



The Night Watch

# World Unions Rising

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September 15, 2021

*As a consequence of comprehensive, far sweeping European court restraint of trade rulings against the FCI and VDH the canine world is undergoing transformation, paradigm shift of unrepresented scale, comparable only to the nineteenth century advent of the purebred dog.*

*World unions—aggregations of national breed clubs—such as the WUSV (World Union of German Shepherd Clubs), have thus been empowered to conduct their international affairs directly, as they see fit, free of onerous FCI and kennel club (VDH or AKC) intrusion.*

*This brings emancipation for trainers and breeders everywhere, indeed all serious dog people, freedom at last from ornamental show and companion dog bureaucracy, oppressive FCI and kennel club exploitation and micromanagement.*

*The WUSV is moving forward vigorously to take full advantage of this newfound power to implement international registration and evaluation programs and other services in order to bring unity to German Shepherd breeding worldwide.*

*Other breed aggregations, such as the Belgian Shepherd Federation (FMBB), are also fully empowered to implement similar programs according to their own needs and desires, their vision of the future.*

*Thus among the benefits of this new world order will be the freedom of breed communities to conduct their own affairs, establish international policy and process, according to their specific needs and desires rather than having it imposed with a crude hand from above.*

*These developments pose a direct challenge to the vigor and even the ongoing existence of the FCI; perhaps that dirge ringing softly in the distance is the tolling of the FCI death knell.*

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Those not familiar with the terminology and recent history would do well to review this: [Here](#) and also [Glossary](#)

### ***Perspective***

Recent focus of the working dog community has been on the escalating clash between the WUSV and the FCI. But this is a short term perspective, a side show, little more than the tip of the iceberg.

The underlying existential crisis—emergent over the past quarter century—has been the free fall of the purebred paradigm, the bleeding out in terms of registrations, credibility, respect and most especially in the inherent functional quality of the dogs themselves. Our working breeds—particularly the effete ornamental lines—are increasingly feckless in their working roles, their ostensible reason for existence. The root cause is the existing order of our international canine world, relentlessly abused power in the hands of the FCI, AKC, VDH and other bloated, overweening all breed bureaucracies.

It is not just that the FCI and VDH have been engaged in an ongoing, spiteful vendetta against the WUSV, it is that these grasping bureaucrats have any power at all over working dog affairs, of which they are profoundly ignorant: the selection of judges, international service, physical standards, registration and breeding prerequisites or any other facet. All of this should be under the auspices of the broad community of breed advocates, acting through their breed specific clubs: local, national and international. For the German Shepherd this is of course the SV, USCA and the WUSV among many others, but this is but a specific instance: the same opportunities now

exist for other breeds including the Malinois and other Belgian Shepherd varieties through the FMBB and potential affiliates such as the NVBK.

### **Angst**

Not without reason FCI and kennel club bureaucrats have become distraught as their genial, secure life has incessantly eroded; for their income, job security and sense of superiority, of relevance and importance, hang in the balance. Their egregious ongoing attack on the SV is but one aspect of this escalating hysteria, of incessantly resorting to pathetic ploys as in ceasing to publish annual breed registration statistics in the vain hope that nobody will notice the blood on the floor, as did the AKC in 2011.

Although emasculating and superseding the emerging hegemony of the WUSV was the outwardly apparent FCI objective, another closely related motivation was reigning in and counteracting the growing influence of the international working dog community as a whole, which has from the beginning been marginalized and systematically oppressed. While ornamental and companion breeding has been in steep decline for most of a generation performance programs such as hunting trials and police patrol dog venues have prospered in terms of trials, service, public appreciation and relevance.

FCI angst has in particular been driven by prospering independent working dog venues—such as the NVBK in Belgium and KNPV in the Netherlands—beyond their reach, their sphere of influence. A primary case in point is USCA, which over four decades has been the driving force behind the emergent American working dog movement, become much larger, more prestigious and more influential than the century old GSDCA, yet remained utterly beyond FCI or AKC reach. Most of these historically predominant organizations—the SV, the FCI, the AKC and the GSDCA—have been in free fall for more than two decades, their membership and registrations plummeting, their leadership unable to stem the flow of blood.

But USCA has prospered in terms of membership, clubs, trials and general institutional vigor. Fear of the robust growth and burgeoning influence of USCA—and similar independent venues—was and is a primary motivation for this onerous and systematic FCI oppression. That they have persisted relentlessly while fully cognizant of their flagrant illegality illustrates the depth of their arrogance and fear. It has become a classic instance of panic and greed giving birth and sustenance to stupidity.

### **Crisis**

Beginning early in 2020 a comprehensive series of Euro court rulings found onerous FCI regulations and restrictions on national breed clubs, such as the SV, to be inherently discriminatory, a flagrant restraint of trade and thus patently illegal. This vendetta had become increasingly blatant and egregious over decades of conspiracy and political connivance, finally rising to the level of vindictiveness in the 2019 prohibition of SV conformation and performance judges serving non FCI affiliated clubs, such as those of the WUSV in Spain and Mexico. Had this ban stood the house of von Stephanitz would have trembled, for these judges had for decades served a much broader role, been the pioneers and mentors establishing the German Shepherd as a breed and the police patrol dog culture throughout the world, from places as disparate as America and as remote as Japan.

This crisis emerged from failing negotiations for a renewed WUSV/FCI working agreement, which had become drawn out, increasingly acrimonious and openly hostile. In July of 2021 this faded from center stage as further Euro court ruling mandated FCI recognition of SV registry entries from non FCI member clubs of the WUSV such as USCA and those in Mexico and Spain.

