

Current Concerns

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Federal referendum of 5 June 2016

Which direction should the public service in Switzerland take? Reflections on the popular initiative “Pro Public Service”

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

One of the referendum proposals on which the Swiss electorate will vote on 5 June is the Swiss popular initiative “Pro Public Service”. The initiative wants public enterprises to first and foremost target the common good instead of mainly aiming to fill the federal treasury. It is above all a matter of the three large national companies – Swiss Federal Railways (SBB), Swiss Post and Swisscom. (Other public service sectors such as water, electricity, hospitals and schools are run by the cantons and communes.)

Behind the initiative are the consumer magazines “K-Tipp”, “balance”, “Bon à Savoir” (Nice to Know) and “Spendere Meglio” (How to Spend Better).

Now it should be obvious to everyone that the Swiss Post and the SBB, the two public businesses par excellence, should first and foremost serve the people and not be aimed at generating a return. Interestingly, however, the popular initiative “Pro Public Service” is rejected by all political actors in unison: In the final vote on 25 September 2015 the National Council with 196 to zero votes recommended voters to reject the initiative, and the Council of States counted 43 to zero votes for recommending rejection. Vote results of this kind are extremely rare. Consequently, all political parties have agreed to vote against the initiative, as have the most important organisations, i.e. the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (SGB), *economiesuisse* etc., and also the SGV (“Gemeindeverband”, Association of Swiss Communes), the SSV (“Städteverband”, Union of Swiss Cities and Towns) and the SAB (“Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Berggebiete”, Swiss Working Group for Mountain Regions).

So what does the people’s initiative “Pro Public Service” want? Why is it so fiercely fought? In order to tackle these issues, it is necessary to first reflect on the true meaning of public service, i.e. the primary care guaranteed by the state, in order to deal with the current situation and possible future developments.

Text of the initiative

Art. 43 b Principles of basic services by the federal government

- 1 In the field of primary care, the federal government does not strive for profit. It dispenses with the cross-subsidization of other administrative areas and has no fiscal interests.
- 2 The principles referred to in paragraph 1 shall apply mutatis mutandis also to companies that have a legal mandate in the field of Federal basic services or are controlled directly or indirectly by the Confederation through majority participation. The Confederation shall ensure that salaries and fees of the employees of these companies do not exceed those paid by the federal administration.
- 3 The law shall define the details; in particular, it delineates the basic services as separate from the other services and ensures transparency on the cost of basic services and the disposition of the corresponding revenues.

The demands contained in the initiative

The promoters explain the three basic demands of their initiative in a generally intelligible way:

- “1. Public enterprises shall aim at promoting the welfare of the population and not strive for the highest possible profits for the Federal Treasury. Good service must be more important than profit.
2. Profits are to be retained in the federal enterprises and to be reinvested there for maintenance and improvement, i.e. railway profits for the railways and postal profits for the post. Today, however, all surpluses are transferred to the federal treasury. Hence, the initiative strengthens the federal enterprises.
3. The higher salaries in federal enterprises should not exceed those in the federal administration. It is incomprehensible that federal councillor *Doris Leuthard* earns 475.000 Swiss Francs per year, while her de facto subordinate *Andreas Meyer* (CEO SBB) has twice as much, name-

ly 1,046,186 Swiss Francs and *Swisscom* CEO *Urs Schäppi* (Chef *Swisscom*) even makes 1.832 million Swiss francs, which is three times the amount. Especially since it has been proven that the performance of a manager does not improve as his salary rises. [...]” (<http://proservicepublic.ch>)

Press ahead with globalization or slow it down?

Opponents argue that an acceptance of the initiative would restrict entrepreneurial freedom and competitiveness, and a waiver of profit in basic services would stifle innovation and ultimately weaken public service (Also see the interview with Professor *Schweizer* on page 2 of this newspaper). Moreover, *Doris Leuthard* threatened, a lack of dividends from *Swisscom* (580 million francs) and *post* (200 million Swiss Francs) might lead to tax increases and performance degradation. Most of the voices critical of the initiative express themselves in the same or a similar vein.

The fact is: Today the *Swiss Post*, *SBB* and *Swisscom* are public companies distributing dividends to their shareholders. The shares of *Post* and *SBB* are – “still” – completely in the hands of the federal government, says *Doris Leuthard*. The *SBB* makes no profit but is subsidized by the federal government. The *post* only makes a small profit with the mail and parcel transport – despite high prices for parcels! – but *PostFinance* is an exception, as besides the basic services (payment transactions) it also offers all banking transactions in its portfolio. *Swisscom* is – so *Mrs Leuthard* – “a listed company, of which the federal government still has more than 50% [of shares]; but there are about 73,000 other shareholders, which would also be affected by the initiative. With such a setting, the creditworthiness of the company would decrease, i.e., its stock would lose value.” (Media Conference of 5 April 2016)

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It needs a Hayek of hydropower

by Dr Ing Ernst Pauli

Nicolas Hayek has boosted the Swiss watch industry in a time marked by plant closures and high unemployment in the cantons affected. Isn't it true, that the in itself healthy Swiss hydroelectric power production needs the ideas and confidence of somebody like Nicolas Hayek in order to out of the current situation?

Now, the Swiss hydroelectric power stations contributed after all 56.4% to the power generation in 2014 and they need new approaches to be able to survive in the current economic environment. Ideas and confidence are to come from those being responsible for the energy supply, namely cantons and communes, which ultimately own shares of 88% of the power producing enterprises. The typical Swiss values Hayek advocates in such a dedicated way, long-term strategic thinking before short-term profit, job security in Switzerland, a "stand-alone policy that is not of always eyeing foreign countries"¹, are to be applied in this domain so critical to our country.

Politicians in the supervisory boards of the power producers do have a mission, namely to contribute the described values to the enterprise policy. As long as profits were gained, one has let companies such as Alpiq, Axpo and BKW have their way. They have invested in countless plants, especially abroad, with some kind of "hunter strategy" already followed by the former *SwissAir*, which now at times of the strong franc and the lowest wholesale prices for electricity impact the balance sheets of the

utilities. The now pursued way out of the current crisis, namely to sell domestic hydropower plants to foreign private investors can only cause a head shaking. These investors, also the foreign ones, seem to see a very long-term perspective in the Swiss hydroelectric power. Professor *Anton Gunzinger* impressively describes in his book "Kraftwerk Schweiz" (Powerplant Switzerland), that within the framework of *energy strategy 2050* with brave and clever use of all technical possibilities a self-sufficiency of Switzerland is last but not least possible using hydropower. His working hypothesis is: "Do we want to be energy-independent in case needed?" This also means that self-sufficiency requires at least partial phase-out from the free market drifting along hopelessly and which is entirely mislead running at prices that don't even cover the production costs of the established energy production.

Reportedly, the prices are so low because new subsidised renewable energy, mainly from Germany is flooding the market. The on-going aberration, namely that old (German) coal plants, long since fully depreciated and to be closed for environmental reasons are just kept running, without having the politics acting against this, is denounced, but plants are not finally closed. This development is accepted unquestioningly, as if a natural event had taken place. Also absolutely meaningful innovative concepts such as the expansion of power plants around the Lago Bianco in the Poschiavo Val-

ley to a large pumped storage plant and many other approaches to environmentally-friendly power generation, which would strengthen the Swiss energy supply, are taken back for "economic" reasons. The same applies to a long list of water plants, which are queuing on a list waiting for compensatory remuneration (KEV in Switzerland), but do not get the crucial political and financial support.

Out of this situation new ideas should be generated. If it is true, that the investment decisions are not taken because of missing short-term profitability considerations, then this must exactly be questioned. Isn't it that money is in circulation in abundance, that even negative interest rates are to be paid because of all that superfluous money not invested? If you think and combine this with the fact that in particular the current cost of financing of new investments in power generation represents a high share of the cost, then an economic operation of hydropower plants would be possible without these costs and the cantons and communes could reopen by political decisions the way for strategic investments. A waiver of various taxes and levies to communes and cantons could make the hydroelectric power again competitive. Ideas and confidence are needed. •

¹ *Current Concerns* No 8, 19 April 2016, excerpt from an SRF-Interview with Nicolas Hayek (Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Which direction should ..."

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Comment: The liberalisation of Swiss Post and SBB, two former federal administrative departments, is well advanced. Swisscom is in the stock market, which means that it *has to make* high profits, in other words, it is under the thumb of the globalized, "free" market. The monopoly of the Swiss post in the letter and parcel carriage business was attacked violently under the pressure of the liberalised EU market, but also by Swiss business leaders; it has successively been degraded to a residual mini-monopoly for letters up to 50 grams of weight, and even this remnant is being violently attacked by *economiesuisse*: "The Federal Council wishes to retain the residual monopoly on letter mail. In this way it will cement the superiority of the state post and paralyse competitive dynamics in the Swiss market. Business customers will pay the bill. *Economiesuisse* does not agree with this view and demands the immediate opening of the

market". (*economiesuisse* on 18 September 2015; <http://www.economiesuisse.ch/de/node/40699>)

This is where the popular initiative "Pro Public Service" comes into action with its first claim, namely that public enterprises should aim at the benefit of the population and not at the highest possible profits for the Federal Treasury.

Why not take a pause and reconsider the development of recent decades? Do we want to propel the still relatively good Swiss public service by leaps and bounds further into the liberalisation trap, into privatisation and globalisation? Or should we remember the co-operative basic idea of a public service aimed at the common good? We say: Sometimes it is advisable to recollect ones roots.

The Swiss Post

The Swiss Post (*die Schweizer Post, la Poste Suisse, la Posta Svizzera, la Posta Svizra*) is almost as old as the Swiss Federal State. The Federal Postal Administration was established on 1 January 1849 and re-

placed the previous cantonal postal administrations. Thereby the federal government obtained the monopoly for *transporting letters, packages, people and remittances and in return guaranteed reliable comprehensive and inexpensive service for the population*. From 1906 on there was a *National Giro Service*, the forerunner of today's *PostFinance*. In 1920 postal, telephony and telegraphy services were brought together under a common administration and had been called *PTT*.

