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## The Evolution of an Idea

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# The Schiller Institute Turns Twenty!

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Live in your own century, but be not its creature; serve your contemporaries according to what they need, not according to what they praise.

Over the 20 years since it was founded as an international institute on July 3-4, 1984 in Arlington, Virginia, the Schiller Institute has evolved an incredibly wide spectrum of activities in approximately 60 nations. In the eyes of many, especially of leading figures in the developing countries, it is the one institution which, from its inception, has been unwavering in promoting the establishment of a New and Just World Economic Order and a new humanist renaissance. Over these past 20 years, we have organized hundreds of international conferences; we have sponsored thousands of lectures and seminars; and we have organized countless concerts, cultural events, poetry recitations, translations of Classical works, and choruses.

What is the guiding idea which has united these activities so diverse? And why has such an institute, whose German branch is subtitled "Vereinigung für Staatskunst" ("Association for Statecraft"), ventured to name itself after the German poet Friedrich Schiller?

To answer this, I must first report to you, that the study of Friedrich Schiller's life and work has been a red thread intertwining all phases of my conscious life. During my time at the *Gymnasium* in Trier, I had the extraordinary good fortune to have three successive German literature teachers (two men, one woman), who, under the sway of the Humboldt concept of education, familiarized me and my fellow students, in a highly polemical way, with German Classicism, and with Schiller's works in particular. I recall that during that time, I came to cherish certain of Schiller's ideas so absolutely, that I would rise to their defense against all challengers and counter-claims.

Among these works, was a passage in the tenth of Schiller's "Letters on *Don Carlos*," where he explains that his true motivation in penning this drama, had been "to take truths which, to anyone well-disposed toward humankind, must be held as *most sacred*, but which, up to now, have remained the property of the exact sciences, and to carry these over into the realm of the arts, to quicken them with light and warmth, and, thus implanted in the human heart as a vital, active motive, to reveal them in powerful struggle with the human passions."

In his Eighth Letter, Schiller described the theme of *Don Carlos* in these terms: "Think back, dear friend, about a certain lively discussion that went on among us concerning a favorite topic of our century: the propagation of a more pure, more gentle humanity; the greatest possible freedom of the *individual*, coupled with the greatest flourishing of the State; in short, the most perfected condition of humankind that is achievable, as is implicit within its nature and its powers." Schiller is referencing here the decade of the 1780s, the time when America fought for and gained its independence. And alongside a passage in the Tenth Letter, where Schiller expressed his hope that these "not entirely unimportant ideas" might be taken up by some future "truth-seeker," I found pencilled in the margin of the volume I had been using back then, the single word: "me."

In yet another passage, Schiller writes that his works will only be fully and more profoundly understood in centuries to come; and I recall that there, too, I had felt as if Schiller had been addressing me personally.

Ten years later, in 1978, when I found myself in a situation requiring that I remain more or less housebound for a good part of the year (I had, in the meantime, married my husband Lyn), I suddenly felt the need to take up Schiller again with renewed intensity. Somehow, I had the strong sense that taking up Schiller's works as a whole, was a task for me left still undone, one to which I absolutely had to return. And so, for months, I plunged into reading the entirety of his writings, dramas, and poems. Given my circumstances, I became immersed in a kind of "inner emigration"; and it was precisely these aversive external circumstances which made me all the more open to certain of Schiller's ideas, such as the Sublime (*das Erhabene*), the "beautiful soul," and also Schiller's absolute contempt for oligarchical tyranny, and his love of inner and outward freedom. An article on "The Secret Knowledge of Friedrich Schiller" was the first fruit of those studies.

The following year, as I was accompanying my husband during the Presidential campaign in New Hampshire, Michigan, and other states, my previous year's intensive preoccupation with Schiller proved to be an internal resource upon which I could draw. Because political realities in the United States were such a brutalizing experience for me, this inner armament of mine was absolutely crucial. Mafia methods being used by Lyn's political opponents, the absence of internal



*The founding members of the Schiller Institute, from Germany and the United States, got together at a farm in Virginia in May 1984, where they established the Institute. Helga and Lyndon LaRouche are on the right.*

and material freedom demonstrated by many otherwise decent elected and trade union officials, corruption among the more impoverished layers via the distribution of ridiculous hand-outs which, albeit extremely useful to the recipients, nevertheless had the effect of further enslaving them—in short, my entire experience during this campaign, of a political life bent on the ruthless wielding of power, convinced me that the conclusion which Schiller had drawn following the failure of the French Revolution, had been absolutely correct.

