

# Canine Organizations: Structure and Ongoing Conflict

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## Introduction

The purebred dogs, especially the police and military breeds of concern here, have complex histories, convoluted and interrelated organizations and incessant conflict and strife. Discussions involve innumerable acronyms and often obscure, at least to the uninitiated, terminology. This is intended to be a primer, an outline presupposing minimal familiarity and knowledge. Because of the complexity and volatility this is sure to be found wanting, for which reason readers are encouraged to note errors or suggest additions; this simply can never go beyond the work in progress stage.

This pertains to the Schutzhund style venues and derivatives employing the padded bite sleeve, as originated in Germany. In the early years of the twentieth century, when these programs were emerging, pioneers in Belgium, France and the Netherlands were evolving variants of ring sport or KNVP (the Dutch Police Trials) involving a fully padded bite suit enabling the dog to grip anyplace on the body rather than just the arm. These programs are equally valid and admirable but beyond the scope of this discussion. They came to America a decade or so after the introduction of Schutzhund in the 1970s and thus are not as widely present.

## Organizations

From an historical perspective the formal canine breed, the advent of the so called "purebred" dog with registration, stud books, written breed standards and dog shows is relatively recent, dating from the latter 1800s. [More](#)

In order to provide governance and services this spawned an ever expanding, incessantly self-serving infrastructure, a hierarchy of clubs or organizations of varying scope. Along with governance and service came an inundation of office seekers, politicians and bureaucrats with personal agendas and an insatiable appetite for status, money and power.

This hierarchy consists of four distinct levels:

- **Local or regional clubs**  
Usually breed specific or training groups for venues such as obedience or police working trials. The breed specific local or regional clubs are generally affiliated with the corresponding breed specific national club.
- **Breed specific national clubs**  
Exemplified by the GSDCA (*German Shepherd Dog Club of America*) or the SV, the German Shepherd mother club in Germany.
- **National all breed kennel clubs**  
Such as the AKC in America or VDH in Germany. Normally there is a single affiliated breed specific national club for each breed. Local all-breed sport or training clubs are generally directly affiliated with the national umbrella club such as the AKC.  
There are often two or more competing national kennel clubs such as the AKC and the UKC (*United Kennel Club*) in the United States.
- **International aggregations**  
The oldest and most prominent of these is the FCI (*International Canine Federation*) which encompasses most of the world's national kennel clubs with the notable exceptions of the AKC in America, the CKC in Canada and the Kennel Club in Great Britain.  
There are also international aggregations of breed specific national clubs such as the WUSV (*World Union of German Shepherd Clubs*)

or the FMBB, the corresponding organization for the Belgian Shepherd varieties.

The relationship between the FCI and the WUSV is severely conflicted and acrimonious because they form a two headed monster, that is are at a corresponding level in the hierarchy with no higher canine authority to adjudicate conflicts and enforce over all structure and policy. They have for many years operated according to makeshift negotiated "working agreements" seeking to define roles and areas of authority and responsibility, but these have not worked well because each side believes they are inherently the legitimate authority. At the moment there is no formal relationship because existing agreements have been terminated and they have not been able reach a new understanding. This has been resolved to some extent in the courts, primarily in favor of the WUSV, but remains an inherently unstable and thus conflict ridden situation.

## **Terminology**

The terminology involves innumerable acronyms, some familiar such as AKC and others more obscure such as VDH or DVG. Here they will be enumerated and provided a complete name, translation as appropriate and a brief commentary.

### ***International Titles***

After a century of use the term "Schutzhund" came to be seen as politically incorrect, resulting in two twenty first century name changes going hand in hand with a pervasive watering down of trial integrity. Prior to 2012 the Schutzhund program, under the authority of the SV for more than a century, and the international IPO program of the FCI stood side by side. In that year the SV abandoned Schutzhund in favor of IPO. The terminology is as follows:

- **Schutzhund** German for protection dog, the name of the venue over the first century. Under the auspices of the SV.
- **IPO** International Prüfungsordnung  
English: International Working Test  
Beginning in 2012 the universal, international FCI program.
- **IGP** International Gebrauchshund Prüfung  
English: International Working Dog Test  
The new name for IPO in 2019

### ***European Organizations***

- **FCI** **Federation Cynologique Internationale**  
English: *International Canine Federation*.  
An international administrative consortium of national kennel clubs, the predominant top level canine organization throughout most of the world. Great Britain, Canada and the United States are not members but have elaborate formal agreements and protocols for mutual recognition of registrations, pedigrees and judges, both conformation and performance. The FCI is a high level entity registering no dogs and certifying no judges, these things being the province of the various national level entities such as the VDH.
- **VDH** **Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen**  
English: *Association for the German Kennel or Dog*.  
FCI affiliated national German canine organization, equivalent to the AKC in America.