Telephone charges and cashless payment transactions financed all postal services

In the period after the Second World War making phone calls has in fact become a "national sport"; in 1948, Switzerland already had 500,000 telephone subscribers, in 1959 their number reached a million. In the same year the Swiss telephone network became the first fully automated network in the world.²

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The initiative can be implemented in a way that meaningful investment will be promoted

Interview with Prof Dr Rainer Schweizer, former Professor of Public Law, including European and International Law, University of St. Gallen

Preliminary note: before each question there is a quote from the Federal Council's commentary in the booklet they sent to each household prior to a vote (henceforth referred to as 'booklet')

Booklet p.10: "The adoption of the initiative would lead to a restriction of the freedom to conduct business and competitiveness. The federal-related companies would not be allowed to strive for profit, which would discourage innovation and development in basic services. That would weaken the public service."

Current Concerns: Is it true that the innovation and the development of SBB, Post and Swisscom would be restricted if there was a Yes to the initiative? Or in other words: would they have to use its income solely for better services, thus cheaper train tickets and parcels, more operated railway ticket offices and the reopening of the closed post offices?

Prof Rainer Schweizer: There are several private and public companies which strive for profits, but for certain reasons do not distribute profits. The legislature, which implements the constitution, can determine how the profits are to be used, one being to reduce the price of the services of the public service for the country's residents, on the other hand if necessary also on substantive, technical and operational innovations and developments. For example, the fact that the various products of SBB are now available on Internet and iPhone is consistent with the initiative text. The same applies to the large investments which Swisscom puts in the network expansion. The initiative can be implemented in a way that such efforts are not hindered but promoted by the concentration of resources.

Booklet p.7: The initiative calls for "to pursue in the field of basic services no fiscal interests". This is to ensure, "that profits of the public companies based on basic provision of services will not be distributed in the form of dividends to the federal government."

So, should the corporations be transformed in different types of companies at a Yes for the initiative?

This is not necessary; certain adjustments in the federal laws and regulations would be sufficient.

Booklet, page 6/7: "According to the initiative text the cross-subsidisation of other divisions would be prohibited. It is unclear if this refers to the cross-subsidisation within the federal state, within the nation-related companies or to the cross-subsidisation from companies to the federal state."*

* the initiative text states "other management areas", which is a distortion of the initiative text.

Which cross-subsidisations would be banned by the initiative?

"Cross-subsidisation in other administrative areas", which means areas with different purposes would be prohibited, so for example, from the postal services to logistics departments of the army.

Booklet, p.6: "Within the public service cross-subsidies are common. Due to the fact that less profitable services are financed by income from profitable services, everybody receives the same services at the same price and the same quality: this is why a priority letter (A-Post) costs the same to any destination in Switzerland."

So the Federal Council has understood what kind of cross-subsidisation the initiative allows?

The commentary of Federal Council provides a true example of the allowed "cross-subsidisation" within the full

range of postal services. The Postal Act already regulates in Art. 19 that the income generated by the postal services from the reserved services may not be used for cross-subsidisation for services outside the provision of basic service.

Booklet, p.10: "In case of an adoption of the initiative the federal-related companies would have to adhere to more stringent accounting standards. They would have to separate provision of basic services from other services in their accounts."

Would such a definition in terms of transparency not in any case be desirable?

Such information in invoices would be very useful. The post offices today sell a range of products, whose profitability would be interesting to know.

Thanks for the interview, Professor Schweizer.

(Interview Marianne Wüthrich)



Prof Dr Rainer Schweizer (picture made)

"Which direction should ..."

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At this point, older age groups recollect – fortunately, because this information is not readily available on the web! – how the PTT worked as a federally administered public business – with the enormous surpluses earned by telephone charges and cashless payment transactions the PTT was able to finance all its other departments without any problems. So the postage for letters and packages remained low,

every little village had its own post office, and the post buses went even to quite remote mountain villages. Thus it was possible to guarantee an excellent public service for everyone. Today we would say that the PTT's necessary investments and innovations were cross-subsidised by the surpluses of individual departments.

Then the spirit of liberalisation came upon Swiss politicians: The optimally yielding telephony department was separated from the rest of the post in 1998; the Swisscom Corporation was founded and

gradually partially privatised. The Confederation currently still holds somewhat over 50% of the shares. However this share may quickly fall below half on the stock market, if that is the Parliament's wish.

The Swiss Post has also become a corporation since 1 January 2013. The Federation still holds 100% of the Swiss Post AG shares – until now! But the choice of the legal form of a corporation suggests that there are plans for a gradual privatisation.

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"Which direction should ..."

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Although the Post brings large profits to the Federal Treasury, its services are being industriously cut back on: "In the last 15 years 1,800 post offices – more than half of all post rooms – have been closed."³

Many villages are seriously affected by no longer having a post office, because its own post office as well as its own village shop and its own primary school are important components in the formation of a Swiss village's identity. Federal Councilor Leuthard's assertion in a media conference that the post offices are being closed because people write emails instead letters, is simply wrong: in 2015 the post carried 2.172 billion addressed letters and over 115 million parcels. Any seasoned postman asked about this would reply that he has not noticed less correspondence yet ...

The profitable cashless payment transactions were spun off to the *PostFinance AG*, a subsidiary of *Swiss Post AG*, in 2013. Nobody guarantees that the *PostFinance AG* will not, like *Swisscom*, land on the stock exchange one day and be at least partly left to the free market ...

SBB

On 20 February 1898, the Swiss electorate agreed with 386,634 against 182,718 votes to the acquisition of private railways by the federal government and the founding of a "*Schweizerische Bundesbahnen SBB*" (Swiss Federal Railways). The SBB was founded in 1902 and has since successively set up its infrastructure for a nationwide public transport, along with other railway companies, with the post office, shipping companies and mountain railways.

In 1999, the SBB was spun off from the Federal Administration and has been an incorporated company ever since.

But even today, there are also numerous private railways in operation in Switzerland, which are, as a rule, run by private limited companies. Many of them are narrow-gauge railways, so that they cannot run on the SBB railway network, but they are fully integrated into the SBB timetable. For most private railways, the cantons have the majority of shares. For instance the *Appenzell Railway* has been in existence since 1875, has been merged over time with other

eastern Swiss private railways and is now called *Appenzell Railways*. This is a corporation owned by the Confederation, the cantons of St. Gallen, Appenzell Outer Rhodes and Appenzell Inner Rhodes, the city of St. Gallen, various other cities and communities, as well as private shareholders. The *Rhaetian Railway* as a second example. This is however not a private railway, but became the Grisons state railway after a referendum in 1897.

As to the service provided by the SBB: It is well known that train tickets and the one-year passes are becoming more expensive. Likewise, every commuter knows that during peak times there is not enough seating provided in the express trains connecting towns and cities – if one cannot afford a first-class pass for 5,970 Swiss Francs per year. And anyone who does not know how to work the ticket vending machines may well miss his or her train because there is no one there who to help or advise him. Thus there is some need for action even for the SBB to provide better public service ...

Conclusion: "Pro public service" – a pause for thought in this era of globalisation and TiSA

Even the provision with basic supplies should have to "be able to keep up with trends such as digitisation, globalisation [...]" The necessary innovation and investment would be prevented by the initiative. "*Further liberalisation is indicated, more than the present market and competition is necessary, not less,*" says *Regine Sauter*, national councillor of the Zurich Free Democrats, president of the Zurich Chamber of Commerce, at a press conference on 5 April 2016.

What do our basic services have to do with globalisation? What place do our postmen and our railway staff have abroad? Which are the innovations and investments Ms Sauter and other business leaders are thinking of?

Is this an example? "In 2007 *Swisscom* forked out around 7 billion francs for the acquisition of the Italian telecommunications company *Fastweb*. This purchase is increasingly becoming a major flop. Present low point: the billion-francs-write-off of last December, which reduced *Swisscom* net income by around 1.2 billion Swiss Francs".⁴

Remember what Mrs Leuthard said at the press conference? At federal and cantonal level everyone was very happy about the high taxes paid by *Swisscom*. Together with the Swiss post, it had delivered *half a billion francs of taxes on income* in 2015. If it paid less, the Confederation and the cantons would have to raise taxes or cut spending ...

Well well – and what about the 1.2 billion that have seeped into the global market?

The popular initiative "Pro Public Service" thankfully gives us citizens the opportunity to take a pause and to return to the direct democratic and cooperative principles, with which we have always fared well in our political system. A Swiss public service company may not use the capital the taxpayers have entrusted it with for speculative transactions or expansion abroad.

A word on salaries: An SBB or Swiss post CEO should not take up this position merely on account of the high salary. If the many municipal councillors and school administrators accepted their mandates only for the payment, we would have to chuck up the sponge. Because most of them are paid much higher wages in their regular occupation than in their part-time commission. And those who engage themselves at a full-time level – like most cantonal government councillors – would probably earn a lot more in the private sector, given their training and professional experience. Direct democracy does not only confer rights, but also duties; and we all have to help carry the responsibility for the whole thing, the entirety.

Finally let me mention a very central argument that has up to now hardly been put in the balance. If the Initiative Pro Public Service is accepted by the Swiss people, this means a clear ban on the tie-down of Switzerland to *TiSA*, which is being planned by the Federal Council: The risk that all service areas including primary care – the exclusion of which has not been credibly established – would be thrown into the insatiable maw of global conglomerates, might for now be averted. Slowly the balance is inclining towards the other side. •

¹ (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die_Schweizerische_Post)

² (<http://nachsendedienst.ch/die-geschichte-der-post-in-der-schweiz/>)

³ (<http://proservicepublic.ch>)

⁴ (<http://proservicepublic.ch/index.php?id=15>)

Collective commitment to our security

by Pierre-Gabriel Bieri

Because of the expected inflow of migrants the Federal Council plans to support border controls by deployment of the army. This will lead to inconveniences for the population and barriers for companies. We should brace ourselves up for that. At the same time we need to bear in mind that the security of a country is one of the main preconditions for its prosperity.

