference took place in Katowice, Poland. Greta was invited to make a short speech to the assembled leaders. This is what she said:

“My name is Greta Thunberg. I am 15 years old. I am from Sweden. I speak on behalf of Climate Justice Now. Many people say that Sweden is just a small country and it doesn’t matter what we do. But I’ve learned you are never too small to make a difference. And if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not going to school, then imagine what we could all do together if we really wanted to.

But to do that, we have to speak clearly, no matter how uncomfortable that may be. You only speak of green eternal economic growth because you are too scared of being unpopular. You only talk about moving forward with the same bad ideas that got us into this mess, even when the only sensible thing to do is pull the emergency brake. You are not mature enough to tell it like it is. Even that burden you leave to us children. But I don’t care about being popular. I care about climate justice and the living planet. Our civilization is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making enormous amounts of money. Our biosphere is being sacrificed so that rich people in countries like mine can live in luxury. It is the sufferings of the many which pay for the luxuries of the few.

The year 2078, I will celebrate my 75th birthday. If I have children maybe they will spend that day with me. Maybe they will ask me about you. Maybe they will ask why you didn’t do anything while there still was time to act. You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes.

Until you start focusing on what needs to be done rather than what is politically possible, there is no hope. We can't solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis. We need to keep the fossil fuels in the ground, and we need to focus on equity. And if solutions within the system are so impossible to find, maybe we should change the system itself. We have not come here to beg world leaders to care. You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time. We have come here to let you know that change is coming, whether you like it or not. The real power belongs to the people. Thank you".

Quickly suspicion was raised that Greta was being exploited by adults, her parents even, eager to reach the spotlight of the media. These claims of remote control by the parents were far from the truth. Greta described herself as a "fifteen-year-old climate activist with Asperger's": a person with a form of autism, combined with high intelligence and language skills but with some problems with the development of personal relationships.

That a fifteen-year-old accomplish amazing mental achievements is not uncommon. In earlier times, young people of this age started university or higher education. This was possible by individual lessons from house teachers. Friedrich Schiller attended the military academy at the age of 14. Wolfgang von Goethe attended law school in Leipzig at the age of 16. Immanuel Kant began his studies in natural sciences and philosophy at Königsberg at the age of 16. Also today individual lessons are multiply more efficient than the group lesson in the school class. This can be seen on the example of the widespread private coaching for schoolkids.

In March 2019, more than 20,000 students participated in a 'Fridays for Future' demonstration in Berlin. They were admonished by some politicians concerning compulsory school attendance. The FDP (Free Democratic Party) leader Christian Linder told the strikers that political commitment is "great" but politics was "a thing for professionals". Meanwhile, Federal Environment Minister Svenja Schulze, from the Social Democratic Party, said "I think that it's good that so many students are taking to the streets".

In May 2019, a schoolmaster at Solingen explained to Chancellor Angela Merkel, how to enable the students to take part in the demonstrations without missing any exams. "I rely on people like you," said the Chancellor, emphasizing: "The young people are really making us steam. I think that's right too"; it nearly would break your heart how nature is overexploited. Approval for the strikes also came from the Federal Justice Minister Katarina Barley, who said "we wish for such young people". Did 'Fridays

for Future’ now have legal blessing for participation in the strikes?

Climate change is explicitly addressed in Berlin School Law:

“§ 3 (3): School education should empower students, ... 6. To develop an understanding of the causes and effects of climate change and the necessary adjustments to their consequences, to learn measures for climate protection and to learn the independent and responsible implementation of such measures in everyday life.”

Since April 2019, ‘Fridays for Future’ has received support from more than 26,000 German-speaking scientists who provide the background information for the claims of the strikers under the title ‘Scientists for Future’. How many of these scientists will go to the schools – even without extra pay – on Fridays to give young people something of their knowledge advantage and their perspective on the future?

