

Current Concerns

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“Justice is an essential condition for achieving the ideal of universal fraternity”

Speech delivered by the Holy Father at the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York on 25 September 2015

Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good day

Once again, following a tradition by which I feel honored, the Secretary General of the United Nations has invited the Pope to address this distinguished assembly of nations. In my own name, and that of the entire Catholic community, I wish to express to you, Mr *Ban Ki-moon*, my heartfelt gratitude. I greet the Heads of State and Heads of Government present, as well as the ambassadors, diplomats and political and technical officials accompanying them, the personnel of the United Nations engaged in this 70th Session of the General Assembly, the personnel of the various programs and agencies of the United Nations family, and all those who, in one way or another, take part in this meeting. Through you, I also greet the citizens of all the nations represented in this hall. I thank you, each and all, for your efforts in the service of mankind.

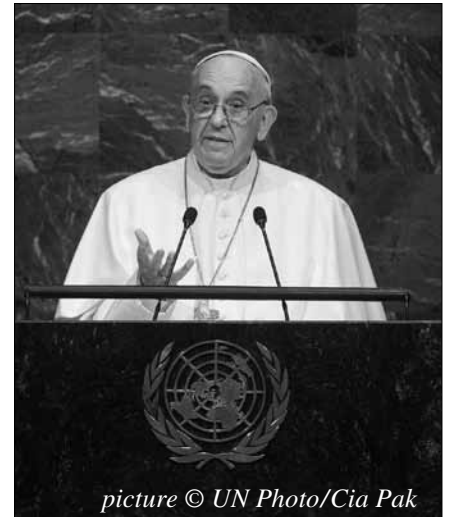
This is the fifth time that a Pope has visited the United Nations. I follow in the footsteps of my predecessors *Paul VI*, in 1965, *John Paul II*, in 1979 and 1995, and my most recent predecessor, now Pope Emeritus *Benedict XVI*, in 2008. All of them expressed their great esteem for the Organization, which they considered the appropriate juridical and political response to this present moment of history, marked by our technical ability to overcome distances and frontiers and, apparently, to overcome all natural limits to the exercise of power. An essential response, inasmuch as technological power, in the hands of nationalistic or falsely universalist ideologies, is capable of perpetrating tremendous atrocities. I can only reiterate the appreciation expressed by my predecessors, in reaffirming the importance which the Catholic Church attaches to this Institution and the hope which she places in its activities.

The United Nations is presently celebrating its seventieth anniversary. The history of this organized community of states is one of important common achievements over a period of unusually fast-paced changes. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we can mention the codification and development of international law, the es-

tablishment of international norms regarding human rights, advances in humanitarian law, the resolution of numerous conflicts, operations of peace-keeping and reconciliation, and any number of other accomplishments in every area of international activity and endeavour. All these achievements are lights which help to dispel the darkness of the disorder caused by unrestrained ambitions and collective forms of selfishness. Certainly, many grave problems remain to be resolved, yet it is also clear that, without all this international activity, mankind would not have been able to survive the unchecked use of its own possibilities. Every one of these political, juridical and technical advances is a path towards attaining the ideal of human fraternity and a means for its greater realization.

I also pay homage to all those men and women whose loyalty and self-sacrifice have benefitted humanity as a whole in these past seventy years. In particular, I would recall today those who gave their lives for peace and reconciliation among peoples, from *Dag Hammarskjöld* to the many United Nations officials at every level who have been killed in the course of humanitarian missions, and missions of peace and reconciliation.

Beyond these achievements, the experience of the past seventy years has made it clear that reform and adaptation to the times is always necessary in the pursuit of the ultimate goal of granting all countries, without exception, a share in, and a genuine and equitable influence on, decision-making processes. The need for greater equity is especially true in the case of those bodies with effective executive capability, such as the Security Council, the Financial Agencies and the groups or mechanisms specifically created to deal with economic crises. This will help limit every kind of abuse or usury, especially where developing countries are concerned. The International Financial Agencies should care for the sustainable development of countries and should ensure that they are not subjected to oppressive lending systems which, far from promoting progress, subject people to mechanisms which generate greater poverty, exclusion and dependence.



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The work of the United Nations, according to the principles set forth in the Preamble and the first Articles of its founding Charter, can be seen as the development and promotion of the rule of law, based on the realization that justice is an essential condition for achieving the ideal of universal fraternity. In this context, it is helpful to recall that the limitation of power is an idea implicit in the concept of law itself. To give to each his own, to cite the classic definition of justice, means that no human individual or group can consider itself absolute, permitted to bypass the dignity and the rights of other individuals or their social groupings. The effective distribution of power (political, economic, defense-related, technological, etc.) among a plurality of subjects, and the creation of a juridical system for regulating claims and interests, are one concrete way of limiting power. Yet today's world presents us with many false rights and – at the same time – broad sectors which are vulnerable, victims of power badly exercised: for example, the natural environment and the vast ranks of the excluded. These sectors are closely interconnected and made increasingly fragile by dominant political and economic relationships. That is why their rights must be forcefully affirmed, by working to protect the environment and by putting an end to exclusion.

First, it must be stated that a true “right of the environment” does exist, for two rea-

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sons. First, because we human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect. Man, for all his remarkable gifts, which “are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology” (Laudato Si’, 81), is at the same time a part of these spheres. He possesses a body shaped by physical, chemical and biological elements, and can only survive and develop if the ecological environment is favourable. Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity. Second, because every creature, particularly a living creature, has an intrinsic value, in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures. We Christians, together with the other monotheistic religions, believe that the universe is the fruit of a loving decision by the Creator, who permits man respectfully to use creation for the good of his fellow men and for the glory of the Creator; he is not authorized to abuse it, much less to destroy it. In all religions, the environment is a fundamental good (cf. *ibid.*).

The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged, either because they are differently abled (handicapped), or because they lack adequate information and technical expertise, or are incapable of decisive political action. Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights and the environment. The poorest are those who suffer most from such offenses, for three serious reasons: they are cast off by society, forced to live off what is discarded and suffer unjustly from the abuse of the environment. They are part of today’s widespread and quietly growing “culture of waste”.

The dramatic reality this whole situation of exclusion and inequality, with its evident effects, has led me, in union with the entire Christian people and many others, to take stock of my grave responsibility in this regard and to speak out, together with all those who are seeking urgently-needed and effective solutions. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the World Summit, which opens today, is an important sign of hope. I am similarly confident that the Paris Conference on Climatic Change will secure fundamental and effective agreements.

Solemn commitments, however, are not enough, although they are certainly a nec-

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essary step toward solutions. The classic definition of justice which I mentioned earlier contains as one of its essential elements a constant and perpetual will: *Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius sum cuique tribuendi*. Our world demands of all government leaders a will which is effective, practical and constant, concrete steps and immediate measures for preserving and improving the natural environment and thus putting an end as quickly as possible to the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion, with its baneful consequences: human trafficking, the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labour, including prostitution, the drug and weapons trade, terrorism and international organized crime. Such is the magnitude of these situations and their toll in innocent lives, that we must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism which would assuage our consciences. We need to ensure that our institutions are truly effective in the struggle against all these scourges.

The number and complexity of the problems require that we possess technical instruments of verification. But this involves two risks. We can rest content with the bureaucratic exercise of drawing up long lists of good proposals – goals, objectives and statistics – or we can think that a single theoretical and aprioristic solution will provide an answer to all the challenges. It must never be forgotten that political and economic activity is only effective when it is understood as a prudential activity, guided by a perennial concept of justice and constantly conscious of the fact that, above and beyond our plans and programmes, we are dealing with real men and women who live, struggle and suffer, and are often forced to live in great poverty, deprived of all rights.

To enable these real men and women to escape from extreme poverty, we must allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny. Integral human development and the full exercise of human dignity cannot be imposed. They must be built up and allowed to unfold for each individual, for every family, in communion with others, and in a right relationship with all those areas in which human social life develops – friends, communities, towns and cit-

ies, schools, businesses and unions, provinces, nations, etc. This presupposes and requires the right to education – also for girls (excluded in certain places) – which is ensured first and foremost by respecting and reinforcing the primary right of the family to educate its children, as well as the right of churches and social groups to support and assist families in the education of their children. Education conceived in this way is the basis for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for reclaiming the environment.

At the same time, government leaders must do everything possible to ensure that all can have the minimum spiritual and material means needed to live in dignity and to create and support a family, which is the primary cell of any social development. In practical terms, this absolute minimum has three names: lodging, labour, and land; and one spiritual name: spiritual freedom, which includes religious freedom, the right to education and all other civil rights.

For all this, the simplest and best measure and indicator of the implementation of the new Agenda for development will be effective, practical and immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material and spiritual goods: housing, dignified and properly remunerated employment, adequate food and drinking water; religious freedom and, more generally, spiritual freedom and education. These pillars of integral human development have a common foundation, which is the right to life and, more generally, what we could call the right to existence of human nature itself.

The ecological crisis, and the large-scale destruction of biodiversity, can threaten the very existence of the human species. The baneful consequences of an irresponsible mismanagement of the global economy, guided only by ambition for wealth and power, must serve as a summons to a forthright reflection on man: “man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature” (Benedict XVI, Address to the Bundestag, 22 September 2011, cited in *Laudato Si’*, 6). Creation is compromised “where we ourselves have the final word ... The misuse of crea-

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tion begins when we no longer recognize any instance above ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves” (ID. Address to the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone, 6 August 2008, cited *ibid.*). Consequently, the defence of the environment and the fight against exclusion demand that we recognize a moral law written into human nature itself, one which includes the natural difference between man and woman (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 155), and absolute respect for life in all its stages and dimensions (cf. *ibid.*, 123, 136).

Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits and without the immediate implementation of those pillars of integral human development, the ideal of “saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (Charter of the United Nations, Preamble), and “promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (*ibid.*), risks becoming an unattainable illusion, or, even worse, idle chatter which serves as a cover for all kinds of abuse and corruption, or for carrying out an ideological colonization by the imposition of anomalous models and lifestyles which are alien to people’s identity and, in the end, irresponsible.

War is the negation of all rights and a dramatic assault on the environment. If we want true integral human development for all, we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples.

To this end, there is a need to ensure the uncontested rule of law and tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration, as proposed by the Charter of the United Nations, which constitutes truly a fundamental juridical norm. The experience of these seventy years since the founding of the United Nations in general, and in particular the experience of these first fifteen years of the third millennium, reveal both the effectiveness of the full application of international norms and the ineffectiveness of their lack of enforcement. When the Charter of the United Nations is respected and applied with transparency and sincerity, and without ulterior motives, as an obligatory reference point of justice and not as a means of masking spurious intentions, peaceful results will be obtained. When, on the other hand, the norm is considered simply as an instrument to be used whenever it proves favourable, and to be avoided when it is not, a true Pandora’s box is opened, releasing uncontrollable forces which gravely harm defenceless populations, the cultural milieu and even the biological environment.

The Preamble and the first Article of the Charter of the United Nations set forth the foundations of the international juridical framework: peace, the pacific solution

of disputes and the development of friendly relations between the nations. Strongly opposed to such statements, and in practice denying them, is the constant tendency to the proliferation of arms, especially weapons of mass distraction, such as nuclear weapons. An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as “nations united by fear and distrust”. There is urgent need to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the non-proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons.

The recent agreement reached on the nuclear question in a sensitive region of Asia and the Middle East is proof of the potential of political good will and of law, exercised with sincerity, patience and constancy. I express my hope that this agreement will be lasting and efficacious, and bring forth the desired fruits with the cooperation of all the parties involved.

In this sense, hard evidence is not lacking of the negative effects of military and political interventions which are not coordinated between members of the international community. For this reason, while regretting to have to do so, I must renew my repeated appeals regarding to the painful situation of the entire Middle East, North Africa and other African countries, where Christians, together with other cultural or ethnic groups, and even members of the majority religion who have no desire to be caught up in hatred and folly, have been forced to witness the destruction of their places of worship, their cultural and religious heritage, their houses and property, and have faced the alternative either of fleeing or of paying for their adherence to good and to peace by their own lives, or by enslavement.

These realities should serve as a grave summons to an examination of conscience on the part of those charged with the conduct of international affairs. Not only in cases of religious or cultural persecution, but in every situation of conflict, as in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Libya, South Sudan and the Great Lakes region, real human beings take precedence over partisan interests, however legitimate the latter may be. In wars and conflicts there are individual persons, our brothers and sisters, men and women, young and old, boys and girls who weep, suffer and die. Human beings who are easily discarded when our response is simply to draw up lists of problems, strategies and disagreements.

As I wrote in my letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 9 August 2014, “the most basic understanding of human dignity compels the international community, particularly through the

norms and mechanisms of international law, to do all that it can to stop and to prevent further systematic violence against ethnic and religious minorities” and to protect innocent peoples.

Along the same lines I would mention another kind of conflict which is not always so open, yet is silently killing millions of people. Another kind of war experienced by many of our societies as a result of the narcotics trade. A war which is taken for granted and poorly fought. Drug trafficking is by its very nature accompanied by trafficking in persons, money laundering, the arms trade, child exploitation and other forms of corruption. A corruption which has penetrated to different levels of social, political, military, artistic and religious life, and, in many cases, has given rise to a parallel structure which threatens the credibility of our institutions.

I began this speech recalling the visits of my predecessors. I would hope that my words will be taken above all as a continuation of the final words of the address of Pope Paul VI; although spoken almost exactly fifty years ago, they remain ever timely. I quote: “The hour has come when a pause, a moment of recollection, reflection, even of prayer, is absolutely needed so that we may think back over our common origin, our history, our common destiny. The appeal to the moral conscience of man has never been as necessary as it is today ... For the danger comes neither from progress nor from science; if these are used well, they can help to solve a great number of the serious problems besetting mankind” (Address to the United Nations Organization, 4 October 1965). Among other things, human genius, well applied, will surely help to meet the grave challenges of ecological deterioration and of exclusion. As Paul VI said: “The real danger comes from man, who has at his disposal ever more powerful instruments that are as well fitted to bring about ruin as they are to achieve lofty conquests” (*ibid.*).

The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic. This common home of all men and women must also be built on the understanding of a certain sacredness of created nature.