### **To Change People with Beauty**

Namely, Schiller had said that a great moment in history—and by this, he meant the opportunity to repeat the American Revolution inside Europe—had found a little people. The objective possibility for that change had been present, but the subjective, moral possibility had been lacking. And thus, henceforth, Schiller said, any improvement in the political realm could be achieved only through the ennoblement of the individual person. And during those months of the campaign, I became ever more firmly convinced that the attainment of political power could only be something positive, if it were united with the idea of Beauty, as Schiller used that concept. Precisely because the great majority of the American population had strayed so far from the ideals of the American Revolution and the principles embedded in the Declaration of Independence, it seemed to me that they needed nothing more urgently than Schiller’s ideas.

I used my address to the annual conference of the LaRouche movement in 1979 in Detroit, to stress the need for a *Schiller-Zeit* (Schiller era) in America: “The reason why,

from among all the great humanists of the past and among all the great geniuses, I have selected Schiller, lies in the fact that more than anyone else—and by this I am by no means belittling the contributions of others—he was the most powerful spokesman for the idea of Beauty, and said that human beings must also laugh: They must be happy. More than any other, Schiller dealt with the question of how it is possible to inspire geniuses—how you can develop a method for taking these mediocre, blockheaded, nice, good people, and make something out of them. How you can change their minds and hearts. How you can change them!” That was the gist of the first poetry readings which I began to organize.

Later on, when our research into the deliberately induced cultural paradigm shift which had transformed the U.S.A. from the world’s leading society of producers, into a parasitical consumer and pleasure society, yielded a wealth of information about how such institutions as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Frankfurt School had consciously worked toward altering the axiomatic basis of public opinion within the population, we developed a still deeper understanding of the reasons why the American people had grown so distant from the great tradition of the American Revolution. But that did not alter the fact that the method developed by Schiller for teaching people how to be “greater than their fate,” by elevating themselves to the level of the Sublime, remains unparalleled to the present day.

But it was not only in the United States that popular culture was degenerating. Although Hans Neuenfels’ “happenings” in 1968, with his calls for youth to murder their own grandmothers and to tear down the cathedral in Trier, might still

have some dubious claim to be the original, it was the *Regie-theater* (“director’s theater”) of the 1970s, with all its variants, which was ultimately merely a variation on a theme according to which actors had to appear on stage with as little clothing as possible, and had to gesticulate as obscenely as possible, or else had to reflect some arbitrary time period selected at the director’s whim. When, in 1980, this same tired model was used at the Schiller Festival in Mannheim, I proposed that throughout the German-speaking world, we seek out the best actors and Schiller experts who remained loyal to Schiller’s Classical tradition, win them over to the idea of a renaissance of Schiller’s ideas, and organize our own Schiller Festival in Mannheim.

The first person whom I sought out, was one of the indisputably best Schiller experts, Benno von Wiese. I visited him at his home in Bonn, in order to win him over to this project. Von Wiese was a man of great intellectual integrity, who placed Schiller far and high above the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, and so was eminently winnable to the idea of a cultural counteroffensive. Our conversation started off on a very positive note, but then his face darkened; he grew almost surly, and I began to wonder what could be causing him so much aggravation. But the riddle was soon solved: His wife brought him his lunch, and after consuming same, he was once again the friendly, intellectually brilliant literary pontiff, glad to be visited by this young lady so passionately committed to Schiller’s ideas. For, Von Wiese was a diabetic.

At the Mannheim symposium, he is said to have delivered a stirring speech, challenging the public that the question is not whether or not Schiller remains relevant for us today, but whether, and how, we today can live up to Schiller.

My next visit led me to Bad Gandersheim, where Will Quadflieg was performing in a festival. We first met in a cafe, where I laid out my perspective for a true reawakening of the spirit of Classicism in Germany, and for making Schiller’s work, in particular, a living experience for young people today. Quadflieg was a true artist; he has a truly lyrical mind, and in a flash, we had already mounted the winged horse Pegasus, and “disappeared into the blue above.” Well, not literally, of course; but I simply mean to say that Will Quadflieg and I had one of the most exciting discussions on poetry and the significance of Classical culture, that one could possibly have. The amazing thing about it, was that he was willing to allow himself to be absolutely inspired by another; that while speaking with him, one was able to create that poetical magic that can move mountains; and that he could experience with equal intensity the most Promethean boldness, and the most delicate stirrings of the soul. His recitations of Schiller’s works and poems in Mannheim were so powerful, that the audience sat as if bolted to their seats. Schiller was present that night.

The symposium was a total success, and other Schiller friends and experts, such as Peter Otten, Norbert Öllers, and Wolfgang Wittkowski, recited and debated about Schiller so

passionately, that one irked member of the audience finally asked: “How dare you hold this symposium without inviting Walter Jens?” At any rate, we had, for that one year at least, won intellectual hegemony in Germany on the issue of Schiller’s significance for us today.

