

## Think Global

### Anton Zischka, Eurafrika and His Followers

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“Africa is the future”. These were the words of former Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in his State of the Union Address to the European Parliament in September 2018 in which he called Africa “Europe’s twin continent”. Juncker’s message: One should stop thinking about the continent in terms of development aid only. Africa would need investments, not gifts. Africans would like to overcome relationships shaped by traditional hierarchies and instead build a genuine partnership that would aim for the formation of a transcontinental free-trade zone as a long-term goal.<sup>1</sup> Africa was the future in Juncker’s imagination, and it seemed as if it would also become the future of Europe.

The idea of close political and economic ties between Europe and Africa can be traced back at least to the late 19th century. Apart from political Sunday speeches, however, today, the idea has no significant societal impact on either shore of the Mediterranean. Instead, Europeans predominantly perceive Africa as a continent of permanent political violence and multidimensional crisis that, due to ongoing migration flows, is said to be a threat to Europe’s security. In reaction to the “refugee crisis” of 2015, discussions to combat the causes of flight locally loomed large among European governments. Instead of ever-closer ties, maximum distance dominates the thinking about Africa within the “Fortress Europe”<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to today, “Eurafrika”, as this idea of close ties was called for a long time, met with a broad resonance in the 20th century – not only in the political realm but also in social circles, both in Europe and in Africa. An important resonator, among others, for the spread of Eurafrika in the German-speaking world after 1945 was the Aus-

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1 Jean-Claude Juncker, State of the Union Address: The Hour of European Sovereignty, p. 8. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/priorities/state-union-speeches/state-union-2018\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/priorities/state-union-speeches/state-union-2018_en), p. 8 27.09.2022

2 See, e. g., Stephen Smith, *The Scramble for Europe: Young Africa on Its Way to the Old Continent*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2019, pp. 169–172.

trian journalist, energy expert and nonfiction writer Anton Zischka, who published a book entitled *Afrika: Europas Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Nr. 1* (Africa: Europe's no. 1 community task) in 1951. This book is quite familiar among historians. It is mentioned in almost any scholarly study that explicitly discusses Eurafrika, and it is usually cited to demonstrate the broad response to the Eurafrikan idea in the 1950s. However, Zischka's Eurafrikan vision is usually not addressed in detail, and resonance fields are hardly discussed. Put bluntly, it is just the book title that stands as evidence of some sort of resonance – a neglect which is justified by the fact that this literature is primarily interested in political history.<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop, I will approach Zischka's Eurafrika from an intellectual history perspective and explore how it resonated in society. "Think global" was a phrase that recurred in Zischka's book from the very beginning. It was meant as an early invitation to his readers to participate in the intellectual exercise he deemed so necessary and at the same time found lacking among contemporary political leaders. Accordingly, his publisher even promoted him as a "spearhead of global thinking."<sup>4</sup> In the following, I will show in detail what exactly Zischka conceived by this phrase with regard to Eurafrika. I will trace the traditions in which his global thinking must be situated and discern the images of Africa that were associated with it. Furthermore, I will discuss how he actively disseminated his ideas and the reactions it provoked in his readers. Thus, I use Zischka as a biographical lens to relate author, text, and recipient. Following up on discussions within intellectual history to broaden the field, the aim is to examine both the production contexts and the impact of ideas equally and to highlight their sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts and effects. This way, intellectual history connects to the history of culture and knowledge without being completely absorbed by them.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, this article will contribute to Global Intellectual History, which in itself is an academic exercise to "think global" and which has gained considerable ground in recent years. As Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori have pointed out in their

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3 See, e. g., Peo Hansen, Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrika: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 125 f.; Papa Dramé, Samir Saul, "Le projet d'Eurafrrique en France (1946–1960): Quête de puissance ou atavisme colonial?", *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 216, pp. 95–114, here p. 100.

4 Anton Zischka, *Afrika. Europas Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Nr. 1*, Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag 1951, p. 9 f. On the promotion, see Zischka to Strub-Roessler, 11.2.1954. Archives of the Deutsches Museum, Munich (ADM). Nachlass Anton Zischka: NL 184/215. Unfortunately, the brochure itself has apparently not survived.