This is the deal breaker, the death knell for oppressive FCI authority over working dog affairs. At a stroke of the judicial pen the FCI agreement became for all practical purposes irrelevant, leaving the SV empowered to conduct breed affairs according to their vision of the future, free of impudent FCI harassment. Even more to the point as the WUSV emerges as the de facto worldwide German Shepherd registering authority the FCI and the national kennel clubs, such as the AKC, will become increasingly irrelevant. Fear of this, and plummeting registration numbers, is why they have become so irrationally hostile.

In retrospect it has become evident that the differences between the WUSV and FCI are in the most fundamental sense irreconcilable, will never be resolved until one or the other ceases to exist or changes so fundamentally that their founding principles are abandoned. From time to time they may still pretend to play nice, but both sides will wait, like the stalking predator, for the opportunity to finally prevail, for the eradication of the other.

### ***Ramifications***

These Euro court actions have the potential to once and for all free those with boots on the ground—the trainers and breeders who hold the vitality of our working breeds in their hands—from stifling interference by the FCI and kennel club politicians and bureaucrats profoundly ignorant of, uncommitted to and disinterested in working breeding, selection, training and deployment. It is a major step forward in once and for all putting working dog affairs in the hands of working dog people.

In particular these court actions empower the SV, as the German mother club, to provide guidance and direction in a coherent, unified international breeding program in terms of selection, breeding prerequisites and performance and structural evaluation all with common criteria and consistent process. In a broader context these benefits have come within reach of other working breeds, provide the opportunity of exerting control over their own affairs, of preserving and enhancing their breeding lines according to their evolving history and ongoing vision. This is a very big deal indeed.

The immediate consequence and focus of attention has been the striking down of the FCI ban on SV conformation and performance judges serving non FCI entities such as USCA and the WUSV national clubs in Mexico and Spain, permanently alleviating this crisis in international German Shepherd affairs, vindicating the SV. But while crucial today this is in the long term transient; we had won a very important battle but the outcome of the war still hung in the balance.

Of even more far reaching consequence is the court ruling compelling FCI recognition of SV registrations from non FCI affiliated national breed clubs such as USCA and the WUSV clubs in Spain and Mexico. The ramifications of this are of profound significance because SV recognition now brings such dogs, and particularly their progeny, under the FCI

umbrella and thus through the cooperative agreements eligible for eventual AKC or CKC registration.

This once and for all breaks the FCI monopoly on the certification of purebred status; in the long run this means a dog will be a German Shepherd when and if the SV says it is a German Shepherd. This conveys enormous power: the transcendent question now becomes whether it will liberate and purify or corrupt, will good or evil prevail?

If all of this falls into place, which seems more than likely but is not cast in stone, the SV registry will become unique, the first of international scope ever. If and when this comes to be accepted by the community at large—breeders, trainers and owners in other nations—the flood gates will be open and the FCI, and perhaps the AKC, will become increasingly irrelevant. Real German Shepherds would come to be those registered in the land of origin, regardless of where they happen to reside or be bred, by the mother club, the SV.

Ultimately the decision makers will be those writing the checks, the puppy buying public. If they come to accept SV registration in place of that great sacred cow, the golden standard of AKC registration, it will be game over.

Make no mistake, in spite of any remnants of play nice rhetoric the WUSV is emerging, becoming more open and overt, as the existential threat to the century old dominance of the FCI and national registries. The primary causes of this are FCI arrogance and hostility on the one hand and the empowerment by the Euro courts on the other, which are hardening the aspiration of WUSV senior leadership to autonomy, a world with much subdued FCI presence and influence, or even complete collapse. What was so recently unthinkable—the demise of the FCI—is now emerging as the prospect of a better world, the natural and most desirable order of twenty first century canine affairs.

### ***Nationalism***

As a relevant point of historical context, beginning with the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 France and Germany engaged in three brutal conflagrations in seventy years, each one inflicting escalating damage to European civilization, the fabric of social and economic life. In this era these nations, where the original breeds were evolving, were segregated by language, ethnic heritage, history, commercial and monetary edifices and governments which regarded peace as little more than rebuilding interludes between armed conflict.

This was the era of aggressive colonialism and hyper nationalism, of intensely inward looking societies where few citizens were multilingual or had the occasion to travel or interact with foreigners; the only place a Frenchman was likely to directly interact with a German was at the point of a bayonet, in combat on the western front. Most social institutions, such as corporations and churches, were national in scope and character. The Catholic Church was a notable exception, but her influence was marginal in the mostly protestant northern region—England, Germany, Belgium and others—where the incipient police breeds were waiting in the wings, on the pastures and fields of the great northern European plain. The temporal correlation of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 and the emergence of the British Kennel Club three years later set the stage for a century of conflict in the domain of canine politics as well as on the western front.

For all of these reasons the origins of our canine culture are most accurately viewed through the lens of this pervasive colonial era imperialism. For better or for worse this inwardly focused world view made canine governance along national lines inevitable, with real power over all aspects of breed affairs residing in an overweening central bureaucracy, thus precluding meaningful links or mutual support between cadres of breed advocates in neighboring nations. Better was more or less a given in the beginning, but worse has emerged and prospered in recent generations. Domination of an all-breed bureaucracy, with negligible concern for quality in the actual dogs of any breed, inevitably fostered and entrenched ever more ineffectual and grotesque ornamental lines, causing real working functionality and service to wither from neglect and oppression.

Thus as we proceed it will become our emerging thesis that this overweening nationalism and imperialism is an inherent causative factor in the inexorable purebred decline, and that the remedy is a severe reigning in of national kennel clubs and most especially the FCI in favor of international aggregates of breed specific clubs with direct cooperative bonds such as the WUSV.