## **2. Climate protection: What is it all about?**

Since the beginning of industrialization, around 1750, people have been extracting and burning coal, oil and gas from the soil. Once burned, Carbon Dioxide (chemical: CO<sub>2</sub>) is released into the air. Since around 1950, this has happened increasingly with explosive intensity. This gas stays in the atmosphere for centuries. Because Carbon Dioxide acts as a *Greenhouse Gas*, the mean temperature on Earth has increased by 1°C. This might seem like a small increase, but the effects are obvious even in Germany. Traditional ski resorts have almost no snow anymore. Some rivers no longer have sufficient water to carry shipping. Hurricanes, formerly rather unknown in Germany, are now becoming more common. Forest fires are increasing, arable lands are withering. All of this has happened with *only* 1°C warming.

If things continue as they have been – “we burn everything we can get our hands on, after us the deluge” – then it is predicted that by the year 2100 the planet will have warmed by 3.5°C. Under such circumstances, much of the earth will be no longer habitable.

This is why world leaders agreed that something must be done. At the 2015 Paris UN Climate Conference, it was decided to set an upper warming limit of 1.5°C by 2050. This means that up to this target point, all countries together are only allowed to produce around 600 billion tons of fossil CO<sub>2</sub> while the emissions are reduced annually. Every liter of gasoline, kerosene or heating oil that we process, fly away or burn, nibbles 2.5 kilograms off this reserve.

Thus, in 2015, the German Federal Government committed itself to a program, which it had calculated as feasible, namely to reduce the German emissions of fossil CO<sub>2</sub> along four ‘climate targets’, based on the emissions of 1990 (starting in 2015 at the 73% level):

2020: down to 60%

2030: down to 45%

2040: down to 30%

2050: down to almost 0%, or *climate neutral*.

Science has proven that the burning of coal, fossil oil and natural gas is the main cause of global warming. But the physical connections are complicated and sometimes not yet fully understood. This provides the opportunity to dismiss facts as opinions. To ensure that the business of coal, oil and gas companies can continue undisturbed, it is sometimes simply denied that global warming is caused by man-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Since 2017, the US has been taking this path under President Trump, the only country in the world to do so.

But even if global warming had a cause other than CO<sub>2</sub>, Germany is at the forefront of renewable energy from the sun, wind, hydropower and biomass. How reasonable is it that German citizens to pay for coal, oil and natural gas imports? So global warming or not: the careless waste in Germany must stop, by economic reasons alone. From the disposable economy back to a recycling economy. The workplaces again nearer to the housing. How much traffic and transport is *really* needed?

And another reason: what right has the generation living today, with all available technical tricks to bring the deposits of oil, natural gas and coal from the ground, and thus deprive future generations of an intact environment and of valuable chemical basic materials?

### **3. In which direction?**

The slogan of the student campaign, ‘climate justice’, sounds good. But what is the concrete goal?

Change to renewable energy? Yes, but the electricity from wind turbines and solar cells does not flow evenly. What does it do, as long as the power cannot be stored? There are storage techniques. Currently the favorite is ‘Power-to-Gas’: electricity produces hydrogen or methane gas, which is accumulated as fuel. But there is a lack of sufficient implementation.

Is the conversion from gasoline and diesel cars to electric cars a goal? Most of the electricity has come from a power plant that emits CO<sub>2</sub>. As compared to a car with a combustion engine, nothing is gained, on the contrary: a kilogram of battery stores only about one-twentieth usable energy as the same amount of gasoline. Therefore, the electric car consumes a large part of its drive power only to tow the heavy battery around. Hence the short range per battery charge. Counting all this together, the disillusionment follows: at the same range, the electric car produces more CO<sub>2</sub> than the car with internal combustion engine.

The electric car brings something to the climate only when the electricity comes from renewable sources. These are technical equipment that must be manufactured and which have a finite life. Also the materials for it must first be manufactured and transported. This all needs energy. The same applies to all materials used in everyday life, from furniture to clothing and appliances to packaging. Spent energy cannot be recovered. Used materials can be partially recovered by recycling, which in turn costs energy.

Thus, climate justice amounts to limiting the personal consumption of materials and energy sources to the amount that is compatible with the earth and gives everyone the same right to consume. The German Wuppertal Institute has calculated that the consumption of materials and energy sources in Germany is around 40 tons per capita per year, five times higher than it should be for climate justice. 8 tons per capita would be the permissible value. Our consumption must therefore be reduced to one fifth.

