

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,
and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Unilateral sanctions violate international treaties

Interview with Prof Dr iur et phil Alfred de Zayas, Geneva*

At the end of their spring session the President of UN Human Rights Council appointed a special rapporteur who will investigate human rights violations in connection with unilateral coercive measures such as economic sanctions. This appointment had been prepared over years by investigations into the status of these sanctions as far as international law is concerned. With the majority vote of the Human Rights Council in favour of the resolution to install the special envoy this preparation phase has come to an end for the time being. (see Current Concerns of 10 March) International law expert Alfred de Zayas answers questions in the following interview, to what extent international law is violated by such unilateral measures.

Current Concerns: In your report to the Human Rights Council which you delivered personally on 10 September 2014, you refer to unilateral coercive measures such as economic sanctions as non-peaceful and as non-compliant with the aims and principles of the United Nations. What does that mean?

Prof Dr Alfred de Zayas: Not only unilateral coercive measures, but quite often also multilateral ones violate the spirit and letter of the UN Charter, in particular its preamble and Articles 1 and 2. The organisation rests on the principle of equality of all its member states. Unilateral sanctions and embargoes break numerous international treaties as well as "general principles of law of the various nations" (Statute of the International Court of Justice, Art. 38(1)(c)).

What are "general principles of law"?
These are principles of legality and legitimacy recognized by peoples and nations over the centuries, and building blocks of treaties and other agreements. Such principles constitute the "spirit of the law" (Montesquieu) and include good faith, *ex injuria non oritur jus* (estoppel), non-arbitrariness – all of which underpin the protection of state sovereignty, the prohibition of interference in the internal matters of other states, the freedom of international

trade and the freedom of navigation, among others. Moreover, sanctions and embargoes violate the cardinal international judicial norm of *pacta sunt servanda*, since they hinder the compliance with valid treaties agreed upon according to international law. The extra-territorial application of national laws constitutes a new variant of colonialism, resulting in usurpation of sovereign competencies, bordering on annexation by means of over-extension of jurisdictional exercise of power.

Are there any UN resolutions which are violated by unilateral coercive measures?
Several resolutions of the UN General Assembly are violated, for instance Resolution 2625 regarding friendly relations between states (24 October 1970), in the preamble of which the states agree "not to interfere with internal matters of another state". This is "a crucial condition for the peaceful co-existence of nations". Moreover they agree "to abstain from any military, political, economic or other coercion

directed against political independence or territorial integrity of another state in their international relations ..."

The General assembly emphasizes: "No State and no group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. Consequently, armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the State or against its political, economic and cultural elements, are condemned. No State may use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another

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Prof Dr Alfred de Zayas
(picture thk)

Saudi air strikes on Yemen violate international law and sovereignty

On Wednesday, Saudi Arabia started a series of air strikes in Yemen; According to reports, it relocated 150,000 soldiers, supported by more than 100 combat aircrafts, who attacked Shiite Houthi rebels, who are involved in a bloody civil war with the government of Yemen led by the Sunni majority.

The major Saudi military intervention in Yemen is a clear violation of international law, which could have significant consequences for the entire region, Dr Hans Köchler, president of the International Progress Organization (IPO) in Austria explained to Sputnik.

"The foreign military intervention in Yemen is a clear violation of international law, in particular Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force in relations between states," Köchler said who presides the organization that is also counselling the UN.

According to Köchler the unilateral action of Saudi Arabia and its allies cannot

be justified as an act of "collective self-defense" in terms of the UN Charter in any way.

"In fact, it is an interference in a civil war on the side of one conflict party, and it will worsen the internal conflict and complicate a solution," the professor added.

Köchler emphasized, Riads approach threatened to ignite a great conflict in the complete region along the Sunni-Shiite divide, which could have severe consequences throughout the Arab world. Bomb attacks that were carried out on Wednesday by the Saudi-led coalition of the Gulf States killed 65 people, so a local government source reported to Sputnik.

The Saudi Ambassador to the US, Adel Jubair, said his country will do that, "to protect the legitimate government of Yemen from the fall."

Source: <http://sputniknews.com>
[former Ria Novosti] from 26.3.2015
(Translation Current Concerns)

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other State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights or to secure from it advantages of any kind."

What is to be understood by "other forms of interference"?

For instance, "the blockade of the ports or coasts of a State by the armed forces of another State" constitutes an aggression in violation of international law (General Assembly Resolution 3314, Article 3 c).

Are there pertinent statements or resolutions by the international community?

Unilateral coercive measures have been condemned by a majority of states on a regular basis in a variety of international fora including the UN General Assembly, for instance in the 23 resolutions of the General Assembly condemning the US embargo against Cuba (see Resolution 69/5 of 28 October 2014). Endorsing this resolution, a majority of states – 188 states voted for, two (USA and Israel) against it and three abstained – referred to the embargo in plain words as "illegal".

This is an overwhelming majority ...

In the debate at the General Assembly the representatives of the South American continent supported Cuba. Speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac), which all American countries except the USA and Canada belong to, Costa Rican UN envoy *Juan Carlos Mendoza* criticised the extraterritorial consequences of US blockade laws which also affect third parties. "The unilateral measures which were implemented as part of the blockade, harm numerous companies who trade with Cuba according to both international law and the rules of the *World Trade Organisation* WTO." The representatives of the non-aligned countries also condemned the sanctions against Cuba.

The driving force behind sanctions are the United States?

According to the US-Treasury official website the USA currently run 26 "Sanctions Programs" (www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs).

The extraterritorial implementation of national laws, such as the *Helms-Burton* Act of 12 March 1996, violate the rights of third party states as well and have been condemned many times by the international community.

According to your comments, unilateral sanctions breach a multitude of international law principles.

Yes, the question of their illegality is quite clear. The problem remains, how international law may be enforced in these circumstances. Up to now, there is no way for the UN to force one of the five permanent members of its Security Council to do what they do not want to do.

One possible approach would be via the state complaint procedure of the UN Human Rights committee according to Article 41 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* – that way the UN would have to deal with the matter.

What aspects of human rights may be violated by unilateral sanctions?

The right to live (Article 6 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*), the right to security of person (Art 7 ICCPR), the right to due process (Art. 14 ICCPR). The sanctions against Iraq, Iran, Cuba, Sudan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe etc. have all caused deteriorations in the food supply situation in those countries and many people have died as a direct result of sanctions, due to lack of food, clean water, medicines and access to medical care. Moreover, the ability to practice economic and social rights as they are laid down in the *International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights* is hampered. Sanctions may also be in conflict with the *Geneva Conventions* and other treaties on international humanitarian law.

In this case, are the recent sanctions against Russia also problematic?

A clarifying advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice would be desirable in this regard, which would require a vote by the UN General Assembly pursuant to article 96 of the UN Charter. The ICJ should pronounce itself on the different legal aspects of these sanctions and on their humanitarian consequences in more detail.

Provided sanctions are illegal, what does that mean for states supporting them?

This leads to the obligation to compensate, especially if human rights have been violated, in cases where sanctions have resulted in famine, violence, mass migration or ethnic cleansing. Pursuant to the erga-omnes principle – regarding all states – governments must neither endorse international crimes committed by other states nor support them financially or in any other ways. But again, as mentioned earlier, international law is not self-executing. For that to happen, the political will of the international community is required. Unfortunately, there is a pervasive lack of international solidarity

Under which circumstances may sanctions be "legal", or is there always a grey area?

There may be many "grey areas" in international law, but in this case the situation is a bit clearer. Article 41 of the UN Charter entitles the Security Council to impose sanctions, provided the Security Council has made a finding under Article 39 of the Charter that peace has been jeopardized. Such sanctions were implemented successfully in the fight against colonialism, racism and apartheid in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and South Africa.

A weapons embargo may be perfectly legal if it is aimed at promoting peace and diplomatic solutions to a conflict. Weapons embargos should be imposed on all warring parties and at the same time the international community should actively work on a cease fire and towards negotiations in good faith. However, in most cases sanctions are not only ineffective but may prove counter-productive. Sanctions imposed on a state by the Security Council may not only deteriorate the humanitarian situation in this state but may even enhance corruption and crime.

What can be said in conclusion?

All sanction regimes – unilateral or multilateral – have to be scrutinized for their compliance with international law in particular with human rights norms. Moreover, apart from being formally legal, sanctions have to fulfill objective criteria concerning the stated objective of the sanctions and must respect the principle of proportionality. All sanction regimes have to be audited regularly – and if they violate human rights or have no positive impact, they have to be terminated. In a globalized world sanctions must not be imposed for the sake of geopolitical or economic interests, and if they violate the rights of people or states this creates state liability for adequate compensation of the victims.

What about most recent developments at the UN in this regard?

The Human Rights Council hosted a conference on this topic of unilateral and multilateral sanctions in May 2014, in which I participated actively. Former *Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq* *Denis Halliday* blamed the senseless sanctions against Iraq (1991–2003) for the loss of more than a million human lives. The report of this workshop was discussed during the 27th session of the Human Rights Council in September 2014. Subsequently the *Human Rights Council Advisory Committee* was requested to perform a study to provide recommendations which have just recently been presented to the Council.

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Iceland's way out of its financial crisis

"Do not listen to the financial markets, but to the people"

(Olaf Ragnar Grimsson, President)

by Dr rer publ Werner Wüthrich

Recently, the Icelandic government notified the EU Commission and the EU Council of its intention of withdrawing its application for membership (see *Current Concerns* No 8 of 22 March 2015). The Red-Green government had applied for membership in July 2009, when the US financial crisis had hit the country's banks devastatingly. As the country recovered remarkably quickly the negotiations were put on hold when a new government came to power in April 2013. Foreign Minister *Gunnar* writes on his website, "Iceland's interests would be better served outside the EU ..." The population would not agree to the accession, as it had experienced in recent years how much it can achieve on its own. Iceland is an island in the Atlantic Ocean, with 350,000 inhabitants. The country has rich fishing grounds. Its inhabitants do some farming with a lot of sheep and they extend their hospitality to more and more tourists who visit the country and wander through it for the sake of its natural beauty and hot springs. Like this, it is quite a good life.

Iceland is a special case in the recent global financial crisis – in many ways. For one thing, the crisis in Iceland was far worse than anywhere else. In 2008 – at the height of the debt crisis – the pile of debts was much larger than that in the southern EU countries. Whereas, for example, the debt in Greece at that time amounted to 175 percent of the gross domestic product, the debt of the Atlantic island (notably the bank debt) was equivalent to ten times the GDP, i.e. 1,000 percent – a veritable disaster scenario. And yet, today – seven years

later – Iceland is looking relatively good. How did this come about and what made it possible?

In the years after the turn of the century Iceland stood out because for its very high growth rates. The reason for these was, however, not the income from fishing, but it lay elsewhere: the three big banks had embarked on a risky game and turned the island into a globally oriented financial centre. They attracted foreign savings with exorbitant interest rates, for instance, and invested this money in risky funds around the world – initially with success. The responsible bank managers presented themselves as "modern" and "open" and broke with the traditions of their banks and their profession – all according to the adage: "The pitcher goes often to the well but is broken at last." The fracture or respectively the slump occurred – in quite an incisive way – seven years ago and led to the rapid collapse of the three major banks.

The people pointed the way as to the foreign debts

The treatment of the three Icelandic banks' external debts, for which according to Western doctrine the state and thus the taxpayers had to assume liability, at least in part, was controversial. The controversy was mainly about the so-called Icesave deposits. As internet bank of the nationalized *Landsbanki*, Icesave had over the years attracted many foreign small savers with its high interest rates, but their funds were not covered by the Icelandic deposit insurance. Notably the UK and the Netherlands, from where most of the foreign

funds came, now demanded that the state Iceland should repay these funds. It was a matter of about 4 billion euros (i.e. about 12,000 euros per inhabitant of Iceland). The government negotiated with the two countries, which granted low interest rates and a long time for repayment. The Icelandic parliament accepted the outcome of these negotiations and passed a law regulating the arrangements for repayment on 30 December 2009. But now the people armoured with pots and pans took to the streets (hence Kitchen Implement Revolution) to express their anger about having to assume liability for something they were not responsible for. Foreign speculators should have to bear the consequences for their actions themselves, they said. After all, their investment had yielded them an interest of 10 percent and more. "Is it morally and legally justifiable to transfer the risk to the state and the taxpayers?" was written on their banners and leaflets. The citizens' initiative *Defence* organized protests of various kinds. They collected over 60,000 signatures (there are only 350,000 inhabitants) and demanded a popular referendum. The citizens besieged the President's residence, equipped with red bengalos, which could be seen from afar as a "stop" sign for this policy. President *Olaf Ragnar Grimsson* listened to the voice of the people and arranged a referendum: "The core of our Icelandic political system is that the people are the supreme judge of the laws' validity. In this light, I have decided, in accordance with the Constitution, to refer the decision about the law in question to the people." – In March 2010, 93 percent of the voters said no to the state's payment of the bank debt.

Great Britain and the Netherlands were then willy-nilly prepared to renegotiate the bank debt repayment. In a new agreement Iceland obtained further concessions and payment accommodations. The repayment was extended until 2046, so that even the next generation would be liable, too. The Icelandic parliament accepted. The president asked the people to vote again. In April 2011, the people again voted with a majority "No". – What to do next?

The Icelanders solved their banking problem as follows: All three major banks had to file for bankruptcy. The *Landsbanki* with its internet bank Icesave was nationalized, and the other two banks were divided into a "New Bank" and "Old Bank". All business areas that were needed do-

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cil's 28th session. At the same session, on 28 March, the Council appointed *Mr Idris Jaisiry*, the former Algerian Ambassador to the United Nations, as *Special Rapporteur on the humanitarian consequences of sanction regimes*.

What else can we all do against sanctions?

The media have an important role to play, especially in alerting the public about the adverse human rights impacts of sanctions regimes. Most citizens don't know what crimes are committed by their own states, or which consequences sanctions can have for innocent populations of other states. It is our responsibility to protest as citizens

and say: "Not in our Name!" On 19 March a scientific conference was held in London which was attended by several professors from Oxford, London, Paris, and my-self. It concluded that sanction regimes create more problems than they could ever solve and that dialogue and UN mediation are better than punishing measures which hurt mainly the civilian populations. "Collateral" victims of sanctions regimes are entitled to international solidarity.

Professor de Zayas, thank you very much for this interview.

(Interview *Thomas Kaiser*)

* This interview reflects the personal opinion of Professor de Zayas and is no official statement in his capacity as special envoy. See also www.alfreddezayas.com and <http://dezayasalfred.wordpress.com>.

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mestically, such as payment transactions, cash machines, a credit department, etc., were incorporated in the *New Bank* (which was recapitalized). The huge debt mountain and the entire international business with many dubious assets which were liquidated in the bankruptcy proceedings were transferred to the *Old Bank*. In this way, the bank counter halls remained open and the cash machines were always in operation. The banks were given new names. The former *Kaupthing Bank* is now called *Arion*, and the former *Gjaltinir* is now called *Islandsbanki*. All three banks (which are now partly in foreign hands) are restricted to traditional, domestic banking procedures.

