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**Evidence supplied by the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF)**

Prof. Dr. Harald Müller

Director, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF)

Baseler Str. 27-31  
60329 Frankfurt am Main

**Testimony to the National Assembly of Wales**

March 2009

## I. On PRIF

Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF, in German “Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung”) was founded in 1970 as a Foundation of Public Law. This misleads people time and again to ask us for money, but we have got nothing to distribute. Moreover, our Institute has no endowment. For 38 years, we obtained our basic funding (ca. 60-70% of our annual budget) from the regular budget of the State of Hesse, the founder of the institute. The form of a foundation of public law was chosen to grant the necessary degree of independence and to ensure that the institute would grow as a non-profit, public-good orientated institution.

The installation happened on the initiative of my last predecessor as director, Prof. Ernst Otto Czempel. He convinced the Prime Minister of Hesse, the social democrat Albert Oswald, that it was up to the states to support peace research. This was the high time of detente policy, with Willy Brandt at the helm of the Federal Republic; installing peace research institute was seen as “the right thing to do” (partner institutes were installed in Hamburg, and by the protestant church in Heidelberg). That a state government rather than the Federal Government would act to found such an institute is rooted in German federalism: Academia is largely in the hand of the states. Albert Oswald became so convinced of the matter that he would later, after his retirement, use his little fortune to set up his own foundation with the main purpose to sponsor the Hesse Peace Prize; PRIF is involved in the selection of the annual prize winner. The initial closeness of PRIF to a social democratic government made us suspicious with the Conservatives as a leftist project, and we had to struggle with that suspicion well into the latter half of the eighties.

The institute started as a purely academic enterprise. Three of the four research groups (today: program areas) were devoted to international relations. The fourth one worked on domestic, societal conflicts with the potential of being conducted in a violent way. The institute had initially eight research associates and four research directors, three of whom were only part-time (25%) while their main occupation was university teaching. The initial budget was about 1 million DM – ca. 550 000 EUR in today’s currency.

The institute worked on basic research. Its products were big scholarly volumes. There was hardly any direct contact to policy (only the group on societal issues worked also on some practical aspects). The institute was also not very well integrated into international networks; this was very much left to individual researchers. Significantly there was no English language name until the mid eighties (when I, returning from two years at an international institution in Brussels, insisted that we had to get a English name, as our German one is a tongue-breaker for any native speaker in a foreign language!). Our research programs – twenty years devoted to managing and transforming the East-West-Conflict, then, after its end, to designing a new

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order for the new Europe – were loose umbrellas under which researchers went very much their own ways.

Today, matters have changed in almost every aspect. The institute has grown to close to 50 researchers (ca. 80 total staff), of whom no less than 18 are Ph.D. candidates. Our budget is about 3.5 million EUR, of which 2.6 million is public funding. Today, the state and the Federal Government share in our funding, as we have entered the “Leibniz Association”, a group of extra-university institutes rated excellent and of importance for national science; every institute in that group has joint state/federal funding; the “pact for research” which the Federal Government, the states, and the Association have concluded now for the second consecutive period of five years, grants continuing growth and thus provides for stability; this enables the institute’s leadership solid planning. Today, we are accepted and appreciated by all political parties as a serious, if critical voice.

PRIF is neither completely basic research nor completely practice orientated. We “walk on two legs”. On the one hand, in the context of our research program, we contribute to cutting edge academic research; the research programs bind more than 50% of the institutes work and present a binding framework for the core work of all four program areas. Our research program “Antinomies of the Democratic Peace” investigated critically the ways democracies conduct themselves in the world today, and accounted for the vast differences among them. Our new research program “Just Peace Governance” looks into the relationship between justice, conflict and peace with a view to find ways to regulate major international problems in a lasting way. We publish in peer-reviewed journals and book series, attend the most highly valued international conferences in large numbers, and encourage our associates to teach at the university at least once in a few years (with the Universities of Frankfurt and Darmstadt, we have regular cooperation agreements).