Shifting migration flows

For several months Europe has been confronted with endless flows of migration from Africa and the Middle East. After a period of hesitation, in which thousands of nameless people – without knowledge of their origin – could enter, now several central European countries and Balkan states responded and closed their bor-

“It is, however, to be considered that the safety and stability of a country are important conditions for its prosperity and those come at a price.”

ders. Blocking the access to Germany and Scandinavian countries will likely lead the next wave of migrants to choose the route via Italy and Switzerland.

This prospect, underpinned by “unsettling” reports, had lead Federal Councillor *Guy Parmelin*, Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (VBS), to target support of the *Bor-*

der Guard and police forces on the southern border of Switzerland by the army. A decision on the nature and modalities of such a mission is probably imminent. According to media reports, already four battalions of about 4,000 soldiers received a letter announcing a change in of their planned summer training.

In a time in which we have become accustomed to believe that nothing and no one could threaten us and the army is no longer of any use for us, this announcement may sound strange. Reality is now hitting back: The peace in which we have lived for 70 years, is indeed a unique opportunity, but not to be taken for granted, and the army itself remains necessary, even in the era of “cyber attacks” to secure the territory. The various forms of international cooperation are useful preventive instruments, but – as the current situation in Europe shows – in crisis times every state hastens to take its security into their own hands. Recently it was announced that Austria has also mobilised its army for border controls.

Restrictions on population and businesses

Fortunately there is currently no veritable conflict; the soldiers are used to control the people at the border and ensure that each and every entrant is correctly checked and recorded, and that the number of travellers entering does not exceed the feasible. Nevertheless, such an effort will cause inconvenience for the affected population, and some will see their private activities and summer projects overturned or restricted.

Resorting to the militia army will likely also affect the activities of certain companies, as they have to deal with unplanned absences of their staff. The VBS chief executive officer is aware of this and has already gone on record. Press had also been reported on this concern.

However, to put this into perspective, it should be mentioned that the charges due to military absences have decreased significantly and are today much lower than absences due to sickness or maternity – which are not predictable by definition. It is therefore to be hoped that the companies will be good with any possibly additional absences during this summer.

The price of security

It is not the question of denying the cost of these absences or the associated difficulties. But if there is a constant and persistent fight against the smallest increase of cost that are imposed on the private sector, we know very well what these absences mean. It is, however, to be considered that the safety and stability of a country are important conditions for its prosperity and those come at a price. This is reflected in special efforts of individuals and the population as whole.

The best thing you can do is to be prepared. In this respect we can be grateful to Federal Councillor *Parmelin* for immediately and transparent information. •

(Translation *Stefanie Meier-Gubser*)

Source: www.centrepatronal.ch from 20 April 2016 No 2175

Letter to  the Editor

The citizen's right

After the outcome of the referendum in the Netherlands against the EU Association Agreement with the Ukraine, various politicians and the media wanted to deprive the citizens of the right to vote on such issues in future.

To deprive citizens of their maturity because they act politically incorrect or vote the “wrong” way, is a kind of behaviour “dominating the others” and violating the principle of equality of human beings and their dignity. For everyone is gifted with practical reason, can get information himself, come to insights and eventually also judge. Citizens are the sovereign, they are not only the source of state power,

and they hold it. This answers the dignity of man, in this case of the Dutch, as a given natural right of self-determination. The Dutch and the other nations of Europe do not need journalists or politicians like *Jean Asselborn* who act up as instructive masterminds and who never react subject-related to the many citizens' concerns towards the EU-policy and simply find them wrong instead. Consequently, still a lot of “explanatory work” would be necessary. Objections of the citizens are readily quashed by stereotypes such as right-wing populism, Euro-scepticism, or even enemies. Stereotypes are a linguistic tool of propaganda and lack any objectivity.

We do not have to put up with that as citizens of the different nations of Europe!

Incidentally, the popular revolt in Kiev did not serve “to free themselves from Russian encirclement” (so the “*Oberbergische Volkszeitung*” from 4 August 2016), but was initiated by the West with the geopolitical aim to enforce an annexation of the Ukraine to Europe by a violent coup. Thus, the voting behaviour of the Dutch is only understandable and logical concerning the EU Association Agreement.

Werner Voss, D-Wiehl

French foreign policy

“Diplomacy needs stability and a minimum of long-time perspective”

Interview by *Eléonore de Vulpillières* (“*Le Figaro*”) with *Renaud Girard*



Renaud Girard
(picture ma)

cc. With this interview from “*Le Figaro*” we introduce our readers to a critical look at the current foreign affairs of our western neighbouring country – a nuclear power, indeed.

At least since its Reintegration in the Nato,

the arbitrary and illegal start of the war against Libya and the clandestine action against Syria, a lot of Swiss are just wondering “*Wohin das Äpfelchen rollt**”, i.e., where and how this all going to play out. Twelve months from now, presidential elections will take place in France. For the time being, the number of candidates, official as well as unofficial, male and female, from the far left to the far right, has reached two dozen. Leading media, as well as domestic policy and foreign affairs are determined thereof, hardly less than in the USA. That is reason enough to look into current France and deal with a skilled expert’s analysis.

In the present interview as well as in his latest book, *Renaud Girard* draws conclusions about French foreign affairs in different areas, Near- and Middle-East, Russia, Europe and Africa. For him the blatantly neo-conservatively and pro-Atlantic French diplomacy is chasing ghosts instead of adapting to the reality.

Renaud Girard has studied in Paris and attended both famous high schools “*Ecole Nationale d’Administration*” (ENA) and “*Ecole Normale Supérieure*” and is a reserve officer. Therefore he has a high and broad educational level, which enables for him to gain a great deal of different elements without providing one-sided perspective. His analysis of the situations is based on objective, information made public, without involving secret service activities that he clearly knows. He is therefore able to deliver clear, understandable and comprehensible political analyses of the current international situation, and to refrain from hardly justifiable accusations. He is one of few French intellectuals who, although clearly belonging to the elites, grants himself the freedom to defend his ideals.

Le Figaro: Your book provides a broad vision of the contemporary French diplomacy, and its statement regarding recent world conflicts. How do you analyze the way France handled the Syrian crisis, and French participation in the last negotiations which started on 14 March in Geneva?

Renaud Girard: What is fascinating in these new negotiations, just as in the case of the ceasefire agreement of last 12 February, is that the opinion of the former mandatory power in Syria, France, didn’t matter at all. The United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran are major powers, whose position is much more important than that of France, absent from discussions through its own fault.

What is the purpose of diplomacy?

France’s first mistake was to withdraw from the game, further to the decision to close its embassy in Damascus in March 2012. You may disagree with the way a State deals with its opponents – France was entitled to blame *Bashar el-Assad* for his crackdown of the opposition protests – but you shouldn’t necessarily close your embassy. Diplomacy is used to talk to your opponents, your rivals, your potential enemies, and to ensure that in case of disagreement we are not going to end up with a war. It is not used to talk to your friends. Diplomacy should move towards fight against the main enemy, an essential

notion, although insufficiently used nowadays in the West.

How could French diplomacy have acted in resolving the crisis in Syria? Did the choice of the “neither-Bashar-nor-Daesh” compromise any crisis exit?

A diplomacy based on the “neither-Bashar-nor-Daesh” principle puts Assad and Daesh on the same level. However, Bashar never killed any Frenchmen, he is not the one who came and killed our children in our very streets – but the “Islamic State” did! It is thus the IS which is the main enemy to fight. To maintain an embassy in Damascus means ensuring the presence of our intelligence services on-site, and fostering knowledge of the whereabouts of the jihadists gone to fight in Syria.

The radical-socialist governments of the years 1935–1936, had no particular friendship for the Bolshevik regime. They did not yet create an alliance with USSR in opposition with National Socialist Germany as *Sadi Carnot* had been able to form with tsarist Russia against Kaiser *Wilhelm II*’s Germany in 1892. This French-Russian alliance saved us in 1914; its absence affected us badly in 1940. *Hitler* wrote in “*Mein Kampf*” that he wanted “to break France”. He was our main enemy, way ahead of the

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Renaud Girard was born in New York in 1955. He is a historian, a journalist and an author and since 1984 international reporter to the french newspaper “*Le Figaro*”. He covered the big conflicts of the last thirty years and has built numerous personal relations with political, religious and military leaders, businessmen and entrepreneurs, diplomats, journalists and intellectuals all around the world.

As a geopolitician, he published, in addition to a large number of articles, analyses and reports, several books on the crises to the Near- and Middle-East: “*Pourquoi ils se battent. Voyages dans les guerres du Moyen-Orient*” [Why they wage wars. A journey in the Middle East wars] 2005, “*Retour à Peshawar*” [Return to Peshawar] 2010, “*Le Monde en marche*” [The world moving ahead] 2014 and its last work “*Le Monde en guerre. 50 clefs pour le com-*

prendre” [The world at war. 50 keys to understand it] 2016.



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"Diplomacy needs stability..."

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Soviets, whose ideology did not directly threaten French vital interests!

In 1941, *Churchill* said in the House of Commons, as some Conservative MPs blamed him for having formed an alliance with *Stalin*: "If Hitler had invaded hell, I would have tried to build an alliance with the devil."

"French diplomacy should consist in bringing Russia back in the European family, of which it forms an integral part since Peter the Great, instead of constantly taking it away. Russia is as European a country as Ukraine. *Shevchenko* is a big Ukrainian poet but the Russians *Dostoyevsky*, *Gogol*, or *Chekhov* belong just as much to our European civilization, which is Greco-Roman, Christian (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant), enlightened by the Enlightenment Europe."