### ***Advent***

The challenges we struggle with today involve enormously complex, deeply intertwined issues whose ultimate ramifications will emerge over time, for better or worse, according to our wisdom and resolve. In order to achieve wisdom and avoid the worst, to adapt our way of thinking to twenty first century realities—and thus circumvent repetition of past blunders and errors—we must strive to more fully comprehend the nature and structure of the purebred canine establishment as it evolved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In particular we must understand the prevailing cultural and historical propensity for such things to be organized predominantly on a national all-breed basis through kennel clubs such as the VDH and AKC—and on the international level the FCI—and why and how this has come to put in mortal peril the viability of the purebred paradigm.

By 1850 technological advances and societal innovations of the Industrial Revolution—rail transport, steel production, the telegraph and so many others—were creating an emerging middle class with discretionary time and income to explore fashionable new diversions, one prominent example being dog exhibition as a competitive hobby. This was the good news. The bad news—the craving of personal notoriety, self-importance and aggrandizement, the collecting of tin cups—was also present at the creation, our original sin.

Diverse groups were gathering together and establishing clubs to formalize existing types into breeds and a system of written standards, registration records and exhibitions or shows to evaluate and rank order individual specimens according to compliance with these formal standards. The hunting breeds of the elite classes were prominent from the beginning, but the herding breeds, incipient police dogs, were by and large to remain in the fields and pastures for another generation, to find international prominence only in the twentieth century.

Diverse breed specific national clubs were coming into existence, and while a few, such as the SV in Germany, would become large and robust enough to stand on their own—create and maintain a registry, conduct local

and regional trials and evaluations and publish journals—many more were small, less robust and with marginal numbers and popularity. Providing economies of scale in administrative and information services to any but the largest breeds was the primary reason for the emergence of these umbrella national kennel clubs. Conformation shows and performance trials require grounds with show rings, record keeping, publicity, benches, judges, stewards and other facilities and services which are much more affordable and feasible when many breeds are served. In this era registries were labor intensive: paper driven, difficult to access and subject to loss through incidents such as fire.

The emergence of these self-styled edifices of rectitude commenced with the establishment of the Kennel Club in Great Britain in 1873 as a conglomeration of breed clubs primarily for the purposes of registration, competition records and the conduct of conformation evaluations. This in turn inspired the establishment of similar clubs in continental nations such as the Raad van Beheer in the Netherlands and the VDH in Germany, each with their own set of national breed clubs. Of particular significance in the working dog world was the emergence of the Belgian "Koninklijke Maatschappij Sint-Hubertus" (Royal Society Saint Hubert) or KMSH in 1882 which in 1891 led to the establishment of the Belgian Shepherd, including the short coated variety later to be known as the Malinois.

The German Shepherd mother club, the SV, came into existence a few years later, in 1899, prior to the advent of the German national kennel club, the "Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen" or VDH which was established in 1906. One consequence of this sequence of events is that the registry has always been in the hands of the SV rather than VDH as is the usual situation. This is a critical point in that it would make withdrawal from the VDH and FCI feasible and would render a credible new VDH registry very difficult to create.

From inception the German Shepherd was different. The SV was established by Max von Stephanitz and a band of associates for the German Shepherd Dog in April of 1899 and within 15 years became by far the largest and most predominant breed club anywhere, with worldwide presence and influence dwarfing that of any other breed and most other nations. Von Stephanitz was a man of the upper class, wealth and an organizational and promotional flair totally dedicated to the establishment of the German Shepherd. By force of will and unstinting devotion, reinforced by his definitive book, he built the breed both in Germany and worldwide. The SV had been prospering twenty years at the second coming of the FCI and until this day holds the registration records, to a large extent manages their own international affairs and in every other way has been more robust than the VDH or FCI. International promotion was relentless, culminating in the establishment of the WUSV in 1975. This burgeoning international power and influence made eventual conflict with the FCI inevitable; merely a matter of time. There is no reason at all why these Germans could not or should not stand alone, conduct German Shepherd affairs worldwide through the WUSV, beholden to nobody.

### **America**

Breed clubs in the United States tend to be pathetic and feckless, doing little more than publishing a magazine and handing out tin cups at an annual specialty. The real power, and the money, is closely held by the AKC bureaucrats: judge certification, registration, the breed standard, discipline,

suspension and anything else that actually matters or, most especially, produces a cash flow. Europe was and is more of the same.

Here as in Europe the German Shepherd was from the beginning the breed apart, functioning largely independently of the rest of the canine establishment. The American club, the GSDCA, has for most of a century been the strongest, most prosperous and most independent of the AKC national clubs, running an extensive schedule of their own more prestigious standalone conformation shows employing their own judges.

Because of the point structure it was necessary to win at these specialties in order to gain the coveted conformation championship, giving the GSDCA significantly more real power and influence than any of the others. In most breeds it is routine for dogs to become a "champion" without ever being seen by a judge with specific breed knowledge, affiliation or breed community endorsement, having been appointed directly by the AKC for convenience in scheduling and as a means of rewarding subservience.

In recent years this has to some extent abated as USCA has stepped to the forefront. In response to SV pressure USCA has for several decades been conducting beauty shows featuring SV judges, taking much of the luster off of the AKC championships peddled by the GSDCA or even more egregiously by the AKC. Today the GSDCA is a pale shadow of its mid twentieth century prosperity.

### ***FCI***

Soon after the advent of the British Kennel Club breeds such as the Airedales and Collies became popular with fanciers on the continent or in America. As other breeds in other nations emerged they also drew foreign interest, with for instance five untrained Belgian Shepherds being imported for the inaugural New York Police canine program in 1907.

This burgeoning migration across national borders created the need for internationally recognized registration and other services, resulting in the establishment of the FCI to foster cooperation and international intercourse. Although an initial federation was created to serve these needs by the kennel clubs of Belgium, France, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands in 1911 it was disbanded during World War I, and then recreated in 1921 at the instigation of Belgium and France.