At the same time, we devote a considerable degree of our work to practical issues. We develop options for practical policies (not the least through our two in-house series PRIF Reports and PRIF Viewpoints) and are a major consultant to the Federal Government on a variety of issues. On arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, we are the leading advisor in Germany. Our media contacts for the last ten years were rarely below 500/year. We introduce our young people early on into government consulting, and we hold regular courses for media interviews to initiate them to this (quite difficult) practice under the supervision of a professional trainer.

## **II. Lessons to be learned**

### **1. Establishment of peace (research) institute by regional government**

It is possible and it makes sense for a regional government to and parliament set up a peace (research) institute when it believes this is the right thing to do. Even if the work of the institute is mainly directed towards the national capital, the involvement of the state government gives the institute some robustness against a central authority enraged by criticism uttered by the researchers (note what happened to the Danish Peace Research Institute under former Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen!).

### **2. Political neutrality**

Peace work and peace research move necessarily in a politically contested field. This creates risks for any institution tasked with this particular mission. It is essential to liberate such an institution from a partisan image from the outset: It should be a supra-party, all-party endeavour. Politicians should exert the largest possible tolerance towards such an entity. The freedom of opinion and of academic research must be fully respected.

### **3. Provide for financial stability**

To isolate the institute against the vagaries of politics and economics, it might be advisable to make part of the budget (say, 50%) dependent on an endowment, and add to this from the annual budget. This enhances independence, and it also gives greater robustness against economic crises. The disadvantage is that it requires heavy upfront investment, which is rarely popular among those responsible for the budget (it was for this reason that PRIF was not founded with an endowment).

### **4. Quality control**

It makes sense to establish some measure of quality control. One has to be careful with this statement in a British context. Great Britain has acquired the reputation on the Continent that it has overdone the rating (and continues so with the new measure of “impact”). The one-size-fits all philosophy (which undervalues, for example, academic services such as databases or yearbooks) is clearly counterproductive, and it is seen as a curious irony in many places on the Continent that Great Britain, among all places, would install in the academic sector an alien conformity that reminds more of the faded communist system than of a vibrant, modern academic structure. I thus recommend setting up an institute-specific evaluation system, optimally a highly qualified and committed academic advisory council that would set up criteria and scrutinize the institute’s work using this standard. Our own experience with our advisory council is immensely positive. Always critical and always constructive, the Council

has helped us to advance, and at the same time is assessed by our funders as a reliable and trustworthy judge of our achievements.

## **5. Internationalisation**

Independent of its mission, the institute should be part of an international network. This is a necessary precaution against cultural bias and intellectual incest. It keeps the mind open for what other people in the work do – even if the mission should be constrained to domestic conflict and conflict solution. Associates should get the opportunity from time to time to spend an internship elsewhere, as the budget of the institute should allow for guest researchers or activists from abroad.

# **III. Choices**

## **1. Mission**

The main choice to be made (apart from the one on whether to establish an institution at all) is what this institution should have as its core mission. First, there is the choice between a more academic and a more practical orientation. It is not easy to “walk on two legs”, and it requires a certain minimum size to do this successfully. If the decision is for the practical (that is: no theory-building) side, the question is still whether the focus should be on research (policy analysis with a view to develop options for practical policy) or practice (e.g. summer schools for kids from Israel and Palestine; offering mediation services for actual conflicts at home and/or abroad; training peace workers for international missions).

The second major choice is whether the institute should focus on conflicts abroad or at home. Each society has conflictual features that can produce violence (e.g. social tensions; generational conflict; migration cleavages). It is a possibility to focus an institute’s work completely on these issues. On the other hand, the world is full of violent conflicts, and much work is needed to find means to mitigate or solve them.