These bankruptcy proceedings are reminiscent of the Swissair collapse, where immediately a new small company – Swiss – was launched (which is now controlled by Lufthansa) and in which the remaining assets of the old society and the huge mountain of debt were liquidated in the bankruptcy processes.

Coping with everyday life and recovery

Life on the island had been difficult since the beginning of the crisis. The Icelandic krona dropped in value. Prices rose. Real wages fell. Life became expensive. Unemployment rose. As early as 2009, economic output had fallen by seven percent. The government needed a \$ 10 billion loan from the IMF to survive these hard times. As usual – the IMF set conditions. However, the left-green government rejected slashes in the social sector. It managed nevertheless to meet the IMF program. Also friendly countries such as Norway and Sweden helped with money. For the population, the taxes were increased, personal income taxation became more keenly progressive and a number of unorthodox measures were taken to reduce the debt. For instance, loans linked with foreign currencies were declared illegal. The government introduced special programmes of debt rescheduling for companies. A haircut on real estate loans followed. Small home owners were conceded payment facilities. In order to

protect the currency and prevent capital flight, the government introduced capital controls, which have been maintained to this day. So foreign-going leisure travellers might exchange only a limited sum of euros.

The IMF respected this government approach. More than that – the Icelandic Minister of Finance *Steingrímur Sigfússon* was asked whether he would like to become the IMF executive chiefly responsible for Greece. However, he declined the offer (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 21 February 2015).

The crisis in Iceland did not last long. The energetic, popularly supported policy soon showed results. Tourism and the fishing industry benefited greatly from the weak currency. Iceland was getting cheaper. Less expensive consumer goods were imported, but more were produced domestically. After the drop of seven percent in 2009, an increase of three percent followed just three years later – an increase that was higher than the EU average. Inflation had disappeared and today, the unemployment rate is at four percent – the same as in Switzerland. There is no youth unemployment, which has reached catastrophic proportions in other countries. – The rating agency *Fitch* raised the country's credit status again. It justified this step explicitly with the "success of unorthodox responses to the crisis".

What helped further was the EFTA Court decision in 2013, which ruled from the point of view of the people in this case and rejected state liability for the foreign bank debt.

Success based on state sovereignty and direct democracy

Why did the country recover so quickly? Crucial for its rescue was for one thing the voice of its people. The Icelanders set the course not only in two plebiscites. The population participated in controlling proceedings actively – but always without violence – by means of a variety of actions. For instance, the Icelanders used witty websites to defend themselves against British attempts to drive them into a terrorist corner and to freeze all UK bank deposits owned by Icelanders. For another thing, the Icelanders rolled up their sleeves and put their economy back on track. The three "new" mas-

sively shrunk banks fulfilled their traditional role in this. The population also hindered the bank managers responsible for the undesirable development to leave their posts with high severance pay as it is usual elsewhere. Several of them have to face a trial today. A parliamentary inquiry committee created a 2,000-page report, which identified a small group of about 30 bank managers, government officials and central bankers as mainly responsible for the financial debacle. The Supreme Court recently sentenced four of them to five to six years in prison for fraudulent market manipulation and breach of trust, the hardest punishment that Iceland has ever imposed in the area of economic crime.

In addition, it was of crucial importance for its rescue that Iceland had its own currency: The massive slump of the Icelandic krona did not lead to the collapse (as some financial prophets had prophesied), but in contrast was crucial for the rapid recovery. Today, the Icelandic krona has levelled off with a minus of about 30 percent compared to the pre-crisis period. Other countries could seek inspiration here! For a Euro country an exit from the common currency is a prerequisite for a similar path.

The successful Icelandic way out of the banking crisis differs from the centralist, top-down EU methods of bank bailouts and "liability management", which keep bankrupt banks on life support and force the taxpayers to bail them out. Iceland has thoroughly refuted the opinion that there is "no alternative" to the rescue of big banks (too big to fail). Even if the Icelandic way can not be copied par for par by other countries, they may yet draw their inspiration from it to boldly seek new ways. It also shows how a small country with its own currency can confidently assert its place in the global financial world. Withdrawal of application for EU membership is the logical consequence. Financial problems can not be solved by a small elite behind closed doors, but the people and taxpayers can constructively help to find the way to success. The fact that the IMF applied to the Icelandic Minister of Finance to assist in addressing the debt crisis in Greece, speaks for itself.

The turning point of Marignano and today's Switzerland

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

2015 is a multiple commemoration year for Switzerland. It has been 700 years since the battle of Morgarten (1315) in which the Confederates for the first time successfully defended their freedom and independence with weapons; 500 years since the defeat at Marignano (1515), a real milestone for the further development of the Swiss Confederation which will be a topic today; and 200 years since the Congress of Vienna (1815), in which after the victory over Napoleon I the European powers set the future map of Europe and confirmed Switzerland's territory existing until today and their – self-chosen! – perpetual armed neutrality.

Let us go back to the year 1515 and address the question why the ancient Swiss Confederates fought wars in Italy, what conclusions they drew after their defeat at Marignano – and what that has to do with present-day Switzerland. On the one hand, it involves a better knowledge about the history of Switzerland and on the other hand an analysis of the current situation that also may interest our readers in other countries. And it involves presenting the cornerstones of our state model which have already been set in the ancient Swiss Confederacy. This means that not Napoleon was the inventor of modern Switzerland, as is claimed here and there, but that the foundation for the Swiss model was laid long before and was revived in the 18th and 19th centuries by the Enlightenment.

I intentionally cite Swiss historians who were working at a time when Swiss history had a worthy place at our universities, and students and professors then knew why it was necessary to consider it.

Saint Gotthard – via Helvetica¹

"History teaches us that major roads not just serve the travelling people and the transport of material, but – and herein may lie their greater historical significance – above all channels and passage for spiritual freight, for world-changing ideas."²

Since the 13th century, the trail crossing the Gotthard initially played a central role for the people of Uri. It brought them additional income to the modest agricultural yield that the poor soil and the harsh climate gave them. Often there were and are primarily economic reasons that urge people to go to foreign countries and continents, so also the former merchants from the lowlands. At the same time, a new world – a different culture, a different language, a mild climate opened for the Swiss Confederates in the south of the



Standard bearers of the Old Cantons (Nikolaus Manuel, around 1500)

Alps and in the direction of the Po Valley, a wide country still impressive even for us today since we are accustomed to small-scale conditions. The conquest of the Alpine passes and the resulting contact with people from all over the world contributed to that openness to the world which is familiar for most of us Swiss – contrary to what others may say.

The people of Uri in any case took advantage of their chance and already built the route across the Gotthard pass in the 13th century, maintained it and established muleteer cooperatives to organize the escort and the night camp for the pilgrims and merchants with their goods to the south and back again. To make the north-south route shorter and less arduous, the highlanders performed a truly great work around the middle of the 13th century: the Devil's Bridge across the Gorge of Schöllenen.³ It was not because of the narrow mountain valleys with their harsh climate that the Habsburgs made life difficult for the old Confederates, but the intention to get the route to the south under their control. However, the inhabitants of the original cantons resisted successfully. So, the Gotthard cleared the way for the founding of the Swiss Confederation.

Struggle for Freedom and Strengthening of the Confederation

The foundation for the Confederation of 1291 and for all subsequent alliances of the Confederates was their will to protect freedom and independence and fight against the interference of foreign powers. To protect their freedom, they distinguished themselves as brave fighters since the battle of Morgarten in 1315. Thanks to excellent terrain knowledge and original fighting methods and strategies, but above all because they knew

mw. "The decision to do without future great power politics was imposed on the Swiss, defeated near Mariagno, from outside. At the same time it also corresponded with their inner nature. Therefore it would be wrong to simply consider the map, on which the power of the Confederation suffered a loss, and say the defeat in southeast of Milan had been the great calamity of Swiss history, because it impeded the ascent to the remaining superpower. You have to declare that the short time in which the Confederacy behaved as a superpower, was an adventure that ended near Marignano because it was contrary to the nature of the covenant. It was offense, to gain ground and at the same time to lose its essence." Here the French winners under Franz I accommodated the Confederates much and, with the peace agreement of 1516, the "Eternal Peace", gave them Ticino and the Valtellina and demanded an everlasting peace with France in return.

Georg Thürer.
Die Wende von Marignano.
Zurich 1965, pp. 41/42

what they had to defend, the mountain dwellers proved to be as capable to cope with far larger and better equipped armies, much to the general amazement of their contemporaries.

In the 200 years between Morgarten and Marignano the Confederates extended their Confederation gradually from three to thirteen cantons, and added looser alliances with "associates" such as the upper Valais, Geneva, the Abbey of St. Gallen and the Grisons, including own conquests, for example of the Aargau and Thurgau to

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round off their territory. The transition from the late Middle Ages to the Modern Age was a troubled time in which numerous power struggles and campaigns of conquest between the various European powers took place, with changing alliances. The Confederates took part often as sought-after mercenaries in these wars – but also had to defend their own growing area from attacks. Until the turning point of 1515, they resisted successfully and secured their borders in the north, east and west, as for example at the end of the 15th century in the Burgundy wars (1474–1476) against *Charles the Bold* and in the Swabian War (1499) against the German Empire.

Marignano – the crossroad

When the Confederates went south they had to make a decision: Should they try to take part in the power struggles of the mighty or should they recall the admonishing words of *Niklaus von Flüe* to organize modestly their affairs in their small country in freedom and independence? The temptation to mingle with the

circle of the mighty was attractive at the beginning of the 16th century; the Confederates were universally respected after many military victories.

At that time the main European powers wanted to get hold or to keep their share of Northern Italy, the desired "garden of Europe": In addition to the Duke of Milan, France, the Papal States in Rome, the House of Habsburg, the Kingdom of Spain, the Republic of Venice, all were involved in varying alliances in the fight for the city of Milan and other northern Italian cities. And the Swiss, known as good fighters and therefore highly sought after as mercenaries or allies, became even something like a big power in the years between 1512 and 1515, first securing the entire Ticino and then continuing to stretch their fingers south towards Novara and Milan.⁴ In any case, the many victories against the powerful armies went some confederates' head. In retrospect, you can therefore say that the heavy defeat which they finally suffered against France in the battle of Marignano brought a pause and a reflection on the objectives and values of the alliance of the thirteen old cantons that was urgently needed for the continuation of the existence of the Confederation.

mw. With regards to the Constitution of 1848 George Thürer writes: "With the departure from the old federalism in foreign policy and military the federal nature of the structure of the Confederation is, however, not at all devalued. It allows today as in the past the inner fulfillment of our civil life in a manageable cantonal political system, in that healthy midway between the small-scale community and the greater state. Within this federal scope we do not want to miss the government nor the independent cultural life of twenty-five [now twenty-six, *Current Concerns*' note] cantons but we appreciate and uphold it as a source of freedom and richness of our Confederation. That would be a monotonous Switzerland, where the cantons were a mere numbers of government units and would therefore lose their characters! We rather enjoy the colorful interplay of states, whether they decide their political fate at the ancient 'Landsgemeinde' or at the ballot box!"

George Thürer.
Die Wende von Marignano.
(Turning point of Marignano),
Zurich 1965, pp.47-48.

Let us also hear what the historian Edgar Bonjour said, who gave three lectures on "Swiss political system and Swiss cultural history" in May 1939, so to speak on the eve of World War II, at the request of the student body [!] of Basel. Considering the threatening world situation, he warned, "[...] that the strength of our

country as a whole lies precisely in the power of intact members of the Confederation, that the destruction of cantonal sovereignty would amount to a self-abolition of Switzerland, for there is an ancient relationship between a centralistic-etatist and a dictatorial-totalitarian conception of the state". Bonjour presented the federalist principle of Switzerland, which especially does also justice to minorities, for the purpose of spiritual resistance against the then impending lack of culture: "The federal law has become our experienced form of community. It provides each of our four diverse, by size so dissimilar ethnic groups an undisturbed own existence and promotes their fruitful cooperation. It alone also bans the specter of minority problems and language dispute from our territories. The legal structure of member states encompasses the most peculiar Swiss political character. We continue to believe in it not out of a tense sentimentality but by faith in the individual determination of the part of people within the nation as a whole, from insight into the deep meaning of this legal organization. We do not consider it as backward, but – despite everything – a promising future. To our Swiss ears the harmony of many voices together sounds better than the monotony of unanimous unison."

Edgar Bonjour. *Werden und Wesen der schweizerischen Demokratie (Development and Character of Swiss Democracy).* Basel 1939, pp. 23-24.

It seems that the current Swiss people are at a similar crossroads – of course in a different environment than 500 years ago. The question of us Swiss people in the 21st century is: *Shall we modestly concentrate on our small-scale state and take our place in the world as a neutral member of the international community, with all duties associated with this privileged status?* (See also paragraph "Perpetual armed neutrality – combat spirit and commitment" on the following page).

Or do we want the pillars of the Swiss model to collapse – federalism, direct democracy, perpetual armed neutrality and multilingualism – only to pave the way for some career-minded politicians, regular officers and members of the Swiss administration to get their dream job in EU or NATO?

"The key question is:

**Freedom or power –
a confederation or a kingdom?"⁵**

That was the question the historian *Georg Thürer* raised in his research work on the defeat of the Confederates at the Battle of Marignano. He concludes that it was not the military defeat alone, which prompted the ancient Confederates 500 years ago to retreat on their native soil north of the Alps, but that their attempt to find their place in the world of the great powers did simply not suit them.

For the Confederation was a federation of small and free communes banded together to ensure that the individual places were able to preserve their freedom with the assistance of their allies. They had no intention of becoming a centrally organized superpower that would be commanded by *one single* ruler and involved in the power struggles and intrigues of the other great powers. Rather, they had deliberately chosen to form a cooperative alliance, a network of independent communes in which everyone had a vote in the Diet, regardless of the number of people living in the commune, and could decide freely, for example, whether they wanted to join a military campaign to Milan (which was not a defensive war!) or not. Furthermore, each commune retained its freedom to regulate its own affairs – today we would say that the covenant of the Old Swiss Confederation consisted of 13 sovereign members. In the words of Professor *Georg Thürer*, „The allies did not want to do without this freedom of an own decision. They did not want to waive their sovereign right, neither politically nor militarily. It corresponded with their belief in the rule of the people. This also included a national army under their own leadership. It would have contradicted the essence of the old Confederation to maintain a stand-

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ing army under a constant commander in Lombardy."⁶

Is this perhaps the reason why some of today's Swiss historians are unwilling to deal seriously with the roots of Swiss history, because they would have to discuss the question "hold on to our independence or being roped in by those in power?" openly and honestly with their fellow citizens? Of course, "independence" does not mean a "separation", a "single-handed effort", as the EU turbos do claim. Switzerland has always been open to the world and exchanged ideas with anyone in the world who is serious. But we want to settle our affairs on our own.