Most of the nations in the world have become FCI members. The exceptions, notably the British, Canadians and Americans, have comprehensive formal operating agreements facilitating international services such as import registration and assignment of judges.

A crucial originating feature of the FCI was one and only one kennel club per nation, which was according to the elitist authoritarian spirit of the era. Twenty years ago this was nullified by a dissident Shepherd club in Germany, RSV2000, which successfully appealed to the Euro courts and is now a full-fledged, if not especially popular or influential, member of the VDH and thus FCI affiliated. In one light this was closing the barn doors long after the horses had fled, but it was also a precursor to the court actions two decades later which are entirely rewriting the canine ground rules.

In the founding era the one club per nation principle was problematic in that several nations—such as Belgium but also France and others—had vigorously competing kennel clubs, a veritable tower of canine babble. The



ultimately fatal flaw was the FCI propensity to select predominantly show oriented clubs and marginalize others, such as Kennel Club Belge, which tended to be more working or performance oriented. This overweening beauty show mentality marginalized working culture and rendered working prerequisites ineffectual: easily circumvented, insipid beauty breeder run temperament tests or in by far most instances entirely lacking. This has proven to be an insidious mechanism in the restless decline of the purebred paradigm.

### ***Devolution***

Among most of the best of our working breeds the founders were men on a mission devoted to the preservation of the remnants of an ancient but dissipating heritage, centuries old lines of tending style herding dogs serving on the great north central European plain, incipient police dogs in waiting. In the early years men such as von Stephanitz, Konrad Most, Adolphe Reul and Ernest van Wesemael were establishing a new, sustainable heritage of police patrol and military service. But what we see before us today in so many of these breeds—the Doberman, the Bouvier des Flandres, the German Shepherd, the Boxer—is stylized and functionally compromised caricatures of the visions of the founders. The Malinois is the notable exception, and is inching toward predominance.

Our Achilles heel, our fatal flaw, is our escalating propensity to pander to ever more grotesque fashion driven style. Physique seriously detrimental to effective service and durability has become the norm rather than selection according to athleticism and efficacy in the real world. Furthermore—with police trainers, handlers and administrators increasingly out of the loop and estranged—Schutzhund and its derivatives devolve into play sport less and less indicative of real world potential. Many are in denial, but this is a profound ongoing and escalating problem. Abandoning Schutzhund and allowing control of sport to fall into the hands of the FCI in 2012 exacerbated this devolution, was a serious blunder.

Conformation judges in general are increasingly less cognizant of or sympathetic to working structure because they are profoundly ignorant of and disinterested in police service with little inclination or incentive to take work seriously. Thus effete ornamental fashion has come to predominate over cultural and historical emphasis on form according to functional efficacy.

This devolution of FCI working lines is a major contributing factor to the fact that much of the best of working breeding, particularly among the Malinois, emanates from outside of the FCI, from venues such as the KNPV and NVBK or from a tenacious and dedicated cadre of working German Shepherd breeders who persist and endure in spite of the best efforts of the SV ornamental dog establishment to marginalize them. That this working community has in recent years prospered has posed an increasing threat to the credibility and vitality of the ornamental lines and the FCI itself.

### ***Change***

National kennel clubs founded in the late nineteenth century were structured according to the practical realities of that era and were to remain essentially unchanged and marginally relevant until well into the mid twentieth century. They persist today but are increasingly archaic and inexorably diminishing in terms of numbers, respect and relevance.

Profound social, economic and most particularly technological change has rendered old ways increasingly obsolete and inherently detrimental to the vigor and efficacy of twenty first century service. Modernization, a recasting of the fundamental structure according to these new realities, this digital age, is long overdue.

Telephone service and email have made communicating across the Atlantic as routine as conversing with a neighbor. Innovations such as affordable air transport, instantaneous worldwide internet information access, English as the ubiquitous international language and transparent financial mechanisms have to a large extent negated the reasons for and benefits of what has become an increasingly outdated and archaic canine infrastructure.

Europe in particular but also the rest of the world has seen the evolution of international corporations, transport and communication networks, Euro currency, financial institutions and open borders. You can travel from Portugal to Poland with no border checks, spending the same money and following the same general rules of the road. The European Union has and continues to implement integrated financial and regulatory operations and there is no reason why this should not extend to the canine sphere.

### ***Computer Era***

The most profound changes have been consequences of the advent of the digital computer. From the beginning of the purebred era a century and a half ago an enormous amount of canine registration and other essential information had been accumulating, at substantial ongoing cost in terms of time and effort, creating a veritable mountain of paper in innumerable filing cabinets and record books scattered throughout the world, difficult to extract information from and susceptible to error or loss from fire, flood or the ravages of war.

The main frame computers introduced in the 1950s and 60s were most certainly a transformative innovation, a paradigm shift in every sense of the word. But this did not directly or immediately negate the need for the economies of scale of kennel clubs such as the AKC, which in the normal course of events implemented and became dependent on such systems as did every large scale business or service entity. AKC leverage and power was in fact enhanced by the fact that such technology was hopelessly beyond the fiscal reach of breed clubs in general, which had access to nothing of lesser scale than old fashioned filing cabinets and paper records. The underlying problem was that the new technology did not scale down and IBM, the predominant vendor, was not about to slay the goose laying the golden eggs. It was an age of big being not only better but the only means by which to endure and prosper, which applied to computer monopolies and canine monopolies, kennel clubs, alike.