## **2. Size/Budget**

The second major choice concerns the size of the institute and, by consequence, its budget. It is hard to make an absolute recommendation on this – depending on the quality of the staff; even a small place can make both a name and an impact. Nevertheless, the larger the institute, the better the chances of name and impact – good staff provided. At any rate, funders should take care not to limit budget to the mere skeleton needs: In addition to staff (including administration) salaries, the institute needs some leeway to conduct activities such as: sending members to important conferences and to field work; inviting guest researchers; holding small meetings; buying, maintaining and updating software etc.

## Letter from the Petitioner #2

Christine Chapman AM  
Chairperson  
Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff CF99 1NA  
6 April 2010

Dear Christine,

### **P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute**

Thank you for your letter of 1 March, requesting more detail on our perspective for the Peace Institute. As explained during our evidence session, we are reluctant to firm up all of the specifics for fear of prematurely closing doors. However, in response, we are happy to propose the following as guiding principles:

1. As we mention in our broadsheet, other Peace Institutes are linked to regional assemblies or governments, to other sponsors, or are wholly independent. For us in Wales it would be desirable for the National Assembly for Wales to support a Peace Institute publicly – whether or not this support includes funding.
2. We believe it is appropriate that the Peace Institute has more than one financial backer as well as generating income from commissioned studies. We anticipate that one or more charitable foundations will be willing to support a Wales Peace Institute. However, if the Institute were to take over work already funded by the National Assembly for Wales or the Welsh Assembly Government, it would seem to us to be natural for such public funding to continue through it.
3. As to formal relationships, whilst we anticipate that the National Assembly for Wales may ask the Institute to undertake specified tasks, we as petitioners do not think of the Peace Institute as responsible solely to the National Assembly, since this might jeopardise its independence.
4. Our aspirations for a Peace Institute's range of activities appear as 'Outline Proposals' in our broadsheet. We are loath to suggest deletions or additions at this stage – though not inflexible about this – as we believe such details are better discussed by the working party that we propose should consider the Peace Institute's remit.
5. We envisage the Peace Institute's governance would be similar to that of those established in other states, and of Cynnal Cymru. It would have an appointed governing body which would select the salaried officers and to whom the staff would report. The composition of the governing body needs to reflect all the differing interests that are anticipated to have a stake in its activities, including civil society, business, academia, government and potential other funders.

6. We feel that at least three salaried staff will be needed to make the Peace Institute credible, but that as many as ten might be employed, depending on the scope of its activities and funding. The Temple of Peace in Cathays Park, Cardiff is willing to host the Peace Institute, but it is premature to decide on the issue of location at this stage.

We trust that these six points clarify our approach, even though many issues necessarily remain to be discussed in detail. We now seek your guidance on “*the practicalities of Wales having a Peace Institute*” as referred to in our Petition.

Some of our ideas impinge on existing governmental or educational activities. We believe it is important to identify where there is potential overlap with current work (and where there is not), and so assess where a Wales Peace Institute would usefully have a role. However, we recognise that we, the petitioners, do not have sufficient detailed knowledge of the workings of the legislature and government to formulate firm proposals, whereas AMs and Committee staff are more conversant with these issues. Hence our suggestion that a working party be created, to examine these issues in greater depth than can be attempted in the formal setting of Petitions Committee meetings.

What we have in mind is a ‘task and finish’ group which would, amongst other things, identify current and potential activities of existing institutions that might possibly be conducted under the aegis of a Wales Peace Institute. The petitioners and Committee staff could meet the identified institutions to discuss the options and report back. The outcome would be a comprehensive report to the Committee (and more widely to the National Assembly) on the key practicalities.

We suggest that this working party could include (say) four representatives of the petitioners, plus four AMs (possibly the Petitions Committee, with substitutes to maintain the political balance) and (say) two support staff. We would anticipate that the petitioners would do most of the leg work between meetings – possibly to include regional meetings and seminars as part of the consultation process – and that its tasks could be completed by the end of this summer.

Having provided you with this perspective however, we must reiterate that we do not have a firm blueprint of proposals or procedures for future consultation, and put forward the above as suggestions for the Committee to consider.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Thomas

***Director, on behalf of the petitioners***