Joining the EU and contributing our ideas of "democracy"? Well, we are in the middle of Europe, surrounded by EU Member States: Anyone who reigns in his Brussels office is invited to learn from the Swiss model – if he is willing to. Following the command of NATO or, because it sounds more "harmless", following the commander of a "humanitarian" EU military mission? Or would you prefer restoring our militia army – or in the words of Georg Thüner "the people's army under their own leaders" – and enabling it to defend our country and our values if it should eventually be necessary? Contenting ourselves with "being surrounded by friends" is more than naive given the world situation and the pitches, which are attuned against leaders who do not march in line with the sole superpower.

"The most peculiar features of the political Swissness are fixed in the legal order of the Member States"

We can therefore conclude that the roots of our current Swiss state structure were already created in the early 16th century in the Confederation of the thirteen cantons: first a federation of cantons with strong federalist orientation, which was later modified in 1848 into a federal state, with then far-reaching sovereignty for the cantons. The federal government was only granted a few rights in 1848, especially in foreign policy:

*Art. 8. The Confederacy has the sole right of declaring War, and of concluding Peace, as well as of forming Alliances with Foreign Countries, and of making Treaties with them, especially such as relate to custom-house duties and to commerce.*⁸

The Confederacy was granted, inter alia, the monopoly to charge duties (Art. 23) and introduce unified coins and weights (Art. 36/37). The formulation in Article 36, paragraph 2 is especially nice,

mw. "Moreover, the will to defend, which is part of a healthy will to live, may not weaken among the people. Whoever loves our free life should therefore fight for the assertion of the Confederation and prepare in time. The bravery and endurance which gave the heroes of Marignano their memorable attitude should not be less in the changed world situation and new forms of warfare of our time, especially as the army of Switzerland, the only country in Europe that has not changed its borders since the time of Napoleon, does not intend to conquer lands, but wants to maintain the gifts and tasks of our small state." This is what Prof Thüner wrote on the occasion of the 450th commemoration of Marignano in 1965, and it seems that 50 years later these words have lost nothing of their importance and topicality.

Georg Thüner. Die Wende von Marignano. (The turning point of Marignano) Zurich 1965, p. 56

In 1939, at the time of a far more threatening world situation, Professor *Edgar Bonjour* pointed out that the Swiss neutrality did not mean neutrality without principles: "With regard to this it must be said that neutrality for us is only a principle of foreign policy, not of a human- mental attitude. [...] Hence it corresponds to the common sense and

is a commandment of sheer self-preservation. But this does not imply that Switzerland has already resigned in world history. Our neutrality prevents the individual citizen in no way from making a judgment about events in world politics or to analyze foreign ideologies and take a stand. [...] A Swiss citizen won't be dictated what he should think, speak and write, neither by his own nor by a foreign government."

Then *Bonjour* points to the obligation which neutrality imposes on Switzerland and the Swiss, especially the duty for the military defense of the country: "The right to make all quarrels of great powers futile imposes obligations on us. The obligation to protect our political and territorial independence with military means; but also obligations to protect our cultural identity with spiritual means. [...] And finally obligations of granting asylum, and the willingness to intergovernmental agreements and helpfulness. [...] The fact that the Swiss neutrality accomplished positive benefits, has earned it international reputation and the overall recognition as an element of European politics."

Edgar Bonjour. Werden und Wesen der schweizerischen Demokratie (Development and Character of Swiss Democracy). Basel 1939, pp. 35–37

"Coinage by the Cantons is discontinued, and is carried on solely by the Confederacy."

"That would be a monotonous Switzerland, where the cantons were mere numbers of government units and would therefore lose their characters!" writes Professor Thüner. We Swiss in the 21st century will soon be in this state, if we do not object: In the so-called "House of the Cantons" our Councillors, elected by the cantonal voters, hold their "Directors' Conferences": these are structures that take decisions without being legitimized by the citizens in their canton; secret circles that concoct their projects and programs such as *Curriculum 21* behind closed doors, contrary to the constitutional right of citizens to public negotiations, and then try to impose these programs on the numbers – sorry, the cantons – without asking the people.

"To our Swiss ears the harmony of many voices together sounds better than the monotony of unanimous unison" – were the words of Professor *Edgar Bonjour* to the Basle students in May 1939. For the family album of the "HarmoS"-zealots: We Swiss do not want a *monotony of unanimous unison for our school children*. We want Glarus and Graubünden and Solothurn schools continue to contribute to the *harmony of many voices together*. A harmony without HarmoS. What an intervention in the school jurisdiction of

the cantons by HarmoS and the Curriculum 21! What a straitjacket in which the school reformers want to put our children in the whole country!

We prefer to stay with the harmony of many voices together.

"Liberi e Svizzeri!" – Four language cultures under one roof

Another cornerstone of Switzerland is multilingualism. This feature was already created in the early 16th century. With the admission of Freiburg/Fribourg in the confederation in 1481 the "Confederacy in upper German lands" included a bilingual commune for the first time. The Uri people had already conquered Leventina on the south side of the Gotthard before 1440 and in 1516 the remaining Ticino areas were included according to the "Eternal Peace". With Graubünden, which included not only the German and Romansh and Italian-speaking valleys, the Confederates allied prior to the Swabian War of 1499.

Although the Ticino was still a so-called "Common Rule", i.e. it was administered by the confederate cantons *together*; "[...] but they did not lose the standard for the considerable freedom they enjoyed compared with the neighborhood. When the question arose of whether Switzerland's southern oriel should be given

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to the adjacent Cisalpine or the Helvetic Republic, the call for "Liberi i Svizzeri!" rose in Lugano in 1798.⁹ So the Canton Ticino has been an equal Canton since the Helvetic Republic, whose current citizens most clearly cast their vote against the integration into the EU in referendums on bilateral contracts.

Edgar Bonjour also points out that the former subjects of the Vaud and Ticino "at the hour of free will, at the doomsday of the old Confederation [...] almost passionately professed their belief in Switzerland." In the fact that the Ticinesi and the Italians very quickly had no resentment against their former rulers, Bonjour sees a proof that the German Confederation allowed the Ticinesi from the beginning to make Italian their official language and even conducted their correspondence with them in Italian. The Bernese did the same, "The Bernese governors ruled the Vaud in French; they even allowed the ruled people to gradually conquer them culturally."¹⁰ At the same time many people in the cantons of Vaud and Ticino also spoke Swiss German.

This is still true today: Most of the elderly Swiss Germans can manage things in French or Italian and vice versa in everyday life. Since in primary school we had no French lessons, but learned the German language thoroughly as a solid basis for foreign languages at secondary level. By the way, many French and some Italian words are solid components in the vocabulary of our Swiss German: from "*portemonnaie*" (wallet) to "*trottoir*" (sidewalk) and "*glace*" (ice cream) to "*confiserie*" (confectionery) and "*merci*", from "*boccia*" (bocce) to "*marroni*" (chestnuts) to "*trattoria*" (small restaurant).

Today, German, French and Italian are equal official languages. Every law, every entry on the website of the Federation is to be found in all three languages. Each Swiss may address the federal authorities orally or in writing in his own language and he will receive his mail accordingly from Berne. The Rhaeto-Romanic language gets special promotion, so that it can remain, for example with its own radio station and subsidies for school books. In the bilingual cantons of Berne, Fribourg and Valais and in trilingual Grisons each language is equal to the other.

This compassionate care of multilingualism since the beginning of the cooperation in the 15th century, even in times of the Condominiums, is another important pillar of the Swiss model. Therefore, Swiss diplomats are often called in as a consultant for language disputes in other countries.

Perpetual armed neutrality – combat spirit and commitment

The principle of neutrality, another pillar of the Swiss model, began to emerge gradually since the defeat of Marignano, "The turning point of Marignano proved to be launching a development that was beneficial for Switzerland and probably the entire world," Georg Thürer notes. For Switzerland, it was truly a blessing that they could – with the exception of the Helvetic Republic, the occupation by *Napoleon I* from 1798 to 1803 – refrain from European wars. In the 1815 *Treaty of Paris* the great powers of Europe accepted neutrality, "this proven state maxim of Switzerland and the continuance of its territory because the neutrality and independence of the Confederation was 'in the interest of entire Europe'."¹¹

For the world, in turn, the blessing of the Swiss neutrality statute works by self-imposed obligations, which are an integral part of our foreign policy. These include the offer of *Good Services*, humanitarian aid, the primary responsibility of Switzer-

land for the ICRC and the fulfillment of its tasks in the world as well as the special obligation as depositary state of the *Geneva Conventions*. Thürer describes how a Swiss man from Geneva, *Henry Dunant*, touched by the unspeakable misery of war established the ICRC, and puts this fact in the context of Marignano, "In 1864, the Geneva Red Cross Convention was launched, which has since then saved the lives of millions of people. However, this fund could hardly have been established so effectively if neutrality, observed since Marignano, would not have offered such a reasonably secure place in a country. Therefore the Red Cross adopted the Swiss national emblem with reversed colors as its symbol."¹²

And do not forget: Switzerland's neutrality is an *armed* neutrality, with the constitutional mandate to ensure the defense of the country and its people, and it is a *perpetual* neutrality, and clearly one of the fundamental values that every Swiss person has internalized (90–95 percent in all surveys).

We close our reflection on the development and shaping of the Swiss model after the defeat of Marignano with some of Georg Thürer's words on the "Order of the small state": "It is now not only a service for the West, but for the world when the Confederation provides the vivid example that even in a small space several language groups can live together in peace and freedom, and that we can entrust the decisive word to the citizens at the ballot box not only in elections, but even in important issues." Thürer ends his book, "Die Wende von Marignano" with an appreciation of the great Swiss *Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*: "In the education towards a social human being Pestalozzi saw the greatest contribution of our small state to the culture of the contemporary world."¹³

This means for us Swiss in the 21st century not to compete for the favour of the great powers, not to march along in their wars, but advance and progress in the education of our children towards social human beings and fellow citizens. Let us get started!



Trail of confederate warriors across the Alps
("Luzerner Bilderchronik", 1513)

¹ Arthur Wyss-Niederer, *Sankt Gotthard – Via Helvetica*, Berne 1979

² Arthur Wyss-Niederer, *ibid.*, p. 2

³ Georg Thürer, *Die Wende von Marignano*, Zurich 1965, pp. 14/15

⁴ Georg Thürer, *ibid.*, p. 45

⁵ Georg Thürer, *ibid.*, p. 45

⁶ Georg Thürer, *ibid.*, p. 47

⁷ Edgar Bonjour, *Werden und Wesen der schweizerischen Demokratie*, Basel 1939, pp. 23/24

⁸ <https://www.e-helvetica.nb.admin.ch/directAccess?callnumber=nbdig-722455>

⁹ Georg Thürer, *ibid.*, p. 53

¹⁰ Edgar Bonjour, *ibid.*, pp. 24/25

¹¹ Georg Thürer, *ibid.*, p. 55

¹² Georg Thürer, *ibid.*, p. 56

¹³ Georg Thürer, *ibid.*, pp. 57/58

“Russia is sending signals of sovereignty and independence”

Interview with Dr Vladimir Ivanovich Yakunin



Vladimir Ivanovich Yakunin
(picture thk)

In the margins of the conference “European choice: Globalization or Re-sovereignization” on 6 March in Geneva, Current Concerns spoke to Dr Vladimir I. Yakunin.

Current Concerns: What is your assessment of the present situation in Ukraine? When is the end of the conflict to be expected?

Dr Vladimir I. Yakunin: To tell the truth, I'm not a politician to answer the questions concerning the feasibility of the end of the conflict. I am studying politics. My task is to learn how to find the major trends and this is how I'm studying politics. To my mind the Ukrainian crisis is a very specific crisis. In contemporary history there is not a single example of that kind of crisis. Yugoslavia has already been mentioned here. We can also consider Libya from this angle.

But that is a specific case, because there is a conflict on the territory of a country with the same historical roots as Russia itself. It is a country which has actually never been a state. It has always been a part of the Russian Empire, Russian society, Soviet society, etc. As regards its culture, Ukraine is part of the [Russian] territory, and from the point of view of values it is quite the same. And now they are divided and even a part of the existing Ukrainian state is strictly divided into the south-eastern part and the very western part of this country. The situation is extremely dangerous because it is also evoking the beast of neonazism.

I have a lot of friends, I am travelling a lot around the countries in Europe. I'm talking to governors, to prime ministers, presidents and I know that the actual mass media reflection of the crisis in Ukraine is not adequate. I am far from being the one who possesses the ultimate truth, but I was surprised how difficult it is for the western societies to find information. So, to my mind, that is a lack of actual knowledge of what was and is going on on that territory. Which is bringing us to this global misunderstanding among the political parties.

As far as I'm concerned the key to the conflict does not lie in Kiev, nor in Moscow and even not in Minsk, it lies in Washington. But on the other hand, an Austrian friend of mine told me when he



In the Annunciation friary in Nizhny Novgorod, one of the oldest monasteries in Russia: believers receive holy water. (picture: H/K)

visited the USA and when he was talking to very prominent people there, his friends, they said no, no, no, we are not involved in the Ukrainian crisis, that is a purely European case.

Despite progresses made in Ukraine so far, the US and the European Union hold on to their imposed sanctions on Russia. What do the people of Russia think about the politics of sanctions imposed by the West?

The answer is simple. The poll results show that more than 86% of the population of Russia are supportive of the course of President *Putin* and that is the same for the elderly and the young-

er generation. One political observer said that, in the history after the Soviet Union, those sanctions contributed more to the consolidation of the Russian society than any previous attempt to this aim on the part of the government and other governmental structures. This is first. Secondly, I suppose we need to admit that the spectrum of the society is very, very wide. You can find liberals, you can find neoliberals, you can find communists, you can find nationalists. Unfortunately, one can even observe the remnants of neofascism. I am ashamed to say, but this is true. On the other hand

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Vladimir Ivanovich Yakunin was born in 1948 in Melenki, Vladimir Oblast. He is Head of the Department of State Politics of the Faculty of Political Science at the Lomonosov Moscow State University, Doctor of Political Science, Visiting Professor at the Stockholm School of Economics, Honorary Doctor of the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Member of the Russian Academy of Social Sciences.

In the years between 1985 and 1991 he was Second, then First Secretary of the Permanent Representative of the USSR to the United Nations. On June 2005 he was appointed Head of the Russian Railways (RŽD).

He is the founder, Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Committee of Trustees of the Centre of the National Glory of Russia and the Endowment for St An-

drew's the First-Called Foundation, one of the oldest Russian foundations, located in Geneva since 2013. Vladimir Yakunin is the founding President of the Public World Forum “Dialogue of Civilisations” and co-President of the Association “Franco-Russian Dialogue”.

