

THE INTELLECTUAL POVERTY OF THE RIGHT: A CONVERSATION WITH GÜNTER MASCHKE

Posted on March 1, 2022 by Günter Maschke



We are very pleased to present this first English-language translation of an interview given in 1997 by Günter Maschke to the journal [Junge Freiheit](#). He was prolific and formidable thinker and published numerous books and articles for radio, newspapers and scientific journals, especially on the work of Juan Donoso Cortés and Carl Schmitt.

Junge Freiheit (JF): Mr. Maschke, almost six years ago you said in an interview that the space for intellectual freedom in Germany had all but evaporated. The situation is unlikely to have improved?

Günter Maschke (GM): No, the situation has not improved at all, because the process of coming to terms with the past has actually intensified. The real problem is not the constant hysterical dissociation from Hitler and alleged fascist or neo-fascist dangers, but that it is extended to the most distant reaches and times. If I write something today about—let's say—about the Minneogesang, I have to first lament the degradation of women by an authoritarian patriarchy and to point out that already in medieval times the horrors of the darkest years can be foreseen, or something similar. And if I discuss the civil wars between the ancient Greek states, I can't get around a denazification tribunal moralizing. This is somewhat caricatural, but the tendency is in that direction.



Günter Maschke, October 2015, Frankfurt am Main.

I am practically no longer allowed to see any epoch out of itself, out of Ranke's imperative that all epochs stand equal to God—I have to pour over everything the sauce of this diffuse, suggestive, extortionate morality. The problem of coming to terms with the past is not so much that I have to pull in from my head at certain names, dates, facts or factual assertions and express the desired opinion—but that I tend to have to look at all historical events under the aspect of supposed emancipation, of guilt and antecedence.

Coming to terms with the past permeates and contaminates the humanities and historical sciences and destroys the ability to think historically, psychologically, and so on. This inability to perceive one's own

social and historical conditions, this stultification thus set in motion, is perhaps more serious than selective political correctness toward National Socialism.

(JF): How do you explain the fact that coming to terms with the past has taken on such a life of its own that the campaigns shake us like fever attacks at ever shorter intervals?

(GM): I think there are few things that are such a good career and power tool as coming to terms with the past, because through it, of course, I can see any traces of disaster or forebodings or beginnings everywhere and can suspect everyone and everything without limit. If you express the slightest doubt about women's emancipation, you will get your head chopped off in every party executive.

The past-tense approach, which extends to the most distant regions, can be used everywhere to defame the opponent as reactionary, harboring dangerous tendencies, and so on. The normal plurality of a community is immediately and aggressively challenged; and this is of course a great tool in the struggle for power. While coming to terms with the past plays a significant role overall in Germany's self-promotion, in the internal political and party power struggle it offers countless instruments for swatting down the opponent. The big Machiavellianism is killed, the small one is really given a boost.

(JF): Is that the reason why this way of exercising power is now also being exported, for example to France or Switzerland?

(GM): I believe that it is a general phenomenon of decadence of a society that no longer wants itself; that because it is incapable of fighting, it has to pay for its addiction to pleasure with contrition—that is endless. The main problem seems to be that these phenomena are always signs of decadence—and there we Germans are of course in the lead once again.

In France, there was once a healthy schizophrenia; they talked about human rights, but oriented themselves to the reason of state and so on. Now France no longer has the strength to hold on to this "schizophrenia." They have now discovered this new source of power; and since every older politician has lived at some point and something happened back then, you will always find something. In the case of Switzerland, it is motivated by the desire to weaken the Swiss financial sector. That's a very clear motive.

(JF): How do you explain the fact that after reunification there was no slackening in the process of coming to terms with the past?

(GM): The bigger Germany is, the more the process of dealing with the past will increase. There was the threat of deciding on a different politics, a politics of self-discovery, of finding ourselves, a power-politics... this threat did exist, albeit more in the eyes of foreign countries, whose fears were knee-jerk but became our political guideline. Reunification was then allowed as a way of fitting into Europe; it was declared to be an acceptable by-product of the unification of Europe.