5 See Lutz Raphael, "Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit': Bemerkungen zur Bilanz eines DFG-Schwerpunktprogramms", n: Lutz Raphael, Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (eds) *Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit. Beiträge für eine erneuerte Geistesgeschichte*. Munich, R. Oldenbourg, 2006, pp. 11–27; Martin Mulsow, "Neue Perspektiven der Ideengeschichte", in: Helmut Reinalter (ed), *Neue Perspektiven der Ideengeschichte*. Innsbruck, Innsbruck University Press, 2015, pp. 25–36; Judith Surkis, "Of scandals and supplements: Relating Intellectual History and Cultural History", in: Darin M. MacMahon, Samuel Moyn (eds.), *Rethinking Modern Intellectual History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 94–111.

pathbreaking anthology, this approach examines intellectual connections between different world regions and aims to overcome nationally fixed and Eurocentric modes of argumentation. Perhaps most of all, however, Global Intellectual History focuses on changing imaginations of the global as such.<sup>6</sup> Following Jürgen Osterhammel, one may also speak of “concepts of world order,” which he conceives as “notions of relatively stable patterns of relations in the relationship of collectives.”<sup>7</sup> Whereas Osterhammel was primarily interested in mapping and categorizing what he still called the “history of international thought” ten years ago, the historical investigation of “global orders” and “worldmaking” has been increasing ever since. This new strand of research has revealed both the simultaneousness of competing concepts of world orders and their specificities in terms of time and place. In addition, these studies pointed to the ideational agency of thinkers as well as politicians and raised awareness for ideas that did not materialize. However, the resonance of such global concepts beyond intellectual and political circles has been rarely considered in detail.<sup>8</sup>

Zischka’s Eurafrika seems an appropriate case study to examine in this kind of detail. In three steps, I want to show that Eurafrika became a distinct concept of world order and that Zischka contributed significantly to its popularization after the Second World War: Zischka was kind of an intellectual for everyone. His Eurafrika was attractive not only to imagine world order, but also to serve various traditional images of Africa. For this reason, it appealed to scholars and experts as much as to the “yellow press” and its audiences. For some of his readers, Zischka was almost a prophet, and some African voices expressed their approval too. In the 1950s, therefore, the future seemed in fact to be Africa – a finding to which I will return at the end of this chapter.

### The Transformative World: Zischka’s Life and Work

“World Transformation Experienced” – in German: *Weltwandlung erlebt* – is the title of Zischka’s unpublished autobiography. It is part of his papers, which are preserved in the archives of the Deutsches Museum, Munich.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Anton Emmerich Zischka

<sup>6</sup> See Samuel Moyn, Andrew Sartori, “Approaches to Global Intellectual History”, in: S. Moyn, A. Sartori (eds), *Global Intellectual History*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2013, pp. 3–30.

<sup>7</sup> Jürgen, Osterhammel, “Weltordnungskonzepte”, in Jost Dülffer, Wilfried Loth (eds), *Dimensionen internationaler Geschichte*, Munich, Oldenbourg, 2012, pp. 409–427, here p. 410.

<sup>8</sup> See Daniel Bell, ‘Making and Taking World’, in: S. Moyn, A. Sartori (eds), *op.cit.*, pp. 254–279, Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019; George Fujii, H-Diplo Discussion Forum 2022–1 on Histories of Global Order. URL: <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/9986671/h-diplo-discussion-forum-2022-1-histories-global-order-march-2022> 29.09.2022; see also Amitav Acharya, *Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> See *Weltwandlung erlebt: sechs Jahrzehnte Wahrheitssuche*. ADM NL 184/073.

von Trochnov, which was his full name, would also be a suitable candidate for the field of global biography, as Dirk van Laak points out in his illuminating but brief portrait of Zischka.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, a more comprehensive biography of Zischka has yet to be written.

Born in Vienna in 1904, he descended from an old noble family in the succession of the Hussite leader Jan Ziska, who was responsible for the First Defenestration of Prague in 1419. Anton was not a particularly good student at the secondary school in Laa an der Thaya and left in 1923 without graduating.<sup>11</sup> He found his first job the following year as an editor at the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse* where he made valuable international contacts and became acquainted with the famous American journalist Walter Lippmann. During this time, Zischka regularly used his vacations for field trips all over the world. Once, he went to the Romanian oil fields near Ploieshti, another time he visited the German chemical plants of Bayer and BASF. In 1928, Zischka travelled to the United States, and a year later took his own plane to “unknown Europe,” as Zischka was to call his trip to Salonika in his travelogue. In 1930, Zischka moved to Paris, where he came to work as a travel reporter for the newspaper *L’Intransigeant* and as a correspondent for the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*. In these roles, he travelled to see, among other people, Ibn Saud, the first king of Saudi Arabia, he interviewed Stalin in his birthplace Gori, and he gave a powerful account of the Yangtze floods from China.<sup>12</sup>

Zischka incorporated all these impressions of the world in his first book *Le monde en folie*, which was published in 1933 and became a bestseller, selling over 200,000 copies. This success allowed Zischka to become self-employed and to settle in Mallorca in 1935 with his second wife, where he lived until his death in 1997, and where he also wrote his book on Eurafica. All in all, his literary oeuvre includes more than 50 books, some of which have been translated into up to 18 languages, as well as countless articles in magazines and newspapers worldwide.<sup>13</sup>