Diplomacy needs stability and a long-term vision

In Syria, French diplomacy didn't want to face facts. If the Russians had not intervened and if Damascus had fallen last September, there would have been an immediate genocide of the Alawites – as apostates – and, at best, a general eviction of all Christians towards Lebanon. All churches in Damascus would have burned. Because even in Kosovo, in the presence of *NATO*'s regiments, 150 churches burned! Blinded by his ideology, *Laurent Fabius* [then French Foreign Minister] favored "neither-Bashar-nor-Daesh".

Diplomacy needs stability and a minimum of long-term vision. *Nicolas Sarkozy* invited Bashar el-Assad to the July 14th parade, on 2008's Bastille Day; maybe it was a bit too much, but this was done. It would have been necessary to rely on these existing relationships to tackle the 2011 crisis, to try to influence the Syrian regime in the right direction. Thus, what was the use of closing our embassy in March 2012, and demonising the Syrian Baathist dictatorship?

Is Fabius' diplomacy totally consistent with Juppé's diplomacy? Can we bridge a gap between the management of the Libyan file and the Syrian file's?

Fabius' diplomacy is *Juppé's* diplomacy for the worse. In 2013, Fabius rejected Iran's participation in the first *Geneva negotiations*, on the pretext that the nuclear issue wasn't yet settled. But, as *de Gaulle* said, "you have to take realities for what they are". Nobody can ever handle the Syrian crisis without Iran, main strategic partner of the Syrian regime, way ahead of Russia. Regarding the Syrian crisis, France was mistaken because it displayed

historic ignorance, political Manichaeism and diplomatic wishful thinking. France has shown complete disregard for Islamic forces hiding for a very long time in ambush in Syria, dreaming to destroy the laic forces. For France, there were, in this confrontation, the "bad guys" (those of the regime) and the "good guys" (the insurgents). Without distinction, French diplomacy took all anti-Bashar insurgents for moderate, she viewed them as same peo-

ple than our Polytechnic graduates, who during the July Revolution in July 1830, fought for republic and freedom.

France did not understand the strength of Islam and Wahhabite ideology in the Sunni world; it believed in the myth of a wide moderate opposition. Of course, there was one, but it was an elitist minority that could be seen more in major hotels of London or Geneva than on the Syrian spot. François *Hollande*, violating the arms international embargo, delivered weapons to this pseudo free-Syrian army. Fifteen days later, the same weapons could be seen in the hands of the Islamic units, whether they had been sold or seized by force.

French-Russian alliance – for centuries a necessity

We supported a ghost without seeing things for what they were. It was not until the 13 November attacks in Paris that President *Hollande* decided to visit *Putin* in Moscow, in order to undertake with Russia a common action against the Islamic State. *Putin* has the ambition to destroy *ISIS* because he wants to kill on the spot all jihadists carrying Russian Federation passports or coming from the surrounding ex-Soviet Muslim republics, before they could get back again.

"For total misery, French-Russian alliance was, for centuries, too often prevented or thwarted by flatteries or incomprehension. Nevertheless, it remains a necessity that reappears at every turn of history" said *General de Gaulle* on Radio-London on 20 January 1942. Where do French-Russian relations stand in 2016?

French diplomacy should consist in bringing Russia back in the European family, of which it forms an integral part since *Peter the Great*, instead of con-

stantly taking it away. Russia is as European a country as Ukraine. *Shevchenko* is a big Ukrainian poet but the Russians *Dostoyevsky*, *Gogol*, or *Chekhov* belong just as much to our European civilisation, which is Greco-Roman, Christian (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant), enlightened by the Enlightenment Europe.

"The Orthodox are not our enemies"

Latin diplomacy continues to ignore and despise the orthodox world. Yet Orthodox are not our enemies. In 1453, the Latin West has abandoned Constantinople in the hands of the Ottoman invaders; in 1999, we bombarded Belgrade and supported the Kosovare separatism, thinking that we could create a multiethnic and peaceful Kosovo, as promised by *Bill Clinton*. Today, Kosovo is neither multiethnic, nor peaceful; the non-Albanians were killed or intimidated and driven away, and the country became a hub of criminality and traffics in any kinds, weapons, drugs, human organs ...

Missed opportunities

I can understand that France marked its opposition to the annexation of Crimea and to the Russian hybrid war in Ukraine in summer 2014. International law exists and must be respected – Russia is signatory of the *Budapest memorandum* of December 1994, which guarantees the territorial integrity of Ukraine. But it would have been possible to avoid war and the annexation of Crimea by practicing a more realistic diplomacy without taking permanently sides for the opposition to pro-Russian president *Ianoukovytch*. On Friday, 21 February 2014, a major agreement of crisis exit was signed between president *Ianoukovytch* and three leaders of the pro-Western opposition. This very day, *Fabius* had left Kiev for China instead of insuring compliance with this agreement. On the evening of 21 February, *Fabius* and his German counterpart should have had dinner in Moscow with *Putin* and told him three things – so that he also signs this agreement – as Germany, France and Poland already did, on behalf of the European Union: "First of all, Sevastopol will always belong to the Russian fleet. Secondly, *NATO* will never settle down in Ukraine. Thirdly, Russian will always be the second official language in Ukraine." He would have responded to this "deal"!

The Normandy format (round of talks between Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France on questions of the Ukraine conflict), initiated by *Hollande* on 6 June 2014, was a good initiative. But the policy of UE sanctions against Russia was a mistake, which harmed us as well, and namely Eu-

"Diplomacy needs stability..."

continued from page 7

European farmers. Russia is a resilient country: now, go and try to have this country – which underwent triumphantly 870 days of the Leningrad siege – change its policy! We refused to deliver *Mistral* class vessels to Russia, although that would not make any difference to the strategic report between Russia and Ukraine. If Putin had wished to capture Mariupol or Odessa, it would have been done long ago, because no one was able to stop him.

We lack a big Russian policy

We are definitely missing a big Russian policy. We cannot leave it to the mediocre trio *Juncker-Mogherini-Tusk* to take care of the European diplomacy... which turns unilaterally towards Ukraine, without any opening on Russia.

Putin gave the Russians their pride back. However, he could be blamed for not having created a law-governed state in Russia. Without a democratic state governed by the rule of the law, it is impossible for any country to develop in the long term. But Putin remains the head of a very big country, with which forging solid alliances would be beneficial to us, such as for example against the Islamic State, our common enemy. Regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, Russia has acted very responsibly, allowing concluding the historic treaty of 14 July 2015. In the summer of 2016, it would be wise not to renew the sanctions against Russia.

Regarding the Iranian and Israeli-Palestinian issues, was the French position the one of leadership or of blind conformity? It is when the *Obama* administration saw its neoconservatives drifting away that France became more neo-conservative and Atlanticist – under Sarkozy, then Hollande. It was a historic aberration. This automatic alignment with out-of-date ideas displays a terrible lack of ambition. France had been right against the United States on the Iraq War, but now it was like being terrified of its own boldness, and toeing the line as quickly as possible.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it was a mistake – under the *Chirac* government – to put *Hamas* on the list of terrorist organisations. This Islamist movement was elected democratically in 2006; he has won popular support in Palestine. But since then, the French diplomats have no right to enter the territory of Gaza; this absence of direct contacts prevents us from playing the role of mediator between Israelis and Palestinians. France will never accept Israel's safety to be threatened, as reiterated by de Gaulle in 1967. We even supplied them the atom bomb. In spite of that, France's position should be moderate:

No illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories must be accepted.

Our diplomacy is pursuing fantasies instead of dealing with reality. In 1959, general de Gaulle said in a press conference: "France has no friends, it has only interests."

Extraterritoriality of the American law is not acceptable

How exactly does France influence the European Union, particularly in its relationship with the United States?

The extraterritoriality of the American law is not acceptable. The European Union should organize real resistance to this American legal hegemony, which was demonstrated in a sensational way when the BNP was fined \$9 billion. EU seems to be paralysed when facing United States. No retaliatory measure was applied to *Goldman Sachs*, although there is evidence that this American bank deliberately helped the Greek government to make up its public accounts! As for the negotiation of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), I'm unable to bring it up, so much it is carried out in the opacity...

In 1996, Europe had managed to maintain its unity when *Total* had been threatened with American sanctions for its drillings on the Iranian site of South Pars. Facing the threats of retaliation from the EU, President *Clinton* had given up imposing penalties to the French oil company. But then, EU diplomatically exploded: regarding the subject of American war in Iraq, France, Germany and Belgium were against it, while the others were all for.

Our relations with Nato

Reinstatement into the integrated military command structure of NATO was a gesture of hardship to the United States that these did not even demand. We have always been able to negotiating between armies without France being a member of the military structure of the Alliance – for example in Bosnia in 1995. But I do not suggest getting out of it now, because diplomacy needs stability.

Could China be considered as a privileged partner for France in the twenty-first century?

China is everything but stable. Besides, we have some disagreements. To the exception of the European Union, all countries in the world apply protectionism, starting with China. There is an absence of reciprocity and equity in the way China and Europe manage their customs duties and regulatory barriers.

We should also be concerned about Chinese maritime expansionism. France has the second 'Exclusive economic zone' (EEZ)¹ in the world, exceeding 11 millions square kilometers. This is a significant strategic

advantage. We urgently need a Navy commensurate with our maritime space and should foster a better allowance of our Navy resources. The world is a more dangerous place than in the past, yet France divided by four – as percent of GDP – its military expenditures since the time of general de Gaulle. This is nonsense.

All things considered, it seems to me all the more urgent that France gets closer to Russia. Culturally, both powers are closest. Strategically, they have more interests in common. In an increasingly dangerous world, we should pursue the policy of our interests!

What are the relations that France maintains with its ex-colonies in sub-Saharan Africa?