He holds numerous international awards, such as the Golden Order of Merit of the Republic of Serbia for the organisation of humanitarian aid for Kosovo and Metohija, he was awarded the National Order of the Legion of Honour, the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold with Star for Services to the Republic of Austria, the Order “For Civil Merit” of the “Grand Cross” degree of the Kingdom of Spain, the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic in the degree of “Grand Officer” and officer of the Russian “Order of Friendship”.

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the majority of the population voted in favour of the policy of Putin. It is not because of propaganda because people rank and file always knew what was going in the Soviet Union and they still know what is going on behind the walls of the Kremlin.

What are the consequences of the sanctions for the people in Russia?

Of course, these sanctions badly influence the life of the people. Not only materially. But psychologically. It is a kind of reaction on the part of Russian majority. We were trying to become part of the European family. We did a lot for that, we never meant any aggression. We never insulted anybody. Why should the world permit e.g. official representatives of Poland to speak so badly about the history of World War II in which our country lost 27 million people? Why was the world not shaken by this attempt to insult, and that is a pure attempt to insult, to punch into the wounds. That is disgusting in my view. Those people are not illiterate, they are well educated, they know quite well what they are doing. And then the

question is, for whom do they do it and at what prize. That's it!

In contemporary world, which role does today's Russia play, which role do the Russian people play? With respect to that role, are there any reasons for fear of Russia – one speaks about “Russophobia”? What does the term Russian World mean?

In the contemporary world there are only four countries who could behave and who could think globally on a political level. One of them – historically seen – is Great Britain. Not that it is still a great empire but psychologically and historically they are thinking globally. Then, the United States of America, of course. The newly born global empire, as *Chomsky* called it, and of course, China. Fourth is the Russian Empire. Russia today inherited this sentiment, a huge territory, a big population, and they are thinking globally. From the point of view of an adversary, the United States can see Russia as a major target, a major objective. Why? Because of its nuclear and military potential. Because it is historically proven and because Russia is sending signs of sovereignty and independence. It is not just because *Snowden* has settled in Russia. He just could not

find any place to go, right? So for our government it was natural, if he did not commit any criminal offence in terms of killing people, drug affairs or something like that, he has the right to be protected. That is the major human right.

You can ask why “Russophobia” is so necessary to the contemporary western world. It is historically proven that it was not Russia or the Russian Empire who fought with the West. It is known from history that it was vice versa. Those who are condemning the idea of a Russian world because it reflects their mind, their imperialistic feature of contemporary Russia, they are just avoiding the actual truth. For it is quite normal for the people from a certain city or from a certain village, that they know each other and possibly support each other if they have the possibility to communicate in their different city or in the different village. Those people from Greece who live in New York City, for example, have their community in New York City. They all have this kind of semi world. So when we use the term Russian world, we mean the people who possibly emigrated from Russia during the Revolution. Or those people who left Russia later

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“European choice: globalization or re-sovereignization”

ef. On 6 March a panel discussion on the topic “European choice: globalization or re-sovereignisation” took place in the *Swiss Press Club* in Geneva. The conference was organized by the *Endowment for St Andrew the First-Called Foundation* and supported by the *Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Swiss-Russian CIS*, *Swiss-Russian Forum*, the *Lomonossov Moscow State University*, and the *World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilisations”*. More than a hundred experts from Russia, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Greece, France, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Denmark and Great Britain participated in the discussion. The conference was moderated by *Guy Mettan*, president of the *Swiss Press Club* in Geneva and president of the *Geneva Red Cross*.

The first part of the event dealt with “globalization as politics”.

Considering the mainly negative consequences of globalization, national states face the choice either to keep their national sovereignty and democratic policy or to be involved in the process of international integration (globalization, WTO, TTIP, TiSA, etc.). Many participants in the discussion pointed to the negative consequences of globalisation in all areas of society, especially the associated loss of sovereignty.

Switzerland was brought into prominence as a positive example, succeeding better than other European countries in

creating mechanisms to protect its state sovereignty. Thus its highly developed banking system had spared Switzerland the dependence on the US Federal Reserve network.

In contrast, the globalised “banking system [...] has turned into an absolutely independent and rather profitable kind of business which dictates other elements of the economy how they should develop”, as *Dr Vladimir I. Yakunin*, founder and deputy president of the *Endowment for St Andrew the First-Called Foundation* and political scientists explained in his opening speech. He emphasized: “The processes connected with globalization lead to the situation that some part of the state's sovereignty including economic sovereignty is handed over to supranational organs”.

With sobering bluntness, *Richard Werner*, Professor for international banking at the Business School of the University of Southampton, director of the Centre for Banking, Finance and Sustainable Development, Chairman of Local First Community Interest, shared his opinion on the economic consequences of globalization: “For the last forty years we can see how strong the influence of IMF and other banking structures was on the development of different economies around the world when it comes to privatization, liberalization and deregulation. The result was quite different from the expected one.

As a result there was a lack of development, inequality, economic and political dependence of countries wherever this policy was applied”.

Professor *Hans Köchler*, President of the *International Progress Organization*, was formulating his criticism of globalization from the standpoint of legal philosophy and international law: “Because state sovereignty is founded in the inalienable rights of the citizen, ‘re-sovereignization’ necessarily means respect of the right to self-determination and re-democratization of politics at the domestic and inter-state level. [...] In the European framework, supranational structures and procedures have undermined democratic decision-making not only at the domestic, but at the inter-governmental level as well.”

The participants of the conference agreed that a common goal of all European countries had to be preservation and protection or rather recovery of sovereignty as well as the prevention of conflicts. Further contributions to the conference emphasized the importance of a historical exchange between the Europe and Russia countries, in particular with Switzerland. This exchange could be a fruitful base for the future and for sustainable development.

The entire conference has been documented at www.st-andrew-foundation.org.

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but who are still in love with their homeland, in love with their culture – these people would like to preserve and would like to introduce their culture to other cultures which is definitely the meaning of the word dialogue, meaning the interaction among different cultures and different nations. And we are standing for that. It has nothing of aggressive implementation of some particular ideas to the societies in the West. That is to promote and to sustain the rich culture of the Russian language, the diversity of Russian culture and that is the meaning of Russian world.

In your Berlin speech you held during the conference “Friendship with Russia” in 2014, you spoke about the crisis of identity of the West as well as a crisis of identity of Russia. What do you mean by that? Maybe in a distant age, all the human beings on the earth will be just human beings of the earth population. Not Germans, not Austrians, not Swiss, not Russian, etc. But the multicultural world of Swiss, German, Russian people, etc. provides such a big variety of possibilities and it also provides the value of this world. So we are made believe to forget, just to oust that we are Germans, Russians, English, Americans in order to be in line with the mainstream. And this mainstream whose name is globalisation does not mean to develop a human being of highest possible humane, respectful features.

You heard that it is all about the Americanisation of the world. And the American nation is a specific nation. People who were coming there were people who left behind their history. The history of their nations. They were immigrating and cut off all their linkage. That mentality can explain some of the features of American policy. They have nothing to inherit from the past, they value nothing from the past. It is not like the historical nations. It is not alike. In history we had good things and bad things. Such is life. Everyone of



View upon the frozen Wolga close to Nizhny Novgorod. (picture H/K)

us can be ashamed of something he or she did. But that is also part of the life which cultivated the nature of a person. When I was talking about losing self identity, I mentioned that the aggressive suppression of humanity in the human being means that we lose the identity of the human being. Moreover, the cult of consumerism is bringing to the surface an absolutely new breed of the human beings. The person who is nothing but a consumer, only wants to consume, only wants to have in order to have, only wants to get what serves his or her desires. Needless to say without any responsibility towards the other. During the period of French Revolution there was a well known case which to my mind is a good description of the freedom of a person, individual freedom of the person. The judge ruled that your freedom to use your hands ends with the nose of another person. And that is true.

How do you see the importance of neutral Switzerland for Russia?

I do not have time to particularly point out the most valuable theme about the history of contemporary Switzerland. Through two wars Switzerland avoid-

ed to be part of the war destructions. Throughout the history Switzerland had a federal structure of state with four equal major languages and nobody feels hurt by the fact that if he goes to Lausanne it might be better to talk French there. Nobody, that is normal, because of this equality. I suppose Switzerland can give a very good example on this and I can add, that Russia is also a multinational country. Not one small people lost its existence. They were not eliminated and they were not suppressed. Even more some of the languages were given another possibility to be written languages, and not only in the songs and in the poems. And that is true. So we have many things in comparison that are equal and I suppose we can strive for a kind of closer cooperation of our societies to show the examples how the people could coexist multiculturally, multi-ethnically and they rightly can coexist.

Dr Yakunin, thank you very much for the interview. •

(Interview
Dr Eva Maria Föllmer-Müller)

It is essential to be informed

Four books about Ukraine, Russia and the West

by Karl Müller

It is not merely a number of internet portals and smaller, mostly alternative print media, but also a few publishers that have taken the step to make critical information available in addition to the presently usual media contributions about Ukraine, Russia and the West. Four of them will be presented below in short and recommended to be read.



ISBN 978-3-40667525-6

Krone-Schmalz: Understand Russia

The first book that is to be recommended here was published only a few weeks ago and was met with high interest. "Understand Russia. The battle for the Ukraine and the arrogance of the West" is the only book that has been released by an established German publisher. The author is a well-known former ARD ["Consortium" of the public-law broadcasting institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany] correspondent to Moscow, *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz*. Today she is a professor of journalism and TV and a member of the Directing Committee of the *Petersburg Dialogue*. Her new book ranks number two on the *Spiegel's* best-seller list.

As a journalist with heart and soul Mrs Krone-Schmalz is appalled by the German media covering on Russia. The journalistic duties of care and the principles of journalistic ethics have been fundamentally violated. Mrs Krone-Schmalz demonstrates this observation by means of many examples, not only since the Ukraine crisis; and once more she confirms the statement of the ARD program committee in

summer 2014. "Because of its observations it came to the conclusion that the ARD coverage on the crisis in Ukraine has in part given the impression of bias and has tended to be directed against Russia and the Russian positions. [...] Moreover, there were some key points that would have been important for assessing and understanding the causes and the escalation of the crisis, which were missing in the ARD reporting on the Ukraine, or were treated inadequately."

"Understand Russia" is much more than a discussion about the western media coverage. It is even more than the excellent suggestions at the end of the book, on what an adequate coverage might look like. The book gives credit to its title and tries to make the German-speaking readers understand the Russian position. And it is worthwhile to carefully reflect a sentence like the following from the penultimate chapter of the book: "Had the Russian interests been taken seriously early and had one chosen the cooperative rather than the confrontational way, one could have avoided the many killed, injured, traumatized, ruined and fleeing people."

In the chapters "The Ukraine, Russia and the West" and "The struggle for the Ukraine" the facts that have led to the present situation in the country since 1991 are once again diligently collected.

Dashed hopes – missed opportunities

The chapters "Dashed Hopes – missed opportunities" and "The idea of peace" are quite impressive. Mrs Krone-Schmalz honors the merits of the Soviet governance in the second half of the 80s and writes: "It was a masterly political performance to break up the Soviet Union essentially without blood shed. But instead of supporting and accompanying the process, this part of the world was treated as the loser's side." Russia, as she continues, "was not given a chance for an unburdened fresh start and from the beginning stood under special observation by the 'international community of states' which wanted to rapidly enforce their rules in this part of the world, as well."

Once more, Mrs Krone-Schmalz recalls, how much trust Russia had put in the West after 1991 and how this trust had been misused to humiliate and rob the country, how the country was denied political and economic equality and thus that confidence was lost piece by piece: "The people were facing predatory capitalism instead of the moderated form of social market economy. [...] The situation was

somewhat perverse since Russia did not dare to establish social protection mechanisms out of the concern that the West might misunderstand that as a socialist or communist measure and withdraw altogether."

Putin sought cooperation with the West, but was not taken seriously

When *Vladimir Putin* became president of the country, he wanted to rebuild the country, in fact in cooperation with the West. But all his pre-proposals for more and for closer cooperation were rejected: "Putin was one of the first who spoke of a multipolar world and a 'common security space' from Vladivostok to Vancouver. Neither the one nor the other evoked some reaction from which he could conclude to be taken seriously." Finally: "The long series of Western rejections and the utterly ignoring of Russian interests from a Russian perspective reads in excerpts as this: NATO bombed Yugoslavia and Serbia in the late nineties, although Russia protested against it in the Security Council; in 2003, the US and the UK launched a military operation in Iraq due to falsified evidence; in 2011, the West abused a UN resolution, which was intended to protect the civilian population, to overthrow *Gaddafi*. In Syria dubious rebel groups are supported with weapons to eliminate the *Assad* regime. And wherever 'regime change' labeled 'democratization' succeeded, Russia loses old contracts and especially Western industrialized nations, above all the United States, seize the most lucrative businesses."

"Therefore, there is only peace that counts" – and what did NATO do?

It is moving how in the book chapter "The idea of peace" the sentiments of the people of Russia are portrayed whom the author met when she was working in Russia in the late 80s. Above all, her desire for peace: "Without peace nothing is worth anything, said a 22-year-old student of economy. [...] For a 64 year old pensioner the only important event was that they had agreed on peace, 'our *Mikhail Sergeyevich [Gorbachev]* and the American President'. 'What we suffered during the war' she said, 'you lads have no idea. I was mauled, but I survived, so the only thing that counts is peace.'

Immediately after the end of the Cold War, there were attempts to satisfy the people's desire for peace by settling contracts. But these attempts soon became obsolete,

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instead NATO expanded towards Russia. So "the West behaved as the winner of the Cold War and believed that it could pass over Russian interests." Mrs Krone-Schmalz quotes from a speech she held already in 1998: "Now that we have laboriously survived, if not overcome, the times of the Cold War, already we're working on a new turn, with only slightly shifted limits. With all due respect for the security needs of the Poles, as well as the Lithuanians and others – the intention to incorporate these countries into NATO is a fatal signal. The mere discussion of that plan alone caused untold damage."

And then Mrs Krone-Schmalz recalls the "fall of man": "In regard to the relations between Russia and the West, the importance of the war in Kosovo cannot be overestimated. Russia had to observe that the UN Security Council was completely ignored and that in the Western states hardly anyone was excited about the fact." With respect to the Georgia war of 2008 the author cites herself again: "As a political observer one must not be surprised that it had come to war in Georgia, instead it was surprising that Russia did passively accept the western humiliations and provocations for so long."

"Understand Russia" is aimed primarily at a German reading public. "Anti-Russian reservations have a long tradition in Germany and have been consolidated in two World Wars," it is written in the blurb. "Also in the Ukraine crisis its effectiveness can be observed. In fact, not only is the relationship between Russia, the West and the Ukraine more complex than is suggested by the mainstream media, as well as the history since the end of the Cold War. It is in the EU's best interest to have Russia as a partner. Those who ignore this opportunity,

risk that Europe is pulverized in the power struggle of future superpowers."