Such understanding and respect call for a higher degree of wisdom, one which accepts transcendence, self-transcendence, rejects the creation of an all-powerful élite, and recognizes that the full meaning of individual and collective life is found in selfless service to others and in the sage

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“Switzerland’s commitment to the peaceful coexistence of peoples”

Bilateral workshops between Russian and Swiss Presidents of Parliament

by Thomas Kaiser

Historically, Switzerland and Russia have always had a special relationship. This interrelation is described in a number of books. In the book entitled “Käser, Künstler, Kommunisten” (Cheesemakers, Artists, Communists)¹ the life stories of a number of personalities as well as the way in which they worked in their respective countries, are documented. A long tradition of mutual exchange developed, which has continued up to this day. As early as in the 17th century *Peter the Great* appointed the Swiss *François Lefort* (1656–1699) the first Admiral of his newly created Marine. Swiss people also played an important role in the Russian educational sphere and in the second half of the 19th century in the slowly evolving economy. But not only Swiss people moved to Russia, from the 18th century onwards an enhanced movement of Russian people to Switzerland could be observed. Especially Geneva became the Russian capital of Switzerland and offered many Russians a new homeland.²

Anyone traveling the old Gotthard road from Göschenen to Andermatt by car, passes the Schöllenschlucht and can see the great *Suvorov*-monument left hand. When in 2009 the Russian President *Dmitry Medvedev* visited Switzerland as the first Russian President, he insisted on visiting the monument together with the then Federal President *Rudolf Merz*. In 1799, *Suvorov* had moved with his army across a number of Swiss passes aiming at expelling *Napoleon* from Switzerland together with the Austrians.

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and respectful use of creation for the common good. To repeat the words of Paul VI, “the edifice of modern civilization has to be built on spiritual principles, for they are the only ones capable not only of supporting it, but of shedding light on it” (ibid.).

“El Gaucho Martín Fierro”, a classic of literature in my native land, says: “Brothers should stand by each other, because this is the first law; keep a true bond between you always, at every time – because if you fight among yourselves, you’ll be devoured by those outside”.

The contemporary world, so apparently connected, is experiencing a growing and steady social fragmentation, which places at risk “the foundations of social life” and

“The Swiss-Russian cooperation comprises a variety of topics, during the discussions the potential of a closer collaboration on the technical level in the fields of innovation, research, health and energy was in particular elicited.”

Russia supported Swiss Neutrality

When Europe after the Napoleonic Wars had ended, was realigned at the Congress of Vienna in 1814/15, Russia vehemently supported the idea of Swiss neutrality which was finally recognized by the major European powers under international law. Tsar *Alexander I*, “alumnus of the Swiss *Frédéric César de La Harpe*”³, also played a decisive role in this context. Since then, Switzerland has had a special position in Europe, which has befitted it until today. Until today, Switzerland is able to pursue its own policy as a neutral state, surrounded by states which had to give up part of their sovereignty because of their membership to an alliance. Due to this particular situation various groups of victims of political persecution from all over Europe came to Switzerland as a safe haven in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The humanitarian tradition of Switzerland

It was not uncommon that even Russian Social Revolutionaries, who revolted against the untenable Czarist regime and were exposed to persecution by the Cheka, the Czarist secret police, fled to Switzerland because here both the political dem-

ocratic system as well as the humanitarian tradition of Switzerland protected the so afflicted refugee from persecution. During this time Geneva became a center of persecuted Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries, who enjoyed great freedom in Switzerland. Representatives of Russian anarchism in Switzerland like *Piotr Kropotkin* and *Michail Bakunin* exerted their influence on their native countries during a short time. Leader of the Mensheviks like *Georgi Plekhanov* or *Wera Sasulitsch* settled in Switzerland for a longer time to escape the persecution of democratically working people in Russia. The best-known figure was certainly *Vladimir Ulyanov*, called *Lenin*, who took refuge in Geneva and Zurich from the Czarist secret police until his return to Russia in 1917.

Swiss investors in Russia

After the end of World War II, both countries tried to normalize their relations. In 1946, their established mutual diplomatic relations testified this. Next year Russia and Switzerland will celebrate the 70-year anniversary of this diplomatic exchange.

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consequently leads to “battles over conflicting interests” (Laudato Si’, 229).

The present time invites us to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society, so as to bear fruit in significant and positive historical events (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 223). We cannot permit ourselves to postpone “certain agendas” for the future. The future demands of us critical and global decisions in the face of world-wide conflicts which increase the number of the excluded and those in need.

The praiseworthy international juridical framework of the United Nations Organization and of all its activities, like any other human endeavour, can be improved, yet it remains necessary; at the same time it can be the pledge of a secure and happy future for future genera-

tions. And so it will, if the representatives of the States can set aside partisan and ideological interests, and sincerely strive to serve the common good. I pray to Almighty God that this will be the case, and I assure you of my support and my prayers, and the support and prayers of all the faithful of the Catholic Church, that this Institution, all its member States, and each of its officials, will always render an effective service to mankind, a service respectful of diversity and capable of bringing out, for sake of the common good, the best in each people and in every individual. God bless you all. Thank you. •

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“Switzerland’s commitment to ...”

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From the time of Perestroika onwards, the contacts between Russia and Switzerland initiated by *Mikhail Gorbachev* have intensified at all levels of social life. In the first half of the 21st century, Switzerland belongs to “the most important foreign investors in Russia”⁴.

Medvedev paid tribute to the Swiss banking secrecy

The quality of Russian-Swiss relations became visible as well in recent times. The two-day state visit of Dmitry Medvedev in 2009 expressed great esteem for Switzerland. In one of his speeches he spoke up against the pressure of some EU countries and the USA, defended the Swiss banking secrecy and praised it as a law for protecting the personality. It was the only state at that time which sided distinctly with Switzerland. During his visit, President Medvedev took up the idea of Mikhail Gorbachev to build a common security architecture in Europe⁵, and invited Switzerland to be part of it. Today, in view of the Ukraine-conflict, people would be happy if there were a European security architecture, which would not only avoid creation of conflicts, but peacefully resolve them once they were there.

Memorandum of Understanding

When Switzerland held the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014, it tried very hard to follow this path to more peace in Europe. Thanks to the acceptance of Swiss neutrality one succeeded in finding a balance between the conflicting parties in Ukraine, Switzerland being instrumental in its basic structure. Switzerland is earning praise for its efforts from all stakeholders, including the Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei Lavrov*, who repeatedly held talks with representatives of Switzerland, in particular with Federal Councillor *Didier Burkhalter*.

Since 2007, there has now been the “Memorandum of Understanding”, which aims at the expansion and strengthening of the Swiss-Russian relations at multiple levels. Both states are interested in a constructive mutual dialogue, and after signing this memorandum relations have intensified. This concern is also supported by political initiatives in the Swiss Parliament. For example, the National Councillor and Councillor of Canton Valais *Oskar Freysinger* has filed a motion in Berne, which demands the Federal Councillor to start “negotiations on a free trade agreement with Russia”⁶ without delay.

Freysinger attributes this to the long-standing relationships that Switzerland and Russia have jointly maintain as well as to

Press release

Interparliamentary relations Switzerland – Russia

Bilateral meeting with the Duma Chairman and the Chairman of the Federation Council on the periphery of the 133rd IPU Assembly and Related Meetings in Geneva

Stéphane Rossini, Presiding Officer of the Swiss Parliament, and *Claude Hêche*, Presiding Officer of the Swiss Council of States, discussed Swiss-Russian relations with their respective counterparts, Duma chairman *Sergej Naryschin* and Federation Council Chairman *Walentina Matwijenko* on 20 October, respectively 19 October.

In the debate with their Russian ministerial colleagues, they emphasized the significance of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed by Switzerland and Russia in 2007 in order to establish a framework for intensified cooperation as a pillar of Swiss-Russian relations.

The Swiss-Russian cooperation comprises a variety of topics, during the discussions the potential of a closer collaboration on the technical level in the fields of innovation, research, health and energy was in particular elicited.

Furthermore, in view of the 70-year jubilee of the resumption of diplomatic relations in 2016, the possibility of an advanced exchange about the issue of federalism was initiated. Federalism is one of the mainstays of both countries, which predominantly serves to preserve diversity in unity and to bring the government closer to the citizens.

The exchange also provided the opportunity to stress the Swiss commitment to the peaceful coexistence of peoples. After having presided the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2014, Switzerland has continued to support the OSCE’s controlling work within the framework of the so-called Troika, together with Serbia (Presidency 2015) and Germany (Presidency 2016), and has committed itself to safety and stability within the OSCE area. The focus here is on the crisis in and around Ukraine.

With regard to the ongoing armed conflict in Syria which has been going on for over four years now and has led to a severe humanitarian crisis, the Council officers expressed their hope of rapidly finding an extensive approach to a solution for the migration crisis and for political solutions to the Syria conflict, together with Russia, within the international community.

Since the bilateral MoU in 2007 was signed, the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Russia have been intensified. At parliamentary level, several summit meetings have taken place on the periphery of international conferences ever since.

Regular contacts at the parliamentary groups friendship level also contribute to the cultivation of inter parliamentary relations between Switzerland and Russia.

At the bilateral meeting with Stéphane Rossini, presiding Officer of Swiss Parliament and Duma Chairman Sergej Naryschkin, National Councillor *Pierre-François Veillon*, President of the Swiss IPU delegation, and National Councillor *Lucrezia Meier-Schatz*, National Councillor *Felix Müri* and Member of the Council of State *Peter Bieri*, both members of the Swiss IPU delegation, were also present, as well as National Councillor *Jean-François Steiert* and National Councillor *Filippo Lombardi*, Vice President of the parliamentary group “Switzerland-Russia”.

The bilateral meeting between presiding Officer of Swiss Council of States Claude Hêche and Federation Council Chairman Walentina Matwijenko was accompanied by the Officer of the Swiss IPU delegation and National Councillor Peter Bieri, another member of the Swiss IPU delegation.

Geneva, 20 October 2015,
Parliamentary Services

the fact that Russia is an integral part of Europe and must not be isolated in any way.

Such meetings, as they took place around the inter-parliamentary Union in Geneva, are to be very welcomed and can make an important contribution to international understanding and peace. •

¹ *Käser, Künstler, Kommunisten* (Cheesemakers, Artists, Communists); Editors: Eva Maeder and Peter Niederhäuser, Zurich 2009

² Mikhail Shishkin: *The Russian Switzerland*, Zurich 2003

³ *Käser, Künstler, Kommunisten* (Cheesemakers, Artists, Communists); p. 23

⁴ *ibid*, p. 11

⁵ Mikhail Gorbachev: *The new Russia*, Cologne 2015

⁶ *Current Concerns*, No. 24 from 23 September 2015



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Cooperation with Russia instead of escalation

Europe must not become a battlefield

rt. While every military and non-military movement of Russia, as if enlarged under a microscope, is assessed “aggressively” and is medially inflated, as currently in the case with Syria, the US and NATO, under US leadership (including some PFP States) are surrounding the country militarily. New weapons, ammunition and soldiers are brought to Russia’s borders every day. The Western European allies are nuclear equipped with the latest upgraded warheads from the US (see *Current Concerns* No. 25 of 29 September 2015). The future battlefield will certainly not be in the US or Washington, but apparently in Europe. It is therefore comprehensible that the United States are mercilessly driving forward their strategy of encircling, even if it is done at the expense of their “allies”.

Only a few military steps taken in the past recent months, which are known in the public are briefly compiled here in a list :

- In *Georgia*, a new NATO training centre for Danish, Latvian, Lithuanian and Norwegian officers was opened. Georgia as a direct neighbour of Russia is not yet a NATO member. The Russian government protested in a futile attempt against these unofficial eastward expansion of NATO.
- On the *Black Sea*, off the coast of *Bulgaria*, the *US Marine Corps* doubled its presence. Weapons and ammunition are transported via Bremerhaven by rail. The presence of warships in the Black Sea – also off the coast of Russia – has been generally strengthened. Manoeuvres like “Sea Breeze” in September with the participation of German soldiers are carried out directly outside of the Russian coastal waters.
- As part of the “Open Skies Treaty” from 2002, intended as a confidence-building measure until August, *Sweden* was allowed to conduct reconnaissance flights over Russia. This was granted from the Russian side.
- *Sweden* has significantly increased its military spending. Amongst other things cruise missiles are being bought that are directed towards Russia.
- *Lithuania* renewed its air defenses.
- Above the *Baltic Sea Region* and the *Baltic States* aircraft of NATO have been patrolling for a lengthy period. Currently 4 *German Euro Fighter* and 4 *Hungarian Saab JAS 39 C Gripen*.
- On the political level *Japan* has – against the majority of its citizens – de-

termined its course to rearm its purely defensive army towards an intervention force.

- Against the will of a large majority in *Germany* the *Bundeswehr* has been converted into a powerful intervention army in recent years (see *Jürgen Rose: Deutschlands neue Wehrmacht*. In: *International. Zeitschrift für Internationale Politik*. 3/2015)
- By 2019 the US intends to have increased its Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) operations by 50%.
- The *USS Donald Cook* guided missile destroyer and its three sister ships have run into the *Mediterranean Sea*. Together with land-based interceptor missiles in Poland, Romania, they are to serve as an early warning radar in Turkey and a command center in Ramstein (Germany) to create some kind of European protection shield.
- At present one of the largest NATO manoeuvre of the past 10 years, “Trident Juncture” has started in the *Mediterranean Region*. The new established “Super Rapid Reaction Force” of NATO will be tested.

Further examples might be added. The military pressure on Russia is being increased. The non-military operations of “hybrid” warfare are not yet included in this list, although they have been destabilising the country already for years.

The serious question arises: Where is the protest of our elected representatives here in Europe against this strategy of warmongering? Where are the European politicians from all political fields, who would reject these policies of military escalation? Are we citizens supposed to be tacitly led to the slaughterhouse?

At the same time people in Europe are kept busy with a huge wave of refugees. Their sudden appearance requires an even more detailed explanation. Additionally Germany, which actually is interested in a beneficial cooperation with Russia, is kept busy with an “automobile exhaust scandal”, which relates to one of the largest employers of the country.

In parallel, citizens have to take note of the fact that the US secret services – with the obvious involvement of German intelligence services – have spied out and are still spying out all important activities of their allies. Furthermore, the public should know that their democratic rights will be levered out by a secretly negotiated so-called Free Trade Agreement between the USA and Europe (TTIP).

Precisely in this situation, the politicians in Europe are demanded more urgently than ever, to take on their responsibilities and to carry out serious negotiations with Russia to induce a relaxation of the tense situation and even strengthen economic cooperation. To this end they might look for active support in the USA as well. Even in the US influential circles exist, which do not want a military escalation.

Any activity aiming at rapprochement or cooperation, must be supported. For instance, the Vienna talks on the question of Syria or the recent creation of a new *economic platform* by the *Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP)*, the *Association of Small- and Medium Enterprises Delowaja Rossija*, the *German Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA)*, and the *German-Russian Chamber of Commerce (AHK)* are to be welcomed. Not only from an economic point of view! •

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Russia, the West and the war in Syria

by Karl Müller

To make one thing clear: in summer 2013, when the US, together with a “coalition of the willing” were starting their direct military intervention in Syria, Pope Francis turned to the people on St Peter’s Square in Rome in a central prayer vigil for peace: “May the sound of weapons cease! War is always the failure of peace; it is always a defeat for mankind.” Even now, two years later and after the military involvement of Russia in the Syrian theatre, the deep truth of this statement is unchanged.