- **SV Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde**  
English: *Club for German Shepherd's Dogs*  
The German Shepherd mother club in Germany, founded in 1900. For a century hands down the most successful and predominant breed club in the world. Today it is in deep crisis, with annual German registrations plummeting from 30,000 in 1995 to 10,000 today and still falling. The breed has been increasingly riven into show lines with extreme structure and dubious working viability and the much more robust old style working lines.
- **RSV2000 Schäferhundverein**  
A dissident national German Shepherd club in Germany, directly competing with the SV, through the courts also a member of the VDH and FCI.
- **WUSV Union der Vereine für Deutsche Schäferhunde**  
World Union of German Shepherd Clubs, under SV control.
- **DVG Deutscher Verband der Gebrauchshundsportvereine**  
English: *German Sports Association for Police & Protection Dogs*.  
The most prominent of several German all breed national working dog organizations, supporting numerous local training clubs.
- **LV/DVG America**  
The American "Landesverbands" or DVG region for the United States and Canada. Contrary to FCI regulation but historically condoned through corruption in high places of the VDH.
- **KNPV Koninklijke Nederlandse Politiehond Vereniging**  
English: *Royal Club for the Netherlands Police Dog*  
Conducting the world famous Dutch Police trials for more than a century. Not FCI affiliated.
- **NVBK Nationaal Verbond der Belgische Kynologen**  
English: *National Federation of Belgian Canine Enthusiasts*  
A Belgian National Ring Trial & Registration Organization. Founded in 1963, not FCI affiliated.
- **FMBB Fédération Mondiale Bergers Belges**  
English: *World Federation Belgian Shepherds*  
Belgian Shepherd equivalent for the WUSV

#### **American Organizations**

- **AKC American Kennel Club**  
The predominant, but not the only, American registry which manages national, all breed canine affairs such as registration and designation of judges, both conformation and obedience. The AKC has fallen on hard times, with annual registrations, and cash flow, falling to less than one third of the 1995 levels by 2011 and much less today. Their remedial strategy has been to stick their heads in the sand, that is, since 2011 they have simply ceased to publish annual breed or total registration statistics. In order to stem the tide of lost registrations and revenue they have embraced the commercial puppy mills, with transparent attempts to justify this, to put lipstick on their newfound pig.
- **AWDF American Working Dog Federation**  
A federation of all breed and breed specific national level American working dog clubs founded in 1989.
- **USCA United Schutzhund Clubs of America**  
By far the largest, most influential and most predominant

American working dog organization. Founded in the late 1970s it is unfortunately today not united in the sense of being all breed, no longer awards Schutzhund titles, has seen many of its amateur clubs become for profit and commercial and is in the most fundamental sense not American but rather German dominated and controlled, having been hijacked by the SV.

- **GSDCA German Shepherd Dog Club of America**  
For most of a century the largest, most independent and most prominent AKC breed club, but in recent years has fallen into steep decline. This is partially due to the ongoing AKC purebred collapse and also because of the burgeoning popularity of working line German Shepherd imports. In recent years affiliation with both the AKC and the WUSV has resulted in serious conflicts of interest. Relevant to this discussion primarily because for decades the SV has manipulated US German Shepherd affairs by playing GSDCA off against USCA. Primary political persona has become dog in the manger
- **WDA Working Dog Association**  
A separate organization created by GSDCA in the early 1980s as a stalking horse, to play a role and exert control in the newly emergent Schutzhund movement while staying more or less within the letter of the AKC regulations and policy prohibiting involvement in protection sport or service. After a long, convoluted and complex history the WDA is for the moment dead in the water, with the GSDCA assuming many of its functions. (This became possible as AKC restrictions became more lax or de facto unenforced early in this century.)
- **AWMA American Working Malinois Association**  
Member of the AWDF and FMBB.  
[Glossary](#)

## Historical Perspective

### **Roots**

Breed histories tend to be tales of prominent founders and generation upon generation of faithful heirs working hand in hand to carry on the heritage of a newly discovered ancient breed. In other words, mythology and sanitized pseudo history. In reality there is inevitable ongoing conflict and strife which tends to be minimized and glossed over but which festers just below the surface to periodically emerge. Current conflicts, which superficially seem to have come out of the blue, generally have deep roots and long histories. Such things must be perceived and put into perspective in order to make sense of events and trends unfolding today.

