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Really Creating a Stir

The police and the discourse on racism in our society

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On 25 May 2020, in Minneapolis, African-American George Floyd suffocated to death under the knee of a white police officer. Those in Germany and Austria who thought such incidents only happened in other countries soon found themselves confronted with a public debate on the racist attitudes and methods of police officers. Victims reported cases of "ethnic profiling" and random checks on individuals who seemingly did not fit the common cliché of a "white person". The issue gained traction, journalists wrote articles, books were published, debates were held in talk shows and ministries drafted action plans. However, it soon became clear that there appeared to be two discourses on this topic: one discussed the question of how police officers should be trained so that checks on individuals were no longer based on skin colour or presumed nationality, while the other wanted to talk about the emergence and impact of racist images of humanity, about the history of colonialism and about the characteristics of racist thought patterns and how they operate in the minds of all white people. Accusations became loud and counter-arguments, assurances by white people that they are not racists, encountered the results of scientific studies which showed that deep within us there are criteria by which we differentiate people who are similar to us from people we perceive as being "different". Of course, the discussion over racism did not begin with "Black Lives Matter", but long before that; it fills many metres of shelving with publications and now has a fully formulated and differentiated theoretical underpinning that we should roughly have understood if we want to engage in this discourse and develop solutions together.

1. THE CURRENT SITUATION

On the surface, it all seems really simple: the police are not allowed to treat citizens any better or worse because of their skin colour, religion, outward appearance or ethnicity. And yet these things do happen: people who do not fit the criteria of "civic normality", however conceived, unfortunately still have to worry about being checked much more frequently, suspected more often and treated less politely than people who tend to fit these criteria. The associated criticism of the police is nothing new, but this topic moved even more sharply into focus following the death of George Floyd in May 2020. In many countries, people demonstrated against discriminatory police practices, the media picked up on the topic, it was discussed in talk shows, and interior ministries, police authorities and police training institutions increasingly shifted their attention to the

question of how best to deal with this issue in view of the unfolding situation. The relevance and urgency of this topic was made all the greater by the fact that in recent years the media have regularly had good cause to report on cases in which police officers posted or commented approvingly of extreme right-wing statements in chat groups, on cases in which the personal details of people critical of the police were unlawfully distributed, while other incidents indicated that some sections of the police hold views that are not to be tolerated.

It soon became clear that the opinion keenly expressed in ministries and police headquarters and above all also in the professional organisations was that this involved only a small number of isolated cases, that they would hardly stand up to closer scrutiny, and that it was appropriate to address this topic much more intensively if only because of the almost unanswerable question about the point at which isolated cases cease to be isolated cases. However, it was also noted that for all the relevance and urgency of the topic, nobody had a meaningful picture of the situation that would have permitted valid statements to be made about the values, attitudes, perceptions and influencing factors that guide police officers, in order to subsequently develop effective problem-solving strategies.

However, the lack of a sufficiently meaningful database prevented neither the police critics nor those responsible in the police, executive and professional associations from offering their view of things to their respective audience in articles, interviews, talk shows and in social media. Questions were raised as to whether the police now tend to have a "latent", "institutional" or "structural problem" with racism, whether they are a reflection of society, whether they attract people with latent racist or extreme right-wing views or whether one runs the risk of developing such attitudes only in everyday police work, whether independent complaints bodies should be set up and whether it makes any sense at all to survey the attitudes and values of police officers in a scientific study.

Many police officers view the discussions on this topic in the media with a certain amount of incomprehension. They often feel wrongfully accused and held generally liable for the behaviour of a small number of colleagues. They see how much they themselves and their colleagues strive in their daily work to cope with the workload and perform their wide-ranging tasks as well as possible while acting professionally, impartially and in accordance with the law. They know very well that not every operation, interview, securing of evidence or contact with citizens will ever fully live up to what they once learned in their training or studies, and there are certainly occasional situations in which they are happy that nobody filmed them with a mobile phone and posted it on the Internet. But they also note how stressful certain operational situations are, how strenuous and annoying some encounters with citizens can be, how tired, stressed and worn out one can be on occasion, and they know exactly how quickly an individual can arrive at the point where they think, say or do things they are not really proud of afterwards. Of course, everyone knows one or other colleague whose unprofessional, insensitive, discriminatory behaviour can no longer be explained away by exhaustion, stress and overload, but must instead be assumed to have a cynical basic attitude, regard certain minorities with contempt and also let them feel it. But how many of these there are nobody knows, and at what precise point a "somewhat robust" view of completing police work stops and tips over into racially motivated unprofessionalism, nobody is able to say.

2. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The police are without doubt the most visible part of the state apparatus and so their behaviour is in much sharper focus among the general public than the behaviour of other authorities and bodies working away rather quietly in the less public areas of the administration. The police must therefore be pleased that the public has high expectations of them in terms of professionalism, rule of law and integrity, and wanting to live up to this should be an important aspect of how the police understand themselves as an organisation. The fact the police in Germany and Austria actually seem to succeed very well at this on the whole is evident in the pertinent survey results (cf. Statista 2021a; Statista 2021b).

Owing to the high visibility and overall social relevance of the factors that determine how the public view the police, the discussion is about what the causes of unprofessional behaviour, racist attacks or extreme right-wing attitudes are, embedded in a political and social context that has a significant impact on such discussions and the probability of success for problem-solving strategies. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, the ensuing public debate gained significant momentum, the police were accused of a "latent" or "structural" problem with racism, an editor of the left-wing German newspaper "taz" even wanted to see police officers thrown out with the rubbish (cf. Yaghoobifarah 2020), and reports came out of the USA on the strengthening of the "defund the police" movement, which aims at withdrawing public funding from the police and completely reorganising police work (cf. Levin 2020). Police officers report that – also owing to the measures put in place during the coronavirus pandemic – disrespect and physical assaults are increasing even in everyday operations, and videos of police operations are increasingly being posted online in order to document the supposed inability or lack of professionalism of the police officers involved. The climate seems to be becoming rougher and the battle lines seem clearly drawn.

Unfortunately, public policy discussions are not always noted for having a particular degree of analytical depth; statements in talk shows are often somewhat simplistic, posts on Twitter are somewhat poorly nuanced due to the limited number of characters, and so there is a great temptation to secure the approval of one's own followers by making correspondingly pointed remarks. This is not always conducive to a differentiated and solution-oriented public discourse. Now it could be argued that an organisation like the police, which does not always appear to be hesitant in choosing its use of force, has to put up with slightly stronger criticism – indeed such excessive criticism or pointedly presented opinions can be well suited to creating an awareness of problems, to generating pressure to act and to significantly accelerating the process of change towards an improvement in the conditions. And for a long time there were also good reasons to present social changes essentially as a linear process of progress and to assume that societies move step by step to a better future as a result of the relevant engagement of progressive groups. If this hypothesis is right, change agents – i.e. primarily the activists of social movements – could go quite a long way to promoting progress through particularly pronounced and, at the respective time, even provocative demands. And there is much to be said for the fact that certain social and political demands in the past were deemed unheard of or utopian at the time they were first formulated. That was the case for the demand after the end of slavery for a general and equal right to the vote, for the equal treatment of women,

for same-sex marriage and for many other demands that seem natural to us today, but represented far from the majority opinion at the time they were first put forward. Against this backdrop, there is something to be said for some statements and demands of the anti-racism movement appearing perhaps excessive today, but perfectly normal in the future. The high level of commitment and even aggressiveness that some of the activists display would be something good in this regard because it tends to speed up social development and highlights the urgency of the matter.

Looking at developments in the USA, however, scepticism is widespread. Not all that long ago, there were good reasons to assume that social tensions in American society would slowly but surely decline and that racial discrimination would at some point be largely overcome. Yet it is precisely the experiences of the USA that show how such a process can also lead to a constantly hardening formation of battle lines, whereby the group of supporters of the social avant-garde grows slowly in numbers, but the resistance of the rest of society also grows steadily, and at some point two enemy camps stand opposite one another, no longer capable of reaching a compromise (cf. Haidt 2012; Klein 2020; Levitzy/Ziblatt 2018). There are signs that this development is not limited to the USA, but is also evident in Europe. That seems primarily to be the case when an increasingly large proportion of society feels under attack from the demands of a minority in a very fundamental way. An example of this would be the support for Donald Trump by white workers who for a long time had also voted for the Democratic party, but who were increasingly irritated by the political discussions of the identity movements and the demands of ethnic minorities and therefore voted for a candidate who promised to resist this trend.

This takes place at a time in which public, social discourses differ in many respects from those of earlier decades: social media have given rise to means of communication that previously did not exist, the business models of global tech companies tend to promote the attention-seeking, the shrill and the controversial, subjective perception moves to the fore, and topics like identity, minority rights or the need for visibility and respect grow constantly in importance (cf. Fukuyama 2018).