To this day, apart from van Laak highlighting Zischka’s lifelong leitmotif of technological, especially energetic world exploitation, he has been judged primarily on the basis of his commitment to National Socialism (NS). Zischka’s most successful book, *Wissenschaft bricht Monopole* (Science breaks monopolies), published in 1936, was indeed entirely to the taste of the NS regime. In view of its main argument that all natural raw materials could in principle be replaced by chemical processes, the book fit seamlessly into the autarky efforts of the Nazi state.<sup>14</sup> Fritz Todt, engineer and founder of the Organisation Todt that was responsible for military engineering projects, per-

10 Dirk Van Laak, “Energie von A bis Z: Anton Zischka erschließt die Welt”, *Non Fiktion. Arsenal der anderen Gattungen* 2–1, 2007, pp. 79–93.

11 See Realschule in Laa an der Thaya. Jahreszeugnis Anton Zischka 1922/23. ADM: NL 184/1.

12 On Zischka’s biography, see various documents in ADM: NL 184/5.

13 D., Van Laak, *op.cit.*, pp. 79–81.

14 A. Zischka, *Wissenschaft bricht Monopole* Leipzig, Goldmann, 1936.

sonally promoted Zischka. He distributed his books among executives and made them compulsory reading in schools. Zischka repaid him by joining the party in 1940, by taking care of the Legion Condor troops stationed in Mallorca, and by writing political reports on the situation in Spain. Last but not least, he wrote other books that were entirely in line with fundamental themes of national socialist ideology such as the formation of a *Volksgemeinschaft* or the acquisition of new *Lebensraum*.<sup>15</sup> Historian of technology Heike Weber has deduced from this a far-reaching sympathy of Zischka for National Socialism and stated that even after 1945, his thinking and writing did not change fundamentally.<sup>16</sup> While the first part of her thesis is certainly true, with regard to Zischka's Eurafrika, I will put the second part to the test and paint a more complex picture.

### Exploitation, Colonial Policy, Thinking Large: Zischka's Eurafrika

First of all, some words on the context of the book's making of are in order. Eurafrika was Zischka's third book after the end of the Second World War. In 1949, his first book was published by the Austrian Leopold Stocker-Verlag under the title *Länder der Zukunft* (Countries of the future). This was followed a year later by *Asia: Hoffnung einer neuen Welt* (Asia: Promise of a new world) before Zischka turned his attention to Africa. Stocker also published these two books in Austria, while the Oldenburg-based Stalling-Verlag marketed them in Germany. Another planned book on "America", however, did not materialize, nor did Zischka's idea for a book titled *Rise of the Occident*, in which Eurafrika would again play a central role. In this context, Zischka's "global thinking" appears first and foremost as a marketing strategy that was developed together with his publishers. Of course, there was no agreement as to the original idea for one book or another. For example, Zischka resolutely denied publisher Leopold Stocker's claim that he had suggested the book on Africa. At the same time, this conflict and many others in the making of these books with both publishing houses illustrate the socioeconomic side of the production of ideas: Material reward was at least as important to Zischka as the ideal content of his books, and in case of doubt, the former took precedence.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, imagining the global was a quite flexible exercise for Zischka. His Eurafrika oscillated between technocratic development project, apology of colonial politics, and German large-scale fantasy. Ultimately, he blended all the dominant con-

15 D. Van Laak, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–85; Weber 1999: 217–219.

16 Heike Weber, "Technikkonzeptionen in der populären Sachbuchliteratur des Nationalsozialismus. Die Werke von Anton Zischka" *Technikgeschichte*, 66, 205, 1999, pp. 223 f.

17 See the correspondence between Zischka and the publishing houses in ADM: NL 184/253–257.

ceptions of the relationship between the two continents that had unfolded since the interwar period into a grand Eurafrikan peace project.

After the First World War, various plans to systemically develop the African continent emerged. Among them, the utopian Atlantropa project of Munich architect Herman Sörgel certainly stands out. Sörgel had the idea of converting the Mediterranean Sea into an inland lake by raising huge dams near Gibraltar and Gallipoli to gain energy and fertile land.<sup>18</sup> Right from the beginning, Zischka was a great supporter of this project. In his book *Le monde en folie*, published in 1933, which dealt almost exclusively with human predicaments around the world as a result of economic crises and natural disasters, Zischka already referred to Atlantropa. He presented Sörgel as a “prophet” leading Europe to a better future with his “gigantic plan” and even explicitly contrasted him with another “prophet” active in Munich, Adolf Hitler, who, as Zischka pointed out, was not working to save Europe, but to destroy it.<sup>19</sup>

