Spot the anti-bridge vintner

26 Apr 2011 by Jancis Robinson

Later that same day *- Just in from Sarah Washington: On Easter Monday more than 80 members of 40 wineries gathered to answer a spontaneous photo call at Wehlen on the Mosel, to demonstrate their opposition to the building of a towering bridge across the Mosel river valley. They came from more than a dozen of the surrounding villages and towns, as well as the neighbouring wine-growing regions of the Saar, Rheinhessen and the Pfalz. All levels of the industry were represented in the photograph, as small-scale winegrowers stood alongside famous names from the global stage and Germany's largest wine producer. Many winemakers brought along their families to show that for them this is about defending their children's future.*

They all turn to the new Rhineland-Palatinate government in Mainz with the request that the internationally known and infamous 'Hochmoselübergang' should not be built. Their argument is simple: the benefits of the project are too small and the predicted damage too great. Egon Müller, premier winemaker and president of the Mosel-Saar-Ruwer region of Germany's leading wine organisation the VDP, made a special trip with his family from the Saar to lend weight to this demand.

'How can I explain to my customers that this wine is worth something, when they see that the landscape it comes from is

treated with utter contempt?' asked Ürzig winemaker Johannes Schmitz. Many others who were unable to attend the unique event sent messages of support. Peter Jacob Kühn commented on the meeting from the Rheingau with the words: 'To create connections between people you do not need to build monumental bridges. This bridge would be a crucifixion of wine culture.'

Great understanding was shown by winegrowers for their colleagues whose vineyards will be directly affected by the planned road, which is set to continue above an 8km stretch of the world's finest Riesling after crossing the river. 'We all know that such massive movement of earth, especially above vineyards, can endanger the water distribution. Up to now it is perfect, as their wines prove,' explains winemaker Clemens Busch from Pünderich.

Michael Willkomm, head of Germany's largest winery Peter Mertes KG, cannot understand the benefits of a road planned 50 years ago: 'With building costs for the proposed route soaring to more than one billioneEuros now being predicted by the press, for economic reasons alone this project has no validity.'

'We still have so much potential here in the Mosel with regards to wine-growing and tourism,' Wehlen winegrower Katharina Prüm is convinced, 'but to develop this, we need an intact landscape and nature.' Photographer Andreas Durst confirms this: 'The image of the Ürziger rock face is world-famous. If there would now be a gigantic concrete bridge standing in the way, that would be the worst marketing possible.'

So all eyes are directed to a new beginning in Mainz, in the expectation that there they also recognise and appreciate the value of a unique cultural landscape.

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Citizens' Initiative Pro-Mosel: http://stop-the-bridge.org

Anti Mosel Bridge campaigner Sarah Washington has managed the near-impossible, to get all of these local vintners together yesterday for a photograph to demonstrate that the Christian Democratic Union politicians are wrong to maintain that 'only a few top vintners are against the bridge'. Those who are actively against this ugly, costly and unnecessary construction, and were willing and able to turn up in Wehlen yesterday to show their support, constitute an 80-strong veritable rollcall of the vinous great and good. Check out the names below, the likes of Manfred Prüm, Egon Müller (two of them), Willi Schaefer, Willkomms and Loosens. Photographer Andreas Durst also received apologies and messages of support from Steffen Christmann, Cornelius Dönnhoff, Armin Diel and Peter Jacob Kühn. I should make clear that the photograph here was taken by Sarah herself and that Andreas's official one, to be sent out to the German press today, is not yet available. A final decision is expected in the next week or two during the coalition negotiations between the Social Democrats and the Green parties.

The participants in this historic vintners' photograph are Johannes Schmitz, Benedict Pfeiffer, Elke Junk-Pfeiffer, Claudia Müller, Katharina Prüm, Manfred Prüm, Amei Prüm, Paul Dietz, Kevin Dietz, Birgit Dietz-Schappe, Karl-Josef Heinze, Uwe Weller, Annett Weller, Nicole Arnold, Daniel Weydert, Gertrud Weydert, Stefanie Lehmann, Marianne Pohl, Markus Molitor, Martin Kerpen, Rudolf Trossen, Christoph Schneider, Guido Schneider, Johannes Selbach, Barbara Selbach, Karl-Heinz Griebeler, Irmi Griebeler, Ulrich Griebeler, Gerd Henrich, Edith Henrich, Alois Morbach, Christa Morbach, Edmund Pazen, Franz-Josef Ames, Hiltrud Ames, Otto Pauly, Axel Pauly, Hans-Josef Christmann, Willi Schaefer, Esther Schaefer, Christoph Schaefer, Andrea Schaefer, Jacob Schaefer, Jonathan Schaefer, Marlis Kees, Monika Görgen, Kees, Josef Bernard Kieren, Claudia Pohl, Daniel Vollenweider, Christoph Schild, Clemens Busch, Rita Busch, Florian Busch, Uli Dahm, Cathrin Dahm, Julia Dahm, Patrick Wolf, Eva Loosen [Erni was presumably travelling], Daniel Emmes, Kirk Wille, Renate Willkomm, Michael Willkomm, Matthias Willkomm, Michaela Stein, Matthias Meierer, Sabrina Krähling, Roman Herzog, Brunhilde Herzog, Nicolas Espenschied, Ingmar Püschel, Josef Weckbecker, Egon Müller, Valesca Müller, Egon Müller, Isabell Müller, Thorsten Melsheimer and Andreas Durst.