The police cannot escape these social and political discourses. It is also helpful to develop a sense of which of these discourses would fall into the category of transient media excitement and which are an expression of social development with longer-term effect. The former often dissipate of their own accord; on the other hand, the police should actively engage in socially and politically relevant discourses and, in a dialogue based on mutual respect, develop common standards and strategies that enable thriving co-existence also with social groups that tend to view the police with scepticism. But for this, one should have understood which implicit and explicit rules these discourses run by, which inner logic they exhibit and which laws of development they follow.

3. THE ANTI-RACISM DISCOURSE IN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

In the German-speaking countries, the discussion on racism naturally began very much later than in the USA, but has become increasingly dynamic in the last ten years. It is striking that the discussion in the German-speaking countries is dominated less by the descendants of the most important groups of migrants by number, who primarily came from the Mediterranean (Turkey, Italy, the Balkan countries), than it is by authors with at least one parent

from Africa or the USA and by authors from Arabic-speaking countries or from Iran.

For obvious reasons, the social discourse on the definition of racism, its manifestations and causes, the possibilities for fighting it, the evaluation of developments to date and the expectations for the relevant groups of actors have, also in Germany and Austria, predominantly followed the corresponding discourse in the Anglo-Saxon world. A distinctive set of theories was developed there in recent decades that is aligned strongly to the approaches of French philosophy, in particular to authors like Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Derrida.

Authors from the Anglo-Saxon language area, who are quoted in the most relevant publications, are, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who was and is an important voice in the establishment of the "Postcolonial Studies" back in 1988 with her text "Can The Subaltern Speak?" (cf. Spivak 1988), as well as Peggy McIntosh, who one year later contributed to the anchoring of the term "white privilege" in the public discourse (cf. McIntosh 1989). At present, it is above all authors such as TaNehisi Coates (cf. Coates 2015; id. 2017), Reni Eddo-Lodge (cf. Eddo-Lodge 2019) and Ibram X. Kendi (cf. Kendi 2019) who are considered to be important driving forces in this debate. The concepts and terms formulated in the relevant publications quickly became important fixed points in the debate and are also to be found in German-language contributions – frequently also in the original English-language formulation. Examples of these, in addition to those already mentioned, are the term "white rage", which Carol Anderson 2014 introduced to the discussion in an article in the Washington Post (Anderson 2014), and the term "white fragility", which can be traced to the author Robin DiAngelo (cf. DiAngelo 2018). There is now also a large body of sociological, philosophical, psychological, historical, ethnological, linguistic, political scientific, journalistic and feuilletonistic texts that it is virtually impossible to overlook in its entirety. This is also the consequence of a clear expansion of scientific engagement with this topic, which has resulted, among other things, in the increased number of correspondingly established university chairs, institutes and research areas. It is therefore no wonder that the number of those who read scientific works is much smaller than those who tend to deal with popular science or journalistic publications, which is why it is reasonable to conclude that the public discourse is above all characterised by those authors who tend to aim their publication at the non-scientific segment of the market.

However, when it comes to the reception of the texts, which tend to be aimed at a broader market, it should be noted that this kind of literature differs from the scientific literature in a number of important ways. Clearly, many authors of popular science or journalistic publications also often make reference to relevant research results, although the motive to make research results public goes hand in hand with others, such as to share the matter, personal experiences, findings and political demands with a broader public, the wish to position oneself as a relevant voice in this discourse and to mobilise a following to do the same, but also the need to give expression to one's own rage, disappointment and frustration in light of the current situation. The latter is clearly evident in a not inconsiderable section of the literature emanating from the USA, and those who look at the history of the civil rights movement and the struggle of the African-American population in the last 60 years can clearly identify the disappointment and resentment of many authors. The expression of

this resentment, which has grown over decades, also resonates among activists in European countries, which enables the experiences of racism here to be categorised in a broader context. However, it must also be considered that a large proportion of the people in the countries of Central Europe followed the social developments in the USA during the last 50 years at best marginally and is thus unable to immediately understand many of the references presented in the literature. That doubtless also refers to a considerable number of the police officers, who – assuming they are actually interested in this topic – might have a hard time even understanding the relevant discourses and publications.

Then there is the phenomenon that key terms such as "racism", "construct", "microaggression", "intersectionality", "othering", "white rage" and "white fragility" have over the years formed fields of meaning that can immediately be recalled by those who know the literature and are presumed to be known by the other members of this discourse field. Or to put it another way: those who use terms such as "intersectionality" or "white fragility" are signalling their belonging to that group of people who no longer need to be taught the ABC of anti-racism. It is not devoid of a certain irony that knowing the theoretical discourses behind such terms and consciously using them can be described really well with the findings on the cultural capital of the educated middle class formulated by Pierre Bourdieu (cf. Bourdieu 1982).