Engdahl: War in the Ukraine

"War in the Ukraine. Chronicle of a planned disaster" is the title of the second book. It was published in November 2014. It was written by *F. William Engdahl*. F. William Engdahl is a US-American living in Germany. He has written a number of books. Best known are "A century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the new World Order", "Seeds of destruction" and "The Decline of the Dollar Empire". You can find many of his essays on his website www.williamengdahl.com. The new book has not been written in one go, but is a collection of essays by the author from 1 October 2013 until 11 September 2014, his titles well expressing the contents as for example:

- The Ukraine hollows out own interests joining the EU free trade agreement (1 October 2013)
- Are the protests in the Ukraine a repeat of the US colour revolution? (10 December 2013)
- Flagrant intervention of the US State Department in the conflicts in Ukraine (26 January 2014)
- United States pushes the crazy stationing of missiles against Russia (19 February 2014)
- The violation of Ukraine: phase two begins (2 March 2014)
- NATO evidently employs Bandera snipers during the coup in the Ukraine (9 March 2014)

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Mackinder's theory of the Heartland

Throughout centuries on Continental Europe Great Britain had pursued a balance of power politics. Its aim was to contain the strongest power by coalitions with the next strongest power so that the supremacy of one state could be avoided. Since the foundation of the empire ("Reichsgründung") and the rapid increase of imperial Germany allied with Habsburg to a scientific and economical big power the situation on the continent – viewed from an English perspective – changed. The former unquestioned world power and ruler of the world oceans had to face the possibility that its dominance could be challenged. *Halford Mackinder*, the British geographer, politician and initiator of the London School of Economics, later founder of the Royal Institute of International Affairs ("Chatham House") and exalted consultant to the English Delegation at the Parisian Conference for Peace (1919 – 1920), responded to this new development with a strategy paper, entitled "The Geographical Pivot of History", first published in the *Geograph-*

ical Journal in London in 1904. In his book "Democratic Ideals and Reality", published at the Parisian Conference for Peace, he deepened the geo-political ideas of this paper, which were labeled the "Heartland Theory". [...] Mackinder himself summarized his own theory in three short sentences:

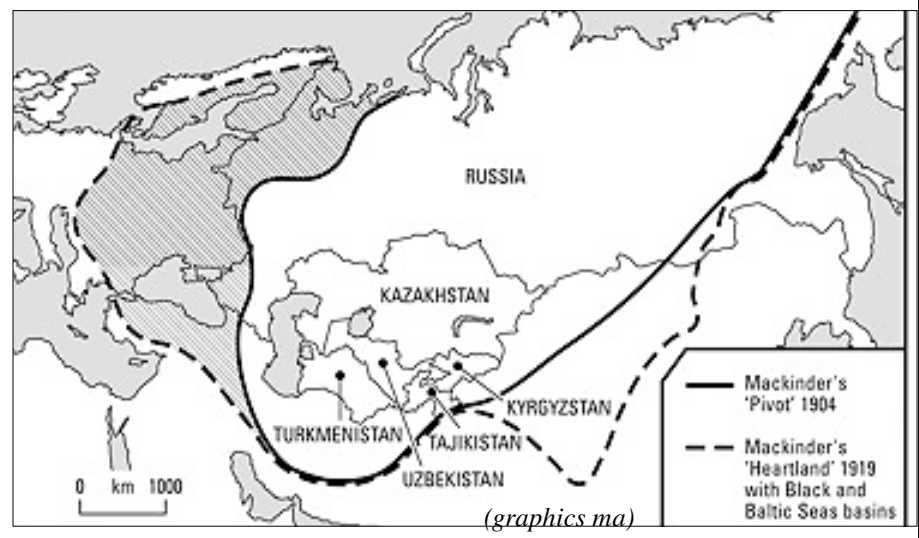
- The one who reigns Eastern Europe, reigns the Heartland (Pivot Area).
- The one who reigns the Heartland, reigns the World Island (Eurasia).
- The one who reigns the World Island, reigns the world.

The theory was based on the assumption that the Eurasian-African land mass contains the bulk of the world's population and is blessed with the largest mineral resources.

Extract from: Jochen Scholz, Worum es geht. Die Ukraine-Krise und die geopolitische Konstante auf dem eurasischen Kontinent; in: Ronald Thoden, Sabine Schiffer (ed.): Ukraine im Visier. Russlands Nachbar als Zielscheibe geostrategischer Interessen, 2014, pages 89 – 107



ISBN 978-3-86445-156-0



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ISBN 978-3-9816963-0-1

- Ukraine appoints oligarchs and gangsters to Governors and Ministers (11 March 2014)

Please note: All this is analyzed before the referendum on the Crimean peninsula – there are no subsequent justifications at all.

Essays written later go further into the topics:

- Employment of snipers is a common tactic for NATO regime changes (24 March 2014)
- New Ukrainian Government hires US mercenaries, to keep the East of the country under control (31 March 2014)

Or:

- The coup in the Ukraine brings Russia and China closer together (5 June 2014)
- Russia and China on the way to get rid of the dollar system (10 June 2014)

Or:

- Neo-Nazis of the Ukrainian right sector “officially” spread terror in the East of the country (11 June 2014)
- Washington’s new strategy: outsourcing of wars (12 June 2014)
- EU and IMF plunder the Ukrainian agriculture (9 August 2014)

Geo-strategic starting points

F. William Engdahls texts are not just expressing opinions, but always backed up by facts. Like many others he once again recalls the geo-strategic starting point of what had actually happened to the Ukraine since 1991 due to Russia (and even before the end of the Soviet Union). It was the former Security Advisor to the US President, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, who wrote in his book, “The Grand Chessboard – American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives”, published in English in 1997, quite frankly and in

the then prevailing feeling of the United States’ inviolable superiority, witnessed by many American authors of this year: “the Ukraine, a new and important area on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot, because its very existence as an independent state contributes to the transformation of Russia. Without the Ukraine Russia is not a Eurasian empire anymore.”

Thoden and Schiffer: Target Ukraine

Ronald Thoden, owner of the *Selbrund-Publishing-House*, and Sabine Schiffer, head of the “Institute for media responsibility”, published the third book recommended here. It is an anthology of contributions by different authors and is entitled “Ukraine im Visier. Russlands Nachbar als Zielscheibe geostrategischer Interessen.” (Ukraine in the Crosshairs – Russia’s neighbor as a target of geo-strategic interests). In this book published in 2014, you will find many good contributions to understand the operations in and around the Ukraine and to take a critical look at the average local media coverage. In particular the four media-critical contributions give evidence for the Western reporting’s lack of seriousness and valuable clues for further studies.

In the first part of this volume, *Reinhard Lauterbach* calls to mind the history of Ukrainian nationalism, which was not above cooperating with Nazi Germany, and whose leading forces have been welcomed “allies” of the American secret services since the end of the second world war.

Hannes Hofbauer has written two articles: one about the “Orange Revolution”, well demonstrating who the forces were – coming from the United States – that had controlled the first overthrow in 2004. The information in his second article about poverty and social contrasts in the Ukraine will be new to most German-speaking readers. Hannes Hofbauer describes that the Ukraine was the economically weakest country among a number of former European Soviet republics after 1991 and that the program of the IMF for the country will make matters even worse. It becomes clear what madness it meant for the country to have to choose either the EU or Russia before the election. He also explains what the Ukrainians will have to expect, after “their” government agreed to the conditions of the IMF-loans. In Spring of 2014, the interim government stated in their letter to the IMF that the people would have to bleed for the credit amounting to 17 billion US\$.” At the same time the government promised to make sure that the wages would not rise in the next 12 months. The minimum wage amounted to 74 euros in Spring 2014. The collective agreement on wage freezing at the level of 1 January 2014 would complete one-

third of all planned budget savings. The Coalition wants to attain [...] more than 25% savings by means of ‘cutting social spending’. On the side of incomes the new Kiev government promised the IMF to stop subsidizing the gas price for end-consumers and to increase the price by 56% by 1 May 2014, which actually happened a short time later. On 1 May 2015 the gas price will rise again by 40%.”

Still Mackinders Heartland theory?

Kurt Gritsch calls to mind the fatal consequences of the NATO’s eastern enlargement and NATO’s increasing confrontation with Russia. The enclosed map illustrates the numerous US bases around Russia and the ironic caption was “Russia wants the war. Look how closely they have put their country to our military bases”.

There is an excellent contribution by *Jochen Scholz*, who brings the events around the Ukraine during more than 100 years of Anglo-American geostrategy in line and submits important world-historical and political considerations: they concern the Anglo-American naval powers’ quest for world domination based on *Halford Mackinder’s* concept formulated in the early 20th century and still valid today. (see box) According to this, one must dominate the Eurasian continent to achieve world domination and one has to prevent by all means an independent rival on the Eurasian continent, that would emerge, for example, in case of closer German Russian relations.

The connecting line to the TTIP is interesting: “Even the currently negotiated free trade agreement between the EU and the United States (TTIP) serves primarily to stop centrifugal tendencies in the Alliance in order to tie Germany and the EU closer to the United States again, to prevent a common economic area from Lisbon to Vladivostok and to exploit the EU for national US interests.”

The joint statement by the Presidents of France, Russia, the Ukraine and German Chancellor on 12 February 2015 in Minsk referred exactly to this concept and in it they confessed their commitment to the “vision of a common humanitarian and economic area from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean”. *Jochen Scholz* wrote his article before Minsk II. But now one can understand better why some people in the United States do not want the resolutions of Minsk II being actually implemented and go to great pains in order to ensure that the conflict will escalate further – for example by arms supplies to the Ukrainian army – and that an understanding between Russia and the rest of Europe becomes impossible.

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What TTIP has to do with the Ukraine

What Jochen Scholz could only hint at in his contribution, is in detail explained in the fourth book recommended here. Its title is "Wir sind die Guten Ansichten eines Putinverstehers oder wie uns die Medien manipulieren" (We are the good guys. Views of a 'Putin-Understander' [a term used by media for somebody who agrees to Putin's politics] or how the media manipulate us) and was written by two journalists, *Mathias Bröckers* and *Paul Schreyer*. The book, published in early September 2014 for the first time, among others contains quotes from the speech of the Commissioner of the US-Government for Europe *Victoria Nuland*, which she held before a Committee of Senate on policies of the US-Government in Ukraine in November 2013. In this speech, she mentioned not only the 5 billion US dollar, spent since 1991 to enforce "the transition of Ukraine to democracy and market economy". She also delivers an interesting assessment about the EU "Eastern partnerships". One has to properly translate the many euphemisms: "In the end, the Eastern partnership means far more than a closer relationship between the EU and various countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. It is as well a step towards the long-term vision of a networked economy, which ranges from Lisbon to Donetsk and is stimulated by market-oriented reforms, growing prosperity and deepening democracy. With this intention the EU and the United States negotiate the transatlantic free trade area TTIP, which promises growth, investment and jobs on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as a rule-based global trading system with high standards. This larger vision of a networked economy in Europe is becoming increasingly real and attractive and could include not only Europe, but the whole transatlantic area. We and the EU believe that an investment in the Eastern partnership is therefore in everyone's long-term interest." The book adds an appropriate comment: "So that is it, the very big arch, the noble goal, the global vision and at the same time, the rejection of any form of multi-lateralism. From now on there is to be only one system, rather than several, possibly equally ranking ones. 'Full spectrum dominance' is the military wording for this, 'Integrated global trading regime' the economic term. Ultimately it is a totalitarian claim to power, which would be the basis of the alleged promotion of prosperity and democracy even in 'everybody's long-term interest'."

By the way: Already *Zbigniew Brzezinski* had requested in his book "The grand

Chessboard" a transatlantic free trade area as part of a US "geostrategy for Eurasia": "A Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement, already advocated by a number of prominent Atlantic leaders, could also mitigate the risk of growing economic rivalry between a more united EU and the United States."

Together with the analysis by Jochen Scholz and his hint to MacKinders Heartland theory it becomes also understandable what *George Friedman*, operator of the US private Intelligence Agency STRATFOR, said in February 2015 in Chicago and what was known at the beginning of March in Germany (www.nachdenkenseiten.de/?p=25398 and www.nachdenkenseiten.de/?p=25405): the United States wanted to prevent in the 20th century that Russia and Germany united on the Eurasian continent. After the end of the Cold War the point was to pull a "line" from the Baltics to the Black Sea, to contain Russia and to disturb its relations with Germany, a kind of new "iron curtain". *Willy Wimmer*, the former Under-State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defense and Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, had learned of these plans already in the year 2000 at a Conference of the US State Department in Slovak Bratislava and publicly announced these plans in 2001.



ISBN 978-3-86489-080-2

**Bröckers and Schreyer:
Global political context
of the conflict in Ukraine**

Mathias Bröckers' and Paul Schreyer's book is a treasure trove for those who want to bring the Ukraine conflict into line with the global political context. The starting point is a brief overview of the Ukraine's history. It becomes clear for

how many decades the American intelligence services have been active specifically in the Ukraine, how fragile this state has been since its foundation in 1991, and that one has so far not managed to build something like a nation of all Ukrainians but that the goal is still to build a nation with a constitutive people despite different ethnic groups.

This fragile structure is in the focus of a worldwide geopolitical conflict, and in its analysis the book by Bröckers and Schreyer focuses mainly on the western part of this dispute, the forces in the background – in particular the *Atlantic Council* – and the role of the Western media in this dispute.

**Putting an end
to US-American autocracy**

Two excellent closing chapters finish the book. In the before last chapter the two authors write about the Ukraine dealing with the question, whether the US is able to keep the leadership-claim for a unipolar world or whether the concept of a multi-polar world will succeed: "A non-aligned, neutral Ukraine which unites its different regions under a federal state and sees itself as a bridge between East and West, EU and Russia, the Atlantic Ocean and Eurasia, would be the ideal development not only for the country itself but also for the 'neighbours' from Lisbon to Vladivostok." In the last chapter which pleads for a new detente policy we read: "Wouldn't it be high time among friends to say 'No' to a [US-] policy which tries to force its autocratic policies upon the rest of the world, striving for 'Full Spectrum Dominance' and not hesitating to carry war to Europe again? Wouldn't it be the right moment to put Anglo-American geopolitics to the test which by all means is trying to avoid a coalescence of the European-Asian 'heartlands'? Should not 'Old Europe', as Donald Rumsfeld disparagingly called the European core-states, because they did not cooperate in the imperial campaign against Iraq as willingly as demanded, should not Germany and its direct neighbours in such a test realize that this Anglo-American policy runs contrary to their own basic core interests as European nations? Should they not have a vital interest in a policy shift, in trade and peaceful coexistence with their continental neighbours in Russia and China? Would in the long term an agreement about Russian commodities and Chinese high-speed trains to Duisburg not be more important for the future than secret TTIP-negotiations about transatlantic trade in junk-food?"