The working trial is and must be the foundation of a viable working breed, the most prominent of these being the Schutzhund venue created to establish and maintain structure and character conducive to work by the founders of the German Shepherd, particularly Max von Stephanitz. (Tragically, after more than a century the SV was to drop the Schutzhund program in 2012 and the working requirement for breeding in 2021—bring everlasting shame on themselves—as discussed in more detail below.)

The opposite side of this coin is the conformation exhibition or evaluation, which was created to evolve and solidify consistent physical structure and appearance establishing breed identity and physical attributes conducive to efficacy and durability in the work. That individuals should be recognizable by the general public as representatives of the particular breed is a legitimate end, uniform breed appearance is just as fundamental as the uniform of the police officer.

The inevitable flaw is that the conformation shows, increasingly run by and for breeders and judges intensively focused on prominence and money, paying only lip service to work, almost immediately become matters of style and fashion, as in the growing of prize winning roses which could not survive in the real, natural world. In many instances such as the foreshortened muzzle of the Boxer, the narrow head of the English Collie and the sloping back and extreme angulation of the SV show lines the physical ideal has become counterproductive, abetting dogs inherently physically unsuited for work and increasingly fragile. The ongoing emergence of career ending back defects in young German Shepherds is a primary example of this fragility.



Max von Stephanitz

### ***The Legacy of Von Stephanitz***

Von Stephanitz was exceptional in his deep-seated commitment to working functionality and durability as a guide to structure, the concept that form must follow function. These roots set the stage for a century of success and dominance for the German Shepherd. A more typical example was the Belgian Shepherd, emerging a decade earlier, whose most prominent founder, Adolphe Reul, was much more focused on emulating the British style conformation show which had brought forth the effete long haired English collies. Reul put emphasis on coat color and texture, downplaying working potential which was apparently regarded as vulgar and low class among the French speaking elite. The Malinois eventually emerged as a preeminent working dog today because his local advocates, Flemish speaking men much closer to the soil, were to persist and prevail, leaving a future as show ring ornaments to the other varieties.

The words of von Stephanitz himself aptly articulate these principles:

"The ideal of the Society was to develop Police trial Champions out of Exhibition Champions, our shepherd dog therefore, was further developed by dog lovers as a working dog. The Standard by which he would be judged and approved was this, namely:—utility is the true criterion of Beauty. Therefore our dogs exhibit everywhere to-day (in a fittingly developed frame, and never as the caricatures of Nature, the greatest of all teachers) a build of body, compacted and designed for the highest possible efficiency, spare and powerful, with wonderfully well-proportioned lines which immediately attract the connoisseur, who soon recognizes that it imparts to its owner a swift, easy gait, a capacity for quick turning and powers of endurance."

(von Stephanitz, 1925) p163

But almost from the beginning many breeders were drawn to the glory and financial reward of conformation show success. Elliott Humphrey and Lucien Warner in their well-respected 1934 book *Working Dogs* report:

"It will be remembered that at the turn of this century the German Shepherd as a breed began to split into two strains. The one produced beautiful dogs, including *all* the show winners. The other produced working dogs, including *all* the working champions. No dog of the championship strains born since 1909 has produced winners in *both* show and working classes. Thus the cleavage is complete."

(Humphrey & Warner, 1934) p226

Today the German Shepherd is far down the wrong road to increasingly irreconcilable sub populations, that is the SV show lines, the AKC lines, the west and east German working lines and the Czech lines. The cold war provided almost half a century of separation and diversity, with Czech and East German lines evolving separately behind the Iron Curtain. Other breeds have suffered even more egregiously: in Germany the Doberman and the Boxer would need to be recreated almost from the ground up to be taken seriously as working breeds. Even my own Bouvier des Flandres is on the verge of extinction as a serious dog. [Here](#)

#### ***Malinois Rising from the Ashes***

In sharp contrast the Malinois, the short coated variety of the Belgian Shepherd, has existed over parts of three centuries bred primarily for work, with relatively little conformation show influence or change in structure and general appearance. Formalized in 1890, a decade before any other serious working breed, he languished in obscurity only to emerge late in the twentieth century as the first serious challenge to the German Shepherd as the prototypical police service dog. Yet photos from the earliest days show dogs very similar in structure and presumably stride to those on training fields and streets today. (And, by the way, remarkably similar in appearance to German Shepherds of the early years.)