Parallel to *Le monde en folie*, Sörgel’s Atlantropa forms the final point of argumentation in Zischka’s book on Africa from 1951: It would be suitable as an organizational basis as well as a propaganda tool to inspire people for Eurafrika. Zischka devoted entire chapters to infrastructure and development projects for the extraction of raw materials and energy, from the “Trans-Saharan Railway” and “Africa as a Leading Light Metals Producer” to “Africa’s Nuclear Power Sources” and the “Industrialization of the Sahara.”<sup>20</sup>

The visionary description of such development projects raises questions about the power relations between Europeans and Africans and thus about the function of colonial policy in Zischka’s Eurafrika. A good illustration of his positioning can be found in the status of Ethiopia, then called Abyssinia by Europeans. In his 1951 book on Africa, this independent country posed a “problem” for Zischka, and it did so for the second time: Because Britain had driven out the Italian colonial power during the Second World War and reinstated Emperor Selassie, the “excellent” Italian development work would have remained unfinished and Abyssinia once more been condemned to stagnation.<sup>21</sup> As early as 1935, Zischka had written an entire book on Abyssinia with the subtitle “Africa’s last unsolved problem.” At that time, studying Ethiopia was key for Zischka, “because the attempts to conquer it represent the most modern chapter of colonial policy, because the tactics of its neighbours, the political, economic and military conquest attempts of France, England and Italy are exemplars of the latest imperialist technique”, as he put it.<sup>22</sup> In comparison, one looks in vain for such aggressive sounds

18 For the original concept, see Herman Sörgel, *Atlantropa*. Zürich, Fretz & Wasmuth A.G, 1932; See also Alexander Gall, *Das Atlantropa-Projekt. Die Geschichte einer gescheiterten Vision. Herman Sörgel und die Absenkung des Mittelmeers*. Frankfurt/M, Campus, 1998.

19 A. Zischka, *Le monde en folie*. Paris, Les Editions de France, p. 240.

20 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, p. 5 f.

21 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, pp. 195–200.

22 A. Zischka, *Abessinien. Das letzte ungelöste Problem Afrikas*, Bern, Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, p. 10.

in Zischka's book on Eurafrika, but the message was nevertheless unmistakable: Only Europeans would be capable of exploiting the immeasurable riches of the "reserve continent" and of making it flourish.<sup>23</sup>

German *Großraumdenken* – thinking in large spaces – left remarkable traces in Zischka's Eurafrika as well. From the 1920s, this thinking emerged in Germany alongside the concept of geopolitics, with Karl Haushofer, Carl Schmitt and Erich Obst (in its economic variant) as the most enigmatic representatives and the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* its main discussion forum. Explicitly oriented towards action, this thinking shaped Hitler's politics of expansion and warfare.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, in some places, Zischka's dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Second World War flashes up quite bluntly. An unpublished article entitled "Vier Milliarden Hektar Wirtschaftsraum" (Four billion hectares of economic space), which Zischka wrote in August 1942, a few weeks before the start of the Second Battle of Al Alamein, clearly shows his vision of Africa during that time. The "4 billion hectares" meant "our Greater Europe + Africa", and Zischka demanded that the Germans discard their self-restraint: "Germany must once again become a world nation."<sup>25</sup>

Roughly ten years later, Zischka invoked again "4 billion hectares of economic space" in his Africa book, this time however as the territory of Eurafrika. In addition, he emphasized that the neighbouring continent would be the only remaining "way out".<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the "way out" turned into a crucial figure of thought for Zischka in view of the barred expansion space towards the East as a result of the Second World War. Originally, Zischka even wanted to name his book *Ausweg Afrika* (Africa: A way out).<sup>27</sup> Following his main geopolitical argument, Eurafrika was the wiser answer to the centuries-old question: what to do with Russia. It was wiser than conquering or "liberating" Russia by force. The fact that he, explicitly referring to Napoleon and Hitler, conceived his Eurafrika concept as another attempt to form Europe into a unified metropolitan area fits in here only too well.<sup>28</sup>

Geopolitically, however, Zischka's Eurafrika was also directed against the United States and Great Britain, which he characterized as non-European and which was certainly not by chance absent from his globe. Instead, Zischka viewed Germany and France as the core area of his Eurafrika that asserted itself as a "third force" between the blocs. The path to genuine European freedom, peace, and prosperity would only lead through Africa and would thus be a prerequisite for easing the East-West conflict,

23 A. Zischka, *op.cit.*, p. 326.

24 See Ulrike Jureit, *Das Ordnen von Räumen. Territorium und Lebensraum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Hamburg, Hamburger Edition, 2012, pp. 250–257; D. Van Laak, *Über alles in der Welt. Deutscher Imperialismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Munich, C. H. Beck, pp. 126–128.

25 A. Zischka. Vier Milliarden Hektar Wirtschaftsraum. August 1942. ADM NL 184/114.

26 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, p 17 and 59.

27 Zischka to Venzky-Stalling, 27.2.1951. ADM: NL 184/256.

28 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, pp. 56 f.