And then the giant slayer stepped forward. The advent of microprocessor based personal computers in the 1980s changed everything, was the coming of a personal digital age for every man, woman and child. Virtually overnight it empowered a single person with a modestly priced computer on an office desk top with processing and data storage potential previously only available on a main frame, all at a minute fraction of the cost and complexity. It was indeed a new era with new ground rules, which would see IBM wither into virtual irrelevance.

IBM's demise was rapid because the free market, once unfettered, ruthlessly purges the unfit. The FCI and AKC, also under siege, and also unfit, persist only because of monopoly, which is why the recent Euro court rulings on restraint of trade are so fundamentally transformative.

The emergence of the internet in the mid-1990s, enabling and empowering networks of widely dispersed computers, was the capstone completing the advent of our digital age, which was transformative in a sense comparable only to the introduction of writing or the advent of the printing press in the latter fifteenth century.

This was the inflection point at which the affordability and power of personal computers and ubiquitous internet access achieved the potential to simplify and streamline the entire worldwide canine administrative and data access process, bringing historical records and ubiquitous, instantaneous information within reach anywhere any time day or night.

Today all of this registration data, for the entire world, for all of time, could be placed on a sixty dollar portable hard drive and slipped into a suit coat pocket without even creating a bulge. Or reside in a public, open access internet data base, transparent and open to the entire world.

Thus the primary reason for the existence of the AKC or VDH, the necessary economies of scale for information management and dispersal during the age of paper and then the main frame computer has for all practical purposes vaporized.

### ***Hijacked***

The advent of the computer driven internet made choice, convenience and competition ubiquitous, literally at hand twenty four seven. Used book stores and DVD rentals evaporated, newspapers and magazines are passing into history and the 11 o'clock news is an anachronism as news hour is now any time you want it to be and you don't have to sit through twenty minutes of commercials for ten minutes of slanted content. The lamented decline of the mom and pop store is inevitable because they are no longer cost effective and cannot provide the depth of selection or level of service that has become the norm.

This is the consequence of healthy, vigorous, open competition. Where competition is limited, where there is monopoly, these benefits can be denied or redirected. This brings forth a fundamental question: is it eerie coincidence or cause and effect that the digital revolution matured in lock step with purebred decline, the ongoing worldwide loss in annual registrations, a crash dive toward oblivion still ongoing a quarter century later?

The answer is increasingly obvious: since the purebred monopolies, such as the AKC or VDH, have failed to adapt to the times people have increasingly abandoned the purebred myth and acquired non registerable dogs at much more reasonable price, either of unrecorded origins or traditional breeds bred without paying the onerous registration tax.

Another factor in play is that the AKC has always been the ultimate sacred cow of American media, provided copious amounts of free fawning publicity and taken as absolute authority on all things canine, more surely infallible than the pope himself. Indeed, one might believe that Jesus himself was whispering in the judge's ear at Westminster to make certain he pointed the finger of glory at the right handler. But there are no sacred

cows on the internet and the AKC is regularly cut down to size and subjected to the scathing scorn it so richly deserves.

For these reasons the benefits of the digital era, such as they are, accrued not to the rank and file of working trainers and breeders or breed clubs but rather were hijacked to enhance the power, pseudo prestige and fiscal interests of the relentlessly acquisitive FCI and kennel club officers and bureaucrats. Much of this failed to materialize because of fading income due to plunging registrations, but the fact remains that they persist in feathering their own nests as fast as they possibly can.

Rather than augmenting operational affordability, client convenience and transparency—benefits which competition fosters in an open environment—they had the audacity to hold this wind fall as a virtual personal asset. Their priority was to monetize the new technology for personal benefit, create cash flow, and engender their historical propensity to secrecy and concealment. This was particularly useful wherever a personal political or business interest could be served or embarrassment averted, as in the 2011 AKC ploy ceasing the publication of yearly puppy registration totals by breed because they were in such steep decline.

In summary the kennel clubs, and a bit later the FCI, arose to provide administrative and information management infrastructure according nineteenth century social, economic, technical and political reality. But over time this metamorphosed into an entrenched, bloated self-aggrandizing bureaucracy with ever diminishing real power and influence in the hands of breed clubs, thus subjecting the community of breeders and trainers to onerous, ongoing exploitation.

In order to right this ship, to regain relevance and vigor, this monstrosity must be recast, rebuilt from the ground up on the principle of breed specific affairs in the worldwide hands of the directly interlocking communities of advocates, emanating from those with boots on the ground, the hands on trainers and breeders.

In the light of twenty first century transport, communications and information innovations there is no reason why it should not be feasible for the German Shepherd or Malinois communities to independently run their entire international operations on a standalone basis. Smaller breeds could according to their requirements and preferences employ independent commercial services on a contract basis for data processing, registration, trial records, pedigrees and other purely clerical functions.

There is just no reason to continue suffering under the yoke of bloated, archaic AKC or FCI oppression.

### ***The Germans***

While the WUSV/FCI clash has held center stage another ongoing conflict, with the entrenched SV show line old guard, smolders. An indication of the depth of animosity emerged when this faction was so quick to throw in the towel in response to the FCI ban on SV judges when Dr. Messler was hospitalized and thus out of the loop. This was obviously a transparent ploy to throw him under the bus, to preemptively sabotage more progressive elements and protect the cash flow and imagined prestige of their slant backed show dogs.

There can be no doubt that the blatant commercialism of this faction is the principal existential threat to the legacy of von Stephanitz. Indeed, their

foundation values and priorities have always been much more attuned to those of the FCI than the vitality of the German Shepherd as the historically preeminent police service dog that the captain envisioned; as the enemy within they remain a much more serious menace than any conceivable external adversary.