Although the world's first police dogs took to the streets of Ghent, Belgium in 1899 the German invasion of 1914, directly through Belgium, and the subsequent Nazi atrocity cast Belgium and Belgian canine affairs into a back water for much of the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1960s and 70s the Malinois, forged in the crucible of the Belgian Ring and on KNPV fields, began to emerge, pushing the German Shepherd off of French Ring Sport fields in the later 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s the Malinois invasion was creeping onto German Schutzhund fields, where pioneers such as Peter Engel (no relation) had begun breeding from NVBK lines.

Schutzhund or national variants began to emerge elsewhere in Europe, particularly the Netherlands, Belgium and Nordic nations, gradually bringing the Malinois prominence on IPO fields worldwide.

This emergent Malinois renaissance created the first serious competition for the German Shepherd after nearly a century of overwhelming dominance, the resulting push back coming more in the political and bureaucratic arenas than on the sport field. The problem has been that most of the best of the Malinois working dogs held pedigrees in the NVBK or other independent registries, regarded as renegade by the haughty FCI bureaucracy. In order to enforce hegemony access to Schutzhund and IPO trials has required registration by a "legitimate" FCI national club, with no accommodation for other registries. There have of course been various ways around this, but with the advent of genetic testing the potential for escalation is increased, the temptation to compete through the political bureaucracy rather than the whelping box is ever present.

### ***Sturm und Drang***

The cleavage of the working breeds, other than the Malinois, into the functional and the ornamental has been a ubiquitous trend, is the primary causative factor in contemporary conflicts. It is our original sin. Much of the strife comes from the need of the show breeders to highjack the public narrative in order to portray their ornamental dogs as noble defenders of family and nation, as having the police patrol potential just below the surface, to be brought forth at any moment with a bit of training. But reality is that these show lines—in all breeds—only pretend to be of serious service potential; in the long term this generates enormous animosity among working advocates who actually do breed such dogs.

A less overt source of conflict and animosity is national and cultural, much of it a consequence of two world wars. In the 1980s I became well acquainted with several of the senior Bouvier des Flandres founders, such as Edmee Bowles and Justin Chastel, Belgians who had somehow survived the Nazi atrocity, often at enormous personal loss. Many carried a deeply ingrained hatred of anything German to their graves. As this generation has passed much of this has abated, and the movement for European unity has restrained overt expression, but remnants remain. The contradictions and irony are palpable, for German breeds, particularly the German Shepherd, have retained universal popularity, the English going to the trouble of creating a new name, Alsatian, to soften the association. Such things are much less prevalent in America, but traces of the animosity are at times imported along with the dogs.

Cultural and ethnic tension is not necessarily international, a case in point being Belgium which is deeply riven between a Flemish speaking north where the great Flemish plain encompasses much of what is today the Netherlands and a French speaking south culturally, historically and linguistically much closer to France than Flandres. (The Flemish language is essentially a dialect of Dutch.) This division played an enormous role in impeding the advancement of the Belgian breeds. At the turn of the twentieth century, when they were being established, French language and culture was elite, of the upper classes. It is not mere coincidence that the French speaking Professor Reul was seeking to emulate elite English conformation shows as highlighted by the long coated English Collie, looking down upon the Flemish advocates of the short haired Malinois, scarcely attempting to conceal contempt for the men as well as the dogs as low class and vulgar.



### ***The American Experience***

The canine establishment in America, having evolved under British influence, was historically hostile to protection service and sport, the idea of dogs biting people under any circumstance being perceived as vulgar, anathema. While the German Shepherd and particularly the Doberman communities were anxious to incorporate the protective capability into the public persona in the interest breed promotion, there was very little understanding of the fact that it was not a given, needed to be relentlessly evaluated and selected for in the breeding process. Americans generally made the implicit assumption that the police potential was inherently present in every individual, with no need for getting the hands dirty, actually encouraging a dog to bite.

American involvement in working dog affairs thus came relatively late, emerging in the 1970s when pioneering Schutzhund clubs began to spring up, first as an independent American organization (NASA) and then linked to Germany through the DVG. Intensive mainstream opposition, led by the AKC, to any involvement in protection sport or service and carry over of European conflicts has produced a history of incessant strife, conflict and intrigue. Thus we have inherited a convoluted and complex world with arcane, decades old animosities, the origins of which are often lost in time, but which nevertheless still generate strife.