But still: The lamentation of western media and politicians about the Russian intervention in the war is hypocritical – and the truth is getting lost. But this hypocrisy is not only (again) directed against Russia; it is also directed against those who want to end the war with Syria, knowing that this will take a joint effort of the global community – the term is suitable here.

A task for the global community

This is not only the view of the Russian government – the Russian President’s speech at the general assembly of the United Nations on 28 September 2015 in New York, the efforts of the Russian UN Security Council Presidency in September 2015, the Russian resolution draft for the Security Council of 1 October 2015 and the statements of the Russian Foreign Ministry are proving this. There are also considerate western voices sharing this view. But these voices are under strong pressure and are on the verge of going down in the propaganda storm of the new Cold War. To realize where the front lines are, it is sufficient to study the media on any weekday.

There are not only media with a transatlantic background ...

Let us take 22 October 2015: The morning after the Syrian President’s visit in Moscow, the German daily newspapers are commenting it with snappish lines. Be it the allegedly conservative “Welt” or the supposedly left-alternative “Tageszeitung”, the allegedly left-liberal “Süddeutsche Zeitung” or the supposedly economic-liberal “Handelsblatt” – none of them is detecting anything positive in the Russian President’s attempt to achieve, together with the incumbent Syrian President, progress towards ending the civil war in this abused country. The accusations even go as far as even blaming Russia with the refugee problem in the Middle East. What reader of these comments is aware that he is dealing with media which are involved in transatlantic networks?

“Is it not a legal and moral declaration of bankruptcy to play a secret game with a regime like IS – simply in order to enforce one’s power politics and one’s imperial goals? Wouldn’t it be about time for the responsible class in politics and media to step back, in order to make room for a different kind of politics oriented towards the values which have once been authoritative for the global community and international law?”

... but also voices for a collaboration with Russia

But a little later, different voices can be heard in the *Deutschlandfunk*, not from the radio station itself but from its interview partners. *Jochen Hippler* of the *Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden* at the University of Duisburg states: “Without Assad, the Syria problem can probably not be solved. Not only *Vladimir Putin* is convinced of this, this insight is gaining ground in the West as well.” Hippler adds in explanation: “The opposition, the rebels, are completely fragmented, fighting each other. Moreover, there is the IS lurking in the background, which means that, without a political alternative capable of taking over the government, the [claim for] the dictatorship’s demission is more flowery wording than political concept.” On the same morning, *Harald Kujat* is interviewed in the *Deutschlandfunk*. Kujat had been Inspector General of the German “Bundeswehr” and also head of the NATO military committee. Other than the newspapers of the day, he sees a sign of hope in the Russian military intervention in Syria: “I think that we currently see a development by which we gather the impression that reason may prevail.” Some days before, on 10 October, the former Inspector General commented on Syria at length. Asked to comment NATO’s sharp criticism of the Russian Syria initiative, he said: “I’d like to recommend more composure here.” Specifically he was commenting on the Turkish government’s claims that Russian planes had violated Turkish airspace, an event to which NATO had reacted sharply. Kujat: “My recommendation is not to escalate – neither verbally nor militarily. Especially Turkey is often tending to bring NATO in situations where it has to declare that we stand by Turkey; that we will defend Turkey. I think we should be careful with statements like this. As I said, verbal de-escalation is the order of the day.” Kujat stated

also that Russia “had no interest whatsoever to attack Turkey.”

Ex-General Kujat: Claim for immediate demission of Assad is absurd

In addition, there was a common interest between the West and Russia: fighting the IS. To achieve this, however, ground forces are needed, which only the current President Assad can provide. He deems the West’s claim absurd that Assad first had to step back. Moreover such claim was in contradiction of international conferences decrees: “That was a position which had been agreed upon back in 2012 [in Geneva]. So it is not a completely new situation. We simply have to return to what has been reasonably decided back then.”

Kujat is not a spokesman for the Russian government. He alleges Russia to have substantial stakes in Syria. But for him the fight against the IS, that is to end the war in Syria is the higher-ranking goal: “It is possible to drive the IS out of Syria.” Together with Russia, this might be achieved, even after the West had been looking on for years, Kujat says.

So the question remains: Why did Western media and politicians start an anti-Russian propaganda over Syria? Does the fight against Russia have a higher priority than the fight against the IS for the leading politicians and main-stream media? Did the West even actively promote the advance of the IS? There are many indications for this. Meanwhile it is a known fact that the Turkish and some Arabic governments are supporting the IS. What is the Western governments’ share in this?

In a multi-polar world: dialogue on equal footing of states at the negotiation table

Is it not a legal and moral declaration of bankruptcy to play a secret game with a regime like IS – simply in order to en-

Rhodes Forum 2015 – The World Beyond Global Disorder Conference impressions

by Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller and Erika Vögeli

The following article gives a first impression. The conference can be checked on the website of the World Public Forum as *lifestream* at www.wpfdc.org.

From 8 to 11 October, the 13th Rhodes Forum of the *World Public Forum* “Dialogue of Civilizations” took place in Rhodes. This at a time of a daily flood of disaster reports regarding refugee flows, economic crises, continuing armed conflicts in Ukraine, in Syria, on the African continent – and last but not least, about the miserable situation of the people in Greece.

During the ride from the airport to the conference venue, the taxi driver told us in fluent German (his grandparents had worked in Germany) that Greece could no longer survive without the revenue out of tourism on the islands. Other than the cultivation of olive trees, Rhodes has no agriculture, only tourism. Now his wife works 12 hour per day, he had to work 14, sometimes 16 hours to feed his family with two children. The worst, however, was the state of the health care system in Greece: Hardly anyone could afford an expensive health insurance. Those who were compelled to go to hospital had to pay the fees themselves. Very few were able to do this. As we drive past abandoned unfinished constructions, he explains that during the years of 2000 to 2005, the banks had telephoned the citizens and asked them if they wanted a loan. You could take out a loan immediately to the amount of EUR 250

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force one’s power politics and one’s imperial goals? Wouldn’t it be about time for the responsible class in politics and media to step back, in order to make room for a different kind of politics oriented towards the values which have once been authoritative for the global community and international law? The world is still far from this. The old powers are still not willing to accept that the world is in the process of becoming multi-polar. And also that in a multi-polar world only one path is acceptable: the path of an equal and honest dialogue of the states and their governments at the negotiation table. Then the Pope’s profound truth “May the sound of weapons cease” has a chance to be realized. ●



The President of the World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations” Vladimir A. Yakunin during the press conference. (picture ev)

000, all one had to do was to just go to the Bank and sign. He knows many who took out such loans at that time and are now hopelessly indebted.

The reception at our hotel is extremely helpful and hospitable.

Traditionally, the opening ceremony took place in Rhodes in the courtyard of the castle of the former Grand Master of the Order of St. John. The hitherto arrived 300 participants were welcomed by Mayor *Chatzidiakos* of Rhodes, who paid tribute to the conference, which he was now able to host for the 13th time in Rhodes. Subsequently the Metropolitan of Rhodes and the President of the WPF, *Vladimir Yakunin*, held welcoming speeches.

It was beneficial that about 400 participants and delegates from more than 50 countries around the world came together, to discuss pressing current issues and possible causes and solutions for our current world situation. Six high-level plenary sessions and five workshops were held.

The conference was opened with contributions of the President of the *World Public Forum* *Vladimir Yakunin*, former US Congresswoman *Cynthia McKinney*, former Foreign Secretary of India, *Kanwal Sibal*, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece *Ioannis Amanatidis*, Alternate Foreign Minister for European Affairs *Nikos Xydakis* and former Federal Chancellor of Austria, *Alfred Gusenbauer*.

At the beginning of his speech, *Vladimir Yakunin* made the ethical posi-

tion of the World Forum clear: It is about global pluralism. *Huntington*’s “Clash of Civilizations” and the ensuing wars that the West has created geo-politically, is countered by the World Forum through the “Dialogue of Civilizations”. The emphasis is on the things in common and on the equivalence of civilizations, less focus is put on the differences. “The objective means and instrumentaria of a dialogue of civilisations go far beyond the

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The plenary sessions:

- A Prosperous Future Together: Financial and Economic Policies for Inclusive and Equitable Development
- The World Beyond Global Disorder
- Which Way WANA (West Asia and North Africa)?
- The New Threat: Hybrid Wars as a Tool of Subversion
- Family Values as a Basis for Sustainable Development of Human Civilization
- Future of International Development Institutions: Challenges and Opportunities

The workshops:

- Past and Future of European Security in the Aspects of Dialogue of Civilizations
- Digital Media, Digital Transition and Internet of Things
- On the Way to the Network of Schools of the Dialogue of Cultures
- China and Russia: History and Future
- The Current Migration Crisis: Causes and Solutions in Europe and Beyond

“What is required are new models of inclusive and equitable development” Concluding remarks of the World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations” on the occasion of the 13th Rhodes Forum 2015

Meeting for the 13th time on the island of Rhodes that is a crossroads of civilizations, this year's *Rhodes Forum* gathered once again people from over 60 nations representing a variety of cultures and traditions.

All the participants were united in their commitment to search for new ways of overcoming the contemporary global disorder – the immense human suffering as a result of military conflict, economic crisis, social dislocation and environmental destruction. By sharing novel ideas and experience from around the world, the Forum debated alternatives beyond the dominant ideologies and power systems. Key to this is the recognition that current chaos is neither necessary nor normative and that a spiritual humanism can transcend the logic of inequality and violence in the direction of justice and peace.

The *World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations”* (WPF-DoC) has always defended the irreducible diversity of civilizations and supported pluralistic ideas at the service of inter-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogue. Based on a fifteen-year tradition, the Rhodes Forum seeks to offer a rich and rigorous analysis of the world as it is – outside of conventional categories that fail to capture the lived experience and reality that confronts people across the globe.

After 1945, the creation of the United Nations was at a heart of a concerted effort to provide for all nations a future without war. 70 years later we are deeply concerned by the persistence of old conflicts and the occurrence of new wars. Amid a shift from more tangible threats to more nebulous risks, there is a growing fusion of physical force (including new instruments such as drones and robots) with subversive tactics (like disinformation, “cyber warfare,” irregular forces, deception). This evolution towards hybrid warfare has the effect of blurring the lines between the military and civilian spheres,

state- and non-state actors as well as regular and irregular tactics. Hybrid warfare represents the contemporary version of “total war”, which aims not only to achieve military victory but also to undo the political and social systems of states. As such, it precludes efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement through dialogue between the warring parties and destroys the very fabric of a world order based on the co-existence of sovereign nations.

During the 2015 Rhodes Forum special attention was paid to *West Asia* and *North Africa* (WANA) [with this term the countries of the region break away from the term “Middle East”, which refers to the western colonial powers, editor's note]. Wars are raging in at least four countries in the region, tens of thousands of people have been killed, and millions more have left their homes in fear for their life. The rise of terrorist outfits such as *Al-Qaeda*, *ISIS*, and *Jabhat al-Nusra* – targeting Muslims and non-Muslims alike – suggests that the world is facing a battle against barbarism, not a clash of civilizations. Fighting the barbarians who slaughter innocent men, women and children is a battle for civilization – for ancient ways of life, ancestral homeland, millennia-old traditions and different faith communities such as Oriental Christians and the Yazidi who confront an impossible choice: forced conversion, expulsion or death. We are convinced that such and similar conflicts cannot be solved by military means alone but require political settlements that reflect cultural realities. We echo Pope *Francis*' recent words that “war only brings destruction and multiplies suffering, while hope and progress can only come from peace. The concerned parties should broaden their horizons beyond the immediate interests and use international law and diplomacy to resolve current conflicts”.

This spirit also extends to other spheres such as the economy, society, and nature where a neo-colonialist system and mind-

set underpin the practices of exploitation that we are seeing around the world. What is required are new models of inclusive and equitable development that can lead to prosperous future – individual fulfillment and mutual flourishing. Therefore the objective of economic, financial and developmental policy should be shared prosperity for all – not just small global and national elites. This was the aim of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the underlying holistic strategy, which now also includes a greater emphasis on ecological resilience. Unfortunately, international organization that should play a key role in this process too often fail to foster sustainable economic growth or to create sufficient jobs. We call upon them to lend to the real economy, particularly to *micro-, small and medium enterprises* (MSMEs) and to individuals who either live in abject poverty or struggle to make ends meet.

We are also concerned about a policy of creating a society of individuals who focus only on satisfying their selfish desires and ignore the needs of others or the fate of the planet at large. We stand in solidarity with all those who consider the family to be a fundamental social and cultural institution that is the basis for human flourishing and civilization – as set out in the 1948 *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the constitutions of more than 100 countries as well as reflected in the holy scriptures of various religious traditions.

In the course of six plenary sessions and five workshops, the Rhodes Forum debated both current affairs such as the migration crisis and long-term issues such as European security, the importance of digital media, the network of schools of dialogue, as well as the cultures, history and future of China and Russia. •

Source: <http://wpfdc.org/about-us/activities/events/19528-13th-rhodes-forum-concluding-remarks>.

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framework of scientific and research interest. This is because the maintenance of peace among countries and peoples depends on how efficiently and precisely is the work of the mechanisms geared to establishing mutual understanding, as well as promoting a trustworthy atmosphere among the parties in the dialogue – be they interstate institutions, NGOs,

transnational corporations or individual personalities. The conditions of an open, mutual respect and equitable dialogue are the chief factors that determine the efficacy of cooperation and partnership among civilizations.” The World Public Forum sees this approach of a dialogue among civilisations as the only alternative to oppose the existing global chaos, conflicts and crises of all kinds and to achieve durable and sustainable solutions.

Yakunin sees a fundamental difference between East and West: The West (NATO countries) is pursuing a theory of the inevitability of conflict, which often leads to military intervention, while in the East wars are seen as a result of an erroneous policy. As an example he cites the utterance of British Prime Minister *Cameron* at a meeting in Manchester:

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that it was indeed legitimate to use nuclear weapons.

It is wrong to think that there is no alternative, there *are* alternatives. The creation of a trustful relationship in dialogue between the states. There is also a third way to world development, beyond neo-liberalism and collectivism/authoritarianism. In a world with hegemonic aspirations, with hybrid wars and neo-liberal oligarchy it is the order of the day to enforce dialogue, the legitimate dialogue between equivalent cultures and states.

Yakunin expressed strong criticism of the Western interventionist policy: "We have seen that a world dominated by a single civilization does not work. Recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria have demonstrated the failings of Western interventionist foreign policy. It is clear from the current state of conflict throughout the world that intercultural dialogue is vital."

Postmodernism, that knows no historical continuity, leading to the isolation of people who are only directed by consumption, he compared to the terrorist militia. Against both significant opposition is indispensable.