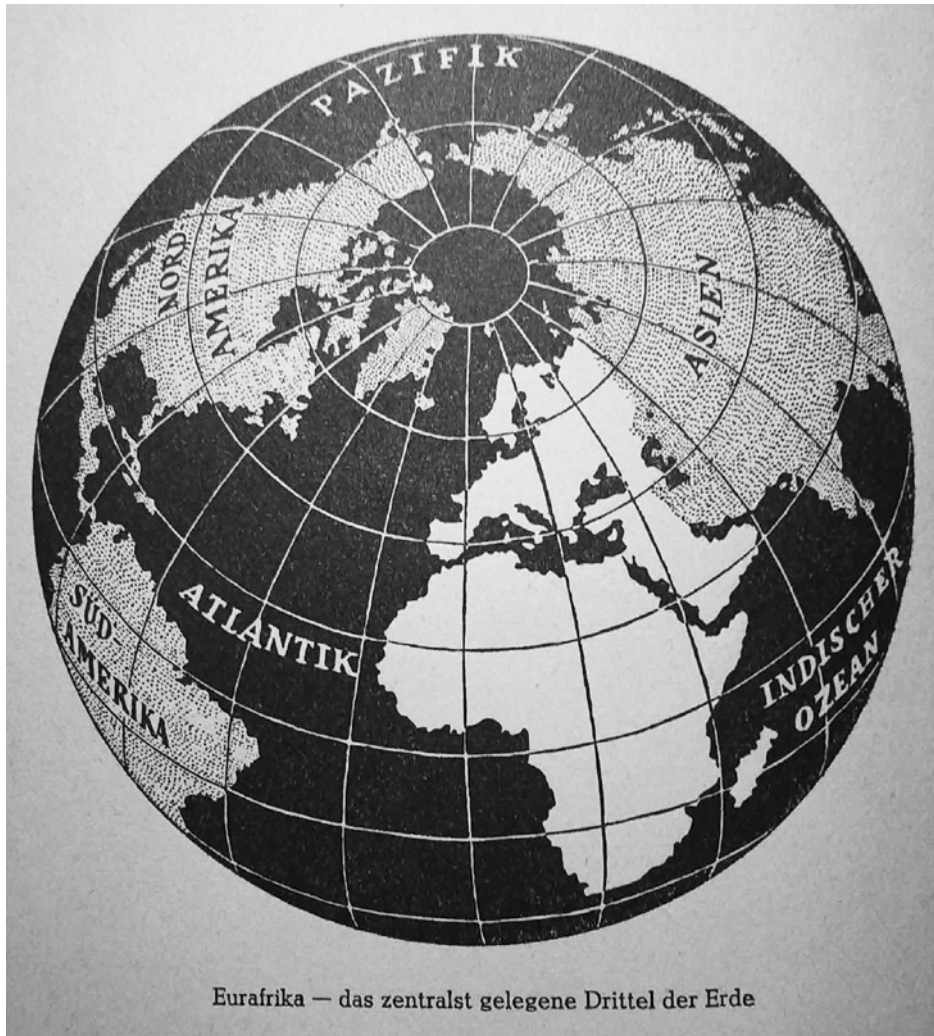


Fig.1 Zischka's Eurafrika. Taken from Zischka 1951: n. p.

because, as Zischka put it literally, “the preservation of peace is the number one global problem, and it is Europe’s vital question per se.”<sup>29</sup>

Overall, Zischka’s Eurafrika echoed many thoughts of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the Austrian leader of the Pan-European movement. He is considered the wordsmith of “Eurafrika” because from the beginning, he considered the neighbouring continent as part of his “Pan-Europe”: economically as a resource reservoir; demographically

<sup>29</sup> A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

as an outlet for imperialist and colonial-revanchist currents; and geopolitically as a prerequisite to build a “United States of Europe”, alongside and competing with the United States, the British Empire, the Soviet Union, and East Asia. Africa’s indigenous population was relegated to a purely functional role in Coudenhove’s visions; racism and a European sense of superiority were constitutive components of his Eurafrikan Pan-Europe.<sup>30</sup>

Zischka, however, did not mention Coudenhove at all because, in short, politics was suspect to him; as already indicated, he clearly preferred technocratic solutions. This was also the case for Eurafrika. The build-up and implementation of the trans-continental structures would be placed in the hands of competent experts instead of nationalistic politicians, thereby citing the European Coal and Steel Community and its architect Jean Monnet as prime example. It would be a matter of creating a “Nation of Europe” through active work of the masses directed by scientific leadership and, at the same time, meant a rejection of Coudenhove’s “United States of Europe,” paralyzing parliamentary debates, and laborious territorial re-divisions of colonies among European states.<sup>31</sup>