In the early stages of the Schutzhund advent, in the 1970s, those involved were tentatively reaching out to the GSDCA, but this quickly brought down the wrath of the AKC and a formal ban. This resulted in the formation of USCA in the late 1970s and the subsequent creation of the WDA by the GSDCA as a stalking horse, as a means of remaining involved but keeping their hands clean in the eyes of the AKC. The Germans, through the SV and WUSV, immediately saw this as an opportunity and began playing GSDCA off against USCA, the primary carrot being the composition of the teams for the annual WUSV Schutzhund championship. Although GSDCA had no history of training, and indeed no dogs capable of being trained at a high level, as the original American WUSV entity they insisted on pushing into the selection process, essentially taking on the role of dog in the manger. This has ever since been an ongoing conflict, with both USCA and GSDCA sending teams for a number of years, which was more or less absurd because the GSDCA teams largely consisted of USCA members only interested in going to Europe. The SV eventually dictated one joint team, which has led to many years of hostile coexistence, with a certain amount of conflict and strife, which has tended to soften as time has gone on.

In recent years the relationship between the GSDCA and their own creation, the WDA, has soured, eventually resulting in the gutting of WDA. The GSDCA has taken on many of the historical functions such as administering local Schutzhund or IPO clubs and trials. Although WDA is currently dead in the water, there remains a small possibility of reconciliation, possibly resulting from a renewed crack down by the AKC.

## **Today**

### ***Purebred in Decline***

Since the mid-1990s purebred registrations have been in steep decline worldwide, putting particular pressure on the AKC and SV and especially the canine bureaucrats whose status, income and employment are in jeopardy as cash flow dwindles. The SV, the German Shepherd mother club in Germany, is in existential crisis, with annual registrations since 1995 plummeting from 30,000 to 10,000, jeopardizing income, status and security for quasi commercial breeders and bureaucrats alike. The AKC is in similar decline.

It is at least a plausible speculation that the emergence of the Internet in the middle 1990s was a causative factor rather than incidental correlation; perhaps a voice for the common man can collapse a carefully crafted public persona based on propaganda and overwhelming media control.

The rapid expansion of the purebred culture that characterized the post WW II era enabled burgeoning bureaucracies, ever more extensive and expensive dog show circuits and escalating prices generally. When the pie is getting ever larger even a narrower slice can increase in size, but when the pie begins to dwindle the struggle for survival becomes more intense, a program to be the least diminished loser perhaps becoming a struggle for survival.

Among the major losers have been the AKC, the SV and the GSDCA, each suffering a vastly diminished role, registrations a mere fraction of former numbers and tarnished prestige. A major winner has been USCA which from its founding in the late 1970s has been the overwhelmingly predominant American working dog venue. The numbers are impressive from any perspective, but perhaps most telling is that six of seven, 300 out of 350, annual American IPO (Schutzhund) trials are USCA trials.

The existential question before us today is whether it is possible to maintain a breeding population of serious service dogs which is simultaneously being "improved" in terms of structure, stride and superficial appearance in the conformation ring. Our experience, as indicated by the worldwide trend to the Malinois in police and military service, would seem to indicate that it is not possible. This is our most fundamental problem, and until it is resolved we will stagnate and regress.

### ***FCI / WUSV Conflict***

In Europe at center stage in recent years there has been an intense, ongoing conflict quietly raging between the FCI and the WUSV. Existing agreements and protocols had lapsed and a bitter struggle for power, influence and status was ongoing. The outcome has the potential to shape world and especially European canine affairs for decades to come.

In December of 2019 this quiet struggle burst into a firestorm, extending to the highest level of the Euro courts, as a consequence of the arbitrary and provocative FCI dictate that the SV must cease sending conformation and working judges to non FCI organizations, in particular USCA. Since the beginning of the American Schutzhund movement, for almost half a century, these SV judges have been providing instruction, guidance and inspiration to our incipient working community; have been an integral part of our foundation.

In exploring the ramifications of these ongoing developments one must perceive that while in a formal sense the WUSV and the SV are distinct entities for practical purposes they are best thought of as different faces of a unified German Shepherd

establishment, the same set of leaders who from time to time wear different hats. As a specific example, SV president Dr. Henrich Messler also automatically serves as WUSV president. Thus the WUSV is not a union of equals but rather national clubs subordinate to the SV/WUSV with very little influence in governance. Although the intention has always been one WUSV member per nation, accidents of history have resulted in several instances of multiple clubs, as for example the United States where both the GSDCA and USCA are WUSV members. In general references to the SV and WUSV are essentially equivalent and there is a slightly careless tendency to use the terms interchangeably. In recent months USCA and SV leaders have become much closer personally, bringing increased understanding on both sides; but this is a transient development based on personal relationships.