By contrast, he highlighted the importance of the family as a union of human beings. Everything in the world is firmly interconnected: the crisis of one civilisation is also a crisis of all other civilisations.

Great variety of topics

The great variety of topics at this conference is shown by a brief glance at other numerous lectures.

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece pointed out that an improvement of peace was possible by further developing democracy. Religions would have to return to their core tasks. The aim was to live together in prosperity and peace.

The former US Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney made a strong case for the values that are conducive for the uneven road in the political struggle regarding the questions of peace: truth, just reality, peace and dignity. Everyone should try not to be part of the problem, but part of the solution.

Former Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer clearly criticised how Greece was being dealt with: on the one hand they forced Greece to reduce the public budget, on the other hand, Greece should master all the administrative work of registering the refugees.

In former times economic decisions had been carefully prepared, now everything went very fast, Vladimir Yakunin



Plenary session: Hybrid wars as a Tool of Subversion (picture ma)

said. The digital world with their e-banking was only there to dominate others.

Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at the University of New Delhi, expressed her surprise at the great furore in Germany about the refugee problem: In many countries of the world there was migration and had been for years, she said. In addressing the question of the causes she was missing the search for the fundamental reason: Economic globalisation prevented development. Professor Ghosh spoke of a veritable "financial artillery". Also the problem of intellectual property might prevent development. After a colonialisation of the mind had taken place over the years, a decolonisation of the mind had become necessary. One should no longer place a higher value on capital than on human beings. We need a democratisation of intellectual property and control of the financial system and above all a significant decentralisation. Communes and municipalities had a very important task here. How could it be achieved that people become capable of mobilising their own people's will, asked the well-known expert on international law and former UN special envoy of the Human Rights Council Richard Falk. He added that everything was depending on that mobilisation. Militarisation had to stop, military power has never won wars.

Hans Köchler, the well-known professor of philosophy and President of the *International Progress Organization* emphasized that questions as to the morality and compatibility of hybrid warfare with international law did not have to be dismissed, if one was committed to a just and stable world order.

The deputy director of the Department of Security Policy of the Austrian Defence Ministry, *Gustav Gusenbauer*, commented on Austria's contribution with regard to the past and the future of

European security: Austria, for a long time, had simply followed the EU and not made its own analysis. On the outside Austria had followed Germany. In the background, however, Austria was establishing a strategic partnership with Russia resulting in a good dialogue and regular meetings. Gusenbauer argued that European countries needed to redevelop their own positions.

The director of the *Foundation for African Cultural Heritage*, *Theresa Okafir* from Nigeria, declared her determined rejection of the ideology of genderism in today's world: What kept parents really busy day and night, was not "gender", but the question of how their children were doing.

Participants at the three-day conference unanimously agreed it is possible to counteract disorder and anarchy and that a different response to conflict that looked to solve the roots of destabilisation could pave the way for a better world. •



Yemen

Human Rights disaster and destruction of World Cultural Heritage

by Georg Wagner

In Yemen a merciless war is waged. For six months now, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States have been bombing the poorest country in the Arab world back into the Stone Age. Officially they claim to want to help President Hadi to re-gain control of the whole of Yemen and to contain Iran, whose participation in the Houthi rebellion, however, is nothing but a fantasy. Saudi warplanes have been deployed without any regard to the protection of the civilian population in Yemen. The bombings look more like a targeted massacre of Shiite Huthi than a sophisticated (well thought-out) military operation. Is Saudi Arabia performing a genocide against people of a religious deviation under the guise of a military operation?

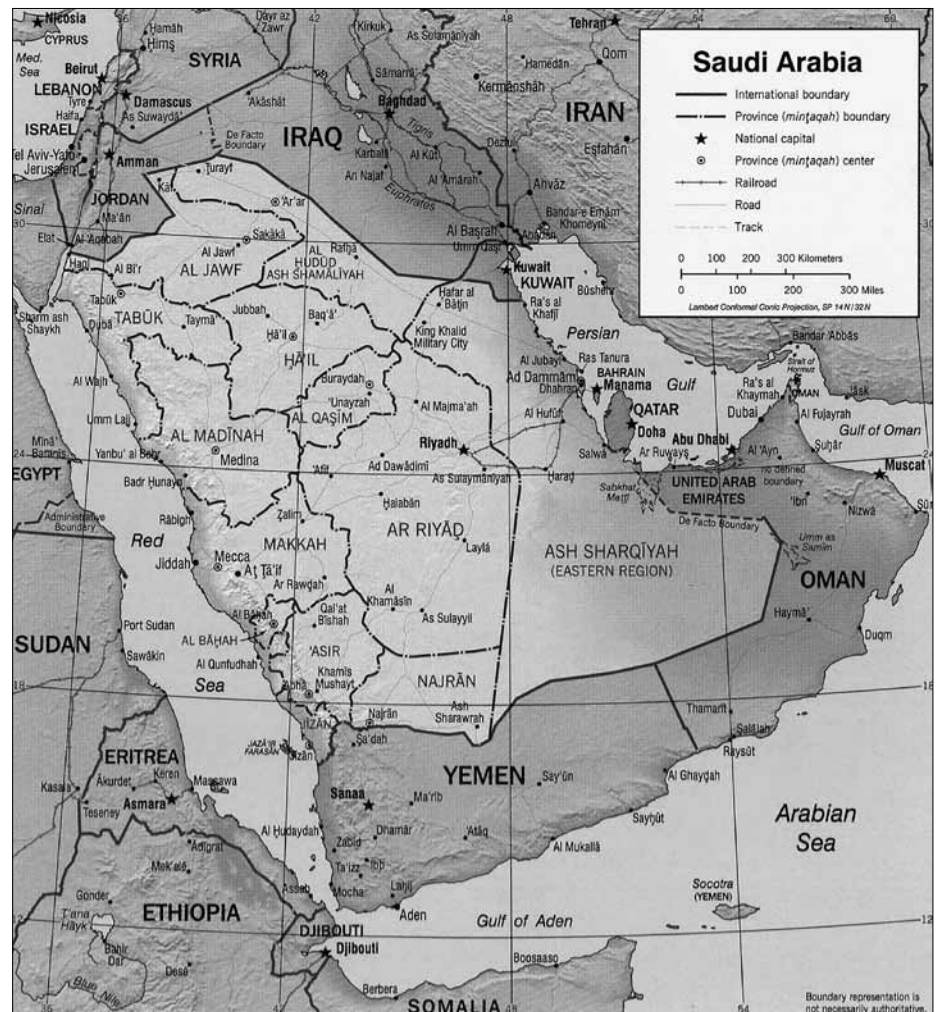
More than 5,000 people have died, mostly civilians. More than 25,000 were injured, including thousands of children. 21 of nearly 26 million Yemenis depend on relief supplies, 6.5 million suffer from acute hunger, more than 2 million children are threatened by malnutrition.

The oldest cultural treasures of the Arabian Peninsula – significant parts of the World Cultural Heritage – are being destroyed.

The outcry of the world fails to materialize. In the light of the refugee catastrophe in Syria, currently dominating the media, the silence can only be described as hypocritical. And the United States are supporting the aggression of Saudi Arabia. In this war, the principle of international law, the responsibility to protect, is turned upside down. This principle should facilitate the intervention of the international community to prevent crimes against the civilian population. But this time the “official government” of Yemen (read President Hadi) has his own country bombarded from his exile.

Modern Yemen covers 530,000 square kilometers in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, about 1½ times as large as Germany. It is an Arab country, Islam is the state religion and according to Article 3 of the Constitution the basis of its jurisprudence is the Sharia. The capital San'a is situated at an altitude of 2,300 m above sea level. Her magnificent old city is a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site. Other important cities are Aden, Ta'izz, Hudayda and Mukalla.

Yemen has more than 25 million inhabitants and is – other than its neighbors – a densely populated country. With a fertility rate of 6 children per woman in 2009, the population is growing rapidly and is



expected to have doubled in 2030. Yemen is one of the poorest Arab countries. 42% of the population live below the poverty level. Yemen ranks 154th out of 177 countries on the *Human Development Index* (HDI). The *HPI-1 value* (*Human Poverty Indicator* for developing countries) for Yemen, 40.67, ranks 76th among 102 developing countries.

Yemen is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the north, and the Sultanate of Oman to the east, the Red Sea to the west, the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea, a sea bordering the Indian Ocean, to the south. On the African coast are Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia of the Horn of Africa facing Yemen.

The inhabitants of the mountains to the north are Za'idi Shiites, the residents of the coastal plain in the south and in the eastern part of the country are Shafi'i Sunnis. Most Yemenis are employed in agriculture. 70% of the population live in villages. Agricultural commodities produced in the nation include grain, vegetables, fruits, qat, coffee, cotton, dairy products, fish, livestock (sheep, goats, cattle, camels), and poultry. But the production of the

country covers only ¼ of its requirements, therefore, Yemen is dependent on international food aid.

Oil and gas

Compared to its neighbors Yemen possesses only small oil and gas deposits. Currently, reserves are limited to deposits in Mar'ib, Shabwa and Hadramaut. New natural gas deposits are expected among others in the area that came to Yemen by the redefinition of the border between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. However, considerable investment with uncertain profitability would be required, as in the region Iran and the United Arab Emirates are already producing significant amounts of LNG.

Several oil companies are interested in Yemen, *Total* of France, *Hunt Oil* and *Exxon* of the United States and *Kyong* of South Korea.

In 2010, the LNG terminal in Balhaf became operative. Income from the oil and gas production generated 70 to 75 per-

Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba

According to ancient narrations *Bilqis*, the Queen of Sheba, lived in fabulous wealth and reigned in a country with flourishing gardens, well smelling frankincense and myrrh. The gigantic dam in Mar'ib belongs to one of the man-made wonders of the world till today. The early Arab empire of Sheba existed from the 10th century BC to the 3rd century AD. Signs of this ancient High Culture of South Arabia are the pillars of the temple Bar'an and Adam as well as the remains of the 600 m long and 17 m high dam, whose locks led the precious water from the Wadi Adhana to the fields. The dam held a thousand years. When it disintegrated in 600 BC, a big wave of emigration started from southern Arabia to neighboring areas like the Saudi Arabia of today.

The Incense Road led through Sheba, starting in India and reaching the Mediterranean Sea. Because of this Road

caravans with immeasurable wealth reached the country, such as frankincense, gold, myrrh, precious stones, sandalwood and other precious objects. In the Bible, in the Book of Kings, we read: "They came to Jerusalem with a very large escort, with camels, carrying Balsam, a huge amount of gold and precious stones [...]"

Frankincense and myrrh were transported by caravans into the entire Mediterranean region, to Egypt, the Levant and the Roman Empire. One also traded with Abyssinia, Persia and India. Sana'a was a veritable trade center with an astonishing cityscape: the narrow high-rise buildings, which seem like early skyscrapers, are a World Cultural Heritage.

After the tradewinds had been discovered, the overland trade of the caravans didn't have worth anymore. Sheba's wealth was scattered.

riors. Even today, men never part of their *Jambiya*, a belt worn curved dagger and a symbol for the honor of the tribe.

The ancient kingdoms in Yemen

From the emerging oases small kingdoms developed. Some of these are lesser-known, others are world famous as Hadramaut and Saba.

In the 3rd and 6th centuries of our era the Ethiopians invaded this territory before the Persian Sassanids expelled the Ethiopians at the end of the 6th century.

The emergence of Islam in the 7th century was a turning point. From 661 Yemen belonged to the caliphate of the Umayyads. Starting out from Mecca and Medina the Arabian Peninsula was gradually united. Incidentally, the Arab Word Yamin means right, as the south is on the right, when viewed from Mecca towards sunrise. After several 100 years of Muslim rule, the Yemeni tribes gradually gained back their independence.

Since the 9th century various dynasties dominated the country. The most significant was the dynasty of Za'idites who founded an Imamate in 901. The Za'idites are a subgroup of the Shiites; they ruled until 1962 on the high plains of the north. Their independence was favored by an economic boom, because the growing importance of the sea route for the east-west trade from India to Egypt via Yemen.

Yemen and colonisation

After the Ottomans had conquered Syria and Egypt in 1517, Yemen had been under their influence ever since 1538. Aden was expanded to an Ottoman naval base. Sana'a was conquered in 1546, and in 1552, the Imam of the Za'idites submitted to the Ottomans. In the late 16th century Za'idite troops, composed mainly of tribal warriors, forced the Ottomans to evacuate the country and after fierce fighting the last Ottoman troops withdrew from Yemen in 1635.

Beginning with the age of discovery Portuguese sailors reached the Yemeni coast and founded a trade settlement on the island of Socotra in the 16th century.

In the 19th century the British due to their presence in India began to seek new shipping lanes on their way to England. So, in 1839 Aden came under British rule. The United Kingdom controlled the strait Bab el-Mandeb in the south of the Arabian Peninsula and the coast of Somalia. With the opening of the Suez Canal end of the 19th century the strategic importance of Aden became even clearer.

In 1872, the Ottomans conquered the seaport city Hudayda, by which they again controlled the north of the country, as they did before in the 16th century. Thus the colonization by the European powers was one

"Yemen"

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cent of government revenue, 25 percent of the GDP and about 90 percent of exports.

The drug Qat

Qat is popular in Yemen, its cultivation consumes much of the country's agricultural resources. The freshly picked leaves are chewed. In the afternoon, the Yemenis meet for jointly chewing qat and discussing. This is part of Yemeni culture and a social custom. Qat consumption induces mild euphoria and excitement, suppresses the feeling of hunger, but may also lead to anxiety and hallucinations. Consumption of Qat has increased greatly in recent years, the cultivation is paying off, nearly 15% of the population live on it. However, the cultivation of Qat consumes 30% of the arable land, and almost 80% of the countries water supply goes into irrigation, whereby the cultivation of cereals and coffee is affected. And by the strong increase in consuming Qat the economic activity in the country is dropping. Chewing Qat also leads to health problems, since the Qat trees have been treated with pesticides.

Gate of Tears

Its location on the Red Sea gave Yemen a significant role for trade, and since the completion of the Suez Canal in the 19th century for the control of maritime shipping. One of the world's major shipping lanes passes the strait *Bab al-Mandeb*, the Gate of Tears.