In the German-speaking countries, the discussion has for some time been strongly characterised by authors such as Alice Hasters (cf. Hasters 2019), Mohamed Amjahid (cf. Amjahid 2017; id. 2021a; id. 2021b), Tupoka Ogette (cf. Ogette 2017), Noah Sow (cf. Sow 2018), Naika Foroutan (cf. Foroutan 2019) and Natasha Kelly (cf. Kelly 2021), who have made it onto the non-fiction bestseller lists with their books and were or are highly visible in both analogue and digital media. The tendency already addressed elsewhere to also pay particular attention to digital media and forms of communication, rather than trenchant statements, also became clear in this regard. And so there developed over a period of a few years a discourse space with a describable canon of arguments and theses that act as a common theoretical basis for a considerable proportion of the relevant publications and can also hardly be fundamentally questioned anymore within this discourse space. Even if it is not entirely without risk to want to distil a number of common core statements from the now very extensive and differentiated literature, this will nevertheless be attempted below with the explicit prior warning that it in no way makes any claims to completeness.

Some of these theses are:

- Racism and the term "race" are an invention of white Europeans who needed legitimacy to suppress, exploit, enslave or even eradicate other peoples (cf. Geulen 2018; Foroutan 2020, 12 f.; Hasters 2019, 27).
- Racism is not an individual matter, but rather we live in a structurally racist society, which is why it is almost impossible to grow up in this society without adopting racist attitudes oneself (cf. Eddo-Lodge 2019, 76–80). Identifying racism in oneself is an important prerequisite for overcoming it; those who deny it, cannot do that.
- White people are privileged because of their whiteness, but are unaware of this privilege as a general rule. However, white people becoming aware of these privileges is another important prerequisite for overcoming racism in our society.

- Inverted racism, i.e. the racism of people of colour towards whites does not exist because in history it was primarily black people who were discriminated against, while white people are mostly treated with respect, including in regions in which they are the minority (cf. Soltau 2020).
- In the case of statements or actions towards members of discriminated minorities, it has nothing to do with how something is meant or what image of humanity the person has who makes the statements or commits the actions, but rather how the member of the discriminated minority perceives the statements or actions. If they define a statement or action as being racist then it is no longer possible to contradict that. Racism therefore also takes place when the whites who make the statements or commit the actions perceived as being racist are unaware of this and did not intend to make or commit them either.
- People of colour are exposed many times a day to racist looks, remarks, questions or actions, which may be insignificant on their own, but can cause great suffering overall. The author Natasha A. Kelly said in a television interview: "If a black person or person of colour goes out in the morning and comes home in the evening, they have already had over a hundred encounters with racism; and the sum makes the difference." (Kelly 2020). These constant small "mosquito bites" (cf. Hasters 2020, 5) are called "microaggression" (cf. Sue et al. 2007) and in the opinion of these authors represent a daily burden for the members of discriminated minorities.
- Members of ethnic minorities are not only discriminated against in this capacity, but are often also victims of other forms of discrimination, which they have to endure because of other attributes or characteristics. Thus, for example, a woman with African ancestors and Islamic belief is discriminated against both as a person of colour and as a woman and as a Muslima. These factors of discrimination overlap and lead to different experiences of discrimination for each person. The term "intersectionality" (cf. Crenshaw 1989) has become established for this phenomenon in the discussion.
- The countries of the whites still profit today from the "colonial dividend"; the prosperity of western industrial countries is based on the plundering of African, Asian and indigenous American peoples. These in turn are still poor mainly because they were colonies and because the western industrial countries continue to exploit the post-colonial structures to the detriment of the poorer countries (cf. Hasters 2019, 62–64). In the view of some authors, rich countries have a moral obligation to help overcome this injustice through the payment of reparations (cf. Amjahid 2021a; id. 2021b; Andrews 2017).
- Among sections of the anti-racism movement, it is now very popular to believe that the achievements of the Enlightenment, the ideals of reason and of universal human rights, of critical discourse and of the fact-based, knowledge-acquisition constructs of a Eurocentric world view are based on racist principles and are thus to be rejected. It is also keenly mentioned that some of the great thinkers of the Enlightenment (such as, for example, Immanuel Kant) had a racist image of humanity by today's criteria.