In a democracy, the consumption of undesirable products is often slowed down by price, for example by increasing taxes, which then benefit the general public. This means a tax on any consumption of coal, fossil oil and fossil gas attributable to Germany, by land, air and sea. This 'CO<sub>2</sub> tax' would therefore also become due on all transport and travel. The recycling costs of products are added from the outset as a deposit in the purchase price and refunded after return. Non-recyclable items such as packaging and non-repairable technical products are then not as cheap as they are today. Will energy, auto, food, pharmaceutical and retail companies try to obstruct? Democracy should keep the upper hand. Despite several shortcomings, it works better in Germany than in many other countries.

In many cases, the high energy consumption for a product is not recognized at all. The Swedish climate researcher Johan Rockström in 2019 made the following calculation: an Argentinean beef steak on a plate in Germany embodies 6 to 30 liters of oil, which was consumed because rainforests are cut down for cattle farming and animal feed is cultivated on

the land, for example, soybeans. In addition, there are fertilizers, the use of agricultural machinery and trucks, plus ships or airplanes for refrigerated transport over more than 10,000 kilometers, plus plastic packaging material. At all these steps corporations make a profit. Workers are exploited as in slavery, animals kept like in concentration camps. Energy raw materials are often war booty. Only this way in the supermarket can the steak from the southern hemisphere be cheaper than the same steak from the regional German farm with animal welfare and traditional agriculture based on solar energy instead of oil and chemicals.

Thus, it becomes clear: the solution can not lie in novel techniques that should make waste possible in the future. The solution lies in the more economical use of energy and materials.

After the Second World War, at least one generation grew up in war-torn Germany with a consumption of less than 8 tons per capita. In the years after the war, people in Germany were daily aware of the high value of objects and energy – were they unhappy because of that? This awareness can be revived, starting in the families.

#### **4. Climate 2020 – really in a hurry?**

In the course of the student demonstrations on climate protection, a long banner was to be seen in Vienna in March 2019: ‘We strike until you act’. But how should the politicians act?

Is it about limiting global warming to 1.5 ° C, according to the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015? In the face of such a general demand, almost every professional politician will boldly proclaim that he is even for only 1.4 degrees or a similarly melodious goal. But he will continue to do nothing. Why should he? His salary – as a member of Bundestag a little over 10 000 euros per month - in the long run is only reasonably safe to him, if he obediently follows his party leadership and avoids deviant actions.

The goal must therefore be more specific. Such goals exist, even from “high up”: the climate target 2020, as the German government had promised internationally in 2015 in Paris – German CO<sub>2</sub> emissions down to 60 percent as compared to 1990.

But in May 2019, the Federal Government complained that by 2020, instead of the target of 60 percent it would reach only 67 percent. It silently dropped the climate target for 2020 and has since been talking only about climate target 2030. Remarkable: the ‘green’ opposition party is in the same horn.

‘Fridays for Future’s’ demand is simply that the Federal Government does its homework, neatly and on time, for the 2020 climate change target it has pledged to the world. This is actually a matter of self-evidence, as well as the students are expected to do their homework. 2030 will be later. The concrete demand is thus:

### **Implement the climate target set by the German government in 2020!**

This means that the fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of Germany by 2020 are verifiably complied with: a maximum of 750 million tons for everything that is attributable to Germany. The Federal Government has control of the tools in its hands, and it has to use them. For this it has committed itself, and for this it is paid by the citizens. Are cheating tricks acceptable, such as ‘emissions trading’, which invites fraud? Or: ‘Leave it to the market’, ultimately to the corporations? Or: ‘plant trees abroad’ - who can control anything there?

Supported by scientists, ‘Fridays for Future’ had developed and presented a complete program in April 2019. With the program, the federal government could easily reach the 2020 climate target if it only wanted:

- The end of subsidies for fossil fuels,
- one quarter of coal power off,
- a CO<sub>2</sub> tax on all greenhouse gas emissions

The item CO<sub>2</sub> tax was directly provided with a price tag: According to the Federal Environment Agency 180 euros per ton of CO<sub>2</sub>. The price increase through the CO<sub>2</sub> tax should not be at the expense of people on low incomes.