The book "Wir sind die Guten" ("We are the good"), has for weeks been ranking high on the Spiegel's Bestseller-list.

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This proves how very interested citizens are in information that is independent of the mainstream media. In the above-mentioned speech George Friedman focused on Germany. This country is – at least in Friedman's view – an "unreliable ally", in whom one cannot trust and whose decisions and future direction are uncertain at present. This is the US-American view. The great interest in the book "Wir sind die Guten" shows that in Germany – but obviously not only in Germany – there are actually many people who do not want to let themselves be used for US-American politics and to let themselves be drawn into a military adventure against Russia. For Friedman also said: the best means in order to retain US-American power is to push potential enemies into war against each other, so that potentially weakened, they will no longer pose any real threat to US-American hegemony.

**When does the West
begin to respect Russia?**

One has the impression that too many German language mass media and politicians ignore all these considerations. These, arguments, explanations and examples like the above-reviewed four books are discredited with a lot of polemic. What is the reason?

F. William Engdahl reported on his journeys to Russia in a contribution in early March 2015 (<http://journal-neo.org/2015/03/09/russia-s-remarkable-renaissance-2/>) what he had learned during conversations with young Russians. He calls to mind the "collective trauma" that many Russians witnessed after 1990 and compares the mood at that time with the current one. The starting situation: "Today [...] Russia finds itself again confronted with a hostile West and with a NATO that does not only humiliate Russia, but also wants to destroy the well-functioning state, since it has the capability to interfere with the Western warfare plans not only in the Ukraine, Syria, Libya and the Iraq but also in Afghanistan, Africa and South-America." But in the Russia of today "in many discussions with



Moscow. View of the Kremlin. (picture caro)

very different Russian acquaintances" he did "no longer come across a depressive basic mood, but feelings of pride and determination and the rebirth of a long suppressed self-confidence." Engdahl shows by means of many examples, how and in what movements this new confidence, the new quality of Russian policy and also rejection of the West is articulated. And then he writes: "For me the promising aspect of the Russian renaissance is the current generation of yet comparably young people between 37 and 49; they are highly intelligent and have a lot of experience not only with the Soviet-communistic bureaucracy, but also with the empty world of the US-led 'Capitalism of the free market'". And he lists, what Russia and these young people appreciate: a high standard of research and teaching at the universities of the country, classical education in the sense of *Wilhelm von Humboldt*, cultural and historical awareness. And finally he writes: "To my mind it is the heart of rebirth that beats in this young Russians' generation, their pioneer spirit gives me hope for the future."

Those who are responsible in our part of the world should recognize and appreciate these facts and developments – that is our wish. They are to deal seriously with what people like F. William Engdahl, authors of

the volume by Sabine Schiffer and Ronald Thoden, Mathias Brückers, Paul Schreyer and Gabriele Krone-Schmalz and others, who could not be considered here, wrote and provided for all of us. All European peoples are interested that the conflict with Russia will be alleviated (schau dir mal das Wort defuse an, es ist offensichtlich, dass es mit Elektrizität zu tun hat!!!) and signals of relaxation will be sent.

The daily media harassment against Russia and the policy of its elected president is contradictory to the spirit and content of the UN Charter. It hurts the principles of the social life and the human social nature and is directed against the meaning of these principles for the community of all peoples and nations. It is an expression of the western complacency, a dangerous hubris and a real refusal of dialogue. It is unworthy and if exposed to it without defence it can make you ill. It is to silence everybody else with their considerations by perfidious language and shameless lies. It is an accumulation of grotesque and unbearable contortions, and it contradicts all healthy human endeavours. It exceeds the Cold War diction by far and with its hatred, parochialism and cynicism it is an attack on human and cultural achievements. This media harassment must have an end. •

“A civilisation that renounces its own moral ideals, loses its spiritual power”

High-level panel discussion at the UN in Geneva about the devastating effects of the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Ukraine

by Thomas Kaiser

It was a high-profile event at the spring session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. On the podium sat none other than the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, his Lebanese colleague Gebran Bassil and Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian. Among other speakers were religious dignitaries of the Christian Orthodox Church and other committed individuals. The discussion was chaired by John Laughland. In his introductory statement he explained that the aim of the event was to set the Christians' persecution on the agenda of the UN Human Rights Council.

The first speaker, Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei Lavrov*, talked about the situation of Christians in the Middle East and on the sidelines about Christians in Ukraine. In his speech, Sergei Lavrov he referred to the devastating situation in the Middle East. “Since the start of the Arab Spring, Russia has warned not to leave the changes in the region up to the control of religious extremists.” “This region”, the Russian Foreign Minister stated, “has been hit by a wave of extremism, the inter-confessional contradictions, the contradictions between the civilisations are being reinforced. Normal religious activities and even the existence of several religious communities are threatened.” Most dramatic is the situation in Syria, because “this country was the unique model of a peaceful, mutually respectful existence of various religious communities. Due to the failure to prevent the activities of extremist forces – one tried to make use of them in the fight against the regime of *Bashar Assad* – this constellation was destroyed.”

With the emergence of the caliphate in Syria and Iraq dozens of churches were destroyed, and a veritable exodus started. In towns like Mosul, where Christians had been living for centuries, they were killed or enslaved. The crimes currently committed by the IS in Syria and Iraq, have all the signs of genocide under the 1948 Convention. There is an urgent need to end the persecution of Christians but also of supporters of all other religions.

In addition, the Christian exodus from the Middle East is likely to have the most negative influence on the structure of Arab societies and the preservation of historical and spiritual legacy that is important for all humanity. “Our common task is to pool efforts for the struggle against extremism and terrorism in the Middle East



and North Africa. Important steps towards this end were made with the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 2170 and 2199. However, our joint ability to reliably block any channels of support for terrorists, such as ISIS, Jabhat al-Nurah and the like, by using the available mechanisms of the Security Council, will play the decisive role in this respect.” We must do all we can to “prevent the persecution of Christians” and of supporters of all other religions. A no less urgent task is “to prevent the jihadists from captivating the minds and souls of younger people. We are supporting the initiatives of the region’s Christian and Muslim leaders that are aimed at opposing by concerted efforts, the attempts of extremists of all kinds to desecrate and distort the high moral principles of the great world religions. The tragic events in the Middle East suggest one more conclusion. It is necessary to give up once and for all the temptation to make the destinies of whole nations hostage to geopolitical ambitions, which are being achieved through crude interference in the affairs of sovereign states.”

Sergei Lavrov greatly regretted that Christians were being persecuted not only in the Middle East, but that also because of the conflict in Ukraine Orthodox churches and monasteries had been destroyed and Orthodox priests had had to flee. Nationalist extremists have begun to sow religious hatred. Lavrov condemned the aggressive destruction of churches and Christian symbols. Three Orthodox clergymen were killed. Many clergymen fled to Russia in the face of extremist threats. According to Lavrov, the result is that Christians are no

longer willing to confess their faith, resulting in a loss of cultural values. Instead, an aggressive secularism spreads that leads to Christian values and notions of morality being washed away. Thus, cultural and religious identity are being eroded. Incidences of vandalism and desecration of churches, temples, holy places, cemeteries and Christian symbols are growing fast. It is increasingly difficult for believers to uphold their convictions. One has to be aware of this development. “Lessons of history show that a civilisation that has abandoned its moral ideals loses its spiritual strength.”

All of us must remember this, especially this year, when we are marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, in which tens of millions of people of all ethnicities and religions were killed. Taking responsibility for one’s own values is extremely important. “We welcome the activities of the OSCE, which has already held conferences on countering Islamophobia and anti-Semitism and is preparing another conference on Christianophobia. We are urging the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe to pay more attention to these issues, including the framework of the Dialogue of Civilisations forum. We are convinced that the Human Rights Council should also contribute to resolving these problems.”

The Lebanese Foreign Minister began his presentation with a phrase by *Pope John Paul II*, who had once said: “Lebanon is not just a state, it is a message”. He went on to explain that Lebanon had incarnated an ideal of tolerance and peace-

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ful coexistence and he was proud to be at the conference and convey these values to the world. However, Lebanon was standing at a crossroads, he said. Either it was going to develop into a place that gives birth to extremists or it would become a place for negotiations and variety that could be an example for others. Lebanon was a country in the Middle East, he said, where different religions and cultures were working well together across all social classes. For years, attempts were going on to use violent extremism to destabilise the region for years to come. "The IS and its followers are a version of this development that is conducting a fight against minorities, especially against Christians." Today in 2015 we commemorate the genocide of the Armenians hundred years ago, who had been expelled only because of their faith. As part of the Ottoman Empire Lebanon had then been affected, as well. He pointed to the historical parallel which showed "that the origin and existence of the IS is not a new phenomenon in the region." In its history Lebanon had always been a liberal harbour for all oppressed people. "That is the spirit of our state." Since the end of Ottoman rule, Christians had played "a decisive role between the different Islamic directions." Lebanon – this was clearly reflected in the Minister of Foreign Affairs' address – is on the forefront in the fight against terrorism, however people feel being left down by the rest of the world, "that does nothing but give lip service, there is no protection or defence of Christians." 20 years ago, more than one million Christians lived in Iraq. In early 2014 there were only 400,000 left. Today there are less than 200,000. It is a war against culture. Holy Christian sites are being devastated, and people are systematically humiliated or expelled. The minister appealed to the international community to put an end to these machinations. Behind the expulsions he did not only see religious fanaticism, but in his opinion, this were the tools to try and enforce a policy strategy, which aimed at organising a new Middle East. There is fear of a domino effect that will capture the Middle East and go on to other regions of the world. The Arab world had failed to react to the IS and its ideology in time. If it succeeded to expel the Christians from this region, the geopolitical balance of the region would be lost and a division into several parts would happen, the

speaker warned. "Russia", so the Minister of Foreign Affairs, "has been active in order to achieve a balance in the Middle East. Russia has always throughout history been a supporter of the region's independence." The roots of Christianity are in the Middle East region. From here, the Christians once came, and here is also the place where they want to live. Nobody, the Foreign Minister said, knew better how to treat their Muslim brothers. For centuries they had lived together and developed together. Christians played a vital role in connecting the various religions. While ending his speech, he appealed to the international community, to help solving this problem.

The Foreign Minister of Armenia also expressed the importance of the Middle East for humanity. "The Middle East is a unique region where multiculturalism is reality. It is a place where different cultures have developed, including Christianity." He went on to describe the increasing threat that Christians were exposed to in the current conflict situation. Unfortunately the persecution of Christians in this region was nothing extraordinary. While Christians represented 20 percent of the population at the beginning of the 20th century, it was now only a mere 5 percent at the beginning of the 21st century. We must not assume, he explained that the attacks on religious groups, particularly the Christians in Iraq and Syria are purely motivated by religion. It had been repeatedly emphasized that the support of terrorists from neighbouring countries must be stopped. In this respect Armenia firmly supported the implementation of the Security Council Resolution.

Further contributions outlined the devastating conflict in the Middle East. The majority of the panel were of the opinion that it was not just a conflict motivated by religion, but that political targets were behind it. Mother Agnes, a nun from Syria, made it perfectly clear that the conflict was instigated by the US, which aimed at bringing about a regime change in Syria. In her opinion, the IS' invigoration was only possible under the eyes of the US. A photograph showing Republican Senator *Mc Caine* with the leader of the IS, *Al Baghdadi*, confirmed the suspected link between the US and the IS, even if the official media would like to make believe us otherwise. Therefore, it was also clear why the IS was able to spread so quickly and why it was fought only half-heartedly by the US and its allies. The strikes against the Assad government have led to a spread of extremists in this

region which again were supported by the US. The so-called "Clash of Civilisations" was the result of provocation and manipulation aimed at achieving geopolitical goals, she maintained. The problem was not between Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Neither was the "Clash of Civilisations" caused by the "incompatibility of various religions." The conflicts were not inherent, but the result of political manoeuvring. Many times more moderate Muslims than Christians paid with their lives for their faith. The affected area of the Middle East had become a place where human rights were ignored. In former times, living in Syria had been no problem for Christians. Now, however, in the areas occupied by the so-called Free Syrian Army, life for Christians was hardly possible. For all speakers was clear that the ongoing "cultural war" was only a superficial interpretation and that in the background there was the struggle for supremacy in the Middle East. This had to be addressed and brought to the attention of the Human Rights Council. •

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility, and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

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Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of
SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of
SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-
for all other countries.

Account: Postcheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4

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Who actually wants Curriculum 21, and where does it come from?

wl. They repeat it over and over again: Curriculum 21 was but an implementation of the Education Article in the Federal Constitution which the people had approved of with a large majority. There, however, is merely written that the objectives of the educational levels should be harmonised.

The education article was worked out by the Commission for Science, Education and Culture of the National Council which had intended to establish the “definition of benchmark figures or meeting points” in its report on occasion of the Parliamentary Initiative of 2005. In the commentaries of the Federal Council for the vote the “cantonal educational authority” is explicitly mentioned, as well as “uniform benchmark figures” supposed to form the framework for harmonisation. Such “benchmark figures”, however, would not take up more space than a few of Din A4 pages. It is evident that in 2006 the people had voted for such a concise harmonisation. And the promise of harmonisation is not even fulfilled in Curriculum 21 because there is no solution mentioned for the language problem in different cantons and the competences have to be processed in a highly individualised way within three- and four-year cycles.

Rudolf Walser for example (*avenir suisse*) criticized clearly that the will of the people has been ignored: “Cantonal authority was given priority to and they only spoke about uniform benchmark figures. [...] There were not any indications that the Curriculum 21 should list up highly controversial personal, social and methodological competences instead of containing educational goals in the sense of knowledge and abilities.”

Speaking on the occasion of a conference at the PH Zurich (Education department of the University) on 7 October 2011 Prof *Rudolf Künzli*, who does curriculum research in Zurich, made it clear that it was not by chance that D-DEC (Cantonal Directors of Education of the German speaking Cantons) wanted to have thousands of competences implemented in the Curriculum instead of some “Treffpunkte” (benchmark figures). The decision “was made in competition with the explicit alternative, the ‘Treffpunkte’”. Those had already been partly elaborated by EDK and “concentrated on specific professional topics and educational contents.” It is evident that the Commission of the National Council meant those when speaking explicitly of “Treffpunkte” (benchmark figures).

As for Curriculum 21 it is certainly not about an implementation of the constitu-

tional article, but it is about something else, as Prof Künzli formulates in the same text: “The alternative that had been chosen deliberately, makes clear that it dealt with large changes of viewpoint and changes of understanding of school and teaching the extent of which you should not underestimate.” The superintendent of schools in Zurich, *Regine Aepli*, found even clearer words to describe the dimensions of the reform: “This is a project of the century that will change our school fundamentally.”