Note: These are views from the somewhat pointedly trenchant section of the anti-racist spectrum, and are quite controversial, both in the public and in the scientific discourse. Some publications are

also noted for having a clearly evident sense of injury, frustration, and rage – even of bitterness and sarcasm – paired with the also explicitly expressed wish to deliberately get a rise out of the reader in order to set self-critical processes of reflection in motion. That such sometimes slightly simplistic, thought-provoking ideas generate disagreement and that individual parts of the line of argument would not necessarily stand up to scientific inspection is obviously taken into account.

Then there is also a basic consensus to be found in virtually all relevant publications that the actually unacceptable attribution of collective characteristics in the anti-racism dialogue on the basis of belonging to a group defined along ethnic, religious, phenotypical or other criteria with reference to white people seems to be entirely acceptable. These texts therefore regularly contain statements on supposedly typical characteristics, views, and behaviours of white people, while only in the rarest of cases taking into account the fact that such-and-such is also to be found among white people – just as it is among all other population groups. This is evidenced with descriptions of self-experienced statements or actions of white people which – other than is usual in the scientific literature – not only serve to illustrate empirically collected findings, but are directly used as evidence for the assertions. Specifically: describing a statement made by a white person and perceived as being racist is used as evidence that the white person "is" racist. This can be explained with the immediacy of one's own experiences and violations, which can be expressed with the words: "You whites have objectified and described us people of colour for centuries in generalising terms; now you can experience for yourselves what that feels like."

This goes hand-in-hand with a fairly consistently held attribution of responsibility that makes white people responsible for all crimes, acts of oppression, insults, slights and indiscretions that other white people – often several centuries ago – committed against the people with a different skin colour (cf. Brown 2019; Sow 2018; Amjahid 2017; Hasters 2019). Denouncing this behaviour is without doubt legitimate; it is also legitimate to raise the claim against a collective that its own members abide by certain norms, yet in the opinion of many white people it is also understandable that a Viennese police officer would not like to ask for forgiveness for the slavery of the southern American states or that a white person refuses to be held jointly responsible for the rudeness of a Berlin waiter towards a person of colour.

Not all of the authors mentioned represent the points listed here to the same extent, although these arguments could reflect a very broad consensus on the rather pointedly trenchant part of the debate spectrum. However, there are now also voices that put this picture into a slightly broader perspective, for whom one or other argument is too pointed and too provocative, and whose position is more strongly orientated towards differentiation, balance and understanding. The current publications by authors such as Aladin El-Mafaalani (cf. El-Mafaalani 2018) or Hamid Abdel-Samad (cf. Abdel-Samad 2021) serve as examples for this.

In the last five years, voices have also increasingly been raised on a meta level, articulating concern about argumentative excesses in this discourse. Here too, important publications first came from the Anglo-Saxon language area, where the discourse seems to be tougher and more unforgiving than in Central Europe (cf. Haidt 2012; Fukuyama 2018; Goldberg 2018; Murray 2019; Klein 2020). Yet

discomfort is also growing in Central Europe – not only in circles of conservative publicists traditionally sceptical of civilisation, but also amongst liberals and moderate left-wingers. There is also a deep-seated fear, in view of the unattractive prospects, that the irreconcilability between antagonistic camps, as can be observed in the USA, could also develop in European societies (cf. Pörksen 2018; Bruckner 2017; Hübl 2019; Fourest 2020; Wagenknecht 2021; Scheller 2021).

Which influential factors will come into play when camps form and battle lines harden is presented in brief below.

4. MY TEAM AGAINST YOURS

As people, we tend not to form our opinions in a rational process of consideration, but have in a sense a kind of "preset" – like a computer program, in which certain settings are already set up as the "default". This "default mode" determines how we react to arguments and depends very much on which group we identify with. This fact is especially relevant in connection with social and political discourses because we have a strong tendency to estimate the credibility of a person who we perceive as being connected with us in this way more highly than would be the case for a person who is not connected to us by anything or who even belongs to the antagonists of our own group. The American psychologist Thomas Gilovich expresses this fact in the form of two different questions, which are asked when one is confronted with an argument (cf. Gilovich 1991, 84, quote acc. to Haidt 2012, 98). If the argument comes from someone I perceive to be a part of "my team", I ask: "Can I believe this?" and look for reasons that support this line of argument. We have a deep-seated impulse that makes us wish that those we feel we belong to may be right. However, if the argument comes from the other side, if my group is criticised or I have other reasons to reject those who present the argument, I ask the question: "Must I believe it?" and look for reasons that do not support this argument. Usually, just one somewhat vague argument that could justify our doubt in the line of argumentation of the other person is enough for us to have a reason to reject the line of argumentation in its entirety. Because it is difficult for us to admit that the other side is right.