An estimated 3.8 million bbl/d of crude oil and refined petroleum products flow through this waterway toward Europe, the

United States, and Asia. Its strategic location could provide Yemen with a security guarantee, but this is not so. From here it is only 15 nautical miles to the coast of Africa; Yemen is situated opposite of Somalia, a country having been warring for 20 years and creating uncountable refugees. According to the *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* 170,000 refugees live in Yemen, according to the government in Sana'a 700,000 Somalis live in Yemen. Although the country has ratified the *Geneva Convention*, the high number of refugees affects its labor market, its health care, and national security. Lack of stability in Somalia leads not only to a high amount of refugees, but also to increased piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

Arabia Felix – Happy Arabia

In ancient times, the part of the Arabian Peninsula that is today called Yemen, was called *Arabia Felix*, Happy Arabia, due to the mild climate and the fertility of the plateaus, watered by monsoon rains. Twice a year the wadis, i.e. dry riverbeds, became raging rivers. Oases emerged, were people settled in the course of time, and practiced agriculture. Since the 1st century BC they built dikes to protect their fields against flooding. They also developed a system of irrigation for the cultivation of coconut and date palms, vegetables, and trees for extraction of aromatic resins, frankincense and myrrh.

Since ancient times, people in Arabia Felix were sedentary farmers and not Bedouins. The tribe ruled over its territory, protected the common land, the streets and the markets. A code of honor existed for all members of the tribe and since there were often conflicts, the peasants were also war-

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reason for the division of the country, because in 1905 the Ottoman and British Empire divided the country among themselves on the basis of several bilateral agreements. The North came under Ottoman administration, even if the tribes still adhered to the rule of the Za'idi Imam.

The British Colony of Aden port

On the southern side lay the British Colony of Aden port and the two protectorates Aden and East-West-Aden; all three areas later were joined to form South Yemen. For a long time two Yemeni States existed, on the one hand based on religious division, on

the other hand based on the British-Turkish colonisation. The North was shaped by the presence of the Ottomans, the south remained under British rule until 1967. 1919, i. e. after the World War I, the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the north of Yemen became independent under the Imam *Yahya Muhammad Hamid ed-Din*, the head of the Za'idi dynasty. He led a guerrilla war against the British protectorate and at the same time he defended the country against *Ibn Saud's* conquest of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Treaty of Taif

Finally in 1934, Saudis and Za'idites reached an agreement, the Treaty of Taif. By it Saudi Arabia was granted a dominion over the Yemeni provinces Asir, Na-

iran and Jessan. The western part of the border was defined, i. e. the part from the Red Sea to the Jebel at-Thar. Further east they failed to agree on a border demarcation. In 1935, Saudi Arabia insisted on the so-called Hamza line, not recognized by Yemen. The border demarcation was not clearly established until in June 2000.

The Yemen Arab Republic in the north

In 1962, the rule of the Za'iditi Imams was overthrown by a military coup and North Yemen became the Yemen Arab Republic with San'a being its capital. Immediately a civil war broke out between the royalists and the putschists. The rebels were

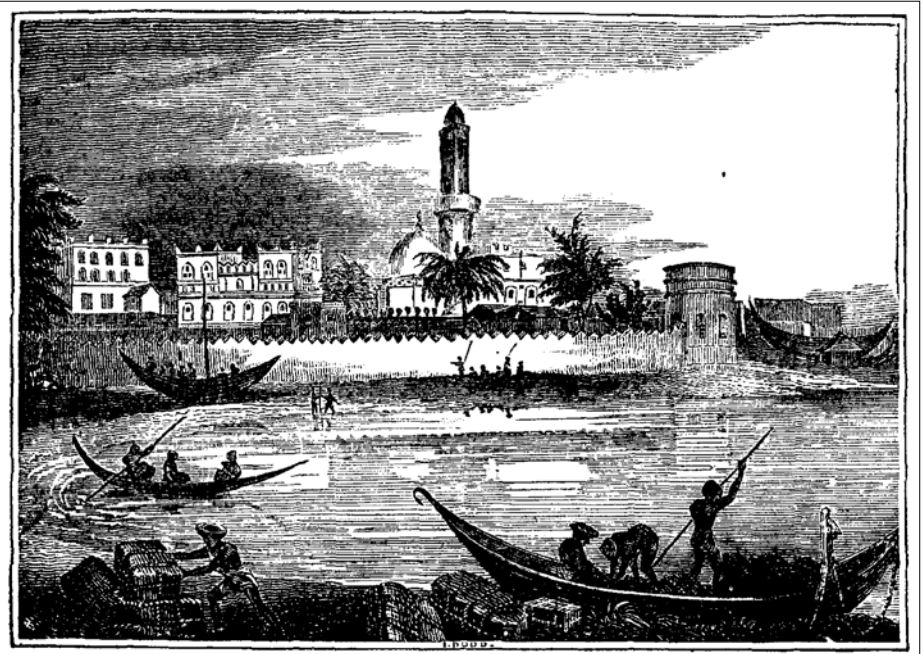
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Mocha – the town where mocha comes from

Today everybody knows the word of *Mocha* or has heard it as at least once. But what exactly is mocha? A variant of cappuccino with chocolate? A certain brand of coffee beans? A traditional way of preparation which has its origin in the Turkish or Arabian region? In fact all this is correct, as there exists hardly any term used in this manifold ways. Beside the range of meanings there are still numerous spellings. Be it mocha, Mocha, or mokha, they have all got the same etymological origin – the town of Mocha (in Arabian al-Mucha). It is situated in the southwest of Yemen directly on the coast of the Red Sea, but 12 metres above sea level, and it looks back upon a long and above all a changing history. The origins of the town are presumably in the ancient harbour town of Muza, supposed to have been in the same spot or at least nearby. Mocha was not only the most important trading centre for coffee, it was also one of the most significant trade centres of the whole region. It was part of the so-called Silk Road, the most important trading road at that time.

Mocha played a decisive role in world trade above all concerning coffee. At first coffee beans grew in Ethiopia, later, however, they used to be cultivated in Yemen also, and for a long time, they were exported exclusively to the world then known. There was a demand rather soon because the interest in enjoying coffee was spreading like a virus from the Arabic region to Europe. In the middle of the 16th century the first coffee house was opened in what is Istanbul today, and some 100 years later, there followed coffee houses in London, Paris, Amsterdam and Hamburg. During that time, Mocha was keen on serving the demand, but they took care of preserving the monopoly in coffee. There was usually water poured over the mocha beans in order to prevent them from germinating.

At the apogée there existed a law prescribing to any ship that landed in the harbour of Mocha – whoever was under way from the Arabic to the Red Sea or



The antique harbour of Mocha. (picture gutenber.org)

reverse had to pay the obligatory taxes for the goods that were carried along. From the 15th to the early 18th century, Mocha was not only the most important commercial centre for coffee, it was also one of the most significant trade centres of the whole region. By former standards Mocha with up to 30,000 inhabitants was a megapolis and you could have met traders from all over the world there. Britons, Dutch, French and Danish people maintained warehouses/storehouses and their own factories in order to quench the thirst for coffee in their home countries. But like many things in life, the history of the success of mocha was evanescent. The Europeans succeeded in spreading the coffee plants and to cultivate them in their colonies. In the course of 18th century coffee came to Indonesia, to Surinam, to Brazil, and to the Caribbean. Here the conditions for cultivating coffee

were scarcely worse and thus the coffee monopoly became a page in the history book. The decline of the harbour town had started.

Today's Mocha is almost meaningless and has just around 10,000 inhabitants. The old coffee warehouses and trading houses decay, and the port seems doomed. In 2013, the former world leader Yemen exported nearly 20,000 tons of coffee. What sounds like a huge amount, is put into perspective when looking at the competitors from other continents. Brazil, for example has harvested almost 3,000,000 tons in the same period, and even countries as Burundi, Madagascar and El Salvador are well ahead of Yemen. Nowadays, people in Mocha mainly earn their living on fishing and the marginally existing tourism. And yet, Mocha is on everyone's lips – in sidewalk cafes in Paris as well as at *Starbucks* in New York City or in a Berlin restaurant.

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supported by Egypt under *Nasser* with 70,000 soldiers, while the royalists were supported by Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The war lasted until 1967, after the last attempt of the royalists to take San'a, the parties sought a peaceful solution and in 1970, Saudi Arabia finally recognized the Yemen Arab Republic.

The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south

At about the same time in the south Britain had to leave the country in 1967, forced by protests against the British presence. In 1970, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was formed with Aden as its capital. A Marxist Liberation Front seized power and established relations with the Soviet Union. Socotra and Aden were Soviet military bases. And on the other hand North Yemen was – in the context of the Cold War – an ally of the United States. Of course, the end of the Cold War favored the rapprochement between the two countries. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, South Yemen lost its major donor. So it was mainly the south wanting the union with North Yemen to jointly exploit the oil fields. Saudi Arabia was rather suspicious of these plans. It preferred two weak Yemeni states to a potentially stronger and more populous United Yemen.

Unification of Yemen

The state, calling itself the Republic of Yemen, has existed since May 1990, i.e. since the unification of the more conservative and traditionalist Arab Republic Yemen in the north and the Marxist ruled People's Democratic Republic in the south.

In the course of this association several border disputes were settled, first of all between Yemen and Oman. There, the border had been set by the British colonial power. The exact border between the two countries was set in 1992, without any major problems, although Yemen forfeited a small part of its territory.

Between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, the negotiations were difficult. Only in May 2000, both countries agreed with each other. The *Treaty of Jeddah* made the triangle disappear along the Hamza-line, which penetrated into Yemen. Thus, the territory of Yemen increased significantly, namely by 37,000 km² which is about the size of Belgium.

Yemen and the Gulf War

In the Gulf War of 1990–1991, Yemen decided to support Iraq in order to distance itself from Saudi Arabia, which in turn supported the United States and Kuwait.

The Incense Road

The Incense Road from South Arabia to the Mediterranean Sea is one of the oldest trade routes in the world. Here, the incense was transported from its country of origin in Dhofar, today's Oman, across Yemen, Asir and Hijaz to the Mediterranean port of Gaza and to Damascus. Important trading posts on the caravan route were Shabwa, Sana'a, Medina and Petra.

The development of the Incense Road was only made possible by the domestication of dromedars in the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. Making use of camels as pack animals, the dependence of caravans from the water holes in the desert decreased.

Next to the incense also spices and precious stones from India and Southeast Asia came to Palestine and Syria via camel caravans. At Petra, north of the Gulf of Kaaba, the Incense Road divided into a northern branch ending at Gaza and an eastern one which led to Damascus. According to reports by ancient authors, it took the camel caravans a hundred days to march the 3,400-km-long route between Dhofar and Gaza.

It is likely the Incense Road was used for the first time in the 10th century BC. However, there was an upswing of

trade only after the emergence of the South Arabian kingdoms of Saba, Qataban, Hadramaut and Ma'in in the 8th century BC.

Since the 5th century BC, the high demand for incense used in ritual ceremonies in the Mediterranean led to a thriving of the route and the cities and empires that connected them. Around the birth of Christ, the Roman Empire alone is said to have consumed 1,500 tons of the estimated annual production of incense, amounting to 2,500 to 3,000 tons.

The eventual decline of the Incense Road begins with the development of the sea route through the Red Sea. Not only the old caravan route loses its meaning. The ancient Arab kingdoms were gradually losing their economic base as well. In the 3rd century this resulted in the rise of the Himayarites in Yemen. Now, they relied increasingly on agriculture in the climatically favorable mountainous region and on the control of maritime trade.

The triumph of Islam in the 7th century meant another serious setback for the trade route. Although incense continued to be used in Islamic medicine, it did not in the religious sphere of mosques.

Yemen and the fight against terror

In the late 90s there were several attacks in the context of international terrorism. In Yemen, *al-Qaeda* had been active since the early 2000s.

On 12 October 2000 *al-Qaeda* committed a suicide bombing on the US destroyer *Cole* in the port of Aden. 17 US soldiers lost their lives in the explosion. After the attacks of September 11, the United States suspected Yemen, to provide shelter for *al-Qaeda* terrorists. The Yemeni origin of the *bin Laden* family and the arrest of dozens of Yemeni fighters in Afghanistan seemed to confirm them in their suspicions.

The year 2008 saw an attack on the American embassy and on foreign tourists in several cases. This put Yemen under increasing international pressure to take action against *al-Qaeda*. After the Saudi and Yemeni branch of *al-Qaeda* had merged in January 2009 under the name of AQAP, the government in Sana'a decided to join in the fight against terrorism. The kidnappings have since then been referred to as terrorist actions, which the army responded to, often with bloody consequences.

This new attitude was a twofold advantage for the government in Sana'a: It provided an opportunity to consolidate its authority in those tribal areas that so far had only insufficiently be controlled. Especially in the regions of Shabwa, Jawf and

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This had serious consequences. Saudi Arabia immediately expelled 800,000 Yemeni workers, and the other Gulf monarchies stopped any economic and financial help for Yemen. The disastrous economic problems and the tensions between the former leaders of the North and the South finally led to the outbreak of a civil war in 1994 and the attempt of South Yemen to separate. There was fierce fighting in Aden and Mukalla. But the segregation failed, and the economic situation was even worse afterwards than before.

Since then Yemen has actually been mentioned in the headline solely because of tourist kidnapping. The most dramatic representations in the local press ignore that the Yemeni society functions by different rules than ours does. A unitary state is without any role model in the history of Yemen. In a country where the farmland and pastures are scarce, the tribal community alone offered the people a chance of survival. Against this background, conflicts of interest between the autocratic *Saleh* administration and the autonomous tribal leaders are inevitable. In the fight against discrimination and in order to enforce their claims (for example, construction of roads or health centers), the tribes operate by kidnappings. Victims may be foreigners, because they are considered guests of the government according to customary law. At the same time, this very law respects the life and limb of the hostages.

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Mar'ib. In addition, this prevented Yemen from being placed on the list of rogue states by Washington.

Meanwhile, Washington and Sana'a are working together closely in the military sector. The US send military advisers to train the Yemeni special forces. Since 2004, the FBI disposes of a permanent branch in Sana'a and the border in the great Arabian desert is monitored by drones. These are controlled from the US base in Djibouti.

The Houthi conflict

In June 2004, the Houthi conflict began as an uprising launched by the anti-government cleric *Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi* against the Yemeni government under *Saleh*. Hussein al-Houthi was killed in September 2004 after three months of rebellion. In 2005, President Saleh granted amnesty for the imprisoned followers (more than 600) of the Zaidi preacher, but later there were new arrests and convictions, even capital punishment.

The Zaidi have been living in Yemen for over a thousand years. Zaidi imams ruled until the revolution 1962 over the northern part of Yemen. In the 1990s, the Zaidi felt increasingly marginalized in the face of the growing influence of Sunni



Wadi Dowan, Hadramaut. (picture commons.wikimedia.org)

fundamentalists. Added to this was the political and economic neglect of the province of Sa'ada after the civil war of the 60s by the Yemeni government, whose efforts for nation-building was limited to the financial patronage of tribal leaders, accompanied by an unequal distribution of wealth and resources.

The Houthi protest culminated in the armed conflict with the Yemeni army in 2004. The then President Saleh – himself being a Zaidi – branded the Houthi as "terrorists" and accused Iran to fund

the insurgency. The Houthi fight al-Qaeda and Islamists, but Israel and America consider them as political enemies. From 2004 to 2011 the Yemeni government waged six wars against the Houthi movement. By 2010, thousands had been killed, hundreds of thousands had been forced to flee.