Ultimately, coming to terms with the past is based on the consensus that Germany must never again be a strong, independent power. This is what I once called the conspiracy of the "flak-helpers." The moment there is even the slightest danger of something happening here, the process of coming to terms with the past must be intensified. Seven years ago, however, this only succeeded because the ideology of the GDR was not so different from that of the FRG, if one just removes the SED trappings...

(JF): Who is responsible for this anti-national consensus?

(GM): The political class itself is responsible, which draws its power from the fact that Germany has no power, or only a very limited one; in the process, under the applause of this class, even the last German power resource is to be dissolved, the German Mark. When this happens, however, the other larger countries will preserve their national prerogatives; but we will have literally nothing left in our hands. When we then have no more money, when our crisis worsens, when we can no longer finance Europe, then we will be the biggest bastards in Europe, and then there will again be huge campaigns because of the past. We should be prepared for that.

(JF): Sounds illogical. The political class usually strives for more and more power!

(GM): It gains, it strengthens and improves its power internally by renouncing it externally. The renunciation on the outside strengthens the totalitarian rule on the inside. Renouncing the pursuit of German interests within Europe implies a gain of power that is certain and calculable, especially since the intellectual middle-classes think similarly and long for denationalization: they do not want to be involved in Europe; they want it to disappear from it. If the German will proudly say that he is European, the Briton or Frenchman will tell him, no, you are a German, you little bastard! And this European will

just be wide-eyed with surprise! In addition, Kohl's official policy is that of a new *cauchemar des coalitions*, that is, the nightmare of coalitions, that of a new encirclement. Bismarck had this nightmare also—and therefore Mr. Kohl is considered strangely as a continuator of Bismarck.

(JF): ...with the opposite result...

(GM): Yes, because Kohl does not raise the question: How do we hold our own on this dangerous terrain? How do we gain the necessary strength? But Kohl propagates German self-captivation, promises German self-captivation. Basically, he is committing suicide out of fear of death. I can only think of Clausewitz: "There is always time to die." This is not a policy that can be believed by others and it is not one that makes us a respected member of Europe. On the contrary, because of this policy and this mentality, because of this policy of repentance and renunciation of power, we are despised and—even worse—resented abroad.

(JF): How do you explain the fact that the left is one of the main supporters of globalization in Germany, even though it should be clear that it is the workers who will have to foot the bill—as with the euro?

(GM): The left hopes for the dissolution of the German people; in this, it is even more radical than the people themselves—even if this is only a difference of degree. But you have to see that globalization is also sharply criticized by parts of the left; for example, in the book by Elmar Altvater and a Mrs. Birgit Mahnkopf in *Die Grenzen der Globalisierung*, published by Westfälisches Dampfboot. If one disregards the somewhat bland proposals for solutions, nowhere else have the catastrophic economic, ecological and also psychological consequences of globalization, the appalling uprooting of people, been described so forcefully. From the right side, from us, there is unfortunately not even approximately so good an analysis!

(JF): What is the reason for the desolate situation of the intellectual right in Germany?

(GM): The right is a purely microscopic phenomenon; one must even ask whether there is still a right at all. I think Ernst Jünger once said that since the Dreyfus affair there is no longer a right. The right today also believes in popular sovereignty, and it is even vulgar-rousseauistic: the people are good. For them, however, it is not capitalism that is to blame, but the industry of coming to terms with the past, or the Allies, or corrupt television. But one has to admit that the German people are mentally and intellectually

completely crippled and degenerated. They are not in a better condition than the political class. The right does not dare to say that either.

Many things that are considered right-wing are not so at all—just think of the strange love of many right-wingers for our German Constitution, of the mirage of a right-wing constitutional patriotism! The right in our country likes to talk about meta-politics, but ends up only in a very short-winded educational hype. One is content with a collage of the right-wing and conservative educational goods of the past—but at discount prices. Three pages about this, two pages about that, a real right-wing morsel culture has emerged. One does not see the sense of ambitious, rigorous theoretical work. One just wants to get quickly to the point but will not, because no measurement of the crisis, of the truly terrible mental and spiritual situation of modern man is made, which transcends everything political.

