

Current Concerns

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Why are the teachers in turmoil?

by Claude Meunier-Berthelot, French author, lawyer and teacher



CC. The following article from France makes it clear that the same pedagogically nonsensical reforms are being carried out there as in Switzerland, Germany and other European countries. There, too, the responsible politicians seem immune to all pedagogically justified objections and concerns, to any didactic experience, to developmental psychological facts and anthropological conditions. And there, too, the reforms are presented under partly superficially melodious, partly unspeakably meaningless terms. Whom should it serve?

In view of the sparseness of the comments on the draft law of the French Minister of Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, on the so-called “school of trust” (!), one is perplexed by the inability of journalists to understand the essence of the subject and to communicate it to the public. There are also those who understand the system best and use their usual malice to conceal reality in order to serve the state. Those who do not understand this course of action would do well to press the replay button, at least until the reforms of Claude Allègre [Minister of Education 1997-2000, transl.] This review would at least make it possible to understand the logic of the system, even if in reality the dismantling of the French education system began much earlier.

A reform that is none...

If we analyse Blanquer’s approach, it quickly becomes clear that this project is by no means a fundamentally new reform, quite the contrary!

It is only a continuation of the policy of its predecessors, based on the “Charter for the Construction of the School of the 21st Century” published by Claude Allègre in 1999, which consisted in transforming the school system into a place of life for our children – as Jack Lang, Minister of Education from 2000–2002, put it: “The school must be a living-space! This rev-

olution is characterised by the disappearance of the knowledge imparted through teaching and its replacement by activities in which the pupils have to acquire their own knowledge. In other words, school is no longer a school.

Since the needs in a teaching-centred school are obviously not the same as in a living space school, it follows that the institutions, the organisational form and the personnel recruitment must be adapted: This is the aim of the measures taken.

The activities of Education Minister Blanquer, are, therefore, part of the implementation of this Charter, which is gradually being implemented “methodically, progressively and without conflict” by the various ministers who followed one another at the head of the Ministry of Education, as Jack Lang, as Claude Allègre’s successor, recommended in the early 2000’s.

Misleading language

Since this school revolution completely contradicts the will of the parents and the interests of the French nation, the activities (e.g. ball games, roller skating, swimming ...) are never described with the normal terms, but packed into an ampoule-like, esoteric and varied language. This language is incomprehensible to laypeople and suggests that the decisions taken serve to improve the quality of the educational system – in reality however, everything is done to destroy it.

So, at the level of principles, it is about “multi-disciplinarity” (J.-M. Blanquer has clearly stated that the pedagogical approach must always be multi-disciplinary), “inter-disciplinarity”, “transversality”, “trans-disciplinarity”, “inter-disciplinary practical exceptional teaching”, in order not to use the simple word “activity”. As far as activities are concerned in detail, it is about “project pedagogy”, individual project work, “cross work”, “ex-peditions”, “art and cultural pedagogy”, “personalised support”, “personal project for educational success”, “tutorials” and even “homework assistance” etc. All these terms are completely exaggerated word clichés for simple activities.

Everything is done to deceive the public and not only to appear credible, but

also to leave the impression that the educational system is being improved, although the opposite is the case.

Renewing existing educational institutions by new designations

J.-M. Blanquer claims to be refounding the *Institut nationaux supérieurs du professorat (INSP)*. One could laugh oneself to death if it were not for crying if one took the appropriate law at hand. There it says: “The term ‘colleges of teaching and education’ is replaced by ‘higher schools of education’ [...]”. Otherwise, nothing is changed in the text of the law!

The “new” INSP are, therefore, nothing other than the former *Ecoles supérieures du professorat et de l’éducation (ESPE)*, which themselves were previously called *IUFM (Institut universitaires de formation des maîtres)*. These were allegedly abolished in 2005 because of massive criticism. Within the universities, however, they continued to exist until they were resurrected in 2013 by Vincent Peillon [Minister of Education 2012–2014] under the name ESPE.

Jean-Michel Blanquer now immortalises the IUFM under the new name INSP. So he does not invent anything new at all – which is the best proof that he follows the same policy as his predecessors.

Changes in teacher training?

It is also claimed that Blanquer is planning to change teacher training as well. However, this change has already been implemented with Vincent Peillon’s “future employment of teachers” [“emplois d’avenir professeur” (EAP)],* which Blanquer is now taking over under the new name of “pedagogical assistants”. For this purpose, unqualified personnel are going to be employed, regardless of nationality or any social criteria. University education disappears and this short training for all employees only takes place in the IUFM-INSP, from kindergarten to university.

Najat Vallaud-Belkacem [Minister of Education 2014-2017] had stated that this had become the “normal way of recruit-

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ing" "teachers who are no longer teaching".