These Germans have taken major strides toward a new and prosperous persona, a vibrant new role in the vanguard of the canine world. But the fact nevertheless remains that the prosperity and viability of the WUSV and the German Shepherd as a working breed hang in the balance, are dependent on the closure of this gap between show and work—the ornamental and the real—and the founding vision of Max von Stephanitz. Unless they do so recent progress will be revealed as illusion, no more enduring than a grass fire, a Pyrrhic victory.

### ***The Belgians***

Although the Second World War is seventy five years, a life time, in the past and the Marshall Plan, Euro Union and passage of time have long since rebuilt cities and restored prosperity there is still, even if lurking below the surface, a remnant of hostility to things German deeply embedded in the Belgian soul. Just as in America where a century and a half later we are still sorting out ramifications of our Civil War, such as removal of statues glorifying the Confederate military and political leaders, again an intense and deeply emotional issue.

The ravages of war run deep, and resentment and anger flow relentlessly under the surface long after apparent surface tranquility has been restored. Belgium more than Germany, more than France, more than any other western nation suffered grievously, endured wounds to the soul reverberating even to this day from the two massive, brutal, unprovoked German invasions early in the twentieth century. Occupation was a searing ordeal, for the Belgian country side was devastated and impoverished, provided the trenches and battlefields as larger nations, each in their own minds great powers rightfully deserving of ever expanding privilege, grappled for imperial advantage, for the interests of the commercial and imperial classes, for territory and colonial empires. As these Belgians bled the bulk of German and French populations remained, better fed, well behind the lines.

For me these things are not abstractions. On these fields of Flandres a small cadre of struggling founders had been in the act of creation, a generation after the emergence of the Malinois, attempting to preserve the rough coated cattle guardians on the Flemish plane adjacent to the North Sea as the Bouvier des Flandres. Ultimately we were to fail, and these things are, to our utter, unrelenting despair, forever intertwined. [More](#)

Beginning in the late 1970s, in America and Europe, I came to know and deeply respect elder Belgian pioneers such as Edmee Bowles, Justin Chastel and Paul DeRycke, all in their own way grievously suffering at German hands—losing long standing kennels, breeding stock, fortunes, homes, countrymen and family. Neither Chastel nor DeRycke to my recollection were to dwell on this openly, but Edmee Bowles, my mentor, went to her grave deeply angry, and with good reason. [More](#)

Why open these old wounds? Because we have crossed the Rubicon, because the working dog world is undergoing far reaching and irrevocable change, and because we are either going to stand united as a working

community finally independent and free of the suffocating worldwide pet dog establishment or we are going to see the SV leap alone into the abyss. And these Belgians are going to make the decision.

How can I say this? Because today, like it or not, and I do not like it, only two breeds really matter. We have been pretending otherwise for decades, which is the cause of much of our grief, but in reality we have the Malinois, the German Shepherd and then a more or less pathetic lot of pretend police dog breeds run by and for pretend working dog people. No one could regret this more than do I, but my two decade personal crusade to turn this tide of history ended in utter failure. [More](#)

Reality is that the best way forward—the only way forward—for all of us is unstinting international commitment to common cause among German and Belgian shepherd advocates. The FMBB and WUSV must stand together, free from FCI restraint, open to other working breed unions and other trial venues such as the Belgian Ring. United in commitment to the foundation principle of excellence in work, police work, as the ultimate criteria of validity and quality we can most certainly prevail.

To achieve this the slate must be wiped clean, old animosities, deep and justified as they may well be, set forever aside.

Surely it is natural for these Belgians to believe that after a century wandering in the wilderness time is finally on their side, that they are prevailing, need only to stay their course. In their eyes the trials and tribulations of the Germans are of their own making, enduring loss and hardship no more than karma, justice.

But every nation has reason for remorse. America emerged from revolution with slavery enshrined in our constitution. We had the wisdom and courage to rebuild Japan and Germany after the war, restoring prosperity and more importantly dignity, but then embarked on the twenty first century as an arrogant bully too stupid even to invade the nation the source of our angst, Saudi Arabia, rather than Iraq. In a world of unfettered righteous revenge every Irishman, or citizen of India, would have moral license to put a bullet in the head of any Englishman encountered anywhere.

But we are wrong to wallow in these animosities; it is time for all of us to put this behind once and for all. Certainly because it is the right thing to do. Certainly because the time for reconciliation and real peace is long past due.

But above all because the Malinois as a world class working breed has the most to gain from unity and independence, the license to chart their own course, consolidate a now fragmented breeding population, the freedom to eliminate the prevailing obstacle to their prosperity, their Achilles heel, the fact that their roots, their foundations, are outside of the FCI sphere, that is in the NVBK and KNPV and in an indirect way the French Ring community. An unfettered FMBB would become empowered to embrace the NVBK, consummate the revolution of 1963, vindicate their courage and tenacity and endurance.

The foundation of Malinois breeding—the most of the best—is to be found in the NVBK, and as long as this resource is not freely available worldwide the future of the breed will remain vulnerable. Thus the strategy most certain to preserve and protect Malinois prosperity is the incorporation of the NVBK—blood lines, breeders and trainers—into an international brotherhood as a standalone member of the FMBB. This would produce

unity, universal recognition of NVBK registration for breeding purposes and access to any working venue any place in the world without the need of conjuring false pedigrees. In this way the working Malinois would come to have an open and above board international breeding pool, even if in two registries, with formal protocols for migration of individual dogs.

The journey to this better world may well need to be in two stages. In the immediate future a plausible ramification of the Euro court rulings setting the Germans free could well be FCI recognition of NVBK registrations and titles, which could come to pass as soon as the Belgians realize that with a little pressure the doors in Thuin would swing open. Would it not be a supremely ironic day were these renegade Flemish trainers, banded together in 1963, to have their lawyers bang on the FCI door to explain that henceforth they were to play really nice or face personal jail time?