## For Mutual and Assured Survival

With the onset of the 1980s, the chasm in trans-Atlantic relations deepened. It was a time when political figures such as Helmut Schmidt began talking about the danger of a Third World War. NATO’s and the Warsaw Pact’s medium-range missiles were arrayed against each other so closely, that Hamburg, for example, could be struck in a mere six minutes in the event of a nuclear exchange. The peace movement held protest demonstrations against the installation of the Pershing II missile on West German territory.

Because of the extremely short warning interval in the event of the accidental launching of a single nuclear missile, the nuclear systems of both military alliances had shifted into a red-alert situation of so-called “launch on warning.” In response to this, my husband Lyndon LaRouche worked out a more effective way to deal with the Damocles’ sword hanging over all humankind. Already during the late 1970s, he and the associates of the scientific journal *Fusion* founded by him, had noticed that those Soviet scientists who, ever since the early 1960s, had been filing reports in scientific journals about their progress in research on so-called beam weapons and other weapons based on “new physical principles,” were suddenly no longer publishing anything on their work.

The development of these new systems had been aimed at incapacitating missile-borne nuclear weapons during their launch phase, thereby rendering them technologically obsolete. There was a growing suspicion that the Soviet Union was working full-throttle on these new-principles-based weapons systems, and it was obvious that in view of the already over-tense situation because of the permanent state of red-alert, the dangerous momentum toward general nuclear warfare would be pushed to a climax if one of the two superpowers were to suddenly install a new weapon system which would, virtually overnight, nullify the effectiveness of the other side’s nuclear arsenal.

My husband therefore worked out a strategic plan for liberating the world from this Damocles’ sword, a plan which became known later as the SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative). He proposed that NATO’s doctrine of “Mutual and Assured Destruction” be supplanted by a doctrine of “Mutual and Assured Survival.” Both superpowers would join in developing these weapons systems based on new physical principles; they would then jointly install these systems, rendering their nuclear weapons obsolete, and then they would jointly apply the benefits of this technological revolution in the military realm, toward increasing productivity in the civilian economy. During 1982, we presented this idea at conferences in Washington and in various European capitals, in the presence



*The immediate focus of mass organizing by the Institute was against the “decoupling” of the United States and Western Europe, especially Germany. Here, Institute supporters are shown organizing in New York City in October 1984.*

of leading active and retired military officials.

One of the most important outcomes of these conferences, was the fact that for one year, my husband was officially commissioned by the Reagan Administration to hold so-called back-channel discussions with Soviet representatives in Washington, on the question of whether Moscow would be prepared to agree to such a fundamental change in the two superpowers’ strategic relations. The proposal which my husband published as a “Protocol for the Superpowers” would have essentially meant the dissolution of the division of the world into blocs, such that the nations of the Third World would no longer be treated as zones of influence where proxy warfare could be conducted; but rather, both superpowers would jointly apply the science driver effect—i.e., the enormous growth of productivity in the military realm—to civilian production in both East and West, so that this growth could then be used for a massive transfer of capital and technology into the developing sector, in order to eliminate underdevelopment in those nations. The goal, therefore, was not merely disarmament; it was a Grand Design for how East-West relationships could be established on an entirely different basis, oriented toward solving “the problems facing all mankind.”

After one year of intensive talks, in which I participated as spouse, in February 1983 the word came back from Moscow that the proposal had been rejected as unacceptable: Such a plan would indeed be absolutely feasible militarily and technologically; yet, its application in the civilian economy would give the West too many one-sided advantages, whereas the Soviet Union, despite any assistance offered by the West for its civilian sector, would have a much more difficult time negotiating such a leap into a more efficient economy.

Nevertheless, President Reagan went ahead, and on March 23, 1983 he announced the Strategic Defense Initiative

as official U.S. policy. Again in August of that same year, he repeated his proposal that the West assist the Soviet Union in the application of new technologies in its civilian economy. But as was confirmed to us, especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the real reason why Moscow had rejected the SDI, was the so-called Ogarkov Plan. Already back in 1983, my husband had publicly forecast that if the Soviet Union persisted in its rejection of the SDI, its economy would collapse within five years. He was only one year off: Six years later, the Wall fell.