There are strong links between France and countries of sub-Saharan Africa, starting with the language, sometimes better spoken in these countries than in France itself. France often betrayed its own language, at the European level just as globally. Around the Mediterranean, the decline of French language was terrible. France has very strong links with French speaking African countries, at the economic, cultural and military level. We shouldn't be ashamed of it. If "Françafrique**", so often decried, means favoring these links, I am in favor of "Françafrique"! •

Source: © Eléonore de Vulpillières, *Le Figaro*, 25.3.16

Translators notes:

* *Wohin das Äpfelchen rollt*: German bestselling novel (L. Perutz, 1928) describing a wild chase leading to downward spiral across post-war Europe in the 20s.

***Françafrique*: « *Francafrica* », means all French speaking African countries are still under the implied cultural and political influence of French government.

¹ Exclusive economic zone (EEZ): The exclusive economic zone according the maritime law agreement of UN corresponds to the area of the so-called "200-miles zone" in which the adjacent littoral state can perceive sovereign rights and define territorial needs, particularly the exclusive right to the economic exploitation in limited extent.

The investigation and exploitation, preservation and management of the living and non-living natural resources of the waters (mainly through fishing) of the sea bed and its subsoil by deep-sea mining within the framework of sand, gravel and carbon production as well as other activities to the economic investigation and exploitation of the zone like the electricity generation, particularly by hydroelectric power plants and wind energy arrangements, all belong to the sovereign rights. Within the framework of its sovereign rights, the concerned coastal state may establish artificial islands, installations, industrial artifacts and buildings, as for example offshore construction works, and pursue scientific sea investigation. In this regard, this country is obliged to care for the protection and preservation of the sea environment and its nature protection.

Rescue of Central Europe through cooperation with Russia?

Prof Dr Albert A. Stahel



Prof Dr A. Stahel
(picture ma)

Even after the ceasefire – concluded at the initiative of Russia and the USA – the political and military situation in Syria is determined by uncertainty and instability. As before, Eastern Syria is controlled by the Islamic State (IS). The al-Qaida affiliated al-Nusra Front mainly dominates individual areas in the west of Aleppo. Wherever these two organizations hold control, religious minorities, including Christians of different denominations are dislodged, suppressed or even forced to convert. In addition to the sites of the ancient world, churches and monasteries are destroyed in these areas.

The direct consequence of war and destruction is the movement of refugees into Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Besides the individual Christians, the majority of these refugees belong to the Sunni line of Islam. Those refugees from the area of Aleppo, are to be counted as conservative Sunni of Syria, i.e. Salafists. Those kind of Sunni, above all, flee to Turkey. At the end of 2015, many of them have already reached Austria, Germany and Sweden via Greece and the Balkan route.

The following scenario for the future development in Central Europe seems plausible. These Sunni will soon fetch their numerous families to join them with or without the consent of their host countries. Thanks to their massive immigration they could gradually gain dominance over the other Muslims in Central Europe, in particular those in Germany. After 10 or 20 years they could definitely determine the life of Muslims in secular Central Europe and very soon push out the remains of Christianity into the cold.

How could such a development be averted? Over 5 centuries ago, Russia was freed of the reign of the Islamic Ta-

“Even today, Russia apparently has still a pioneering role in the fight against the Islamic terrorism, since, in contrast to the ineffective air war by the US-led coalition under Barack Obama against the Islamic State, Russia on the orders of President Putin performs a massive air war against the al-Nusra Front in Syria. A rescue of Central Europe could consist in closer political and military cooperation with Christian Russia.”

tars by Ivan IV. Vasiljevic with the conquest of Kazan (1552) and the conquest of Astrakhan (1557).¹ Even today, Russia apparently has still a pioneering role in the fight against the Islamic terrorism, since, in contrast to the ineffective air war by the US-led coalition under Barack Obama against the Islamic State, Russia on the orders of President Putin performs a massive air war against the al-Nusra Front in Syria.

A rescue of Central Europe could consist in closer political and military cooperation with Christian Russia. •

¹ Randa, A. (ed.), *Handbuch der Weltgeschichte. Erster Band* (Handbook of world history. First volume). Walter-Verlag, Olten and Freiburg, 1954, p. 959

Source: www.strategische-studien.com from 03/06/2016

“... the best possible sign for peace and understanding in the world”

The joint performance of the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra and the St. Petersburg Mariinsky Orchestra on April 11 in Moscow was, according to the German musicians, the best possible sign for peace and understanding in the world.

“Music is a language without words that joins nations together across borders. Therefore, this concert is a contribution to spread this language even further”, said violist *Konstantin Sellheim* from the Munich orchestra in an interview with *Sputnik*.

“The Maestro *Valeri Gergiev* has been our chief conductor since September 2015,” said *Stephan Haack*, cellist and orchestra board member. “Wherever we were, internationally or in Munich, we had a lot of success; the audience was enthusiastic. We are glad that we finally come with him to his home country. What is special today, is that we perform together with his orchestra in

St. Petersburg, and with colleagues from the Mariinsky Theater. This is a political gesture and an act of friendship, and that’s why we like doing it very much.”

“I think it’s really gorgeous to play Russian music in Russia – in the German-Russian orchestra as a sign of the affinity”, added Sellheim.

On Monday, even President *Vladimir Putin* visited the performance of the “merged” orchestra in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. The concert started with *Sergei Prokofiev’s* music for the ballet “Romeo and Juliet”. Thereafter, the international orchestra interpreted together with Russian pianist *Alexei Volodin* Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 2. This year the 125th birthday of the composer is celebrated not only in his homeland, but also internationally.

Source: *Sputnik Germany*
from 19 April 2016

(Translation Current Concerns)

In the shadow of the red light

A new book by Manfred Paulus

by Dr Barbara Hug



Roberto Scarpinato is Chief Prosecutor of the Direzione Antimafia Distrettuale di Palermo. He is one of the most protected personalities worldwide. *Giovanni Falcone* and *Paolo Borsellino* were his colleagues, murdered in 1992 by ignited explosives. Scarpinato warned Germany of the “Grant-Let”, of “Mafia Romance” and thus of the genuflection concerning organized crime. A democratic society is threatened by the scale of the Mafia Billions of dollars and the resulting influence on the economy, politics and government. Democracy – where is it going to disappear?

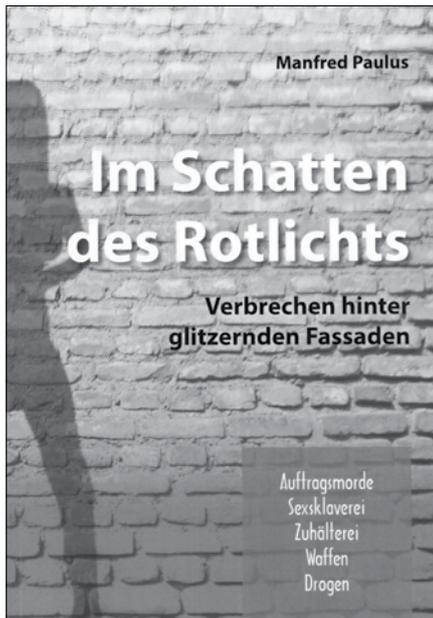
In his latest book *Manfred Paulus* speaks – after decades of own experience – about the crimes behind sparkling facades, the sex slavery, the red light district, the human trafficking of women and children and, coupled with this, the arms and

drug trade. One milieu does not exist without the other one. The “Goods woman” is exploited mercilessly, the business flourishes in rich Germany. Prostitution is always enforced, usually it is offered in because of poverty. As street prostitution isn’t to everyone’s liking and the suitors like to remain anonymous, the milieu is transferred to alleged accepted Spa Hotels, for example near the airports in rich Germany. Wellness, fine dining – nobody suspects that the graying men are looking for a dominatrix, a victim from the Balkans, which has to be of service, for one or two hours.

Paulus takes the reader into the past, as well as into the presence of his nocturnal police trips and experiences in the milieu of Ulm. It remains unknown how many young women he found dead or suffering by his task forces. However, the characterisation of the perpetrators, the profiteers and their brutality, gets under your skin. Organised crime (OC) always needs the social acceptance of their actions, which can not be hidden. As the OC tried to implant the acceptance of illegal drug use by skillful propagandist ways via the media and other channels, so the OC behaved in the range of the red light. Popular here is spreading the tale of voluntariness, which the poor young women from eastern Europe supposedly have, when they start prostitution business. Paulus unmasks

this tale, based on conversations he had with young women. Even just by recruiting and smuggling of partially very young women a loop is going wrapped around their necks. If they want to get out, the loop often leads to immediate death. Everything voluntarily?

Especially now, when brothels are stomped from the ground by Germany at the border to France, when Switzerland is overrun by suitors feeling threatened by larger financial penalties in France, right now this book is of an exceptional topicality. It earns a wide readership. •



Paulus, Manfred. *Im Schatten des Rotlichts. Verbrechen hinter glitzernden Fassaden*. Klemm+Oelschläger. Ulm 2016. ISBN 978-3-86281-92-5

cc. According to the Federal Government in Germany 5835 minor refugees have disappeared among which were 555 children. These are the results taken from a response of the Ministry of the Interior from 7th April 2016 (BT-Drucksache 18/7916 [Parliament’s printed matter]). 8006 is the total number of minor refugees reported as missing of which only 2171 have re-emerged to the present day. The response of the Ministry of the Interior reads as follows: “The missing, unaccompanied minor refugees mainly come from Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea, Morocco, and Algeria.”

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“In summary the situation in Afghanistan is an imminent catastrophe”

by Dr Matin Baraki*

After the end of the Soviet Union US imperialism declared itself to be the only super power and claimed the whole region of Eurasia as Grand chessboard to which it demanded unlimited access as their sphere of interest. This defined what future imperialist wars would be aiming for. Afghanistan became the first victim of this aggression. The war against Afghanistan had been planned as early as nine months before 11 September 2001, as revealed by the “Washington Post”. 11 September only provided the pretext. Had it not happened the way it did the war mongers would have had to invent it. Starting 7 October 2001 the US army bombed the country at the Hindu Kush. Within 4 weeks the Taliban regime had been toppled. The neocons around *George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld* wanted to proceed with their “Greater Middle East” (GME) strategy as early as possible. This GME strategy means that the region from North Africa up to Bangladesh should be brought under the control of the USA.