Where are the models, and what are the goals of the whole thing? In their White Paper HarmoS published in 2004, the DEC gives the hint that the restructuring of the educational system takes for a model the Anglosaxon and Scandinavian countries as well as Germany, as far as competences are concerned, particularly because monitoring of education is made possible that way. “This is what the work focuses on; and it has the utmost strategic priority” for the DEC.

The DEC then pointed to the theory of educational standards established by the American educationalist *Diane Ravitch* in whose sense it dealt with “‘standards of performance and result outcome’ which were oriented towards the output.” Unfortunately the DEC is not as honest as to inform the public that the same Diane Ravitch has been for long one of the most famous critics of this fatal education reform in the USA because as a result the educational system has become corrupt and asocial, and because intellectual performance have deteriorated.

The question arises here, why this nonsense about competences, why educational monitoring and why the standardisation mania can bear such fruit, all the same. A telling answer to the question is a study done by the Bremen political scientist *Tonia Bieber*. She did research on the question why it was precisely in Switzerland that international organisations were so successful in turning the educational system inside out according to their own ideas. The influence that had been decisive for the introduction of the recent reforms of the Swiss educational system was the influence of Pisa. Through “soft governance” OECD had succeeded in getting the “veto-players” – particularly the SVP and the cantons – involved in the reforms efforts: Among the various instruments of these “mechanisms of governance” the setting of educational standards in the aftermath of the Pisa survey had had a special influence. Tonia Bieber summarizes that OECD has been responsible for all Swiss educational reforms since 1990, and that this represents an “extreme change of policy”. To sum up she judges that the “soft mechanisms of governance” used by the interna-

tional organisations had even outstripped the conservative “veto players” – among other things because the latter did not want to be blamed for preventing reforms.

In the text mentioned above, Prof Künzli points as well to a fundamentally changed idea of stateliness. “From the point of view of curriculum theory and school theory Curriculum 21 is part of a changed logic of how schools are directed that are called governance today.” What is understood by governance are forms of influence and control that are not democratically legitimised, that is why international organisations with a foreign agenda have actually brought about Curriculum 21.

In parallel to politically pushing this agenda, the educational bureaucracies have been working at full blast on “implementing” the reforms inside the schools. For years the training and advanced training of teachers are committed to this school reform, the obligatory manuals are partly “in line with the curriculum”, principals of schools as well as members of school authorities have been aligned to this “masterpiece of the century”. *Martin Wendelspiess*, head of the Zurich secondary school authority, describes the means and methods of “soft governance” employed to implement the reforms in this context: Today we are equipped with a “far better quality management”, there are school directors and professional supervision of schools. And what about unruly teachers, who don’t agree?, asks the “Landbote” journalist the school bureaucrat on 10 February 2015. “At first the responsible persons try to enter in a dialogue; common goals and training courses are agreed upon or are decreed. If a teacher refused in principle, that would mean a violation of his professional duty.” Is it a mystery that the teacher associations are so silent?

As a summary we have to state: 1) Curriculum 21 is not a constitutional obligation. 2) The people did not want Curriculum 21 in this form. 3) The educational bureaucracy lets itself “softly” govern by international organisations. 4) Their pressure was transferred onto the teachers and others in the education system. 5) The whole procedure is in contrast to democracy, pluralism and the state of law. ●

Literature:

Diane Ravitch: *The Death and Life of the great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*, 2010.

Tonia Bieber: *Soft Governance in Education. The Pisa Study and the Bologna Process in Switzerland*, <http://www.sfb597.uni-bremen.de/homepages/bieber/arbeitspapierBeschreibung.php?ID=159>

Who benefits from Curriculum 21?

mw. Meanwhile, probably each and every attentive citizen has understood why we must make sure to spare our youth a school with Curriculum 21. Left alone in front of the computer screen, with a patchwork of "competences" without contents, with trial and error methods and riddles without clear results and computer tests without understanding the substance of the tested material, without a solid base of knowledge and especially without the inner strength resulting from a positive relationship with their teacher and the class room community, our children, after primary school would have to face the harsh reality. Many of them fail already today because of the often constructivist-drenched school management, when it comes to stand one's ground in an apprenticeship or at secondary school. With Curriculum 21 the number of shipwrecked young people would undoubtedly rise.

Who is going to bear the damage ...

Of course, it is obvious who will bear the damage brought about by Curriculum 21. Our children and young people will have to suffer the consequences. The parents as well, who already today have to sit down daily to do the children's homework with them. At best they can help them unravel the tangle in their heads. Not to forget the young teachers who are no longer trained to learn one of the most beautiful and most fulfilling professions, but are trained to be only managers or coaches. Finally, it is the communes that will have to pay for the damage since young people will grow up lacking the commitment and knowledge indispensable for contributing to the democratic process, particularly in Switzerland. And let us not forget, the democratic control of the Elementary School that was performed by a school board elected by the people, which in the future would be replaced by "professionals" in all cantons (in some this is already the case, today). Those professionals are controllers who are directed from the top, which suits our direct-democratic community like chalk and cheese.

According to Professor *Walter Herzog*, "These were experts who silently worked out the Curriculum 21. And it will be those experts who will monitor and control its implementation. The idea of a public school system that is wanted and democratically controlled by the citizens seems to have been lost just as the reputation of the teaching profession which can only be exercised properly if it is not curbed by political convenience." "Kompetenzorientierung – eine Kritik am Lehrplan 21" – lecture on 7 July 2014 (Competence ori-

Tablets in the classroom: Dear teachers, this is how it works

Teachers can learn in a new advanced training course how to use tablets in the classroom. The course was developed by the University of Education (PH) Zurich and is funded by Samsung Electronics Switzerland.

According to a PH statement on Tuesday, the tablets offered a great potential for innovative teaching that activated students. However, these options were not yet used by all schools and teachers. The new training course is free of charge for school teams or individual teachers. In a five-part series they receive impulses and concrete teaching ideas that are based on the competencies of the Curriculum 21. On rental devices teachers can test the lessons between courses.

The courses address German Swiss schools from Kindergarten to Secondary School. Samsung bears the costs of training and sets up two rooms for courses at the PH Zurich with the respective administrative infrastructure.

Experts consider the benefits of mobile devices in particular in cooperative learning, such as group work and interdisciplinary work. In some pilot projects tablets are already made use of in Swiss schools, for example in the Cantons of Aargau, Zurich and Solothurn, in one case even in a nursery.

sda/mim from 24.2.2015

(Translation Current Concerns)

entation – a critique of Curriculum 21, lecture on 7.7.2014)

... and who are the beneficiaries?

If we consider this horrendous damage, we are faced with the urgent question: Who then benefits from this Curriculum 21?

First of all, it benefits the legion of "experts" who for years have listed up competencies and competencies in private at the order of the EDK; next the "experts" who now produce the appropriate computer test series, and the statisticians, preparing for the evaluation of the testing. However, this alone does not yet explain the matter. Many of these people have long since had their jobs in the administration of the federal government or cantons – they don't mind performing this job or any other job. The situation is quite different for professors and consultants who are engaged from outside the state administration. Their fees have to be paid additionally out of the tax coffers of the cantons.

But whom does the Curriculum 21 serve that much that he by no means wants to let the chance slip? In our globalized world of large multi-billion dollar corporations this question can easily be answered. "The Curriculum 21 benefits all those who want to have more control and survey of the school, those who want to develop and carry out the tests because they make money with them. Measuring by itself does not make any sense. The guy does not become any fatter just by weighing." (Professor *Walter Herzog*, in "Das regulierte Schulkind", *Beobachter* from 2.20.2015)

Hence, the beneficiaries will be the Bertelsmen and Co. and the like: A solvent country like Switzerland with thousands of schools which are supplied with new teaching aids each year, especially tailored to Curriculum 21, in the form of software in particular ... And then the whole

series of tests including the related series of exercises plus the supplied test specialists for hundreds of thousands of students ... A roaring, an opportunity which the globalized world of education does not want to miss. *Jürg Brühlmann*, Head of Pedagogic Job Center at the LCH (*Dachverband der Schweizer Lehrerinnen und Lehrer*, Federation of Swiss teachers), continues to weave the thread, "It may well be that with this Curriculum 21 the privatization of Swiss schools is being advanced because it allows international providers to take over this service." (*Beobachter* from 20.2.2015) It's about time that the LCH-management is beginning to realize where to the apples are rolling. Surely, the LCH will not be harnessed for this business! In this regard, the Social Democratic Basel Councillor *Anita Fetz* notes, "In addition to this, the whole exercise is expensive. Very expensive. And the money is flowing into concrete, not education! In Basel for instance, the conversions of the schoolhouses with several hundred million francs engulf that much money that the Canton barely escapes the debt ceiling and for years cannot make major investments." (*Die Zeit* from 23.10.2014)

We see, for us who have still learned how to add up 2 and 2, things fall into place. The giant experiment of the Curriculum 21 means a billion dollar business for the producers of teaching materials and test software would batten on whole generations of students. By the way, this also applies for the hardware companies. For, all the "self-directed learning" and certainly the majority of tests are performed at the computer – every schoolchild his own laptop (along with the Kindergarten personnel!). For the construction industry and many trendy ar-

“Children need structured teaching directed by the teacher”

Interview with Dr med Elke Möller-Nehring, child and youth psychiatrist



Elke Möller-Nehring (picture ma)

A look beyond the borders can be enlightening, especially when it comes to developments in our own country, that have little in common with the actual tradition and the roots of our state. This is absolutely the case with the new Curriculum 21. It is interest-

ing that exactly the same transformation of the proven school education as in Switzerland is pursued in the conservative German state of Bavaria. In the following interview appalling parallels are pointed out by child and youth psychiatrist Dr med Elke Möller-Nehring, that give rise to the question where these education reforms come from.

Current Concerns: What is your criticism of the Bavarian Curriculum PLUS?

Dr Möller-Nehring: The Bavarian Curriculum Plus is actually a consequence of the curriculum that was already introduced in 2000. Since its implementation, this curriculum has already had such a strong impact in school classes that I realized that – if now again a new curriculum is to be introduced – attention should be paid to the things that are planned to be changed. What is picked up again, what will be new?

Was it easy for you to get information about it?

“Who benefits from Curriculum 21?”

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chitects there is a lot of profit to be made with so-called learning environments.

And what kind of schools do we citizens want?

Do we really want to hand over our schools just to have business flourishing? Certainly not! We do not leave our youth to the private sector, we certainly will not allow education companies from home and abroad to directly take hold of the students by means of coaching and testing and digital controlling of everybody and everything. The solid Swiss elementary school, one of the main institutions of the public sector that are rooted in the communes and cantons is not to become the privatized game ball of the traders. The citizen has to step out of the house and see what

No, not at all. What was interesting, was the fact, that there was no information at all in advance. There is a stone wall of silence from the Bavarian Ministry of Culture. Everything is decided behind closed doors. Only after completion, the curriculum will be available for inspection.

What was changed by the new curriculum in 2000?

Systematization, structure or in-depth practice have disappeared in favor of a motley variety, self-discovery and “everyone finds his or her way.” For example, in mathematics lessons: There is no longer any instruction in small steps how to find every time and easily the right solution. Instead, the students are supposed to find their own ways to solve a problem. One mother told me how big problems her son, second grade, had with that: You solve this type of task in this way and not otherwise, and that one in that way. This gave the child security and stability again and enabled him to cope with math again.

In Curriculum PLUS, this proceedings from the 2000 Curriculum are continued and established, this time codified with explicit reference to the concept of constructivism. New teaching methods are made compulsory for the teachers, namely in such a way that children are to learn in a self-directed way – i.e. alone dealing with their worksheets – and that the teacher should actively withdraw from the teaching process. He must no longer act as a knower, who teaches and imparts the children anything. His only task is to shape the learning environment in order to make self-regulated learning possible, and to adopt an advisory role in the background.

is going on at the front door. The school board, which has already been abolished in the one or another Canton, must reclaim its position as the basic democratic authority, elected by the people in the communes. In these boards the craftsman sits next to the doctor, the housewife and mother next to the farmer and father. At all times, the task of the school board has been to accompany and support the teachers, but it never usurped the mandate of monitoring them. We citizens will certainly not look on to watch how our school boards will be replaced by a centralized supervisory body that, detached from the democratic structure does testing, evaluating and maintaining the statistics. Now more than ever, the people in the cantons have to decide on the curriculum of the elementary school – and with common sense and democratic instinct they will take the proper decision. •

This is a completely wrong conception of teaching.

Can the consequences of the Curriculum revision in 2000, which you mentioned, already be perceived today?

The impact is to the effect that graduates start their apprenticeship or their studies with a remarkably less consolidated basis. The result is that, at the universities, professors have to offer courses in order to teach the basics, which formerly students had to bring along as a prerequisite for studying. The training masters can no longer rely on mathematical knowledge or consolidated spelling. Also as far as their conduct is concerned they notice ever more that young adults are not able to learn anything, to work something out in a focused manner – the modern teaching methods do not lead students to acquire such positive skills and attitude to work – and that they are willing to let themselves be instructed by an adult, which causes discontent in the training companies.

Do the training companies complain about these increasing deficits?

To this day, it is not yet recognized that there is a link existing between deficits of young people and the new Curriculum. Therefore, it is my intention to initiate a broad discussion in the population, so that people begin to realize what is actually going on here and where these developments come from.

Did I understand correctly, the shortcomings are realized, but their causes are still insufficiently recognized?

Yes, to date there is neither resistance from the teacher's associations nor from those of the parents, but teachers in the schools are totally bewildered and partly frustrated because what is prescribed in the curriculum, is not at all useful.

What does this exactly mean?

The Curriculum is competence-oriented and based on constructivism, both of which are of no use for the teacher. These are keywords which do not improve the quality of teaching. On the contrary. Teachers realize that their educational task is no longer appreciated, because by introducing such ideas as self-discovering learning, weekly work plans or individualized work orders, they are deprived of their pedagogical instruments. That is not what teachers want, while parents are increasingly burdened with the task of an assistant teacher, without whose support many students would fail; and chil-

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"Children need structured teaching ..."

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dren whose parents are not able to accomplish this task, really fail – should we really fall back to a two-class education system?

You mentioned constructivism, which in Switzerland is as well praised as a new insight for the reforms. There are even striking similarities to the Swiss Curriculum 21. What do we understand by constructivism? Constructivism assumes that every human being creates his or her own reality and that there is no truth and no reliable knowledge. From what it will find in the world, the child is to assemble itself a "reality", just corresponding to its current aim or its inner mood. The problem is, that in this way, children and young people do not get any more guidance. It is no longer taught that there are fundamentals and established knowledge but the child must discover and re-assemble everything itself. This is on the one hand overcharging the child and on the other hand often leads to total superficiality, because the foundation is missing. And of course it strongly relativizes all values and standards, indispensable for a peaceful coexistence and a well-functioning democracy.