In addition, there is the antagonism between the regional superpowers Saudi Arabia and Iran, the so-called fight against ter-

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The towns of the Hadramaut

In ancient times, the Hadramaut was called the "Holy Land". Many graves from pre-Islamic prophets and other saints are reminders of those days. The Wadi Hadramaut that could be reached until the 60s only through the desert Rub al-Khali, Marib and the plateau of al-Mukalla, is a fertile river oasis, surrounded by kilometers of date palm groves and majestic mesas. The three cities of Shibam, Sa'yun and Tarim are located in this cultural landscape.

The Hadramaut was and still is a troubled area. At all times, the Hadrami competed for the little fertile soil of this barren region. They protected their small towns by thick mud walls that no bullet could penetrate, and defended their dwellings by carved loopholes windows.

But the Hadrami would have been well protected in their strongholds of clay, if there had not been now and then heavy rains which the walls and houses could not counter at all. Every few years, parts of the settlements are literally washed away by the floods.

People had survived here in the few fertile parts of the Wadi since pre-biblical times. The Hadrami were famous as traders, as they maintained contacts up to Indonesia, India and Africa. Their high, partly whitewashed mud houses

reflected their wealth. They often decorated the mostly unadorned facades with elaborately carved and heavily studded doors.

These Hadramaut cities might be described as "World cities of Architecture, because what we find there as healthy power everywhere, sprung from its own soil in unbelievable richness, down there in the Arabian Peninsula, where we previously suspected nothing but desert and bare mountains, surpasses all our expectations.

Sky-scrapers of the desert, at a time when America knew only paltry huts! Each of these cities offers an architectural image of purest content, testifies to an art of building that one would have never imagined the Arab population to be capable of.

The reason for this peculiar design, which actually is not Arabic, is explained by the insecurity of the country. South Arabia is constantly haunted by a predatory war. Bedouins raids are rampant. Each house, each village and each town is a self-contained fortress. And all houses are built of mud." (cf. Hans Helfritz. *Chicago der Wüste*. 1935)

If Sana'a is time and again referred to as the Pearl of Arabia, then Shibam earns at least the attribute pearl of the Hadramaut. For centuries, the old trad-

ing town was one of the most important caravan bases along the legendary Incense Road with the bizarre landscape of Wadi Hadramaut.

In Shibam there are no real monuments. The city itself is a monument as much as the civilizational achievements of its inhabitants. High-rise buildings without elevators? Far from that. Even in ancient times, cargoes – and presumably people too – were transported via elevators to the upper floors. That worked over a role fortified on the rooftop with appropriate counterweights. In the 3rd or 4th century AD, Shibam was founded as successor to the ancient capital of Shabwa. Under the pressure of semi-nomadic tribes from north of the desert the situation of Shabwa had become untenable then.

In Shibam there are approximately 500 high-rise buildings, most of them are over 30 meters high and have more than 8 floors. Many of these houses are between 200 and 500 years old.

For the construction air-dried bricks of clay mixed with chopped straw were used. As protection against erosion through wind and rain the upper floors were plastered with bright white lime.

In hardly any other city, the traditional Arab life has been preserved as much as it has been in Shibam.

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rorism and its impact on the internal politics of Yemen, which led to an increase in anti-Americanism. Then there is the resistance against the intended fortification of the borders with Saudi Arabia, which threatened to cut off the inhabitants from their traditional trade and supply lines. In 2008, the government claimed that the Houthi wanted to overthrow the government and introduce Shi'ite religious law and accused Iran of leading and financing the uprising.

In 2009, there was a new offensive against the rebels in the province of Zaida. 100,000 people fled the fighting. Along the border there were clashes between the northern rebels and Saudi security forces. The Saudis then launched an anti-Houthi offensive which the United States participated in with 28 attacks of their air force. After a cease-fire in early 2010 the fighting flared up again. Fighting took place in the districts of Zaida, Haddsha, Amran and Al-Jawf and the Saudi province of Jizan.

After 2010 the Houthi succeeded in establishing alliances and marriages of convenience with local tribes. Many tribal leaders, disillusioned by the central

government, joined the Houthi. Both the Houthi as well as the government at that time promoted the outbreak of old tribal feuds to mobilize the tribes for their own respective positions.

When the Arab Spring of 2011 seized Yemen, the Houthi movement joined the protest and President Saleh was forced out of office. On 21 February 2012 presidential elections were held. The only candidate was the Vice-President *Abed Rabbo Mansur Hadi*, who was to take over the presidency for two years to initiate a constitutional reform. Thereafter, re-elections were to take place.

But the security situation and the economic situation of the already poorest country of the Arabian Peninsula continued to deteriorate and support for the new government of President Hadi waned. Al-Qaeda increasingly gained power and got much of South Yemen under control.

March 2013: A national dialogue was initiated to enable the transition to democracy. Several political groups, including the Houthi, were working on a new constitution. When fighting between al-Qaeda groups and the Houthi occurred in the north, the Houthi dissociated from

the outcome of the conference in early 2014.

In September 2014, 30,000 Houthi followers besieged the capital Sana'a and took over important government buildings. In October, the rebels forced a government reshuffle of President Hadi, and they advanced in the east and south of the country.

In January 2015, the Houthi surrounded the presidential palace in Sana'a with tanks. Hadi and several government members were placed under house arrest, the president offered his resignation.

In February 2015, Hadi fled to the southern Yemeni city of Aden and made its refuge the new capital. The rebels began their march on Aden.

End of March 2015, the Houthi conquered the last military bases before Aden, using the help of ex-President Saleh's followers. Hadi fled to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and asked his Arab neighbors for intervention.

In March 2015, a military alliance, established by Saudi Arabia and consisting of Egypt, the Gulf monarchies and others, started an offensive against the Houthi, logistically supported by the United States, France and Great Britain. •

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Press release of the Research Institute Direct Democracy

“Liberalism and direct democracy”

On 10 October 2015 the *Second Scientific Conference of the Research Institute Direct Democracy* on the topic of “Liberalism and direct democracy” took place in Zurich. Over 80 participants gathered in the great hall of the “Centre Charlemagne”.

The meeting, aimed at scientists, professionals and an interested public, addressed the theoretical foundations of liberalism and the liberal debates in several panels which often discussed the question of “representative or direct democracy?”.

After a short welcome by the head of the Institute Dr phil René Roca, the representative of the General Secretariat of the Liberal Democratic Party (FDP. The Liberals), Ms Carina Schaller, conveyed the greeting words of her party to the Conference. Then former Federal Councillor Elisabeth Kopp started the conference and right at the beginning of her speech postulated a comprehensible thesis: Liberalism, linked with the principle of a state based on the rule of law, can only be realised in the long run in a direct democracy. Thus, an exciting starting point was set for the conference.

René Roca presented an introduction into the subject from a historical perspective. He started by presenting the current election platform of the “FDP. The Liberals”, where they claim that direct democracy was also a “liberal achievement”. Roca denied this and justified his thesis by historically reviewing the relationship between liberalism and direct democracy. In the first half of the 19th century, the Liberals had yet opposed direct democracy by any means and preferred a “natural aristocracy” in the framework of representative democracy. After 1848 learning processes could be observed among the Liberals who started to increasingly appreciate the value of direct democracy – not least due to practical experiences at cantonal level. Thus, as Roca explained, both liberalism and direct democracy have become important pillars of modern Switzerland.

In the context of the first panel “Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism” Paul Widmer spoke about two important representatives of the political philosophy of liberalism, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès and Benjamin Constant. These two were of defining importance for the liberal constitutional thinking in Europe and especially in Switzerland. The lecture put the two liberal thinkers in the centre and focused on the deciding factors of their arguments against direct democracy.

Then Robert Nef asked how compatible classical liberalism was with democracy. On the basis of key sentences, he attempted to answer the question by quoting the impor-



Dr phil René Roca, head of the Research Institute Direct Democracy

tant liberal personalities Zaccaria Giacometti and Friedrich August von Hayek. After the Second World War Giacometti succeeded once again to combine both freedom and democracy to form a coherent whole. Von Hayek wrote the concise sentence: “The Swiss institution of the referendum has much contributed to protect them from the worst excesses of the so-called representative democracy.” Words which lead very well to the second panel “Liberal Debates – Representative vs. Direct Democracy”.

The beginning was made by Joseph Jung with his presentation on the relationship between Alfred Escher and direct democracy. Escher as an extraordinary promoter who had advanced the economic and socio-political development of early Switzerland after 1848, could do so – Jung pointed out – only because at that time a small (economic) liberal time frame opened which already closed again in 1872/74. This phase was characterised by the representative and not by direct democracy. Therefore, Jung said, one can argue that the awakening to modern Switzerland was only possible because, not the direct but the representative democracy had prevailed in the early state.

Werner Ort presented another central liberal figure, Heinrich Zschokke who had laid important political foundations for Switzerland. Zschokke was one of the most influential and most eloquent publicists of Switzerland in the first half of the 19th century. He was enlightening the people and at the same time a pioneer of liberal, modern Switzerland. Like Escher, he favoured the representative democracy and was very skeptical towards direct democracy.

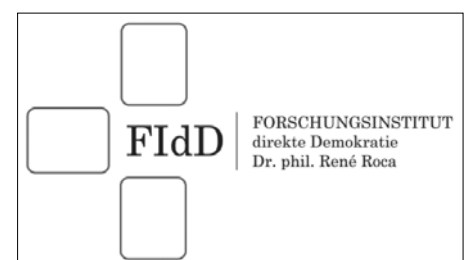
Finally, in the context of the topic “Switzerland as a liberal State” Daniel Annen revealed interesting links between the ideas of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schiller, Leonhard Ragaz and Meinrad Inglin. Especially Inglin’s work “Schweizerspiegel” is a treasure trove for basic thoughts about the liberal state and Switzerland in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century. With Ragaz, a good bridge could be established to the next year’s Conference which will deal with the topic “Early Socialism and Direct Democracy”.

A stimulating and lively discussion ensued the very interesting and informative presentations.

René Roca, the head of the Institute, concluded the meeting with the announcement that in spring 2016 the conference proceedings of last year’s conference will be published. Their title will be “Catholicism and modern Switzerland. Democracy and Education in the Catholic area” and will start the new scientific series “Contributions to the study of Democracy” at the publishing house Schwabe. The outlined meeting “Liberalism and Direct Democracy” will be volume 2 of the scientific series. •

Press release of the Research Institute Direct Democracy (see www.fidd.ch) of 20 October 2015

(Translation Current Concerns)



Direct democracy – hindrance or driving force for the economy?

mw. The scientific conference on the subject of “Liberalism and Direct Democracy” taking place on 10 October 2015 in Zurich in the scope of the Research Institute for Direct Democracy headed by PhD *René Roca* presented a diverse and stimulating program. We will choose the presentation by Prof Dr *Joseph Jung* about “Alfred Escher and direct democracy” as an example for the full range of interesting addresses. His position is that the enormous economic awakening in Switzerland in the period from 1848 (establishment of the state) to 1872/74 – construction of the first railway lines, founding of the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), founding of the *Creditanstalt* to finance these projects – was only possible in such a short time because the young Federal State was ruled not by direct but by representative democracy.

At first, Professor Jung’s vivid description of how Switzerland developed from an economic hinterland to a location to be reckoned with by its European neighbours in a few decades of the mid-19th century sounded plausible: Had the Swiss been allowed to vote on the construction of the first railways and the course of their first routes, on the founding of the ETH, and on other large-scale projects, Switzerland would – according to the speaker – have missed the boat and not have appeared on the European economic stage because of the tardiness of all the processes and the fact that they might even have eventually been rejected by the voters.

Though set forth with great rhetorical momentum, this position may yet provoke contradiction. Of course we cannot step into the shoes of our ancestors of 150 years ago and thus answer the question “What would have happened if ...” But we do know the rich economic and historical constitutional material in the series of so far five articles titled “The importance of direct democracy for securing social peace” published by Dr rer publ *Werner Wüthrich* in *Current Concerns* since May 2015.

If we look at the democratic maturity and sense of responsibility shown by

Swiss voters from all social classes for over 100 years in referenda on partly highly complex economic-social matters we come to realize that citizens are very well able to help shape the state, if, from an early age on, they are properly guided by parents and teachers so as to understand direct democracy and play an active role in it, starting in their own community and from there letting their activities radiate onto the levels of the canton and of the Confederation.

At the same time, the state political model of Switzerland has a direct influence on the business location. Of course we have to appreciate the achievements of innovative entrepreneurs like *Konrad Escher* or, more recently, for example *Nicolas Hayek*. But let us not underestimate the importance of direct democratic organisation of our state and its economy! The fact that the location Switzerland is appreciated around the world depends on the one hand on the high quality of its products and services as well as on the reliability and punctuality of services, notably those rendered by SME (small and medium enterprises), which amount to about 95% of all undertakings. This also concerns the Swiss dual vocational training: 80% of school leavers are trained in the Swiss businesses and vocational schools to become well trained professional people and (mostly) reliable human beings and at the same time responsible citizens (whenever that is possible).

Direct democracy results in a stable state

The political stability of the Swiss state is a very important factor of Switzerland’s economic success. This political stability is a result of the responsible management of so many of the diverse common affairs by the electorate. So for example the *peace agreement of 1937* between the Federation of Metal and Machine Industry Employers and the Swiss Metalworkers’ and Watchmakers’ Union (*Current Concerns* No. 19/20 from 29 July 2015) shows that employees and employers are at the same time citizens and voters and

as such used to settle social issues on an equal footing with each other. Where the employees had further claims, they solved their problems by means of a number of popular initiatives and referendums, for example, with respect to working hours, social insurance and many other questions.

By the way, there is no harm if the legislative process takes a little longer in our country than elsewhere because of the political rights of voters: Decisions passed exhaustively to and fro between the two chambers of parliament and then subordinated to an optional referendum (the citizens can demand a referendum with 50,000 signatures), might take a few years, but afterwards they stand firm.

Taken together with the dependability of the individuals, this our entire system of state and economy has led not only to an extremely high economic performance and thus the prosperity of our country and its residents, but it has also created confidence of trading partners from all around the world.

Likewise all attempts from the outside to weaken Switzerland’s financial centre have not had the intended effect: The “strong franc” remains – even with minus interest! It is strong, because, precisely in a world of weak and fluctuating currencies, it is particularly trustworthy.

Let us return to the 19th century Swiss liberals’ scepticism towards direct democracy. Among their descendants, today’s economic liberals, we find some who – if they were completely honest – would also prefer a little less direct democracy. For example, some politicians and/or businessmen would rather organize Switzerland’s relationship to the EU without the voters’ participation, and so with unrestricted free movement of persons (i.e. with the cheapest possible labour from abroad) and with an institutional framework agreement (i.e. with so-called “safe”, uniform rules especially for the multinational conglomerates).