(JF): Recently it has become fashionable to claim that more and more leftists have allegedly migrated to the right, for example, to name a few names, [Klaus Rainer Röhl](#). Can you speak to this at all?

(GM): With Röhl, I see that he became anti-communist, anti-totalitarian; but I would not call him a rightist. On the contrary, with him there is an identification with the existing system. This kind of right-wing liberals, of the national liberals, believes that this republic is basically good; that one has to defend this republic against the left. In reality, they would rather be dispossessed by these leftists than vice versa. A leading right-wing intellectual, whose name I won't mention now, once got upset about [Joschka Fischer](#), and I told him that this was Joschka Fischer's state rather than his. There are enough established people who have not yet understood that they are only tolerated. They appeal to a Federal German substance that has long been in other hands.

(JF): For a while, you expressed yourself more on the right in terms of journalism. Now we have the impression that you have withdrawn more to scientific work. Is that also because of frustration, that you don't see anything moving on the right?

(GM): You should do what you think you can do best, and that's good enough. And, as I said before, I believe that the right has to learn how to tackle tasks that are tedious. I don't think that's resignation. I just can't dance at two or three weddings.

(JF): Do you see anyone in Germany, or its neighboring countries, who would be able to do this

theoretical work from the right?

(GM): Yes, I know some people, even thirty-year-olds, whom I trust to do a lot. In our country, and also in Belgium, France, Spain Italy. The problem is discerned by some, certainly. But if you look at certain usual suspects here and elsewhere, certain right-wing usual suspects, you will only find journalism, contemporary history and the like. Of course, you have to read that, too. But I know relatively well-known authors of the right who have never read a classic work of political science in the broadest sense, be it Tacitus, Tocqueville or Carl Schmitt; who live second- or even third-hand. Simply put, such is the truly distressing situation. You have to show that more is being done; and also that a people who have been reconditioned for decades, with a completely buried consciousness, cannot be cured by a few witty formulations or a few snappy phrases. The right must become more serious intellectually and scientifically, and there are beginnings of this.

(JF): So, it has to relearn its craft?

(GM): Yes, because we have almost no resources left. We are intellectually in a much worse position than in the 1950s, when certain great authors were still able to shape opinions; for example, [Arnold Gehlen](#). We have to get back to that level of knowledge and awareness, so to speak, because today we are below that level. Just think of parliamentarism! Although the parliamentarism of today's republic is much more disastrous, much more low-level than that of 1955; almost all right-wingers today are below the level of a [Winfried Martini](#) of 1955 with his book, *[Das Ende aller Sicherheit](#)* (*The End of all Security*), as far as the insight into the value and non-value of parliamentarism is concerned.

We are in an infinitely weak position. And if the enemy demonizes to who knows what extent, it is only because it is truly totalitarian, because it wants to nip an entirely minoritarian cause in the bud. Political correctness is precisely totalitarian, and above all it is analogous to the fascist authority syndrome. According to this, the enemy is tiny, ridiculous, stupid, historically refuted, dirty, pathetic—and at the same time tremendously dangerous. This is how we are treated. But from this, we must not conclude that we are really dangerous—but only that the enemy wants to stifle immediately the most modest beginnings, and with good instinct. Secondly, however, we may conclude from it that this enemy will reach the highest values on the F-scale of the Frankfurt School, not we!

(JF): Political developments are currently moving rapidly in the direction of the dissolution of nation states. Is it at all sensible and realistic to resist this? Or, is it logical that the result will be larger state

structures and greater spaces?

(GM): The trend towards this is certainly inevitable; but what is to emerge or will emerge here is not a large space—this entity has neither a hegemon, nor is there agreement about the enemy, nor is there homogeneity among the members of the federation, nor is there a political idea affirmed by all and therefore no common metaphysics; nor is there a ban on intervention by powers outside the space. What will probably emerge is a Latin Americanization of Europe, a facilitated penetration of Europe by the United States.