There are role models: Sweden has been implementing a CO<sub>2</sub> tax since 1991, at the equivalent of 115 euros per ton. Switzerland levies a tax on heating oil and gas of 85 euros per ton. The government reimburses two-thirds of this income to citizens, through health insurance. This promotes the consciously economical use of energy.

Whether the Federal Government will take up the specific proposal of ‘Fridays for Future’ for the 2020 climate target, or whether it will go its own way towards this goal, is up to it. But it has to fulfill its self-imposed task. There has been added a serious reason by the international situation: Since the United States, a major energy consumer, terminated the Paris

Agreement in 2017, the climate target 2020 has become a critical tipping point, for the following reason:

Whether or not Germany is pursuing climate protection is almost indifferent to the Earth, because we only contribute 2% to total global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However, Germany has massive self-interest in climate protection, because even now, in the '1.0-degree world', the damage caused in the country by shifts in weather patterns are severe. As a precaution, Germany therefore needs to keep with the 1.5 degree limit.

But we can never do that on our own, but only if we succeed in bringing other countries with us. The voice of the German government has international weight. After the USA, China and Japan, Germany is the fourth largest economic power in the world. German renewable energy services enjoy a high reputation. This model is particularly interesting for poorer countries, because it shows them how they can save costs for the purchase of fossil fuels. And many of these countries are particularly affected by the effects of global warming, including the major CO<sub>2</sub> emitters USA and China.

But if the "model student" Germany misses its self-imposed climate target 2020, then other countries will push their commitments in the trash: "The US got off – even the fastidious Germans let it grind, so with the global warming it may well not be really serious?"

Thus Germany without own doing since 2017 has received an extreme responsibility. If Germany misses our own climate target in 2020 and thus our prime reason to raise our voice for climate protection internationally, then this can be the spark for the catastrophe: global climate protection is tipping over. The 1.5-degree limit cannot be maintained, not 2030, not 2040 ... There will then be no stopping further uncontrolled global warming. Therefore, it is urgent that the Federal Government does what is necessary, in Germany, before 31 December 2020.

## **5. The Atomic Outsiders**

There is a second problem: climate justice needs peace in Germany, and peace is increasingly in danger. What hardly anyone is aware of today is that, like in the Cold War, Russia and the United States still lurk at each other today with nuclear missiles, each side with more than 1,000 warheads, day and night, 365 days a year. Defense is technically impossible. Therefore, electronic warning systems should detect incoming enemy missiles and, if they do, cause a devastating counter-attack: launch on warning, within

minutes. Blind, merciless revenge.

The archaic customs of revenge were overcome with Christianity, albeit only after bloody centuries. Revenge only makes a bad situation worse and leads to spiraling violence. Are the governments of the US and Russia Christian?

Contrary to popular misconception, nuclear warfare does not mean painless evaporation in a flash of lightning, “that’s it”, but rather a miserable perishing in the radioactive rubble landscape. The suffering lasts for hours, days, weeks. The radiation damage to the body cells is not curable, because their self-repair is destroyed. The organs gradually fail. The doctors cannot offer relief, because they are helpless victims themselves.

When it comes to the great nuclear war, it is the end of civilization, by the destruction, the radioactive contamination and the subsequent “nuclear winter” in the northern hemisphere: smoke and soot from the huge fires darken the sky for months. Temperatures drop to arctic frost levels. Harvests fail. Hundreds of millions of people die of cold and hunger.

At any time, there can be a major nuclear war due to a mistake in the Russian or American warning system or a human misjudgment. Thus Russia and the USA endanger the existence of humanity through their nuclear duel. There are quite different views on which of the two sides is more to blame for the trip-wire duel and which one is the more active. But does not one of the two opponents have the sense to end the crazy alarm circuit? Would not the other be under pressure to follow suit?

Several other states (France, China, Great Britain, Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea) have acquired nuclear weapons. But the US and Russia – each of both sides! - have seven times as many nuclear weapons as all the others taken together. This is beyond any military justification. In the name of what do the US and Russia - together only 7 percent of the world’s population - take the right to endanger humanity?