The success of the US army at the Hindu Kush opened the gates for the war against Iraq which started in 2003. However, when *George W. Bush* declared “mission accomplished” for the war in Iraq the Taliban were already back in full action at the Hindu Kush. Resistance against the occupiers gained momentum in Iraq, too. Already then the US imperial power reached its limits. The greater Middle East is just different from South America where the US had been able to do as it pleased them for centuries.

Up to 150,000 soldiers have been deployed in the US lead NATO operations at the Hindu Kush over the last 14 years. Resistance, usually summarised under the term “Taliban”, could be subdued temporarily but never smashed completely. Quite to the contrary, shortly after the German army had left the Northern provincial capital of Kunduz was conquered by the Islamist resistance on 28 September 2015; this meant a threefold defeat for the administration in Kabul and for the NATO occupation: politically, morally and militarily.

* Matin Baraki is a German Afghan politologist and interpreter. After training to become a precision mechanic he studied education in Kabul and worked as a teacher. From 1970 to 1974 Baraki was technical assistant at the faculty of science at Kabul university. In 1974 he emigrated to Germany and achieved a doctorate at Philipps University Marburg. Afterwards he lectured as a politologist at the universities of Marburg, Gießen, Kassel and Münster.

“There has never been a military solution for Afghanistan, there is none today and never will be. This was proven by the 14 year long war of NATO at the Hindu Kush. The social fabric of Afghanistan has been destroyed to its core. It is high time to replace war by peace politics.”

Politically, because the occupiers were despised by the Afghan population who seemed to prefer the Taliban rule. Morally, because the Afghan administration is viewed to be just the poodle of the US and the NATO soldiers are accused to have murdered thousands of Afghan civilians. Militarily, because NATO did not succeed to stabilise the country with up to 150,000 soldiers in 14 years of war. A recent classified document of the German ministry of foreign affairs states “severe security problems and human rights violations” at the Hindu Kush.

The bombardment of a hospital run by “Médecins Sans Frontières” (MSF, Doctors Without Borders) by the US occupants on 28 September 2015 which killed several doctors and patients who were burned in their beds, will be remembered in the annals of Afghan history just like so many previous crimes of the US and NATO occupants. MSF refers to the incident as a “war crime”.

On 8 december 2015 the Taliban raided the airport of Kandahar about 16 kilometres outside the city and took hostages, as the press officer of the Kandahar provincial governor, *Samim Chpalwak*, reported. According to his account the long lasting fights concentrated on the military sections of the airport, where the US army headquarters are situated. “martyrs” apparently managed to break into the airport compound “equipped with light and heavy weapons” and attacked the “invasion troops” as the Taliban declared. The fights lasted for 27 hours and claimed 61 lives, including the eleven intruders, press agencies afp and dpa reported from Kabul. Afterwards the commander of the Afghan intelligence service, *Rahmatollah Nabil*, resigned. Now Afghans on both sides continue to die for the strategic aims of the occupiers.

According to a “Security situation outlook 2016” report issued by the German army, another Taliban offensive at the Hindu Kush is likely to be launched after the winter pause. The report refers to the military stand of the Taliban as “increasingly successful” since they could co-or-

dinate their actions “more effectively” and show up in bigger numbers. At the same time it warns against an imminent collapse of the Afghan law enforcement capacities, which had been supported among others by the German army themselves. Therefore, an end to the permanent military problems of NATO in Afghanistan is not to be expected soon.

While the number of NATO troops will be increased again to a total of about 12,000, including 10,000 soldiers from the US and 980 from Germany (850 had been planned before) this will probably not stabilise the situation at the Hindu Kush. When Kunduz was occupied by the Taliban it became clear that the Afghan forces are reluctant to fight them unless NATO training personnel are present. Both nationally and internationally the administration in Kabul has slipped into a legitimacy crisis. It is on the verge of collapse. Apart from the Taliban, another armed coalition called “Schora-e Harasat wa Subat Afghanistan” (Council for the perpetuation and steadfastness of Afghanistan) was established by Islamist warlords who had not been invited to participate when posts were offered by the administration, people like *Abdul Rasul Sayyaf*, the most atrocious war criminal and ideologue of Saudi Wahhabism, *Mohammad Junus Qanuni* warlord of the so-called Northern alliance, and *Ismael Khan*, warlord of the Western province of Herat. This further decreases the chances of reforms and reconciliation with the Taliban, condition for continued support of the Kabul administration by NATO and the German government. This warlord “council” does everything it can to prevent negotiations with the Taliban from happening. Reason being, that the Taliban have already announced they would disclose material against the corrupt warlords and politicians and prosecute them in case they were to join the administration.

Regardless of winter or summer season, the resistance is on the rise. In summary, the situation in Afghanistan may

Listen to the voice of the peoples

km. Matin Baraki's reports from Afghanistan have been confirmed by many other local witnesses. For instance, the former member of parliament *Malalai Joya* reported in the German newspaper "Junge Welt" (21 April 2016) that the situation for the Afghan population had continuously deteriorated since the beginning of the Western occupation. After the Western intervention, the country had become a safe haven only for one group: for terrorists. "Millions of people are suffering insecurity, corruption, unemployment, poverty. The rights of all people, especially those of women, are constantly violated. Occupants and fundamentalists share the power in the country."

Willy Wimmer, former undersecretary of state in the German Ministry of Defence, claimed that the US and its allies had cut a swathe of devastation from Kabul to Timbuktu. This is material and cultural devastation which involves immense human suffering.

The question may be left open whether this was the specific intention linked to a Neo-Conservative-Trotskyite strategy of chaos or the true face of an elitist West-

ern megalomania which is now faring as did the hybris of classical tragedies. For 25 years now, ever since the decomposition of the UN member state Yugoslavia, the Western hegemon has, together with his vassals, time and again broken international law and defied all commandments of humanity.

It sounds cynical if these same Western states now come up with the hubris of "helping" millions of migrants from other cultural spheres and of "integrating" them. Integrating them into what? Integrating them into a world of nihilist, power-crazed "elites" lacking all cultural substance? Integrating them into a dog-eat-dog society which tramples all the principles of human social nature underfoot? The absurdity of this idea is fast becoming obvious. Who will want to follow this path?

If the West really wants to assume tasks in the world of today and tomorrow, this will only be possible if there is a renaissance of its cultural substance. We can expect nothing from the US. It is Europe's turn. This includes putting the request for a mandatory universal ethics as

a framework for all cultures and religions back on the agenda. In 1945 and the following years, there was an effort made resulting in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which are still applicable law in most states on earth. History has shown that there is a mutual relation of religions and secular ethics. In their painful and at times bitter history, Christian religions have come a long way in essential aspects. It cannot be God's will to ask for what deeply contradicts the nature of his creature, man. Other religions also have this duty and they are on their way. And they are all well capable of going this way because all great religions have a manifold substance to offer, so as to contribute towards a peaceful and fair coexistence of all people – as soon as the focus is no longer on the striving for power but on man and his fate.

The direction will be determined by the people. The large majority of humans in Europe still have a conscience and an intuition for what is humane. Hence the perspective is to listen to the voice of the peoples. •

"In summary the situation ..."

continued from page 11

be referred to as an imminent catastrophe. While the Taliban rule the Southern Pashtun provinces, especially Helmand and Kandahar, more or less completely and are able to gain footholds in the North too, such as Kunduz, the Islamic State (IS) is establishing itself in the two Eastern provinces of Nangarhar und Nuristan.

The president in Kabul, *Ashraf Ghani*, is weak and incapable to prevent the country from destabilizing further. The "Afghan National Army" (ANA) suffers heavy losses in the fight against the Taliban and the corrupt "Afghan National Police" (ANP) proves to be incompetent to

control the cities and basically accepts no-go areas dominated by the Taliban in many Southern regions. Some provincial governors prefer not to show up in their assigned districts at all, but to stay in Kabul after being appointed.

Stopping the withdrawal of the troops as decided, by both the Obama administration and Germany, as well as the deployment of additional soldiers, will not suffice to prevent the catastrophe in Afghanistan. Nevertheless the Taliban won't be able to march victoriously into Kabul, either. All they can achieve is a permanent instability by military assaults in any part of the country. This may be called a stalemate. Neither nationally nor internationally the conditions are favorable for a Taliban coup d'état at this point.

Parts of the population, the NATO and the warlords will not tolerate this. On the other hand an agreement with the Taliban was supposed to offer an alternative to continued NATO presence.

Who wants to achieve peace and stability at the Hindu Kush should replace the NATO units by Islamic ones immediately, legitimised by a UN mandate. This could lay the foundations for an inner Afghan agreement and peace negotiations.

There has never been a military solution for Afghanistan, there is none today and never will be. This was proven by the 14 year long war of NATO at the Hindu Kush. The social fabric of Afghanistan has been destroyed to its core. It is high time to replace war by peace politics. •

Teachers' "Götterdämmerung"

A book review of a recent publication by Christoph Türcke

by Lis Calganini



One may understand the term "Teachers' 'Götterdämmerung'" in a drastic way: Teachers are no longer needed, facilitators will be enough. Or one may understand it as conveying a feeling of hope: "It is dawning on the teachers that they must not accept this. If they really fight for the preservation and the ethos of their profession, they will open an orientation debate that will touch the foundations of the neoliberal world." (p. 153) So the book written by German philosopher *Christoph Türcke* ends. But let us start at the beginning.

In the first chapter "*Competences Mania*", Türcke clarifies the origin of the term "competences" and shows for what purpose this term has to serve today.