Fortunately, we voters have the last word concerning all these issues. •

Teacher training according to the framework of Curriculum 21

The main point is a fitting disposition...

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

Since years there has been a lack of teachers in Swiss elementary schools. The number of committed and experienced primary and secondary school teachers that change their profession or chose early retirement has increased: “[...] A lot of teachers at retirement age do not want to participate in ‘HarmoS’ (New regulations of constitutional provisions on education) – they leave a huge void”. (Basler Zeitung, 31.10.2013)

In former times educational courses for other professionals were offered in order to provide a remedy. Since 2012 the opportunity has existed to apply for studies at Swiss cantonal colleges for pedagogy (PH) in order to train as teachers at elementary schools. (cf. “Wiler Nachrichten” from 29 September 2015)

When scrutinizing the admission process for this educational training one recognises that nowadays obviously only those can become elementary teachers who reveal the “correct” cast of mind: the admission process mainly consists of an examination of one’s convictions. This fact confirms many parent’s and teacher’s concerns that children, when ruled by Curriculum 21 will be influenced in an ideological way. Among others this is one reason for many cantonal popular initiatives to prevent the establishment of the Curriculum 21. And this is certainly also one factor, why many contemporaries heavy-heartedly decide not to become or remain to be a teacher: We Swiss do not like to be told what to think.

Our particular interest, however, focuses on the candidates’ professional requirements. This allows the gentle reader once again to immerse oneself in the very depths of the term “competence” – and it is to be feared that he will not be any wiser when returning to reality.

The admission process for lateral recruits to become kindergarden or primary teacher – I chose the PH St Gallen as an example – consists of three parts: one obligatory information session, the enrolment and an assessment day (cf. www.phsg.ch; “Aufnahme sur dossier”).¹

Disposition examination 1:

Motivation and idea of being a teacher

Part of the enrolment procedure is an application form to be filled in with personal data, moreover there is “a letter of motivation and self-assessment of one’s competences”. The letter of motivation must

answer the questions: “What determines your conception of being a teacher? What expectation do you have with respect to being a teacher? What are potential negative aspects of the teacher’s profession and how would you address them?”

These questions already amount to testing one’s convictions: What is an applicant expected to write about his motivation of becoming a teacher and his conception of being one to please the PH-trainers? Or the other way around: What ideas should he better avoid to express?

Competence concept hardly enlightened – Or: what are “professional competences”?

The “self-assessment of skills” consists of a grid with 4 levels (very good, good, rather unsatisfactory, clearly insufficient). First “competencies” are needed in mathematics, natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, engineering), German (literature, grammar), humanities (history, geography, economics, law, philosophy, ...), music, sports, design, works, so in all subjects of the Curriculum 21. The candidate can make comments and attach documents as evidence.

Is there only knowledge required? How can the candidate assess his status in those many subjects by himself? “I took biology a long time ago at high school, but I do not know exactly what I retained,” or something like that? Or should he cite the elementary school teaching aid or material from his former vocational training? Or his school records? “In maths, I always had a 5 or 5.5”, that means “good to very good skills”. Or: “I can find all formulas in physics on the web, so I’m very knowledgeable/competent.” Should he tick honestly, if he has only little knowledge of a subject, or bluff?

Oh, there is a note to be read: “If your skills are inadequate, please explain very concretely how you will reach *minimum standard* by the start of the studies.” [emphasis *Current Concerns*] To this end, the canton provides a preliminary pedagogy course at the ISME (*Interstate Matura School for Adults*). But the question still remains unanswered: What are the contents that are part of the required minimum standard? What are insufficient or sufficient skills? Or in other words: How are the “competencies” measured? Unanswered questions abound: Must the candidate, for example in mathematics, master the themes listed or is it sufficient to just

have to have an idea of them and to be able to find out (with aids), how a task is to be solved? Or in plain English: Does he have to calculate the equation himself and to draw the construction task by hand, or is it sufficient to find the solution in an educational tool and to tick congruent triangles?

Here we are facing the same fundamental problem as in Curriculum 21: The competence orientation provides no guarantee that the students – or the prospective teachers – have really understood a subject and practiced so intensely that they are able to master it. But if it is not mastered by the future teacher – how will he later be able to explain it to the students?

Examination of attitudes 2: Screening one’s personality

The registration process is not only the self-assessment of professional competences, but a self-analysis of your own personality that interferes deeply with the candidate’s personality – a tricky endeavor. For he has to assess his own methodological skills (analytical thinking, joined-up/networked thinking, structuring capability) as well as his communicative skills, his reflectivity and resilience. Difficult, isn’t it? It will be best when I always tick good or very good – I surely can not write, I am not resilient, otherwise I will be sacked right at the beginning. What exactly do they mean by “communication skills and reflectivity”? That you always act as if you were capable of everything, or that you discuss the usefulness or the nonsense of the respective theories with each professor, pardon, with “each teacher/each female teacher”? – First you should certainly master the gender language to stay candidate! You are also expected to have an understanding of philosophy: The philosophy favoured at the PHs is constructivism (everyone builds his own reality), from this basis, students can discuss with every “teacher”, according to the ideology of the Curriculum 21.

Assessment day: An opportunity to examine the individual disposition

The third part of the enrolment procedure is the assessment day, which on the one hand consists of a subject examination and on the other hand of an inspection of one’s personal-social competences.

"Teacher training ..."

continued from page 19

We can imagine what this inspection of the personal-social competences consists of: some "psychological games" and similar humbug ... But even in the subject examination various opportunities to vet the personality have been slipped in. Take biology for instance: "human interference with the eco-system" (switch off nuclear power stations or not? Trip to work by car or by public means of transport? And so on); in music/sport (team-games and rhythmic exercises are especially examined, that show, who is able to march in step with others – pardon – make music or move in measure with others.) In the subject German language applicants have to write an "argument-based text" (the provided topics are very well appropriate for testing the applicant's attitude); especially of importance: "Language and Sex" (examination of one's personal attitude towards gender); and the oral analysis and interpretation of a text (here again it is easy to sniff out the personal views of applicants.)

The subject knowledge in history – second part of the assessment besides biology out of the group "Natur, Mensch, Gesellschaft" (NMG, nature, mankind and society) is an example of pure brain-washing! Swiss history of the 19th and 20th century is exclusively examined. Without knowledge about earlier periods we cannot call this history! Just take the selective choice of the examination topics which starkly reveals a one-sided, almost manipulative view: for instance the "The Second World War – Switzerland's Probation Test: independence, neutrality, collaboration, humanitarian tradition; Cold War, the Swiss Redit Mental-ity and Special Case Thinking", or: "The Swiss and the supranational development

after 1945, especially Europe's integration: History of neutrality, relationship to UN and EU".

Is a Swiss applicant, who wants to become teacher therefore not allowed to voice his indignation about such conspicuous catchwords, that do not live up to neither the difficult and dangerous situation of Switzerland in the World War II nor to any of our parents' and grandparents' impressive efforts during the Second World War? Is he not allowed to express his deep identification with our country, nor say loudly and clearly that the accession to the EU would mean the end of the Swiss Model? In other words: Must a candidate mutate into a head-nodding figure, only to become an elementary teacher? From these urgent questions, other more serious ones arise: What kind of distorted picture of Switzerland and the Swiss are future generations to be taught at elementary school? What is the agenda?

Conclusion

The critical citizen receives a vivid insight into the world of Curriculum 21. On the one hand dim competences instead of a solid structure of knowledge and skills, on the other hand grave interferences with the freedom of expression of the personal opinion. These interferences are being inflicted on our children and our future teachers to the taste of some chief-ideologists. The main thing is that the latter receive generous salaries out of the taxpayers' purses – whether today's pupils under the reign of Curriculum 21 will some day be capable of learning their desired profession and among other things of earning their life for themselves and their families, whether they will leave elementary school – turned upside down to such an extent – as well informed and reliable citizens, these are the burning questions, posed

Swiss Conferences of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) as self proclaimed state authorities

mw. On 21 June 2012 the EDK (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education) decided on the "minimum qualification requirements of professionally experienced persons (lateral recruits) to become male or female teachers". For all who do not like this gender-jargon: The EDK has decided on the qualifications, a lateral recruit without "Matura" (highest school-leaving examination) has to fulfil, in order to receive a Swiss-wide acknowledged teaching diploma. (cf. "Quereinstieg Lehrerberuf, <http://www.edk.ch/dyn/23673.php>)

What gave the EDK the idea, to "enact" this or anything else with Swiss-wide effect, especially because constitutionally the EDK does virtually not exist? It is not for the first time that we recognise: We citizens elected our cantonal governing councillors to have them execute orders by the parliament and the sovereign. They also are to take prevent the cantonal administration from mushrooming beyond their responsibilities. On the contrary, we never allowed our superintendents for educational, health care or social affairs to implement a new administrative level between the federal government and the cantons which enacts decrees and regulations – or secretly ordered a centralistic curriculum to be written! – which is hence slipped into cantonal law without consulting the sovereign nor sometimes even the parliament.

to us parents, teacher and every thinking human being. We all bear this responsibility. •

¹ The admission process for secondary teachers (7th to 9th grade) differs only marginally.

The unknown history of women

by Stephanie Meier



The Bernese historian and archivist *Franziska Rogger's* current book is entitled "Gebt den Schweizerinnen ihre Geschichte. *Marthe Gosteli, ihr Archiv und der übersehene*

Kampf ums Frauenstimmrecht" (Give the Swiss women their history. Marthe Gosteli, her archives and the disregarded struggle for women's suffrage)¹ It is common knowledge that in Switzerland, women's suffrage was not introduced until 1971. So there is need for explanation in one of the oldest democracies of the world. Franziska Rogger comes to the surprising conclusion that the long women's suffrage struggle should be seen as a real success story. The "misappropriated, independent history of Swiss women, their tenacity, their tactics of resistance and their victory" are reviewed extensively. For the first time Rogger evaluates the papers and documents from the archives of the "Working Group of the Swiss Women's Associations for the Political Rights of Women", which have hitherto been neglected by Swiss historiography. In her book she corrects the over-emphasis on those women who fought so full-throatedly for women's suffrage in the wake of the '68 movement. We have been made to believe that their media-effective means of protest – especially the march to Berne of 1 March 1969 with the attendant barrage of catcalls – caused the shift of opinion in the male voters, whereas the political actions of organized women's groups were marginalized. The sources tell a different story. The dedicated women of the old women's movement were successful in their struggle for women's suffrage, with their "tenacious cracking of tough nuts and the way they bravely pulled themselves together after every defeat". According to Rogger, the old labels old/bourgeois and new/left (since '68) women's movement are basically imprecise and tend to promote thinking in ideological stereotypes. There was no clear dividing line between the two groups of women.

In her current book Franziska Rogger honours the rich life and work of Marthe Gosteli as one of the best-known representatives of the Swiss women's movement. The first part of the book is devoted to the long and rocky history of the struggle for women's suffrage. In the time before the second federal vote in 1971 Marthe Gosteli played a central role as President of the "Working Group of Swiss Women's Associations for the Political Rights of Women". Together with representatives of the organized women's associations she negotiated with Parliament and the Federal Council about the best time for a referendum. Would Switzerland sign the European Convention on Human Rights without any reservations and thus prioritise the vote on women's suffrage? The minutes read like a thriller, even if the outcome is already known.

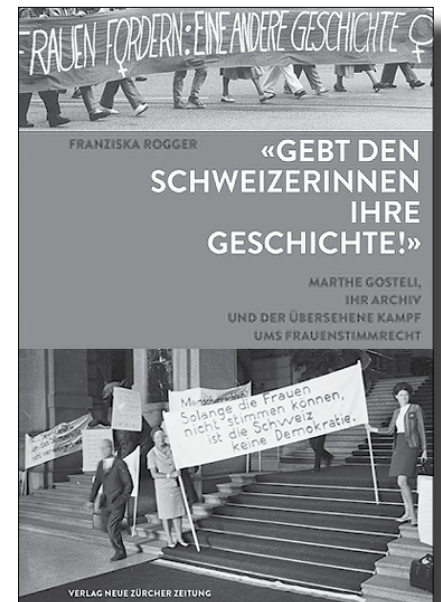
Marthe Gosteli's track record as country lady, as archivist and "historian from the heart", as Rogger calls her, is the focus of the second part. Marthe Gosteli visited the girls' high school in Berne and enthused over her two teachers *Louise Grüter* and *Helene Stucki* – incidentally the sister of the great Federal Councillor *Walter Stucki*. A comprehensive education and shaping of the human character was to enable their students to lead a self-determined life. Later Marthe Gosteli would follow in the footsteps of these women's rights activists. Gosteli memorialised them and many other women by setting up her archive on the history of women's rights in Switzerland. The creation of this archive is Marthe Gosteli's greatest pioneering achievement.

In the third part of her book Franziska Rogger turns to Marthe Gosteli's ancestors: the Gosteli and Salzmann families. Since 1735 the large farmhouse on the Altikofen has been in the possession of the Gosteli family. It is a Bernese peculiarity that it was always the youngest boy of the family who inherited the farm. The women formed an indispensable part of the extended family, which operated as a sort of SME, but they hardly ever made any decisions about the development of

the estate. Widowed women in possession of financial resources had more leeway. *Elisabeth Walther-Gosteli*, Marthe Gosteli's early widowed great-aunt, for example, had had the stately residential outbuilding built on the Altikofen, which now houses the archives documenting the history of the feminist movement in Switzerland. Time and again there were also supporters of women in the two families. The "old patriarch" (so called by Marthe Gosteli), her grandfather *Christian Salzmann*, hired young *Ida Somazzi* as the first secondary school teacher in Bolligen – notabene with the same pay as her male colleagues.

With her book Franziska Rogger has closed a long overdue gap in the history of the struggle for women's suffrage. The "old" women's movement is appropriately appreciated, and in particular its pioneer Marthe Gosteli gets the well-deserved appreciation for her life's work. •

¹ Rogger, Franziska, *Gebt den Schweizerinnen ihre Geschichte. Marthe Gosteli, ihr Archiv und der übersehene Kampf ums Frauenstimmrecht*, (Give the Swiss women their history. Marthe Gosteli, her archives and the disregarded struggle for women's suffrage), publishing house "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", Zurich 2015



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Causing the European orchestra to resound



az. How can you cause the European orchestra to resound? This is the central question moving the citizens throughout Europe and having already moved them for more than fifty

years. There are voices becoming louder now, which postulate further political steps towards the United States of Europe. They consider this as the only way of stabilising the EU's situation. At his meeting with German Chancellor *Angela Merkel*, President *Hollande* addressed once again the issue of a common economic and fiscal policy. This is now postulated by the Italian Finance Minister *Pier Carlo Padoa-Schioppa* as well, a former OECD chief economist. The same tones are coming from the headquarters in Brussels. US President *Barack Obama* has also endorsed this view. The refugee issue too is to be controlled centrally. And what is Switzerland's mentality?