## **New Basis for U.S.-European Relations**

On my travels during that time in the United States and in Germany, a certain trend perturbed me: Namely, in the United States I discerned a growing anti-German and anti-European mood in the media, in the political parties, but also in the population at large; conversely, on my political travels within Germany, I noted with growing shock, that openly expressed anti-Americanism was spreading, not only in leftist circles, but also among members of the conservative Christian Democratic Union. It was, as it were, a mild foretaste of the resentments felt today in Europe against the Bush Administration. This resentment was being fed, at least among informed conservative circles, by the fact that in the event of a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the Federal Republic of Germany would not survive; a defense of Germany’s territory was simply not a part of the MAD doctrine. One witty French military figure at the time, put it this way: that for Germany, the alternative was not “red or dead,” but rather “first red, then dead”—meaning that in the event of a nuclear confrontation between the superpowers, Germany would first be struck by a Warsaw Pact first strike, followed by a second strike from NATO.

When, at that time, I considered transatlantic relations from the standpoint of Classical tragedy, in approximately the same way that Schiller judged the failure of the French Revolution—i.e., that a great historical moment had found a “little people”—it seemed to me that this applied no less to the state of mind of the populations of both Germany and America. I was convinced that after two world wars, in which the United States and Germany had stood on opposing sides, the seeds of destruction would persist, if each side confined itself to merely listing the negative points of the other.

And so, I hit upon the idea of proposing an initiative for a fundamental improvement in German-American relations. I gathered up my entire political experience to date, and decided to associate this initiative with the name Schiller. An institute was to be founded which would strive to improve foreign-policy relations between Germany and America, by drawing upon the best traditions of each, especially the American Revolutionary tradition, German Classicism, and the spirit of the German Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. This institution was to function as a kind of think-tank for constructive proposals in the domains of military strategy,

economic cooperation, scientific and technological cooperation, and research into common cultural and historical roots.

Under Point 4 of the Institute's founding principles, it says: "The Institute shall be named for Schiller, because there is no one who united the ideas of republican freedom and poetic beauty more effectively, than Friedrich Schiller. For Schiller, as for the associates of this Institute, the greatest work of art is the establishment of political freedom." The fundamental idea of the Schiller Institute, was to insert Schiller's image of humanity into political life, in such a way that it could counteract the *Zeitgeist*, and, in action, help to improve human beings.

One year before it was officially founded, I drafted a memorandum on this initiative. It was a time when my husband was working with representatives of the Reagan Administration in connection with his SDI proposals. Since President Reagan had reacted favorably to my husband's Grand Design—which, it should be noted, was completely different from the distorted versions presented in the media—I presented my initial proposal for the founding of a Schiller Institute to an associate of Reagan's National Security Advisor, Judge William Clark. At the time, there was great openness for this proposal to put U.S. relations with Germany onto a basis different from what had characterized most of the postwar period. In the course of numerous, extensive discussions, Richard Morris, who at the time was Judge Clark's assistant, assured me that my idea had struck a positive chord, and that

it would be seriously considered.

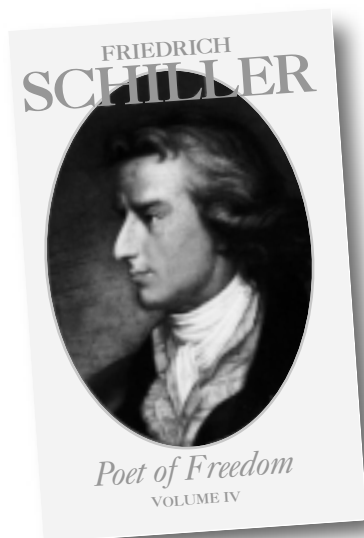
My proposal ultimately suffered the same fate as the SDI. Representatives of the utopian military faction inside and around the Reagan Administration began a full counteroffensive against both proposals. They included such people as Richard Perle, Kenneth de Graffenreid, Henry Kissinger, and William Webster. As for the SDI, President Reagan made his proposal one last time during his meeting with President Gorbachov in 1986 in Reykjavik. And as for Schiller Institute proposal, already by 1983 it had fallen victim to the counteroffensive mounted by the faction within the Reagan Administration which is more or less the predecessor of today's neo-cons.

So, I decided to organize the initiative on my own. For approximately one year, I attempted to find backers in many locations in the United States and Germany—an effort in which I had the indispensable assistance of Renate Müller, who was likewise involved in many discussions and talks promoting this idea. We sponsored dozens of smaller preparatory conferences, and then finally, in May 1984, the Schiller Institute was founded in Germany. The grand international founding conference took place on July 3-4, on American Independence Day, in Arlington, Virginia, with the participation of over 1,000 guests and representatives from over 50 nations. All present were keenly aware that they were participating in an initiative of great historical significance.

—To be continued

*"There is a limit to the tyrant's power."*

—Friedrich Schiller,  
Wilhelm Tell.



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