But ultimately prosperity must be in freedom from the clutches of the ornamental breeders, the FCI led establishment, the freedom to take their fate into their own hands, to have and to hold, in a robust, standalone FMBB community beholden to no one, owing allegiance only to their founders.

### ***Union***

In the ideal the prosperity and vitality of a serious working breed—such as the Malinois or German Shepherd—would best be nurtured, promoted and governed through strong bonds of cooperation, sharing and comradery among advocates in the homeland and other nations throughout the world, a cohesive international community devoted to common cause and ideals. Such a structure is best suited to the fostering of a genetically diverse but yet coherent pool of breeding stock selected according to universal principles and standards, which is what a breed should be all about.

But prior to the advent of the digital age—the emergence of the internet and powerful, cost effective very small scale computers—the infrastructure to support such a canine utopia simply did not exist.

Thus for historical reasons—prevailing nineteenth century circumstances—national breed clubs of necessity emerged subservient to and dominated by all breed kennel clubs such as the AKC or VDH, with little meaningful interaction among breed advocates in neighboring nations. This mode of operation has become increasingly obsolete, ineffectual and inherently detrimental to working breed vigor; and it has been collapsing from within for a generation.

An alternative paradigm emerged with the advent of the WUSV in 1975 as an evolution of the European Union of German Shepherd Clubs (EUSV) dating from 1968. In retrospect the WUSV has proven to be the right model for the future: stand alone, breed specific, international aggregations of robust national clubs providing comprehensive governance and support in all aspects of breed affairs.

The FCI/WUSV clash was and is inevitable because it is ultimately impossible to superimpose two fundamentally different governing structures on one international community. In order to govern effectively the WUSV—and any other union—must wield real power now in the grasp of the kennel clubs acting through the FCI. A house divided cannot stand.

The WUSV is far from perfect, but it is on the right side of history. Today there is no longer any reason or justification for emasculated, hollowed out national breed clubs micromanaged by kennel club bureaucrats devoid of

concern for the heritage, integrity or quality of the diverse breeds, serving not the viability of our working canine heritage but rather the greed of dog merchants, politicians, brokers, handlers and commercial breeders.

The time has come.

### ***Police Dog Federation***

The emergence of the WUSV put a viable alternate paradigm before the canine world, and the Malinois and other Belgian Shepherd varieties followed suit in establishing a similar international breed specific aggregate in the FMBB. In my view these and other similar unions need to cut their losses and abandon the FCI in order to establish an umbrella police dog federation to oversee trial rules, host all breed events and offer various other services not conveniently provided by an individual breed.

The KNPV in the Netherlands in 1906, the NVBK in Belgium in 1963 and USCA in America in 1978 all arose in response to establishment oppression of working culture in order build traditions and programs for police style trials without compromise. Although there have been rough patches they have generally prospered, so much so as to create the consternation in the FCI establishment leading to the current crisis.

A primary function of an umbrella federation would be the establishment of cooperative relationships with law enforcement and military agencies throughout the world. Thus it should seek relationships with existing entities with decades of experience and deep historical police service ties, as this would hopefully become a way to build trust and bridges with law enforcement agencies. For these and other reasons the KNPV and NVBK should be welcomed to a new federation with open arms and accommodations for their heritage and existing structure should be considerations in the planning process.

In light of the FCI experience, their arrogance and delusion of "Supreme authority in the canine world," the federation should be held on a very tight leash, be firmly limited to complying with the direction of the participating international unions rather than setting standards or policy. Control should not be on a one breed one vote basis but rather according to size in terms of annual registrations, working titles or some similar metric. Above all else the AWDF situation of clubs little more than empty shells, in the new vernacular "fake," should wield no real power or influence.

As for the FCI, let them carry on with the Cocker Spaniels, French Bull Dogs and all of the other pet breeds with no pretense of functional purpose and incorporate clubs for the hamsters, rats, pet snakes and goldfish in order to have an offering for every perspective pet owner.

### ***Pragmatism***

The future structure of international working dog affairs is in flux, and certainly not cast in stone. Although the ideal would be an independent police dog federation of breed specific aggregates such as the FMBB and WUSV that is not likely to come to pass in the immediate future; there will likely be evolutionary organizational iterations. And if we do not actually get to this promised land whatever we do wind up with is likely to be a real improvement over what we have today.

Broadly speaking there are several alternatives. Perhaps the most likely would be an ad hoc modification of the current structure, a set of changes



which would allow the continued existence of a much more tightly restrained FCI. In my view this would not be an ideal solution in that what we have today, while appropriate a century ago, is flawed beyond what a makeover could reasonably be expected to produce. The primary problem is the deeply embedded tendency toward extremes in conformation, generally deleterious to real world functionality, and the lack of support for a credible international demonstration of working potential as a breeding prerequisite.

As a nonnegotiable minimum the one nation one vote scheme would have to be modified so that the weight of a national vote is proportional to the annual registration count or some other similar metric.

Another major stumbling block is that the IGP program of today, under the control of FCI show dog bureaucrats, has evolved, both in terms of rules and predominant judging fashions in terms of style, particularly the emphasis on the prancing heel, as much more of a play sport than a hard core working certification process. In order for the FCI structure to become viable absolute, final control of the IGP program would have to be in the hands of the serious police breeds, that is primarily the German and Belgian shepherd dogs, rather than other breeds in general and the pretend police breeds in particular.

A second configuration, not beyond the realm of possibility, would be for the German Shepherd community, under SV leadership, to become entirely separated from existing structures, including the VDH, FCI and AKC. The immediate result would be new, or previously existing entities such RSV2000 in Germany or the GSDCA in America, which would compete vigorously. This would be an extremely fluid situation, but one desirable outcome would be for the SV to rediscover its police dog roots and reinvent itself as a serious working dog entity. This would tend to two vigorously competing clubs per nation. In America this would likely be an even more robust and numerically predominant USCA, more influential and vigorous, aligned with the new working SV, and the remnants of the GSDCA aligned with the AKC and whatever show oriented VDH club emerged in Germany.