What does that look like practically in the classroom?

Since competencies have priority over contents, children are to organise the lessons themselves today. In secondary school, for example, the countries of Europe are to be addressed in the 7th grade in geography. It is explicitly requested that students submit their work in the form of presentations. Apart from the fact that students do not learn how to structure a solid presentation, they are not able to give a substantiated overview from the material they have collected in the Internet. That would request a university course. Teachers once completed such a course of study, a didactic training, and now the children are to teach each other with their unstructured prior knowledge. But this is outrageous and there is no learning effect. The learners who should work together are sometimes very discouraged because they can not develop ideas in order to approach the task in a useful way. They have a flood of unstructured information and not the slightest idea what to do with it and ultimately they resign. ...

... You can hardly believe that this should be the future of our schools ...

... But, unfortunately, it is. Look at the following example: In a group of four, the students were to develop the presentation. One of them immediately took his phone out and started playing games, because the task was too much for him. There is no teacher to guide the young people and to give them support and help them cope with the diffi-

culties. Being left completely on their own, without any guidance, without any contact with the teacher, is expecting too much of the young people.

How does this affect the learners?

This leads to complete uncertainty, it causes discouragement and in the worst case, the feeling of being stupid. This often results in behavioural abnormalities among young people, why they are often referred to a psychologist or psychiatrist. I am a psychiatrist for children and adolescents and see such cases in my practice in great numbers. The young people are pathologized and, for a lifetime, have to carry a heavy burden, which they will hardly get rid of. But this is not necessarily so.

What is your idea of good teaching?

We have to assume that today many children and young people are no longer able to adjust to another person. The child and adolescent psychiatrist and author Dr Michael Winterhoff maintains that today's young people entering education institutions have accomplished an emotional development corresponding to a 16-months-old child. It is in such a condition that the children come to the first class.

This is frightening.

Yes, it actually takes a mandatory post-maturing. The children's entire personal development, however, requires an adult counterpart. The teacher must be aware of that. He is the person towards whom the children orientate themselves; he shows them the way. This means they need a structured and guided instruction by the teacher who proceeds in small steps with precise guidance and correction. Since a relationship develops between the teacher and the young people, understanding, encouraging and targeted support of the child become possible. This also means that the teacher demands something of the students. In order to do so a personal relationship is needed. Primary school teachers could play that part, because there is the class teacher principle at primary schools. They could bring the children forward to this post-maturing. These logically structured lessons and the relationship between teacher and students are the basis of successful teaching.

The teacher can, as you describe his task, respond to the pupils more specifically than these new forms that are planned in the Curriculum PLUS. The children are left to themselves here.

The children are disorientated and muddle along somehow. Thereof another aspect results: Since the individualising and self-directed learning are in focus, the whole classroom teaching is cut off completely. The class community is the very best situation for children to learn from each other. The weak

student who listens to the questions of the other classmates and that way learns the answers as well; so he learns a lot, even if he did not dare to ask the question. The children learn to refer to each other, to listen to each other. Under the expert hands of an experienced teacher, they can become a community where they can learn everything they need later in our society and our democracy. So they will be capable of democracy. All this disappears within the "learning centers", where each individual has only his individual progress in view. The classmate does not count or presents even a disturbance.

You can actually say that the Curriculum PLUS and even the Curriculum 2000 is a paradigm shift with respect to school education.

Yes!

The teachers only become ...

... coaches or learning guides ...

... and the students are left to themselves and to develop something in the sense of constructivism, which has nothing to do with reality. You ask yourself why such thing is introduced in our schools against one's better knowledge?

These are clear ideological aims. It all comes from economy oriented circles, of course not from the middle class, but from the major international industry and high finance. They want people to be controlled. Children who have no relation to the community and no longer focus on adults, can be controlled. They are so unrelated that they can be easily manipulated. And the education sector is an extremely lucrative market.

What do the parents think, nobody who is halfway reasonable can approve of that?

This is something we Bavarian parents do not want under any circumstances. A lot of parents notice that many things do not run properly, but they can't classify the operations. That is my task now, to explain to parents what is going on here. For this reason, we have written a letter to parents entitled "Eltern für eine gute Bildung" (Parents for a good education.) We want an education in the sense of the humanistic tradition to give an education for everyone. So that each person is in a position to judge the world and to help shaping the political process. This is what we want to come back to and our parents group wrote the letter to parents that can be downloaded from the Internet address www.eltern-fuer-gute-bildung.de. We would be delighted if it could be spread and a discussion initiated by it.

Dr Möller-Nehring, thanks for the interesting conversation.

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)

“The polytechnic secondary school used to establish a connection between learning in school and working life”

A conversation in the Glass Museum of Weisswasser

Current Concerns: In many European countries, including Switzerland, there has since long been an acute shortage of STEM professionals, i.e. professionals with a focus on mathematics, computer sciences, natural sciences and technology. There are no longer many graduates who trust themselves to study subjects in this area, and probably this is not least due to the fact that schools no longer adequately teach the basics of these subjects. This view is backed up by the large number of college drop-outs. Recently, a businessman in Ilmenau told me that Germany does no longer offer a tertiary education for engineers, but only a course of studies leading to a Master of Business Administration, often without imparting any technical knowledge, but aimed at turning businesses inside out to trim them into efficiency, and often ruining them in the process. This was different in former times.

In the former GDR great importance was attached to a good education, above all in the field of the technical occupations. The professionals trained there were certainly very popular in the West. I suggest that today we speak about schools and education in the GDR era, with a special focus on the polytechnic secondary school.

Gotthard Bläsche: First let me say a word about the current situation. Far too few skilled workers are being trained in Germany today, and there are far too many students who break off their studies. Currently, the Chamber of Trade is making efforts to reach out to these drop-outs in order to enable them to complete a skilled labour training course.

Christa Stolze: I must say that the best engineering graduates were the ones who learned a profession before taking up their studies. Those of my apprentices who had first completed their vocational education and then took up their studies were of use, but those young people who after school first went to university and then came to us, were of no use at all. This is my experience in the industry.

Hans Schäfer: I would like to confirm that. I know a whole number of glass engineers who graduated from our technical college for glass art and then found themselves in the west after the turnaround. There they had to face all the differences that had accumulated in the course of the years. And precisely when it comes to work in practice, I have to say that in this respect, our people were much better than the Westerners. They brought with them skills and were willing and able to carry something through and to go looking for solutions if something was out of order, all of which

left their Western colleagues pretty thunderstruck.

Christa Stolze: The Westerners sat down and waited until the spare part arrived and the craftsmen came to repair what was broken. The Bavarians always said: Those “Ossies” (Easterners) are good – they can work even if something is broken. For us in East Germany that had simply been necessary, because we had got nothing. After all, we picked up each piece of wire and we hammered crooked nails until they were straight again. The shortage economy made people inventive. I do not know how you look at that, since as the headmaster of the Vocational School Centre you were much closer.

Gotthard Bläsche: Exactly, that was due to the fact that we possessed so little. We had to face difficult conditions, there was no Marshall Plan, we had high reparations to pay to Russia and we suffered from the economic sanctions imposed by the West.

Of course you can always only give an individual view on things, because everyone has his or her own adventures and experiences, but I believe that society has become quite complacent in many respects, sleek and calm and not particularly willing to make an effort. I also observed this among students in general or among our students at college: They often exerted themselves only up to a certain degree when tasks were assigned. Rather often the effort did not continue right up to the solution. And I think more emphasis should be placed on this in childcare, education and training. This is the alpha and omega, especially where technical occupations are concerned.

Technical Jobs are, curiously enough, not quite as much in demand any longer. A few years ago, we had an information event in Krauschwitz, where the secondary schools of the region presented themselves. Our vocational school centre and various companies and representatives of institutions were also present. We were placed in a large room, together with a carpenter’s shop. But the carpenters were not very popular, although this is a wonderful profession. I think this is because too little knowledge about this and other technical professions is taught to our young people at school.

We always had quite good cooperative relations with the secondary schools of the region – in Krauschwitz, Schleife, Weisswasser – and we conducted project days, during which their students came to us and we showed them how, for example, electrical engineering or carpentry works. Our carpenters did things with the students and

suddenly mathematics became interesting and they had to figure something out or else the piece would not have turned out perfect. Afterwards the students were really enthusiastic about what they had learned. I think, today too little of such things are done.

There is not only a shortage of engineers, but we also have far too few teachers who are well-trained in natural sciences. Nobody wants to be a teacher of mathematics, physics or chemistry any longer. Much the same applies to the area of professional training: No-one wants to be a teacher of metal or electrical engineering any longer. Technology is often considered to be difficult even by primary school teachers, and that keeps young people from taking this direction.

Current Concerns: And that used to be different at GDR times?

Evelin Hubatsch: We used to have the prevocational polytechnic secondary schools for all students from the first to the tenth grade. From there you went on to high school, first after the eighth and later after the tenth grade. Each of the polytechnic secondary schools had a close connection to one or more partner companies. Work in the school garden, handicrafts and needlework were taught as polytechnic subjects in the first to the sixth grade. In the seventh to the tenth grade, students used to spend one day a month in the partner companies, and there they had to actually work.

For instance, I was in the iron foundry Keulahütte in Krauschwitz. That is not exactly a job where you put on a white coat. I had to make moulds for the foundry, so I had to lay bricks properly. But this way one learnt to appreciate the value of these people’s work, who stood their ground day after day. Students built up an understanding of the profession and some of them would develop a career wish in this direction.

Gotthard Bläsche: The labour stints were put down on the timetable as subjects to be studied – as productive work (PA), and as Introduction to Socialist Production (ESP) for the theory lessons. In the theory lessons we learned for instance technical drawing and the like. And in the practical work stints we filed and drilled and learned many other craft skills in the companies, skills needed by a locksmith or electrician or whatever.

I went to an industrial company, but buddies of mine were assigned to agricultural work and spent their labour stint day there. Every week they spent four hours on the farms, and after that they mostly had

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another two or three school lessons. You were also graded for PA and ESP in your report.

As the young people got to know agriculture, industrial plants and whatever else there was, they had a real idea of what to expect in these professions.

Evelin Hubatsch: Up to the fourth grade of the polytechnical senior classes, German lessons were predominant, as we had ten to fourteen lessons a week. After thoroughly learning the German language, the focus was put on the subjects of mathematics, science and technology.

Hans Schäfer: For human beings, language and thought go hand in hand anyway. If you have no command of the language, you can neither think properly, and today that is partly lacking even where the language is part of a profession.

Current Concerns: The West is heading into a completely different direction. For example, the OECD calls for more and more academics, although it is known that the countries with the highest rates of high school graduates also have the highest unemployment rates. Under the pretext that the “knowledge society” requires this, practical knowledge is more and more being reduced and destroyed.

Listening to you makes me wonder whether it would not have made sense to sit down together at the time of the turnaround and think about what parts of the two school systems were worth preserving and then to co-ordinate and merge them?

Gotthard Bläsche: After the turnaround everything we had done was wrong as a matter of principle. We were not asked.

Referring to what you said about the theories of the OECD: I think we will always need practically oriented people; the world is not theoretical. It takes a lot of crafts knowledge. The requirements have indeed changed, because other gadgets and devices are available which have to be operated and controlled, but it is still important to learn

Station of young natural scientists and technicians, Weisswasser

ds. The station of young natural scientists and technicians offers extra-curricular youth education. Providing opportunities in natural science and tech-oriented fields as well as creative programs geared towards those more interested in artistic fields, it seeks to support the youth in determining where their professional future might lie – an important task that schools, often are unable to oversee properly. During a recent visit, the station’s director *Bernd Frommelt* explained the dilemma: “During my time at school in the former German Democratic Republic, we used to have a subject called ‘productive work’ which was no longer taught after the reunification. Even though the work wasn’t always fun for us kids, we were still able to get to know different professions and could also see whether we were or maybe weren’t suited for a particular job. Here at the station, kids are given the opportunity to try out different things – working with wood, metal and other materials, either in the field of electronics or within nature. They are given the chance to ask themselves: “Am I patient enough to build a model ship with the help of a construction plan – every week over the span of an entire year – to release it into the water in the end? Or am I more interested in nature or electronics? We, along with seasoned professionals, also offer a camp focused on digital technology for

those particularly interested – for the potential future engineers.”

Last year, the station worked on a project based on the idea of rediscovering old fruit varieties. “Due to the progression of brown coal open-pit mining and the uniformization of the products – every apple has to have the same size and isn’t allowed to have any discoloration – many of the old fruit varieties have vanished and are almost extinguished”, *Frommelt* stated. The station collaborates with a specialist that, together with the kids, visits the areas taken over by brown coal open-pit mining. They collect branches of old apple varieties before these villages will be cleared out.



general things, to try out things and to be able to put two and two together.

I have found that among young people disorientation often leads to a lack of motivation. If they do not know what’s coming up, then they are unwilling to work. Overall however, I think that the young people are no less efficient today than young people were in the past. This also depends on the school. I have great respect for some schools around here which are doing an excellent job and educate their students quite well. Only I imagine that there is often too little coherence, that students do not know

what can be done with what they have learnt and how they can link together what they have learnt. They often do not know what it might do for them. The conception of this causal relation is often lacking.

In the polytechnic secondary school, the effect was that young people learned something at school, for example in mathematics, they went to the company and they noticed: If I want to solve that, I’ll have to be able to do the maths. As a result, there was a connection between learning at school and working life.

Petition against Curriculum 21 successful in St Gallen

The non-partisan association *Starke Volksschule St.Gallen* submitted its petition “Yes to HarmoS exit” on 27 March. With 7,017 signatures, 75 % more than the required were collected.

With those very strong results, voters in St Gallen have emphasised their wish for a change in educational policy. Apparently, citizens have become increasingly worried that the educational system might be harmed further by Curriculum 21, competence orientation, self-organised learning and the foreign language concept.

The listing up of pseudo-skills and semi-knowledge, as demanded by Curriculum 21 does not result in a solid education. “Educational experts” have seemingly taken it upon themselves to transfer the simple task of a reasonable harmonization of education into a large-scale educational control and ideologization of the school without having been legitimised by the Swiss people to do so.

From the press release: Starke Volksschule St. Gallen

Participants in the discussion were: Evelin Hubatsch, former chief executive of the Lausitzer Glaswerke GmbH (Lusatia Glassworks Ltd.), Christa Stolze, former head of decoration of the Porzellanwerk Weisswasser (Weisswasser Porcelain Plant), Gotthard Bläsche, Head of the Vocational School Centre in Weisswasser up to the year 2013, Hans Schäfer, former lecturer at the Glasfachschule Weisswasser (Weisswasser Vocational School for Glass), as well as Jochen Exner, second chairman of the friends’ association “Glasmuseum Weisswasser” and Dieter Sprock for Current Concerns.