The cause of the nuclear war danger is not fear or hatred, but a will to power and economic interests. For the corporations and the military of both sides it is a good business to develop and deliver extremely expensive nuclear armaments, then to earn more for their maintenance year after year and to enable high paying professional careers. Which opponent or even if there is an opponent, that does not really matter. The main thing to justify the high military expenditures is that there is an enemy image. For this goal every war and every terrorist attack is a gift, from a business standpoint. Ammunition consumption is sales. Long-term supply contracts with governments are ongoing. Questions about meaning, law and morality are

regarded as unworldly. New techniques lead to new weapons - recently missile defense and hypersonic missiles. So far, nothing has happened in your own country. Wars take place elsewhere, so: “Where is the problem?”

In 1945, two atomic bombs destroyed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Today these explosions are considered “small explosive yield”. But even the very smallest nuclear weapon has the explosive power of hundreds of the largest conventional bombs. In addition there are the radioactive toxic effects. Thus, any use of nuclear weapons inevitably breaks international law and is therefore a war crime, for several reasons at the same time: disproportionate violence; lack of opportunity to distinguish between military personnel and civilian population; unnecessary suffering of the victims; genetic damage to future generations through radiation; long-term environmental damage.

Germany has a special role in all this. A review of what is largely unknown here still today: In the decades of the Cold War until 1989, the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and France ‘practiced’ and prepared for limited nuclear war in Germany year after year. At the time of the greatest danger, in 1983, former US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara warned, with clear words, that are valid again today:

“What the West Germans need to be clear about is that their culture will be devastated if they continue to adhere to the NATO strategy”.

He knew what he was talking about, for in the 1960s he himself had invented NATO’s nuclear strategy, and he had begun to stuff West Germany with nuclear weapons. In 1983, about 5000 (five thousand!) nuclear warheads were stored there, mostly as cannon projectiles with ranges of less than 20 kilometers, for detonation in West Germany, with explosive forces similar to the atomic bomb of Hiroshima. They were to be used as atomic area bombing against a Soviet tank advance. At that time, all Federal Governments kept this threat from the ‘allies’ secret from their people. Why?

Of the four powers that occupied Germany in 1945 after the Second World War, three left after 1990: Russia, Great Britain and France. The fourth remained, the USA. The reason: In Germany, the US maintained – and still maintain today - numerous military bases, including at least one nuclear weapons storage site and several important command centers, which are bunkered deep underground. Of course, the US wanted to keep all this after 1990. The German government did not prevent them, even

though the Cold War was over.

Such underground bunkers cannot be destroyed by conventional bombs, but they can be destroyed by pinpoint atomic hits. Even before 1990, at least these bunkers on German soil were programmed targets of Soviet-Russian nuclear missiles, and they will be today. Because these command bunkers are magnets for nuclear attacks, namely the most important targets in the first few minutes of a European war of the nuclear powers, no matter what happens afterwards.

US nuclear weapons are stored on the airfield Büchel in the Eifel, a number of free-fall bombs that in the event of war are to be dropped by German pilots from Bundeswehr aircraft. On whom? Are German soldiers allowed to obey orders for such war crimes?

In 2010, the entire Bundestag - in unusual unity, with all parties together! - mandated the Government to remove these nuclear bombs out of the country. What happened – nothing. Why? To whose benefit?

Why does Germany still refuse to sign in the UN the 2017 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons for which 122 countries have voted? This treaty came about through an international effort with strong youth participation. In whose interest is the Federal Government obstructing this treaty?

Through their command centers and military bases in Germany, the United States today wage wars of aggression in Asia and Africa. The commands from the USA are transmitted via satellites in space. Due to the curvature of the earth, the radio links need intermediate stations in Europe. And where are they? In Germany. Why does the Government tolerate that?

These US wars have no permit, no mandate from the United Nations. They are therefore contrary to international law. Thus Germany is an accomplice. Without their German bases, the US could hardly wage these wars. Will acts of revenge by victims of the American attacks come sooner or later to German cities, in the form of terror attacks? Why does the Federal Government allow the US this misuse of Germany?

In 2018, US President Trump threatened North Korea with nuclear war. In 2019, the US, and then Russia, withdrew from the INF Treaty: Land-based intermediate-range nuclear weapons, which had been banned since 1987, are now allowed again. Today, American tanks travel along the Russian borders. How fast is the clock ticking towards war?