We are often unaware of these processes, but they are extremely effective. With regard to actual or alleged assaults by police officers on members of social minorities, this leads to the frequently observed phenomenon that police officers spontaneously tend to believe the statements of their colleagues even if the facts are still completely unclear, while members of the affected social group tend to believe the accounts made by the group of "their people" than the statements made by the police.

The pattern behind such reactions is important for group cohesion and therefore also typical for the behaviour of groups when they come into conflict with other groups. On the one hand, this expresses itself in the phenomenon that it strengthens the inner cohesion of the group, when there is considerable consensus within the group about how unacceptable the views, actions, attitudes, characteristics or statements of the other side are. The consequences of this fact can be well observed in political debates: each side focuses primarily on the extreme statements of the other camp and sees these as confirmation that the antagonism towards those on the other side is justified. Those looking to strengthen the power of their own group have an interest in presenting the opponent as deluded, irresponsible and incompetent, but also above all as threatening. Demagogues know that and often use this mech-

anism unscrupulously and, unfortunately, often very effectively as well.

The result often involves "circling the wagons". If the pressure from outside increases and it is clear who the opponent is, social systems almost always react in the same way: the ranks are closed, discussions are prevented, internal criticism is perceived as disloyal or, in the worst case, as betrayal. This phenomenon exhibits the features of an anthropological constant and says something about how the tendency to close ranks and stand together as a group when faced with external danger has proven to be a survival-promoting evolutionary advantage and is therefore probably very deeply embedded within us as an impulse.

5. PERSPECTIVES

So what happens next? Are we – as has already been implied above – slowly moving to a point at which two rival camps stand opposite each other just shouting at each other? Or is the "great irritability" (Pörksen 2018) followed by a phase of understanding and the search for pragmatic solutions? Experience to date shows that the concerns of marginalised groups mostly make progress when an influential majority of the dominant group is fundamentally able to accept those concerns. That was the case both with reference to the American civil rights movement in the 1960s and in connection with the emancipation movement for the creation of gender equality.

All efforts to reduce racist or extreme right-wing attitudes in police officers and to proscribe such statements or corresponding behaviour should therefore aim at preventing the circling of wagons on both sides and not driving the reasonable, the upright, the moderates into the arms of those who see the enemy in the other side, who no longer listen, but only want to see confirmation of their view that the other side is hopelessly stubborn and any discussion meaningless.

This succeeds only when both sides approach the protagonists on the other side who are reasonable and willing to engage in productive dialogue, by entering into conversation with each other and in doing so being very careful to avoid making generalising statements about the other side. It is without doubt helpful to listen to what the other side says it finds burdensome or outrageous and not to switch immediately to relativisation mode and answering with a "Yes, but …". And both sides are well advised to search for solutions together and not to make any agreement dependent on whether the other side distances itself from the sins committed on its side first.

There has been movement on the part of the police in recent months and years, but as an organisation and as a society we still have a very long way to go. And history shows that processes of social change can also come to a stop again or there can even be a backlash, and years later one realises that earlier progress has been squandered.

In order for things to develop for the better, different levels of progress are called for in different ways: the police officers on duty at the police stations must abide by the law and must treat all citizens professionally, in a civilised and unbiased manner. Managers must demonstrate values and competences such as professionalism, competence, decency and fairness, and in doing so must not tolerate any sloppiness. Educational institutions must work with the police officers of the future, impart these values to them and meet them in the world they live in in an educationally smart way. Scientists should set about better researching the findings on attitudes and views, decision-making factors and action practices of police officers as well as the experiences and perceptions of the groups affected by these practices, and

discuss them with an interested public. The highest management levels, the ministries, police headquarters as well as the highest echelons of the police trade unions or professional associations should continue the social discourse on this topic: receptive and open to criticism, reflective and ready to talk, but also firmly committed to the values of our constitution and legal system. And the activists who get involved for the rights of the victims should differentiate between those in the police who are part of the problem and those who are or could be part of the solution. They need these as allies because they will not be able to win this battle without them.

Talking and listening to one another, being sensitive and tactful, largely dispensing with accusations and dogmatic statements, allowing the other person to matter and looking for solutions together – it is not actually all that difficult. If the will is there.

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