Controlling and manipulating people's reactions

The concept of competences is mainly used for accurately describing all learning achievements and for making them measurable. This postulation is based on the idea that the only thing about human being that is verifiable and scientifically accessible is our behavior. Originally, this was the behaviorists' idea: to replicate and control human behavior by machines. "Already in the 1950s, behaviorism had begun to divide all learning behaviour into the smallest possible steps, and to accurately describe them." (p. 30) No one today would express this in such an outright way as *Watson* did at that time: He indeed wanted to control and to manipulate the reactions of people. The achievement of a learning objective was called a qualification. But the word had a technical connotation and did not encompass the whole person. Still in the 1970s the detailed description of learning objectives and qualification was named operationalisation. The concept of "*competence*" however sounds much more flattering. In terms of content, as Türcke shows, it remains the same: competence describes a desired behavior that should be defined as accurately as possible.

"Gap-filler mentality"

"And so, in the 1990s, education policy began to rename all learning objectives and qualifications competences. That helped the acceptance of their behavioural measures." (p.31) A lot of money was invested in this competence modelling, glossy brochures as well as meetings spread the impression that this is all about a highly promising long-term project.

Even the elusive competences such as the ability to work in a team as well as social and communicative competence were to be described accurately. Networked knowledge was to be developed instead of so-called inert knowledge. For example, the knowledge of how to write words correctly is called inert knowledge; children should instead consider spelling rules and have strategies how to obtain them: in plain language by checking them or clicking them up. This is considered to be networked knowledge, responsible-minded and creative. The educational standards of today flatteringly call school children spelling strategists and independent authors as soon as they are able to draw some letters. Cloze tests have become fashionable in order to reduce the laborious effort of writing, which in particular favours weaker writers. But without practicing the writing process in the context of coherent writing, correct spelling cannot take root firmly. The same applies to mathematics: in accordance with competency requirements, it is primarily not about learning to do sums, but above all to communicate about understanding and solving calculations, to argue about suppositions and mathematical correlations, and to arrange one's own exercises. As only a few schoolchildren are able to achieve this, possible answers are readily supplied, which is then called *multiple choice*. In fact, a so-called "gap-filler mentality" (p. 45) is practiced as well in language as in mathematics teaching.

Level reductions imposed

In all educational standards the so-called *soft skills* are winning through. Hard skills such as mental calculation, spelling, memorisation are taking a backseat. They are considered to be beneath the children's dignity, as those should discover things creatively instead of cramming them into their minds. History lessons? There's *Wikipedia*. Geography? That is what *Google Earth* is for. Learning words? How dull! Pianists who do not want to practice their technique but rather make music immediately, would probably argue like that, or footballers, who focus on the really important thing, the intelligent interaction, instead of doing the necessary strength and fitness training. And children are to be equipped primarily with soft skills for taking part in our microelectronic capitalism and they should get rid of all superfluous burdens for which software exists. In microelectronic capitalism social skills, ambition, flexible personalities are required, whereas expertise

can be looked up. According to Türcke level reductions are thus imposed from above.

It is a fact: All these changes make the A-levels (Abitur) obsolete in our flexible educational world. The truth is: "The higher a nation pushes its number of A-level students the better will be its position in international education rankings." (p. 47) This means that soon it will be embarrassing to have no A-level, but its significance will also be reduced. Because: "If, however, every student passes the A-levels, no one will pass it any more," (p. 51) Once it used to be called "general matriculation standard". Today, not only the grades but the CV, the motivation and the personal interview are taken into account for potential students. Measuring the competences has led to a graduation ending up in a pile of fragmented competence-shards.

And – what many people do not wish to believe – this pressure calling for more flexibility, which breaks conventional workspaces and existing educational areas into pieces, is not a wish of the people, but a demand of power. Our school policy just passes on the pressure.

A right to alms

Türcke goes on to say that the principle of "difference of objectives" – here in Switzerland called exemption from learning objectives – which was originally intended as a concession to weaker learners is intended to become a general principle of education. Everyone should have a right to this charitable gift. Everyone is different from everyone else, everyone has his own pace, his own preferences and talents. Therefore we need a school that satisfies everyone: the inclusion school.

Türcke gets to the bottom of this "*inclusion madness*". This is also the title of his second chapter. A few decades ago the term "exploitation" was at the centre of all serious social criticism. However, with the microelectronic turnaround, when the computer made ever more workers redundant, the sociocritical agenda changed. Was it not much worse to have no job, to be "excluded" from the labor market, than to be exploited? In 1989, the EU Ministers of Social Affairs adopted a resolution to combat exclusion. Since then this has been considered the fundamental evil of our time. It is taking part that counts, this is the motto. Integration is desirable. Those who have a job are integrated. "That is the simple principle of a new, interdenomina-

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tional and cross-party ideology, which radiates in all social areas." (p. 61)

This principle also underlies the *Convention on Persons With Disabilities*, which has been effective since 2008 and demands full participation in society for all people. Who wants to disagree with that? Of course this includes the education system. But how can we achieve this end? How should the exclusion of the disabled be made to come to an end? "Fortunately" education experts are at hand with their solution: the comprehensive school. Their basic message is: time is up for separate schools catering to different levels of performance. At first, the concept was not to separate children with disabilities in special schools right away, but to offer them special one-hour lessons with differentiated learning objectives. Inclusion advocates now demand to have all students take part in the same lessons with all their diversity of competences and levels. While the inclusion school welcomes all students equally – regardless of their individual presuppositions – the integrating school still specified performance differences and did not cease to distinguish stronger and weaker students.

Support teachers' education demoted to repair operation

Especially teachers who feel their profession to be a matter of the heart and more than just a job find a new meaning of life in it and are therefore also ready to implement the inclusion principle as well as possible, with a great willingness to make sacrifices. The slogans of inclusion: "It is normal to be different" or "Every child is special" sound good and, the longer the more, are accepted by many. When it comes to such a wonderful principle, the real consequences of this course of action are accepted as "teething problems" of implementation. But Türcke warns: "The United Nations do not consist of apostles, but of experienced politicians and diplomats." (p. 71) They are the ones who demand the dissolution of all support and special education schools worldwide. This allows for tremendous savings in buildings, rooms and teachers. Today it is already evident that now support teachers (here: special educators) support the subject teachers (here: class teachers) as mobile units. If the expected result fails to materialise with a child, the child is to be empowered to succeed by targeted promotion. So support teachers' lessons are demoted to a punctual repair operation on several children in a class, in several classes, at several schools. It sometimes happens that the special education teachers build a stable relationship to a child; how-

ever, this is not provided for by the structures. They are only there for a few hours, and every school day passing without any major friction between class teachers and special education teachers is a stroke of luck. All those who are convinced of inclusion hope that the state will finally provide sufficient funds, but, as Türcke says, this hope will soon have to give way to the disenchantment that inclusion does not serve the children, but primarily serves the intentions to make savings: "A global inclusion offensive has started precisely because real national debt gives ever less cause to expect money for education."

Inclusion: a neoliberal project

"Inclusion is a neoliberal project, not a sociocritical or even "left" project. It hurts all the more to see how much educational enthusiasm is burned up by it." (p. 75) So Türcke indicates that a proper education for all cannot be a proper education any more. Study groups should have roughly similar learning prerequisites. Of course, even in a – in terms of power – heterogeneous learning group everybody can solve arithmetical problems with the numbers between 1 and 100. Some will then count colored balls, while the others deal with adding and subtracting. But you cannot call this joint education; even less you can call it the end of exclusion. Especially children with disabilities and learning difficulties will feel their otherness painfully. They are constantly confronted with what they will surely never be able to learn. It is not a matter of excluding somebody in a discriminatory way, but it is about the fact that precisely these children have a right to a protected space where they do not have to compare with the others permanently. That would probably give them more stability and security.

Teaching shrinks to introduction and the handing out of working materials

Türcke fears that in future subject teachers will assume the role of support teachers: The actual "teaching" will shrink to the introduction and handing out of work and working materials. The teacher will henceforth only encourage and advise as well as evaluate the children and their work. Conventional support teachers remain the mobile operational service. But why should not also the class teachers become nomads in this new scenario? Mobile teams of learning coaches in flexible learning environments, in which all children are supervised and coached individually? In this way even school reports would become unnecessary. Portfolios (this is a term from the financial sector), i.e. competence profiles of children would take their place. Fortunately, this kind of standardised school still lies in the future,

but the future has already begun. Worksheets dominate, portfolios are on the rise.

Simply letting them grow – that is not possible

In chapter three, "*Return to the teacher*", Türcke shows how the current trend could be changed again for the better. He addresses himself to long-established developmental-psychological insights that have unfortunately been lost in the current debate on education. For example, he emphasizes the importance of showing things to the children, as this helps to consolidate volatile structures so as to form collective facts. When a child starts to learn, this is entirely dependent on close caregivers or family members and their emotions. But even under favorable circumstances, it always takes place in an environment also characterised by conflicts. The pioneers of modern pedagogy – above all, *Rousseau* – edited out this fact. He glorified the natural state, which had its justification in his time: he protested against using force and against the suppression of the child's needs. What was natural was good and reasonable. Also the progressive educational movement of the time around 1900 succumbed to this fallacy. Their focus was also on the child and they also propagated letting it develop naturally. But their merit was that they wanted all subjects to be taught in an intuitively accessible way and to be perceived and learnt with all the senses. To some degree this is today established as the standard, and no one wants to return to the earlier drill school.

An "educational revolution" with a neoliberal accent

This approach is being glorified again, as part of the current "educational revolution", but this time there is a neoliberal accent. But children want to learn, they are curious by nature, plus they need adults who show them the things in life. "Showing and highlighting is teaching" (p. 101) Here Türcke shows his belief that parents are probably the first and nearest teachers and that parents can also be good teachers. In his opinion though, more distance is of advantage for children from pre-school age onwards.