## 6. Self-protection

Without peace for the youth in Germany global warming is probably at best a fringe-concern. Because if something goes wrong between Russia and the USA in Europe, then it will definitely bang in Germany.

And maybe it will bang in Germany only, because no other European country allows to be so endangered. The three nuclear powers in the west and the one in the east are preparing to lead a possible war outside their own countries. However, a European land war between NATO and Russia presupposes that the NATO allies can use Germany because of its central location as a battlefield, because of the US bases and because of the North Sea ports for the supply of war materials from the USA. Poland or Romania are not a substitute here because of their location on inland seas, whose straits can be easily sealed off.

Such a war between NATO and Russia would leave Germany as a field of debris, possibly radioactively poisoned. The fallout clouds will take off with the wind. It blows mostly in the direction East. That's why atomic damage would scarcely affect France, Britain and the US. By the way: Would these three economic competitors, from a business point of view, regret a nuclear disaster in Germany? Does it finally matter, which side someone in Germany personally had been viewing the 'good guys' or the 'bad guys'?

Year after year, also in 2019, groups of the peace movement demonstrate at the nuclear weapons storage site Büchel. They demand nothing more than what the entire Bundestag has demanded from the German Government since 2010: withdrawal of the nuclear weapons.

According to the 'two plus four treaty' of 1990, the new federal states and Berlin are an internationally recognized nuclear weapons free zone. Why then has the German government not declared Germany entirely a nuclear-weapon-free zone?

Who will bombard in Germany, even bombard with nuclear weapons – can such one be our friend? The NATO allies USA, Britain and France have until now not guaranteed under international law what should actually be self-evident among friends: Never to use war weapons, let alone nuclear weapons, against targets on German soil. No word was heard in that direction.

But there is a chance for self-protection: All military targets that attract attacks must disappear from Germany at once. Germany can and must use its house right, its national sovereignty, and refuse any nuclear power to use

the country as a military base and battlefield. Just like the – smarter ones? – neighboring countries Switzerland, Austria and Denmark do since ever. The urgent requirement is therefore:

**Ban nuclear targets from Germany  
(nuclear weapons and command bunkers)!**

At the same time, this serves peace throughout Europe, because without Germany, the European war will not work. Deterrence with an atomic threat of revenge fuels distrust and enmity. Peaceful neighborhood is built on understanding, even with difficult neighbors who obviously have their own problems. Just like in private life.

Germany today is much more vulnerable than it was during the Second World War, now with highly centralized supply, glass cities, with nuclear power plants as bomb reinforcers, without any shelters for the people. Therefore, a ‘promising’ military national defense for Germany is no longer possible. Tank battles, aerial bombardments and nuclear missiles would destroy what needs to be preserved. It does not matter to the people in Germany, which flags are painted on the tanks, planes and missiles, whether of ‘enemy’ or ‘friend’, whether of Russia or NATO.

So preferably no more means of war fighting at all on German soil! Not from strangers and not our own. They no longer help anybody here, but can only do untold damage and cost a lot of money, which is urgently needed elsewhere. Without means of war fighting in the country, nuclear powers no longer find a pretext to use Germany as a demolition ground.

Germany defenseless - is that possible? We are not defenseless. Defense is much more than armed forces. Denmark demonstrated it in 1940 when it was occupied by the Nazi Wehrmacht. In addition, modern international law offers highly effective protection: If Germany defends itself non-violently, attacks could only be directed against the civilian population. Such attacks instantly arouse worldwide disgust and are outlawed as war crimes. Today, all conceivable attackers against Germany – from east or from west – are export-dependent industrial states. An attack leads to a boycott of the economic products of the aggressor, thus damaging his export business. Germany will not be worth it to him, because there are no resources to be captured here. The substance of Germany survives, unlike with military defense. However, this protection – ultimately through international law – only works if we ourselves strictly observe international law. And there are deficits.

The US government under President Trump – with his line ‘America First!’ – may not like the loss of Germany as a military springboard to Russia, Asia and Africa. But is not Germany economically strong enough to withstand such pressure?

Will perhaps a new generation of Europeans, Americans and Russians be happy and grateful that at the heart of the conflict a small but important step is being taken to rid the world of the nuclear threat? With the end result of the worldwide outlawing of nuclear weapons, as it has been done with chemical and biological weapons decades ago.