The WUSV has had only limited success in guiding international German Shepherd affairs. Historically it has wielded little direct power, relaying on German prestige to influence member nation breeding rather than actual control. Registration records, judging appointments, most conformation and performance events and breed standards remain under the direct control of national entities such as the AKC and the GSDCA. This has created problems. A prime example is the United States where, about 1960, the GSDCA in particular and Americans in general went off in their own breeding direction, by and large ceasing the importation of German breeding stock and the borrowing of SV conformation judges as a means of maintaining some level of continuity with German breeding. The primary reason for the WUSV was to foster an international type, one German Shepherd worldwide, but this has been only marginally effective.

The primary mechanism for German influence was sending SV judges around the world to preside at conformation shows and working trials. Von Stephanitz himself went to the United States, Great Britain and other nations to judge major conformation shows, often providing elaborate critiques of individual dogs as a powerful educational mechanism. SV working judges played a major role in the establishment of Schutzhund in America, exerting enormous influence and paving the way for SV conformation judges. It should come as no surprise that when the FCI bureaucrats and power brokers sought to rein in SV influence their primary point of attack was to try and block SV judges serving abroad.

The canine world has changed enormously since USCA was founded in the late 1970s. In the beginning it was conceived—or at the very least promoted and projected—as an American all-breed organization focused on building our national infrastructure providing access to Schutzhund trials. About a third of the members were training other breeds, and there was great emphasis on inclusivity, everybody working together. It was, after all, the "United Schutzhund Clubs of America" rather than "National German Shepherd Schutzhund Clubs" and there was emphasis that all breeds were welcome on a level field. The link with the SV came more or less through the back door in response to the need for credibility through a Euro association and access to established judges. At the time this seemed more or less natural in that in American eyes Germany and the German Shepherd were the center of the working dog world, very few Americans being aware of working dog Europe beyond Germany or that there were Belgian, French and Dutch working breeds. It may seem inconceivable to Americans today, but as late as the year 2000 the existence of the Malinois or the KNPV and ring venues where they primarily trained and titled were virtually unknown in America.

When USCA gradually metamorphosed from a breed agnostic American training organization into a dependent client of the SV with "for the German Shepherd dog" popping up under the USCA logo on the magazine and the web site and the

introduction of breed surveys, German style registration and beauty shows there was a sense among many of the now "alternate" breed trainers that they had been hijacked and marginalized.

This situation posed a serious threat to the prosperity of the movement, but was in time remedied by the advent of the AWDF. I had been promoting a national level umbrella organization for breed specific working dog clubs in my *Dog Sports* magazine column, and Paul Meloy, USCA president, called a foundation meeting which took place in the USCA office in St. Louis in June of 1989. Present at the creation were Paul Meloy and Vernon Crowder representing USCA, Erik Houttuin and Jim Engel representing the Bouvier club, Eckart Salquit and Jacqueline Rousseau for the Rottweiler and Ray Carlisle for the Doberman, all at the time familiar names on the American working dog scene. Although the memory of Paul Meloy was latter tarnished by controversies within USCA he was at the time an able leader of vision, determination and wisdom, which is how I prefer to remember him. The AWDF brought order, cooperation and prosperity for most of two decades, at which point the wheels began to wobble and eventually in 2019 fall of, leading to our current crisis.

Beginning roughly in the 1960s, when the Americans began to go their own way, the SV had an increasing and in certain sense legitimate desire to wield more direct power in order to influence and guide the evolution of the breed internationally, to have one German Shepherd worldwide; but those in other nations and organizations have been quite naturally reluctant to yield control without compensating increases in meaningful influence within the WUSV. The desire for one German Shepherd was and is admirable, but the Germans stand on soft ground because the most fundamental disparity is between their working lines and the incessantly increasing angulation and extreme type of SV show lines.

This desire for international control runs counter to historical precedent grounded in practical realities of communication, travel and money and the natural desire in the various nations to govern themselves according to local circumstance and preference. Primary power has thus been in the hands of national entities, such as the AKC or VDH, and their associated national breed clubs such as the GSDCA and SV because international travel, communication and financial transactions were very difficult, time consuming and expensive. In 1900 there was no internet, television or automobile. Very few people could speak or read foreign languages and business was transacted in person or by mail. Travel was by horse, foot, railroad or ocean liner. It is no accident that the WUSV came into existence when international air travel became affordable and gained momentum with the advent of the Internet.