Precisely because such a technocracy would make domination-based colonialism obsolete, as Zischka put it, it would also become easier to regulate the living together of Europeans and the indigenous population. Zischka envisioned a “permanent co-existence of diverse organisms for mutual benefit” – strictly separated, but on equal footing.<sup>32</sup> Thus he was able to put a positive spin on apartheid and, in the same breath, demanded the development of Black industrial areas and equal pay for equal work for Africans and Europeans. The prerequisite for such coexistence would be the significant rise in African people’s standard of living through housing and school construction as well as the founding of hospitals.<sup>33</sup> In a nutshell, Zischka described quite precisely the phenomenon the French philosopher and government functionary Alexandre Kojève famously called “donor colonialism” (*gebender Kolonialismus*), which paved the way for postcolonial development cooperation.<sup>34</sup>

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30 Thomas Moser, *Europäische Integration, Dekolonisation, Eurafrika: eine historische Analyse über Entstehungsbedingungen der Eurafrikanischen Gemeinschaft von der Weltwirtschaftskrise bis zum Jaunde-Vertrag, 1929–1963*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2000-, pp. 100–103; on Coudenhove, see also Ulrich Wyrwa, “Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894–1972) und die Paneuropa-Bewegung in den zwanziger Jahren”, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 283, 2006, pp. 103–122; Vanessa Conze, *Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi. Umstrittener Visionär Europas*, Gleichen, Muster-Schmidt, 2004.

31 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, pp. 307–312 and 321–325, quote p. 325.

32 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, p. 13 and 254.

33 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, pp. 255–257.

34 Alexandre Kojève, “Kolonialismus in europäischer Sicht. Vortrag, gehalten beim Rhein-Ruhr-Klub am 16. Januar 1957”, in: Piet Tommissen (ed), *SCHMITTIANIA. Beiträge zu Leben und Werk Carl Schmitts, Band VI*. Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1998, pp.125–140, here p. 136. On Kojève, see also Timo Luks, *Die Ökonomie der Anderen. Der Kapitalismus der Ethnologen – eine transnationale Wissensgeschichte seit 1880*, Tübingen,

All in all, Zischka's 1951 world order concept of Eurafrika assembled various and partly contradictory figures of thought with regard to the relations between the two continents.

Dreams of colonial exploitation stood next to developmental visions for Africa scripted by modernization theory, paving the way for the continent's speedy take-off. Emphasizing apolitical technocracy did not prevent him from promoting Eurafrika as a "third force" that would guarantee Europe's geopolitical self-assertion. And German *Großraumdenken* primed his grand design for a peace-bringing Eurafrikan integration scheme to come. As such, Zischka demonstrated how much eclecticism was possible in the art of thinking global after the Second World War, what creative forms "world making" could take and how flexibly seemingly antagonist ideas could be merged. Which tradition of thought he himself most agreed with is however less important than the identification of these distinct traditions because they explain why Zischka's Eurafrika was attractive to quite different audiences.

### Zischka's Followers: Fields of Resonance

Admittedly, the sales figures of Zischka's book on Africa were by no means exhilarating and did not come close to matching his bestsellers during the time of National Socialism. The first edition was to have 14,000 copies; 6,000 of them were sold after about a year, and not many more were sold after that. Unfortunately, no exact figures are available for Austria; however, his first book, *Länder der Zukunft* (Countries of the future), was a considerable success in this country, selling more than 10,000 copies, a fact which suggests that Zischka found a solid audience in Austria as well.<sup>35</sup>

Anyway, reactions to his book went beyond the German-speaking world: Eurafrika was quickly translated into Dutch, Italian and French. In addition, it was widely and predominantly positively reviewed, from the influential conservative and Protestant weekly *Christ und Welt* to the renowned London-based *Geographical Journal* to the eminent Parisian *politique étrangère* and the political weekly *Der Spiegel* in Hamburg. Particularly striking in these reviews is the fact that Zischka was praised as a knowledgeable provider of ideas and the obvious suspicion of utopia was regularly rejected.<sup>36</sup>

On his actual readership, however, Zischka's secondary publications and his correspondence provide more detailed information. They reveal, first, that the political

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Mohr Siebeck, 2019, p. 42 f. On the history of development, F. Cooper, "Writing the history of development", *Journal of Modern European History*, 8, 2010, pp. 5–23.

<sup>35</sup> See sales figures in ADM: NL 184/257.