## **7. The taming of the corporations**

Global warming and nuclear armaments have one and the same cause: The cancerous disease infestation of the industrialized countries with the aggressive virus ‘corporation’.

Corporations are very large private companies with anonymous owners, the shareholders. They have since conquered all economic sectors, from the production of nuclear weapons to baby food and up to dominant retail chains, rent-boosting apartment companies and powerful banks.

Corporations work as robots with the only goals being: maximum profits and growth. At the same time, the leading employees known as ‘Group Management’ must not look at how these goals are achieved, whether at the expense of environmental destruction, exploitation, social division or war. A corporate manager, who shuns such damage, is swiftly exchanged, because with his consideration he misappropriates money that is legally entitled to the shareholders of the corporation. ‘Future’ is an unknown word for the robot.

Corporations operate in democracies as well as in dictatorships. They do not know any national borders. Their headquarters settle ‘multinationally’ where they have to pay the least taxes. By their size they have almost inexhaustible funds, more than the governments of middle-sized states. So corporations can buy politicians. Citizens and small or medium-sized enterprises cannot do that.

For more than a hundred years, corporations have appropriated rights of humans, as so-called ‘legal persons’. But corporations are not persons, but things. However, with this legal trick, they can go to court against citizens and small businesses, and usually with success: in the path of lawsuits heard in court, corporations win almost every case, because the cost of lawyers and courts explode with the rising level of court instance.

Justice has become for sale, democracy and law are eroded. Should corporations in Germany retain the prerogative of the legal person?

The multinational corporations are also responsible for destroying the livelihoods of peoples on other continents. The Swiss sociologist Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food from 2000 to 2008, published a book in 2012 which detailed how, according to UN statistics, 52 million people were affected by epidemics, contaminated water, hunger and deficiency diseases. In business projects in Africa, funded by the World Bank, residential areas were knocked down. Between 2005 and 2015, 3.4 million people in World Bank projects lost their land or part of their livelihood.

Millions of people in Germany push their shopping trolleys daily through the rows of shelves in the supermarkets. They do not suspect how the alleged 'lowest prices' come about: through exploitation and blackmail of the economically weaker producers and through ruthless exploitation of the soil and the oceans. Cheap meat products are predominantly the result of animal cruelty of historically unprecedented proportions, namely in factory farming. Do not the animals have a natural right to our protection?

## **8. Who are the realists?**

What is the difference in the spiritual worlds between today's children and adults? For decades, adults have been 'brought into line' with the economically dominant corporate world, through kindergarten, school, education, professional life and the media. They are trained to obey 'superiors', with the reward of a much easier everyday economic life, but in the background with the fear of money shortage and social decline, to homelessness. Anyone who gets his income from corporations sees himself as a 'small light' in a huge system where he cannot change anything.

So many adults – even the majority? – are tuned to accept obvious absurdities as supposedly 'without alternative', such as the relationship with neighboring countries mediated through 'nuclear deterrence', thus a relationship of permanent deadly hostility, not as a normal way of dealing with normal conflicts.

Children do not yet have this mental distortion of adults. Are they the realists?

## 9. Parents as trustees

At the age of 18, young people in Germany are legally regarded as adults and thus eligible to vote for the Bundestag. In 2019, the Berlin state government campaigned for the “U18 election”: Although not counting as regular votes, children and young people under the age of 18 could vote like adults. Democracy game? Or serious intentions?

Young people enjoy the protection of the law from their birth. But until the age of 18 years, they are denied the democratic right to vote, even though it is all about their future. In a number of legal proceedings, the parents act as trustees for their children. For example: A part of the inheritance of a child is administered by the parents until the age of majority. Why are parents not allowed to vote for their minor children? Who is better as a trustee for children’s rights than the parents?

In the current distribution of power in Germany, the older generations increasingly have the dominant say. More than half of the members of the Bundestag are – as of 2019 – 50 years or older. Leading politicians are over 60 years old. How far does their world view coincide with the reality of life of parents of underage children in rented apartments?