Thus for a century, from the foundation in the aftermath of WW I, the FCI has had a relationship with the SV through the VDH, that is the national German kennel club, exactly as every other national breed club has been under the auspices of a national entity such as the VDH in Germany, Raad van Beheer in the Netherlands or St. Hubert in Belgium. The WUSV has historically had a much more tenuous existence, has been a quasi-informal entity with limited real influence.

Today because of the internet, affordable and rapid international travel and sophisticated financial and banking mechanisms these limitations have evaporated, opening up the possibility of an international breed club based in a mother country taking on all administrative functions, eliminating any need for intervening entities such as the FCI, the AKC or unaffiliated national breed clubs. This would bring economies of scale and eliminate intervening layers of bureaucracy, bringing

uniformity in terms of breed standard, breeding requirements, appointment of judges and disciplinary actions.

Thus it would today be entirely feasible for the member WUSV clubs to sunder relationships with organizations such as the FCI, VDH, AKC and deal directly with the WUSV, which would provide registration, record keeping and all institutional functions on a uniform, worldwide basis. Entities such as the FCI, AKC and VDH would become as archaic as transportation by horse and buggy and business transactions by mail and check. Fear of this is to a major extent behind recent FCI efforts to rein in SV foreign activity.

Would a WUSV independent of the FCI be a good thing? Would Americans, for instance, be willing to give up any vestige of national sovereignty and be entirely subservient to Germany? Would the American public accept WUSV pedigrees and registration in place of AKC papers? Would we be willing to accept only judges appointed by the SV? Indeed, would the SV have only German judges who would travel worldwide to insure or enforce uniform standards? More importantly, would WUSV be willing to grant other nations real power within the WUSV, including direct influence in leadership selection? These are all pertinent questions, which I make no claim to have answers for.

Historically the FCI was able to take on ever expanding and unfettered authority, and in the process demonstrate once again the truth that unbridled power inevitably corrupts, largely because there was no international mechanism to intervene. The advent of the European Union gradually evolved a free enterprise culture and corresponding body of European law to enforce it. Since the EU is primarily a mechanism to facilitate international trade it came to have comprehensive laws and traditions severely limiting restraint of trade. RSV 2000, a national German Shepherd club created as a counter to the SV, went to the German courts and forced recognition by the VDH and FCI on an equal basis with the SV. When the FCI blocked SV judges from presiding at USCA trials WUSV member clubs, led by USCA, appealed to the German courts and prevailed, largely striking down FCI control over relationships between national clubs regardless of FCI affiliation, such as USCA. This is of paramount importance with far reaching ramifications, a once in a generation paradigm shift.

The overriding result of these events over the past ten months is that the WUSV, having prevailed over the FCI in the Euro courts on issues of restraint of trade, has empowered the international German Shepherd community, worldwide, to make and implement their own decisions; there now being very little the FCI, VDH or the AKC can do about it. This newfound empowerment comes at a price, for they are now one step away from either unprecedented prosperity or disaster.

An enormous amount of cash is at stake, for registration fees and similar payments are the life blood of any canine bureaucracy. Their success in this would reset the entire world order, set aside a century of tradition, order and international agreement. The FCI bureaucrats will oppose this with every fiber of their being, for this is an existential threat to their prestige, their privilege, their cushy jobs, indeed their very existence. Escalating urgency is the fear that a successful SV circumvention would likely be the only the first of many, that other breeds would also follow suit and break free. Relations between a newly empowered WUSV and the AKC would be problematic to say the very least; the resulting new world order would be most interesting.

### ***SV Repudiates von Stephanitz***

From the beginning, at the turn of the twentieth century, the Schutzhund trial had been the foundation of the German Shepherd as a credible police breed. As the universal prerequisite to breeding this rendered every pup a credible police dog candidate precisely because both parents, and their parents before them for generations, had been proven worthy on the trial field. This was the essence of the heritage as envisioned and created by Max von Stephanitz, his legacy.

But after more than a century, in 2021, the SV abruptly abandoned, shamelessly repudiated, this requirement. The reason was quite simple. The ornamental show lines had become so physically grotesque and morally deficient that the pretense of police potential had become absurd, a laughingstock. Fake special trials for the ornamental dogs with a cadre of hopelessly lenient judges had finally become untenable.