<sup>36</sup> See *Idee und Kraft*, in: *Christ und Welt*, 3.1.1952; M.-J. Bénéité, A. Zischka, *op.cit.*, pp. 426–428; Africa, in: *Geographical Journal*, Oct./Nov. 1952; all these reviews can be accessed in ADM: NL 184/288; *Der Spiegel* 1951.

realm took Zischka's Eurafrica as seriously as his reviewers. For example, Zischka published regularly from 1950 onwards in the *Berichte und Informationen* of the Austrian Research Institute for Economics and Politics, based in Salzburg. This institute was founded in 1946 by Austrian journalist Herbert Kraus whose political agenda aimed at a re-integration of former Nazis into the public life of the Second Republic; indeed, in early 1949, Kraus became one of the initiators of the *Verband der Unabhängigen*, a new political party gathering war returnees, displaced persons and supporters of the NS regime, and the forerunner of today's FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria).<sup>37</sup> The cooperation with the journal came about on Zischka's initiative, but both Kraus and the members of its editorial office claimed to be great fans of Zischka's books and considered themselves equally fortunate to have won him as an author.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, his Eurafrica also found great favour among development experts. For one thing, the Swiss engineer and dam expert Hermann Strub-Roessler was so impressed by Zischka's book that he wanted to publish together.<sup>39</sup>

Thirdly, the resonance in business circles was similarly positive. This holds true for the French colonial milieu in the Moroccan *Comité d'action eurafricaine* as well as for the *Europe-Africa Union* based in Basel, whose German section had only been founded in 1954 with reference to Zischka. A second reference of this association, however, was Otto Strasser, brother of Gregor, the NSDAP renegade and, after his return from exile in Canada in 1955, leading figure of the right-wing extremist *German Social Union*. Here, then, Zischka's large-scale thinking came full-circle.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the political realm, experts and business circles, Zischka fourthly reached out to the masses. From 1951 onwards, he wrote regularly for the Nuremberg-based *Wochenend, Bilderzeitung zur Erholung vom Alltag* (Weekend: Illustrated journal for the recreation from everyday life). Founded in 1949, it was among the first and largest yellow press weeklies in the Federal Republic and Austria.<sup>41</sup> Zischka's book also received a review in *Wochenend*. In addition, he provided articles on Africa on several occasions, precisely tailored to what the editors of the journal described as "a rather quite simple and not very complex thinking readership".<sup>42</sup> As the clipping

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37 See Erich Marx, "Herbert Kraus", in: Herbert Dachs, Peter Gerlich, Wolfgang Müller (eds) *Die Politiker. Karrieren und Wirken bedeutender Repräsentanten der Zweiten Republik*. Vienna, Manzschke Verlags- und Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1995, pp.344–352.

38 For the correspondence with the research institute, see ADM: NL 184/243.

39 See correspondence between Strub-Roessler and Zischka in ADM NL 184/215. See also D. Van Laak, *Imperiale Infrastrukturen, op. cit.*, p. 345.

40 See correspondence in ADM: NL 184/215. On Strasser, see Armin Nolzen, "Otto Straßer", *Neue Deutsche Bibliographie*, 25, 2013, pp. 479–481. URL: [https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd118755749.html#ndbcontent\\_01.10.2022](https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd118755749.html#ndbcontent_01.10.2022).

41 For information about this weekly, see ADM: NL 184/260; Oskar Stodiek, *Die Medienagenda in der Medizinpublizistik der "Regenbogenpresse"*. *Thematisierungsmuster einer Printmediengattung*. Münster, LIT Verlag, 2009, p. 153 f.

42 Krakauer to Zischka, 5.1.1953. ADM NL 184/260.



Fig. 2 *Wochenend* Nr. 3, 14.1.1953, 3. Taken from ADM NL 184/25.

makes evident, he used this platform to both disseminate his visions for Eurafrika and to consolidate the most vulgar clichés about Africans being uncivilised, wild and even cannibalistic among his mass readership.

The collaboration with *Wochenend* proved quite successful over several years. Zischka received a number of short portraits as a “favourite author,” and at some point, a science fiction novel was even planned as a sequel in which Herman Sörgel was to play the leading role; however, these publication plans were never realized.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, he seems to have gone down very well with this clientele. Alongside general approval, he also received letters from concerned mothers and fathers asking for advice on their sons’ career choices. Zischka undoubtedly became an authority. For some, he became something more: several letters speak of great admiration for Zischka as a preacher of a new doctrine – one wanted to found “Zischka cells,” another wanted to “unleash a

43 See correspondence in ADM NL 184/260.

European people's movement [...] with Zischka's help," and a third wanted to work for Zischka personally in Mallorca.<sup>44</sup>

The Innsbruck history teacher Hermann Gsteu was particularly convinced of Zischka's ideas. He not only recommended Zischka's books to his students, but also *zischte* extensively himself, as he called the study of the former's works. Finally, he wrote a peasant novel himself in which Zischka was given a prophet-like role. One must, Gsteu said, "approach humanity like a doctrine of salvation. [...] That is why Zischka must have apostles winning people over without science."<sup>45</sup>