Today, Switzerland's relationship with the European Union is based on two pillars:

1. The 1972 great Free Trade Agreement (between the EFTA countries and the former EC). It was adopted with 71 per cent Yes-votes by the Swiss people and by all cantons. In the following years, a variety of smaller and larger supplementary agreements have additionally been concluded. About 200 of such agreements are mentioned – especially concerning the service sector.

2. The Bilateral Agreements I and II of 1999 and of 2004.

The Free Trade Agreement of 1972 is an economic treaty facilitating the exchange of goods (mainly industrial goods) and services. Agriculture was deliberately not included. In contrast, the Bilateral Agreements I and II, include many elements such as the free movement of persons, transit traffic, the opening of borders (Schengen), the asylum system (Dublin) and much more. These are all elements tying Switzerland politically and therefore they are giving these agreements a different and more problematic quality than the former ones: "The (bilateral) agreements with the EU have been negotiated under the implicit assumption that Switzerland in the foreseeable future will be a member of the EU, which is why only little attention was paid to active participation and co-determination." (Former Secretary of State *Franz Blankart*, Switzerland's chief negotiator at the EEA, in *NZZ am Sonntag* 25.10.2009) It is therefore not a surprise, that today a framework agreement is imposed on Switzerland by the EU, under which in future Switzerland would have to simply accept the EU's legislation – where-

as the people's participation is excluded. The here presented brochure was published in Germany in 2014 and is based on a series of articles in *Current Concerns* from the year 2012. It highlights the founding years of the EEC, the foundation of the EFTA, and especially the political process leading up to the Free Trade Agreement of 1972, being adopted by the people with an overwhelming majority, never questioned until today. The brochure is based on original documents electronically accessible from the collection "Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland". This has been created in collaboration with the Federal Archives, which provided the internal documents from the years before 1970: Protocols of the Federal Council meetings, reports and letters from the embassies abroad or memos from the employees of the Federal Council having attended the meetings with representatives of foreign governments. Furthermore, with regard to the issue of European integration, a number of papers are to be mentioned from the so-called ambassador conferences, with which information about the political situation and the talks with the then EEC was usually provided to the foreign representatives by a Federal Councillor or a Minister. When reading such internal documents, the reader gains an accurate picture of what happened – as it is not possible in the current world of politics. This includes treasures such as an interview transcript of Federal President *Wahlen* with General *de Gaulle*, who talked about European integration in Paris in 1961, which today can be downloaded in its original wording. (www.dodis.ch/30270)

Causing the European orchestra to resound again

On 5 September 1969 – in the run-up of Switzerland's free trade agreement with the EC – Minister *Weitenauer*, Delegate for Trade Agreements, assembled the ambassadors on the theme "Possibilities and Limits of Economic Integration". In a broad-based, national political lecture he raised the question, what conditions were to be met in order to form a common state in Europe. He came to the conclusion that most of these conditions were not given. Politics and the economy would have to be separated in order to cause the European orchestra to sound (what actually happened in the Free Trade Agreement of 1972). His remarks can be read here: www.dodis.ch/30861.

Jean Monnet/USA concept

The European policy of the United States is as well becoming clear when one reads the brochure, being called "Jean Monnet/USA concept" by Minister *Weitenauer*. The United States clearly argued against

free cooperation of sovereign European states in the economic field, as it was supported by the Swiss Federal Council and the then German Minister for economic affairs *Ludwig Erhard* – and called for the formation of a supranational, political union. Even more: The United States urged the Europeans to dissolve the EFTA as a liberal union, and advised Switzerland to commit itself to the EEC. After a visit by US Undersecretary of State *George Ball*, this was commented by Federal President *Wahlen* as follows: "The United States support the aim of the EEC and strive for the creation of the United States of Europe. Whoever shut themselves off from that goal, cannot count on Washington's sympathy." (www.dodis.ch/15113, [30116](http://www.dodis.ch/30116), [30279](http://www.dodis.ch/30279), [30358](http://www.dodis.ch/30358), [30835](http://www.dodis.ch/30835) and others)

The brochure examines the work of *Jean Monnet*, being considered as one of the "fathers" of the EU. In particular, the "Monnet method" is part of today's politics. He himself describes it as follows: "L'homme n'accepte le changement que sous l'Empire de la nécessité." (Eric Roussel, *Jean Monnet*, p. 68, Paris 1996 "Man accepts changes only under the pressure of necessity") In simple terms this means: Political difficulties serve as a lever to promote the development towards a political union.

By these documents available today history becomes alive. Whoever reads them and compares the reflections of that time with the political situation of today, inevitably come to the conclusion that history is admittedly not repeating itself, but that there are definite constants. Detecting them and drawing the right conclusions from them, eases the way into the future. •

Werner Wüthrich. "Das Europäische Orchester wieder zum Klingen bringen" (Causing the European orchestra to resound. The history of the European Union from a Swiss perspective), Bergen 2014. The brochure is available in "Bücher-Chorb Aadorf" (004152 366 22 60; info@buecher-chorb.ch)



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In the beginning there was the idea – Le Locle should again have a general bookstore

Interview with Isabelle Zünd, André Frutschi and Odile Grange

Since 29 August 2015, Le Locle, the small town bordering France, has got a general bookstore again. Inspired by the French writer Guy de Maupassant, it is called “Aux Mots Passants”. Three residents of Le Locle, Isabelle Zünd, social worker, André Frutschi, agricultural engineer, and Odile Grange, a retired bookseller, have initiated the project of a cooperative-based bookstore, presenting an encouraging citizens’ initiative.

Current Concerns: What was your motivation to launch a cooperative bookstore?
Isabelle Zünd: My colleague has always been interested in the cooperative system, in co-operative projects. And I, after living in Le Locle for 20 years, have long since regretted that there was no bookstore. So we’ve teamed up and had the idea to put up a co-operative project in the form of a bookshop.

André Frutschi: Also the cultural aspect played a role, a town of 11,000 inhabitants deserves a bookstore. Regarding the socio-cultural aspect, Le Locle is rather poor. We have an unemployment of 8%, 30% of cross-border commuters who are working here, it is the canton, however, that benefits from their taxes and not the city. There are many recipients of social assistance, Le Locle is not a rich city. In the 70s they built facilities for 15,000 inhabitants, but since the beginning of the crisis of the watch industry, the population of the city dropped to 11,000 inhabitants. The last general bookstore closed its doors in the 90s. Odile can tell you the story.

Odile Grange: Yes, that was *Reymond*, a bookstore with branches in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Neuchâtel and Lausanne, and then they had to close in 1996/7, and since then there has been no general bookstore in Le Locle. People say we are brave to open a bookstore, here near the border with France and with *Amazon* and *Migros* close by, where books can be bought cheaply. They’re right, it is difficult.

What has yet given you the courage to launch the project?

Isabelle Zünd: Sure, it takes courage, but also many cooperative members responded positively to our call. It was a kind of thermometer to know if the people here would like to have a bookstore again. And then I think the idea is spreading by itself. They will tell their friends in La Chaux-de-Fonds and Neuchâtel, we even have people from Basel ... The personal advice and human exchange, which is



Opening of the co-operative bookstore “Aux Mots Passants”. (picture ma)

promoted by our coffee corner, are our trump cards.

André Frutschi: I was parliamentary assistant, I do not know if you know *Daniel Vischer*, a member of the Zurich National Council. When I told him that we were going to establish a cooperative bookstore in Le Locle, he said, “Send me a deposit slip.” He’ll never come here to buy books, but he found the idea brilliant and our initiative courageous, and he is convinced that culture has to be promoted.

What do you think is the importance of the printed book in an increasingly electronic world?

André Frutschi: I’ve conducted quite a few comparative studies. There is a big difference between the Germanic-Anglo-Saxon world and the Latin world. The Germanic-Anglo-Saxon world has proceeded to the e-book reader, there are many electronic books, while the Latin world, Italy, Spain, France and the French-speaking prefer the printed book, this is culturally conditioned. The *Federal Office of Culture* has conducted studies related to Switzerland and has found a difference of 30% between German-speaking Switzerland and the French and Italian-speaking Switzerland. This is our chance.

Why did you choose the organizational form of the cooperative?

Odile Grange: A great advantage of the cooperative is that one is independent of banks, which are always asking for sales. You are under less pressure and more flexible.

André Frutschi: Yes, I think if we had gone to the bank to open a bookstore in Le Locle, they would have first laughed for 10 minutes, not even taking the time to offer us a cup of coffee ... and then: bye-bye! Because bookstores are closed and not opened.

Suppose, Isabelle and I could have put 70,000 francs on the table and opened a bookstore, we would have taken a great risk. If, instead, we found a cooperative and 135 cooperative members give 500 francs each for the project, then we have active customers, people who will not buy from Amazon or in France. They will come here because it is their bookstore, not ours, it is theirs. This was essential for our project.

Isabelle Zünd: Yes, and then also during the renovation of the shop, we saw the advantages of a cooperative. We had to renovate everything, insert new walls, tearing walls down, etc. There were always cooperative members, who came and helped without charge. Some wanted to repaint the furniture, on request, a car varnisher painted the furniture, at the end for free. A professional carpenter fixed renewed this step in oak, I do not know how much it would have cost if we would have had to pay.

This shows that the cooperative members really feel responsible. A cooperative also creates human connections.

André Frutschi: Yes, absolutely. We came to know many people. Even, a notary has

"In the beginning there was the idea ..."

continued from page 23

congratulated us on our statutes and said that if he ever had to form a cooperative, he'll take our statutes as a template.

Isabelle Zünd: The volunteer work was not only limited to the renovation of the premises. We, Odile and I, we work 50% in the shop and then there are ten volunteers who support us. You hear sometimes the say that mutual aid nowadays is no longer alive, but that is not true, if you ask for help, then people tend to jump in.

The cooperative is also still the most democratic form of organization.

Isabelle Zünd: Exactly. Each member has one vote, regardless of how many shares he has bought. The municipality, which has bought ten shares has one vote and the three women, who together bought a share, have one vote each. This is unlike an ordinary company.

How did you proceed from the idea to the opening of the bookstore?

Isabelle Zünd: First, we became acquainted with other bookstores. We visited several bookstores, in La Chaux-de-Fonds, in the region, in France and had a look at how they work. Then we visited various cooperatives, among others, "Espace Noir" in St Imier.

André Frutschi: I do not know if you know "Espace Noir"? If not, you need to visit these diverse cooperatives. It is very interesting, a place of culture consisting of a dwelling house, a theatre and a bookstore of anarchist philosophy. Historically, St Imier is a place of anarchists, *Bakunin* was in St Imier. The cooperative "Espace Noir" promotes the cooperative movement very strongly.

Isabelle Zünd: So we met the people of "Espace Noir", they gave us advice, shared their statutes with us ... and then we wanted to try out if there actually was a demand for a bookstore, whether people would like to have a bookstore again. And since this was the case, we said to ourselves: "Let us go ahead, let's give out the shares of the cooperative." Within 6 months, we sold 135 shares for CHF 500 each. We had set the share at 500 francs, because we did not want too many members in the cooperative, because the more there are, the more difficult is it to manage the cooperative. We would have needed a secretary. But we preferred a lean administration.

How did you find members for the cooperative?

We wrote letters to our friends, and then to more distant acquaintances. We wrote to stores and businesses in the district. Two companies have become members of the cooperative. Then we asked the municipalities. Le Locle and Les Brenets agreed. The remaining members of the cooperative are all private. I volunteered a lot in the past and therefore I know a lot of people.

Then we started to work out the statute, which was not easy, as there are few cooperatives in French-speaking Switzerland, towards which we could orient ourselves.

André Frutschi: We found one model in the Valais, but we had to revise the statute and adapt it to our requirements. We wanted to include the purpose clause saying that it is a cooperative with an idealistic purpose to make clear that it is not the primary goal to earn money. But for legal reasons, that was not possible, as a cooperative needs to pursue a commercial purpose by law. At least it must be able to support itself.

Isabelle Zünd: However, from the *Loterie Romande*¹ we received funding, since it is considered a non-profit project in essence. With this money we were able to

acquire the basic computer equipment and basic materials.

These preparations took their time – about a year. In the course of this year we fortunately met Odile. She is a retired bookseller and agreed to participate in our project. Now that we have opened, is clear to me that we would have never succeeded without her. She is ready to work half-day and sometimes even more for free in the bookshop.

André Frutschi: On 23 March this year we adopted the statutes at the inaugural meeting. Since 8 April the cooperative "Aux Mots Passants" is entered in the Register, and in April we found relatively cheap and well-located premises. As the rooms had been used as a storage by the antiquarian next door, we had to make everything new. But thanks to the many volunteers we managed to prepare the premises until the opening on 29 August very nicely.

We were amazed when on the opening day some 300 people came. Government representatives were also present. It must be said, that politics supported our enterprise. The municipality bought 10 cooperative certificates. Many volunteers had organized games and set up booths. 300 visitors came while we had only 135 cooperative members. This already shows that other people are interested in the project!

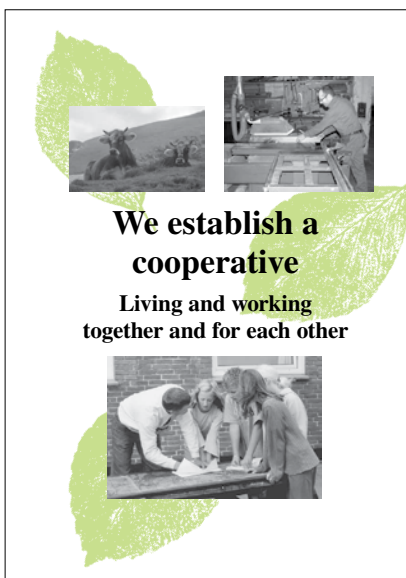
By end of the year, 6 months after opening, the General Assembly will present the first opportunity to gather all the members of the cooperative, and then we'll see ... we just take it step by step. We have ideas ... There is, for example, a prosecutor from Neuchâtel, but he also writes novels. He approached us and asked us if he could arrange an autograph session at our bookstore.

Isabelle Zünd: So all the pieces have been put together very nicely. Sometimes, I say to myself, if the energy is there in the project, all the pieces fall into their place, that's a wonderful thing.

Thank you for the interview and all the best for the future. •

(Interview Susanne Lienhard)

¹ The six French-speaking cantons (Vaud, Fribourg, Valais, Neuchâtel, Geneva and Jura) authorize the operation of the *Loterie Romande* and get all the profit. The profit goes entirely to nonprofit institutions in Romandie.



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