So the children are detached from the care of their parents in daycare and kindergarten and accompanied on their way to school. Much depends on how this is done, if there is a framework, whether suggestions and rules are given with patience and perseverance or whether discord and disturbance are allowed. Children should get the opportunity to build common ground with their peers under the guidance of adults. If they miss this experience, it is not easy to make up for it later.

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Elementary instruction at school essentially consists of showing and highlighting things or issues, and consolidation is not thinkable without repetition. Children starting school are to be familiarised persistently and patiently with their new environment. Normally the basic rules of spelling, reading, writing and counting should all be presented together, but this is everything but a process evolving no emotion. Primary school teachers are role models, and only if they accept this role, they awaken interest. Children are not insatiable explorers who find everything interesting if only given enough latitude. The foundation for their interest must be laid by their caregivers: "At primary school age enthusiasm for facts is still largely transmitted love for people. Human teaching and learning present themselves as a multi-layer transfer process." (p. 106)

There is no learning free of emotion. Education comprises more than the accumulation of knowledge and skills. Good teachers also want to promote emotional and social learning. Nevertheless many people presuppose "... the behaviorist division of the learning capacity and then try to reassemble the thus isolated particles by teaching compassion and common sense in a way as isolated as the basics of mathematics." (p. 110)

Türcke is very attentive to what he calls the common now-time. By this he means that a teacher places extra emphasis on a fact by calling for the attention of all students. If twenty pairs of eyes are fixed on him this is also a highlight for the teacher and no permanent condition. And the



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more he is enthusiastic about the matter, the more the children are enthusiastic, too, and this is the only way they will understand this matter deeply and lastingly. But that is by no means possible without a variation of follow-ups by repeating, applying, varying, deepening. Competencies, however, can be "grafted" on a person; somebody may be "competent" in some matter, even if he has only understood half of it. In fact, the creation of something of your own never begins at zero and has always something to do with overcoming resistance. Creativity is based on understood facts and cannot be learned per se. Today's concept of creativity is shallow. It plays off mindless learning of predetermined facts against "networked" knowledge said to be creative.

The brave new work world of intercommunication and flexibility also goes hand in hand with what Türcke calls the harassing fire of interruptions. The following quote illustrates the way in which this background noise of modern communication has already arrived in school life: "As reading is determined as a competence which should be constantly checked, the current teaching of reading interrupts every act of reading by supposedly useful control and comprehension questions and so destroys it." (p.130) How should a child discover the pleasure of reading, immerse itself into an exciting text, if it is checked after each paragraph?

Connection between thinking and writing is neglected

The introduction of the cloze text that does not demand the composition of coherent texts makes the flow of writing superfluous, so that the connection of thought and writing is recklessly neglected. Finally the triumph of the cloze text has led to the introduction of a simplified new basis writing. There is no longer an established context. No more time is wasted on motoric exercises, time that would allegedly be used better for dealing with creative contents. Türcke wonders where this will lead to, when some day children will be learning their letters with the computer instead of learning to write them themselves, and he prognosticates an increase of ADHS.

Subject matter has no significance at all.

Often it is the work sheets that determine teaching today. They are distributed, they give the children facts or circumstances on an individual level, and they demand: Calculate. Sum up. Fill in. The teacher walks around through the classroom and advises the pupils when required to do so. That is what "optimal support" on a poor basis looks like. The subject matter has no significance of its own. But it is no longer a ques-

tion of contents, as they are but a means to acquire competences. Competences comport themselves as if they were capital owned by a person. "The fundamental attitude of the paradigm of competences is to control and organise everything by yourself, to have a disposing relation even with things and thoughts that are intangible." (p. 144) Today even religious education follows a tendency towards the neoliberal ideology of education. So, for example, the children are supposed to acquire the competence of discovering fundamental issues of life. You cannot "discover" fundamental issues. They force themselves upon anyone, in any case of disease or of feeling with another. They require no discovery expertise, but they do require an attitude that is open to them. This also requires contents. But content has to be imparted with the aid of emotion. Otherwise it has no chance to win children's hearts. Contents reveal themselves only when they fascinate and let time be forgotten – i.e. if they evoke an attitude of devotion and a wish to linger. If something is to become part of an education, it will have to enter into the fundus of the student, he will have to grapple with it, it will have to mature with time.

An educational vow

"By contrast, the neoliberal educational offensive is an offensive against education. It wants to reduce education to competence, and attitude to behavior. Its success is catastrophic." (P 146) For contents that really affect a child cannot be settled by isolated learning acts as they occur during competence learning. Nevertheless, this also leaves memory traces. Even when allowed to run wild as in today's lessons, a memory remains. Therefore a fundus made up of parts of learned contents is made up by learning. This indistinct structure, that "still is more than competence" today represents the formation of a human being, and even if it is shamefully little, this sediment of residues of learnt factual content is a beacon of hope.

Machines have no education, they only have their program. They provide sheer competence. To view people only in terms of their competences means to degrade them to machines. "This is dreary! To reduce teacher to competence sourcing agents means to debase them. They must not put up with this. They are under no obligation to surrender themselves; but they should return to what teaching is intrinsically: to showing things. And what there is to show is facts which are not encompassed by competences and which therefore have something to give - something substantial that can provide stability and

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Clear commitment to the educational sovereignty of the cantons

cc. In the “Landsgemeinde” of Appenzell of 24 April 2016, the Curriculum 21 was first subject of a cantonal referendum in Switzerland. The discussion in Appenzell Innerrhoden had been initiated by Paul Bannwart the individual initiative “For a Strong Primary School”. After the Government Councillor of the Department of Education and “Landammann” Roland Inauen had made far-reaching concessions, the initiator wanted to withdraw his proposal. This was no longer possible because the “Landsgemeindefandat” – that is the name of the information booklet in Appenzell Innerrhoden – was already sent. Therefore, there was a vote about the initiative on 24 April and it was rejected after a clear statement of the “Landammann” for the cantonal educational sovereignty.

Among other things the Director of education secured the initiators that in Appenzell Innerrhoden there is no intention to prefer self-directed or individualised learning compared to other teaching methods. Therefore, the schoolrooms in the canton would not be transformed into so-called learning landscapes, in which the students should learn alone with the help of the computer or by other learning materials provided from the teacher. The more, the teachers would continue to be responsible for the classroom management; a change of the teacher’s role in the direction of a coach or a learning companion was not intended.

On the assembly the “Landammann” reaffirmed once again that the Curriculum 21 will not simply be adopted in Appenzell Innerrhoden: “At this point I would like to say once again loud and clear that



the Canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden is implementing the curriculum in a moderate and independent form. Out of Curriculum 21 arises the curriculum of Appenzell Innerrhoden which is committed to our culture, our cultural heritage and also the Christian principles.”

The content of statements of Roland Inauen about the future shape of Appenzell school differ far from the Curriculum 21. “Introducing a base level – that would be a merger of kindergarten with the first and second class – is not an issue for us. The 2008 decision of the “Landsgemeinde” is fully respected. For us the first year of kindergarten remains voluntary. The Canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden will also face annual standard tests at federal level with great reluctance.”

The statements of the Government Councillor about the teaching of the second foreign language which in Appenzell has always been taught only in secondary school have special meaning also for other cantons. “In the question of French teaching we have repeatedly said what is necessary to say. In contrast to other cantons, we have great experience with our

model which begins with English in the third grade. The start of French teaching should begin only in secondary school also in the future. This has the advantage that there are more weekly lessons, they are much more intense and the classes are more homogeneous and the teachers are trained specially for foreign languages. In Article 15, paragraph 3 of the Federal Language Law it says that the Confederation and the cantons should make sure within their competences that the students at the end of their

compulsory schooling should have skills at least in a second national language and a further foreign language. The Confederation claims the goal and we achieve it with every guarantee.”

To these clear words from Appenzell it is to notice that some education politicians and even a Federal Councillor have threatened the Canton of Thurgau which recently has decided to start the second foreign language on secondary level – as Appenzell Innerrhoden does – with sanctions. The statement of “Landammann” Roland Inauen to such unauthorised interference of the Federal Government into the cantonal educational sovereignty was very clear. “The path to the goal is in the competence of the cantons. That’s why we do not understand that the Federal Government wants to prescribe us now also the way. This is a massive intervention into the constitutional right of the cantons. After all it clearly says in Article 62 paragraph 1 of our Constitution: ‘The cantons are responsible for the system of school education’. We observe the law and that’s what the Federal Government should do, too.”

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comfort” (p. 148). Just as the Hippocratic Oath gives an orientation in medical-ethical questions, so would a pedagogical oath be essential, and this would define the showing of things and facts in a common now-time as mandatory core activity. This would be a strong orientation.

Teachers also need a professional ethos, and that is not a competence but an attitude that makes up the backbone of a person. Yet the neoliberal education policy wants to be flexible. “But just as little as the insistence on the indispensability of plenary teaching is a plea for teacher-up-

front style, so little does the criticism of the delusion of inclusion already imply a return to that rigidly separate schooling, which from the outset spoiled a lot of opportunities for self-development for many special, primary, and middle school pupils”. (p.149)

The conclusion at the end of the book is refreshing. Despite the sharp criticism of the competence orientation, which has progressed in Germany much more than here in Switzerland, TÜRCKE shows a way out, he has hope. Admittedly politicians of all persuasions are still calling for extensive inclusion, and a harking back to divided schooling is taboo. But even in a divided school projects of special school

pupils and high school students together are possible, as is impressively shown in the example of the film “Rhythm is it”.

The new learning culture is mainly promoted by the “leftists”, which is rather incomprehensible, as it has its origin in the neoliberal turnaround. Paradoxically, just those political forces that complain about the neoliberal excesses in education, uphold capitalism which they describe as the best of all forms of society. And those who criticize neoliberalism most sharply do everything to enforce the neoliberal competence and inclusion concept.

Christoph TÜRCKE. *Lehrerdämmerung*. C.H.Beck, Munich 2016

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