Last but not least, the book was met with a positive response even among readers from the African continent. A prominent and staunch supporter of Eurafrica was the later Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor. Early on after the Second World War he became convinced that French Africa's futures would depend on close cooperation – on equal footing – with France and other European countries. At the same time, Senghor was obviously ready to embrace any colonial initiative that would pave the way to such an arrangement, as his strong support for the so-called Strasbourg Plan of the Council of Europe evidences, which was adopted in 1952. Accordingly, Senghor appreciated Zischka and his book on Eurafrica so much that he repeatedly cited it in public. For one, during the debates on the establishment of a European Political Community, he referred explicitly to him to lend weight to his demand for full incorporation of the overseas territories.<sup>46</sup> But it was not only African elites like Senghor who expressed such positive views. African students like the Sudanese Abbas El-Hamidi, who was enrolled at the University of Zurich, also wrote to Zischka, eager to meet the "scholar" in Mallorca or in Switzerland; in his polite response, Zischka sounded quite interested in making a meeting happen.<sup>47</sup>

### Global Futures

With his book on Africa Zischka became an intellectual for virtually everyone. Politicians and businessmen, academics and the masses, Europeans and Africans, ex-Nazis and supporters of European integration, and, not least, older and younger generations could take some pleasure in Zischka's Eurafrica – precisely because his highly eclectic way of thinking global offered something to all of these groups. Through the biographical lens of Anton Zischka, imagining Eurafrica as a concept of global order appears in

44 Zischka to Schwerdtfeger, 8.3.1952; Krauss to Zischka, 1.1.1952; Meyer-Küster to Zischka, 7.11.191; Terluch to Zischka, 29.3.1952; Trübsach to Zischka, 14.5.1952. ADM NL 184/291.

45 Gsteu to Zischka, 11.7.1952; Gsteu to Zischka, 22.3.1952. ADM NL 184/291.

46 P. Hansen, S. Jonsson, *op. cit.*, p. 143; Yves Montarsolo, *L'Eurafrrique: contrepoint de l'idée d'Europe: Le cas français de la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale aux négociations des Traités de Rome*, Aix-en-Provence, Presses universitaires de Provence, 2010, pp. 95–118.

47 El-Hamidi to Zischka, 29.6.1952; Zischka to El-Hamidi 2.7.1952. ADM NL 184/291.

a different light than political historical accounts have drafted it so far. To be sure, in terms of content, his originality was largely reduced to skilfully linking various older (and a few more recent) images of Africa and traditions of thoughts. However, combining intellectual history with the history of culture, knowledge and global intellectual history have revealed contexts of production and response that go far beyond the political process proper and shed some light on the extent to which such global orders could enter and fuel the social imaginary as well.

The broad societal resonance to Zischka's Eurafrica, however, cannot be explained solely by the fact that he drew on different traditions of thoughts and knew how to articulate his ideas within different sociocultural contexts. In particular, those reactions that came close to equal a veritable community of believers must be interpreted as an indication of widespread uncertainty and fear about the near future around 1950. At the intersection of the intensifying Cold War between the superpowers and the progress of decolonization in Asia, the need for orientation and the desire for positive designs of the future was apparently enormous. Against this background, Zischka's "worldmaking", namely to resurrect Eurafrica as a third "force for peace", appeared to be a plausible economic and geopolitical option for broad sections of society in the German-speaking world.<sup>48</sup>

Given these findings, the future ought to belong to Africa already – not only for people in German-speaking lands but also in France, elsewhere in Europe, and not least in the African territories themselves. Indeed, imaginations of the Euro-African relationships should not be reduced to dichotomous role attributions: Despite being so heavily laden with the spirit of late colonialism, Zischka's Eurafrica was also attractive to some Africans because of its developmental promises it would never fulfil.<sup>49</sup>

Usually, historians stick to debating past futures. However, it seems safe to state that the prospective future belongs to Africa as well in the sense that it will concern Europe more directly again in the decades to come than it did in the age of decolonization, which was characterized by increased distance from both sides. What this common future will look like ultimately depends on the direction (and degree of convergence) in which global thinking will develop on both continents beyond Sunday speeches like the one by Juncker cited in the beginning. Facing the pandemic, the war against Ukraine and a highly fragile economic world order, at least in one respect Zischka's words count more today than ever and resound rather as a warning: "The world is one. We all now belong to a single, highly complicated [...] organism."<sup>50</sup>

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48 On West German fear of the "communist threat", see e. g., Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst. Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*. Reinbek bei Hamburg, Rowohlt Verlag, 2019, pp. 122–123.

49 On the attractiveness of the developmental promise for Africans, see Joseph M. Hodge, "Beyond dependency: North-South relationships in the Age of Development", in: M. Thomas, A. Thompson (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 621–638.

50 A. Zischka, *op. cit.*, p. 9.