Basically, what is at stake today is no longer a ban on intervention by powers from outside the region, but a ban on penetration—a desirable process, but one that is difficult to imagine, since the United States would have to be ripped out of the ganglia of the European Union.

Moreover, the European Union will probably fail because, after monetary unity, political differences between the individual states will grow, as each will seek and find the culprit in the other. The crises will be immediately continentalized without finding a clear addressee, without being able to agree on "the culprit;" and the whole relation of protection and obedience, which cannot function without clear authorities and responsibilities, will collapse in this pseudo-grand space. The people will divide and the high-time of demagogy—even nationalistically aggravated—will haunt the disuniting Europe. The process will be socially—in the broadest sense socially—destructive, without a political concept and a really iron framework. One could agree to the whole thing if the exclusion of the United States were aimed at and if there were a common political idea. Yes, if...

(JF): Couldn't it be that Europe is also of interest to Germany?

(GM): Only if one has an interest in asserting oneself in some form. Then you have to say—we want, to a certain extent, a German Europe. Now, however, Germany wants to be integrated, i.e., tied down; Germany's behavior in the Maastricht matter shows that. By the way, it would be difficult to play the hegemon in the new Europe, even if we were able to shake off the past.

(JF): But hasn't coming to terms with the past become, in a peculiar way, a completely new national backbone of the Germans? Isn't the call by Green politicians for German participation in military interventions rooted in this? Behind this is the hybrid idea that the Germans have been chosen

historically, not in a nationalistic sense as they were 50 years ago, but in the opposite sense, to tell everyone what is morally good ...

(GM): That may play into it, but it's more a complete surrender to U.S. missionary ideology. Theodore Roosevelt said in 1909 that the Germans would choke on their geography and could be a useful auxiliary people to the U.S. afterwards. Is a commitment to the "auxiliary people" role nationalistic? Now we allow ourselves to be instrumentalized by the UN, now again controlled by the U.S., without imposing any conditions on it, except for the silly demands for a seat on the Security Council. We take the official humanitarian flywheel ideas seriously; our politicians believe their own lies; and so we run the risk of becoming the dumb suckers of an alliance built against us. A German reorganizes the finances of the UN; the Germans want or are supposed to carry out military actions of the UN—and they don't even demand the elimination of the enemy states clauses!

(JF): Don't you have the impression that the Germans of 1997 can be most irritated if they are deprived of their historical role as perpetrators?

(GM): Yes, of course, because that's all they was left with. This goes so far that one demands that people of other nations, who are naturalized here, should share in this guilt. For example, Turks who become Germans. But then they will say: "Grandfather didn't do anything at that time." But at least it is expected of them; at least they are expected to have this substitute identity. Here the German policy is extremely contradictory: If we are supposed to repent eternally, if we are supposed to remain eternally aware of our terrible, incomparable guilt, is it not necessary to keep the German people intact? Is it not necessary to prevent the German people from being dissolved biologically and socially by the mass import of foreigners?

In order for the German people to continue to indulge in guilt messianism, it must be preserved in its ethnic substance and not be damaged by multiculti and mass immigration. This assertion is absurd only for those who do not realize what absurdistan they live in.

(JF): Doesn't the demand for normalization of Germany already come more strongly from abroad?

(GM): Yes, but foreign countries understand normalization to mean that we participate in their dirty tricks, that we participate in this imperialist Western constellation on an equal footing, especially

financially. That cannot be in our interest.

For example, it was not in our interest to co-pay for the United States' techno-massacre of Iraq, a country that never threatened us; it would be in even less of our interest to actively participate in such interventions in the future, which will increase. A strengthening of our service to the victorious powers should not be christened normalization or even proclaimed a national duty.

Featured image: "New Inventions of Modern Times, The Invention of Copper Engraving," plate 19, by Jan Collaert I, ca. 1600.