Were the establishment of a standalone WUSV to come to pass a viable strategy for dealing with the wider canine community would need to evolve. Many current problems are consequences of the 2012 abandonment of Schutzhund in favor of IPO, under FCI control, as the breeding certification. This further empowerment of the FCI politicians and bureaucrats was a serious blunder, a direct causative factor in the escalation of the FCI/WUSV conflict.

One option would be for the SV and WUSV to reestablish Schutzhund as the international breeding qualification test in a form similar enough to historical norms for continuity in training yet different enough in superficial details to make concurrent competition in Schutzhund and IGP difficult, separating international competition in a way similar to what existed prior to 2012, when our current set of problems emerged.

In this way each WUSV member nation could conduct local trials according to their inclinations and political situation. In Europe local clubs could conduct both Schutzhund trials as a breeding qualification and WUSV championship qualification and also IGP trials for those interested in all breed events such as the FCI championships.

In America, USCA would be wise to conduct only Schutzhund trials until the hostile relationship with the AWDF was resolved in a satisfactory way, probably through the elimination of the AWDF and DVG, and a new set of

workable relationships came into existence. USCA is so predominant in terms of members and trials that IGP would most likely die or persist as a minor venue of no real importance.

As mentioned above a third and preferable option would be the emergence of a new alliance of international aggregations, such as the WUSV and FFMB, with strong working dog culture.

### ***Way Forward***

These Euro court rulings reigning in and emasculating the grasping FCI bureaucrats are producing a profound ongoing transformation in the purebred world order, a paradigm shift which will reverberate for decades to come. This is an inflection point with unforeseeable ultimate ramifications contingent upon ongoing decisions and actions as the various organizations adapt and evolve. As in any deep societal transformation this new world will emerge according to whose leaders prove to be the most far sighted, courageous, clever and fortunate. At this moment the names Messler, Plotsker and Campuzano—as a consequence of their bold and far sighted leadership through ongoing trials and tribulations—stand forth as men of courage and wisdom well prepared to carry the baton.

The emasculation, or even the eventual demise, of the FCI will ultimately be the consequence of evolving international societal, economic and technological trends, but this is only prelude, a necessary prerequisite to deeper change.

The existential peril, the moral hazard, is the ubiquitous influence on working dog affairs of effete conformation dilatants, especially those within, relentlessly conjuring ever more grotesque fashion dogs increasingly inappropriate for their originating working role, deficient in vigor, working instinct, vitality and most particularly physical structure.

In order to rebuild on a foundation conducive to the evolution of ever better police dogs—robust, trainable, durable, aggressive, stable and cost effective—prevailing leaders must be men seriously committed to these attributes in terms of physique as well as character, with deep, preemptive belief in the police dog heritage. We must without shirking return with vigor to our common founding working heritage in order to reap the benefits of this incipient transformation. To do less, to act without unstinting commitment and resolve, would be to repudiate our common heritage, the von Stephanitz legacy.

*Jim Engel, Marengo, © Copyright September, 2021*

## ***Glossary***

### ***American Organizations***

AKC	American Kennel Club
AWDF	American Working Dog Federation
CKC	Canadian Kennel Club
USCA	United Schutzhund Clubs of America
GSDCA	German Shepherd Dog Club of America ( AKC Affiliated )
AWMA	American Working Malinois Association

### ***European Organizations***

FCI	Federation Cynologique Internationale English: International Canine Federation Predominant world canine organization. England, Canada and the United States are not members but have cooperative agreements.
SRSH	Societe Royale Saint-Hubert(French) Royal Society Saint Hubert(English) Belgian National Kennel Club, FCI Affiliated
KMSH	Koninklijke Maatschappij Sint-Hubertus (Dutch) Royal Society Saint Hubert(English) Belgian National Kennel Club, FCI Affiliated
KCB	Kennel Club Belge, Belgian national canine organization, not FCI
SCC	Societe Central Canine, The French national canine organization.
KNPV	Dutch: Koninklijke Nederlandse Politiehond Vereniging English: Royal Dutch Police Dog Association.
NVBK	Dutch: Nationaal Verbond der Belgische Kynologen English: National Federation of Belgian Canine Enthusiasts Non FCI Belgian Ring Trial & Registration club. Founded 1963
SV	Verein fur Deutsche Schaferhunde English: Club for German Shepherd's Dogs The GSD mother club in Germany, founded in 1900.
WUSV	World Union of German Shepherd Clubs
FMBB	Fédération Mondiale Bergers Belges World Federation of Belgian Shepherds
VDH	German kennel club, equivalent to the AKC
DVG	A German Schutzhund "Sports Association for Police & Protection Dogs" or "Deutscher Verband der Gebrauchshundsportvereine" in German.

***Background and Reference***

***Web presence:***

**[Schutzhund America](#)**

**[Ongoing FCI / WUSV Strife](#)**

***Reference:***

**[Glossary](#)**

**[Working Dog Organizations: Structure and Ongoing Conflict](#)**

***Articles of interest:***

**[AWDF, Stillborn American Elite](#)**

**[Supreme Authority of the Canine World](#)**

**[House of von Stephanitz](#)**

**[Emergence of a new Canine World Order](#)**

**[American Consequences of the WUSV Vindication](#)**

**[The Way Forward](#)**

**[Meltdown in America](#)**

***Much more historical detail can be found in my police dog book:***

**[The Police Dog: Evolution, History and Service](#)**