As a fig leaf the SV has conjured up an insipid, pathetic "Breeding Predisposition Test" (ZAP) as a lame alternative, a "second route to breeding approval" to spare the ornamental lines the ongoing embarrassment of going through watered down back door trials. They have crossed the Rubicon and in so doing brought everlasting shame on themselves and the breed. [More](#)

### ***AWDF in Crisis***

In the middle 1980s roughly a third of USCA members were training other breeds such as Dobermans, Rottweilers, Boxers and the Bouvier des Flandres. At this time the Malinois was still virtually unknown in America. As the USCA gradually became more overtly a German Shepherd club in response to incessant SV pressure, and as national clubs for some of the other breeds came into existence, interest in some sort of high level organization of clubs emerged. I had in fact been advocating this in my *Dog Sports* magazine column for several years.

As a result the AWDF was founded in June of 1989 at a meeting held in the USCA office in St. Louis. I was present and became the founding AWDF secretary, my long term associate Dr. Erik Houltuin becoming the Bouvier club delegate. In this role, and later when I served as both AWDF secretary and president of the Bouvier club, relationships with Paul Meloy, who was then president of USCA and AWDF, were generally good, all of us being essentially on the same page. The early years, through the end of the century, were generally marked by peaceful relations and lack of drama. The Malinois was still rare on American sport fields and FCI IPO championship interest was nonexistent or low key. This worked reasonably well for many years, but there were structural problems which would in time emerge and ultimately, recently, provoke crisis.

Organizations whose constituent members have great disparity in terms of numbers, objectives and relative economic prosperity are difficult to govern. A prime example is the United States, where the framers of our constitution endured a long and arduous process of compromise in order to arrive at our current configuration with two legislative bodies, one apportioned according to population and the other with two senators per state. Even today, two and a half centuries later, issues such as the disproportionate power of small or sparsely populated states or the Electoral College periodically bring forth shrill accusations of "not democratic."

The founders of the AWDF faced a similar dilemma, but we, unwisely as it turns out, chose to implement a one vote per organization structure, which in fact turned out to be a ticking time bomb. At the time we all understood full well that USCA was vastly predominant in terms of numbers and influence and likely to remain so in the

foreseeable future. Paul Meloy, USCA president, embraced a one vote per organization format on the grounds that it was a gesture of trust, that we were all reasonable people and would act in our common interest. This in fact turned out to be true as long as we remained involved and the existing circumstances prevailed. But the fact remained that rouge delegates and leaders representing a very small portion of the aggregate active trainers could, in support of a cabal with personal agendas, entirely overrun the interests of a vast majority, even to the point of expelling a predominate club in order to include a different breed club representing a very small portion of the trainers involved. [More](#)

Recently the stars aligned and the time bomb went off. A cabal centered on Anne Camper, president of both the AWMA and AWDF and Annetta Cheek, known primarily as a Pit Bull advocate and longtime DVG insider and former president, currently AWDF vice president, expelled USCA from the AWDF and made grandiose pronouncements on behalf of the FCI declaring USCA titles invalid, the members ineligible for international FCI competition and by implication USCA an orphan wandering in the wilderness.

Had this stood it would have recast the AWDF as a German rather than American controlled and dominated entity, for the vast majority of supposed American trials would have been under the auspices of the DVG, a German national club, by local training clubs with primary loyalty and ultimate control rendered onto Germany. These would have been literally illicit German trials on American soil. Only a mere handful of annual breed specific club trials would have remained, with several of these national clubs running only a single annual championship and others inactive, empty shells but still with a seat at the table, full voting rights.

But this lasted only a matter of days before the FCI smack down came, reiterating in the strongest possible terms their recognition of USCA titles, judges and trials and the expectation that this situation would be resolved in a favorable manner, leaving no question that any American national entity sans USCA was anathema. This once and for all emphatically shattered the illusion that AWDF ever had anything more than guest status at the FCI, a contingent privilege of sending observers to meetings and complementary entries to some international trials. [More](#)

The silence of Anne Camper, AWDF president, has been deafening, leaving the tattered remains of the AWDF twisting slowly in the wind. There can be little doubt that if AWDF does not somehow manage to walk back the expulsion, establishing new ground rules acceptable to USCA, future FCI IPO qualification trials will be under the auspices of an entirely different national entity.

This has been a festering, untenable situation for years and perhaps this crisis was necessary to clear the air, to set the stage for a new beginning.

*Jim Engel, Marengo, Revised November 2021*

## ***Background and Reference***

[Glossary](#)

[Decline and Fall of the House of von Stephanitz](#)

[Who Owns the House of von Stephanitz?](#)

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[Working Dog Organizations](#)

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***Web presence:***

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[Ongoing FCI / WUSV Strife](#)  
[Conacts & References](#)

***Much more historical detail can be found in the police dog book:***  
[The Police Dog: Evolution, History and Service](#)