On top of that, the percentage of older people in the electorate is growing, due to the demographic development, among other things based on advances in medicine. The statistical life expectancy in Germany is increasing. Nearly 30 percent of German citizens are at least 60 years old. By 2050, this share is expected to rise to about 38 percent.

In addition, the consequences of the rapid technical and economic development, from global warming to the digitization of the working world to the low-wage sector, are having an effect. Older people are barely touched by all this. The youngest, who will be most affected by the new problems, have no voice. Would it not be fair to give young people a voice, from birth until they reach the age of majority via the parents?

In 2008, the Federal Constitutional Court declared that the current federal election law is unconstitutional. The current system, introduced in 1953, favors the major parties, with ‘first vote’, ‘second vote’, mandatory party obedience and five-percent petty clause for small parties. The emergence of new political currents out of the population thus is made more difficult. As a certain consolation for the small parties, then the FDP, in 1953 the decisive vote was given the name ‘second vote’: The voter should have the impression that with the ‘first vote’ he makes his first choice, with the ‘second vote’ an independent second choice, for example in favor

of a small party, which he would like to see in the Bundestag too. So already the name of the decisive voice is a delusion.

On top of that, the German electoral system is full of reckless tricks in favor of the major parties and the interest groups behind them, which the citizen cannot recognize. This electoral system is impenetrable for voters. Is it compatible with democracy? Should not the parental suffrage become an issue in the German electoral law reform, which has now been postponed for more than eleven years?

## 10. Which demands?

In short, securing the future for the youth is about the following demands, which have for the most part set up the Federal policy itself:

- **First, put into effect the climate target 2020 set by the German Government itself**
- **and secondly ban nuclear targets from Germany (nuclear weapons and command bunkers)!**

So the youth actions deserve to be wished strength, perseverance and co-operation, because from the majority of the adults they can probably expect little help. Ongoing the Fridays really for the future of the students? Will the 'big' Federal politics try to tire the youth actions and intimidate them with felony threats? Will politicians be able to evade persistent public issues of students in the long term?

One guess: this time, the change of course to a future-oriented policy and vibrant democracy in Germany will succeed.

## 11. And a few more thoughts

**Nuclear weapon-free zone.** Germany is immediately expanding the nuclear weapon-free zone in the new federal states and Berlin to all federal states.

**Nuclear weapons ban treaty.** Germany immediately stops its boycott at the UN and signs and ratifies the 2017 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

**End of nuclear power.** Germany immediately shuts down all nuclear

power plants because of the excessively damaging consequences of accidents and military or terrorist attacks.

**Ban on means of warfare.** Germany immediately prohibits all means of warfare in its territory. Military assets today can no longer defend the highly vulnerable Germany against attacks, no matter who attacks, how he attacks, and why. It would be destroyed what needs to be preserved.

**Referendums.** Germany immediately facilitates referendums at the federal level. In almost all EU countries, citizens have the option of referendums on important issues, but in Germany only in the federal states, not at the federal level – a basic lack of democracy.

**End of the right of legal action for corporations.** Germany immediately removes for corporations – not for small and medium-sized companies! – the term legal person. As a result, corporations are losing the opportunity to force their business interests through litigation and money in Germany.

**Fiduciary Parental Vote.** Germany immediately grants all civic rights at birth, which are exercised by parents until the age of majority, including the right to vote.

**End of youth unemployment.** Following the example of Denmark, Germany immediately eliminates youth unemployment. Every young person of goodwill – no matter how he or she got here – is guaranteed a financially adequate role in the community, according to his or her abilities.

**School topic climate protection and peace.** Germany immediately brings climate protection and peace as topics to schools, organized by the students themselves, with the contents: Democracy, Economics, Law, Technology and Science. For example, on Fridays, without performance pressure, without exams.

**Animal welfare.** Germany immediately stops mass animal husbandry and gives the livestock in the country some basic rights.

**Fairtrade.** Germany immediately stops trading in goods produced by environmental degradation, animal cruelty, land grabbing, industrial emptying of the sea or child labor.







*The Revolt of the Children* was first published in German in 2019 as *Der Aufstand der Kinder*. The author, Joachim Wernicke, published a small A6 edition for free distribution at Student Climate Strike protests in an effort to make the link between climate change and nuclear weapons.

