

Siegfried Beer

EDITORIAL

TRANSITIONING TO MORE CITIZEN SECURITY – ACIPSS A WILLING PARTNER



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“An open eye and ear might be more powerful than an iron fist”

(a possible motto for a potential Graz-security-initiative)

JIPSS is proudly entering its sixth year of publication. We have tried to produce an internationally oriented journal on three crucial areas of modern life: on intelligence as everybody's need to know; on ever-present propaganda as potential strategy to misdirect the recipient's life; and on security as a human right in a functioning democracy, while at the same time offering a national focus in our contents as well. ACIPSS has now passed the eight-year point and has consistently aimed at the local scene, at Graz University through teaching, training and research, but also at intelligence and security concerns of the City of Graz, Austria's second-largest.

Our 15th ACIPSS Workshop on April 27, 2012 was a case in point. Its title was: “Public Safety – Is there a (Need for) Citizen Responsibility?” It was a well-attended event to which politicians of all six political parties represented in the Graz City Council (Gemeinderat) were invited, as well as one of the highest local police officers. A report about this dialogue forum was duly published on our webpage (www.acipss.org). There was an almost complete consensus among all discussants that security issues belong to the most vital concerns of any community and that there is a great need to strengthen the aware-

ness of citizens for the growing importance of citizen involvement and contribution in terms of individual and collective alertness and willingness to support security organizations in their increasingly difficult and diversified work. It was generally realized that the resources of all governments – federal, provincial or municipal – are finite and that authorities in charge of security cannot be omnipresent (police) or omniscient (intelligence), while ignorance, apathy, denial and complacency displayed by citizens can be dangerous, even deadly. Several participants lamented a glaring lack of civil(ian) caring and courage for even simply reporting the witnessing of crime and violence, despite the wide-spread possession of mobile phones by the majority of city-dwellers. This problem had also been recognised by former Austrian Interior Minister Maria Fekter when she stated: “Echte Helden holen Hilfe. Außerdem will ich mehr Bürgerbeteiligung an der Sicherheit.”¹ It also became quite clear that the spectrum of security to be considered at each and every level of society (from local to international/global) ranged from petty crime and violence to a potential terrorist activity (“What happened in Toulouse can happen in Graz also”).

While there was general agreement on the importance (great), nature (complex) and massiveness (“Austria is no Island of the Blessed”) of the security problem at all levels, it was also recognised that security politics was difficult to sustain, that there was little media interest for it (not a single journalist

attended the event) and that there were no proven channels of reaching the individual citizen on these issues. Then the idea of perhaps establishing a local security advisory council (Sicherheitsbeirat) on the model of the human rights advisory council (Menschenrechtsbeirat) was ventilated and found much spontaneous support. Such a council, it was hoped, could help keep such issues on the front burner.

Needless to stress, ACIPSS is willing to participate in such a scheme and in this context can already point to a consistent policy of calling for an improved information management and a heightened citizen participation in the areas of intelligence and security in the editorials of its hitherto ten issues of JIPSS. Already in our initial number we exhorted: “We perceive a definite need to involve the interested citizen. JIPSS wants to contribute in this important area of democratic life.”² In the editorial of issue 1/2008 we argued “The Case for Citizen Vigilance” by claiming: “It simply matters to which degree information is shared with all participants in civil society. [...] This concern has led to the concept

of the ‘citizen intelligence minuteman’ as a kind of ‘knowledge volunteer’, [...] eventually leading to a security-smarter society.”³ In the following number we admonished that “a key element in civil protection planning is deemed to be not only government activities at [all levels] but also the active involvement of all sections of society, i.e. of the individual citizen. This necessitates a widely-applied communication strategy.”⁴ And again in 2011 we demanded that “it is time to recognise also in this country that citizen involvement in fighting crime and terror is a strategy well worth pursuing in order to enhance safety in neighbourhoods and to improve security at any level of society.”⁵

ACIPSS has been built on the conviction that the sciences, even the humanities, have to look for application and connection to society at large.⁶ If the City of Graz is ready to become serious in the promotion of personal security as a citizen right as much as a citizen responsibility in a given community and society, we will gladly offer our accumulated scientific expertise and future endeavour in partnership.



V.l.: Martina Schröck (SPÖ), Christina Jahn (Grüne), Bernhard Kraxner (ÖVP), Georg Schröck (BZÖ), Armin Sippel (FPÖ), ...



... Siegfried Beer (ACIPSS) und Kurt Kemeter, Stadtpolizeikommandant von Graz

ENDNOTES

¹ Heroes fetch help. Besides, I want more participation of citizens in the area of security. As reported in the Viennese daily *Österreich*, 30 December 2010.

² Journal for Intelligence, Propaganda and Security Studies Vol. 1, Nr. 1 (2007), 5.

³ Ibid., Vol. 2, Nr. 1 (2008), 6.

⁴ Ibid., Vol. 2, Nr. 2 (2008), 6.

⁵ Ibid., Vol. 5, Nr. 2 (2011), 7.

⁶ As stated in the editorial of the initial issue of our journal: „[JIPSS] will particularly aim to bridge the gap between the academic fields of scientific production and a general non-academically oriented audience.” Cf. Siegfried Beer, Why Another Journal? Thoughts on Our Mission, in: Ibid., Vol. 1, Nr. 1 (2007), 5.