A living-space school no longer needs qualified personnel with diplomas. This also largely explains last year's introduction of the "Parcoursup" system. In this online application of the Ministry of Higher Education, all high school graduates who are interested in higher teacher training have to provide detailed information about themselves and their interests, which makes access to universities difficult for many.

Blanquer continues this policy under a different name while claiming to be innovative.

Creation of public comprehensive schools for the acquisition of basic knowledge?

This has been in preparation for quite some time! If there are no longer lessons at school, if neither knowledge or intellectual education is imparted, if there are no teaching goals to be achieved, but only activities to be carried out, class teaching is no longer justified and no distinction between primary and secondary school is needed. Thus, there is no longer any reason why the different school levels – including grammar school – should not

be combined in comprehensive schools, which are called "Ecoles inclusives" by Education Minister Blanquer.

As far as basic knowledge is concerned, you can always come back to it later to acquire it!

The teachers are dissatisfied – but that is nothing new!

The teachers are dissatisfied – but this is nothing new. 20 per cent of the staff have quit in the last few years: That has never happened before! However, nothing is said about that. The Cerberus of the system (mostly a dog with several heads, which in Greek mythology, guards the entrance to the underworld so that no living person penetrates and no dead person comes out) – in other words, the trade unions have looked on and done nothing, although they know exactly what has been going on for decades. They are pushing for demonstrations when it is too late. The teachers have been silenced, despite the commotion caused by the real nonsense of the system. They mistakenly believe, however, that it is still a school, since many have not yet realised where they and our children are heading.

Blanquer's slogan: "Keep silent!"

Blanquer has supplemented the whole thing with a "duty of exemplary and restraint"! This is no coincidence! The

teachers are annoyed; they can hardly bear the situation they have to cope with on a daily basis. He knows very well that the explosion is imminent, reason enough to oblige them to keep silent.

Silence! We are killing the intelligence of your children! This is the "school of trust", keep silent!

So, we know why the teachers are in turmoil: Abused by the state, which claims to be working to restore the educational system, they know very well that this is not the case and that, on the contrary, their situation and that of the children entrusted to them, will only deteriorate in the future.

Strikes? A washout ...

The strikes, called by the unions, only serve to curb dissatisfaction. It is obvious that they will bring nothing but a few meagre consolation prizes, with no effect on Mr Blanquer's policy, because it is far too late. Everything is planned in detail and prepared so that he can continue his policy.

Strikes, at the wrong time and without putting the finger on the sore spot, are, as usual, nothing more than a washout! •

* Law from 26 June 2012, Decree in CE n°2013-50 from 15 January 2013

Source: www.libertepolitique.com/Actualite/Decryptage/Pourquoi-les-professeurs-sont-ils-en-colere, from 7 June

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Test tasks in German 2017 for the examination of the basic competences (ÜGK) by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

mw. It took two respectively three years for the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) to produce the results of its "standardised, computer-based competence tests" (3rd high school, mathematics / 6th primary class, school language and 1st foreign language).

The sixth-formers were only tested in reading / text comprehension and spelling.

Reading area: Short texts (max. 1,000 characters), three text types: narrative, factual text, argumentation. In addition each with a sample question with four multiple-choice answers.

"Task example for an argumentative text with explicit performance of comprehension" (ÜGK 2019, p. 22)

Title: "Brand-name clothes". Tina, 12 years old, expresses her opinion on brand-name clothes.

Question: *Why do certain young people buy branded dresses according to Tina?*

Multiple-choice answers: *Because brand-name clothes are very expensive /*

because they don't like cheaper clothes / because they want to belong to a certain group / because they want to save their money.

Comment: Two out of four answers are to be cancelled because every sixth-former realises that they can't be right; the right solution is given practically literally in the text: "[...] only because you want to belong to a certain group [...]").

"Task example for a narrative text with implicit performance of comprehension" (ÜGK 2019, p. 23)

Title: "Noah's Christmas". "Noah tells a story about Christmas."

Question: *When is the story set?*

Multiple-choice answers: *A few months before Christmas / A few days before Christmas / At Christmas itself / After Christmas.*

Comment: The answer is provided by the first sentence of the story: "No doubt, it will be Christmas soon!" confirmed by the statement in the second sentence that dad "is bringing out the garlands and the Christmas baubles".

Comment: Dad does this barely a few months before or even after Christmas. The rest of the story can be skipped by the reasonably alphabetised sixth-former.

"Task example for an informative text with explicit performance of comprehension" (ÜGK 2019, p. 24)

Title: "The Flamingo." Text from an encyclopedia.

Question: *What kind of toes does the Flamingo have?*

Multiple-choice answers: *Toes with special lamellas / Toes with webs / White and red ones / About 40 centimetres long.*

Comment: Sixth-formers who are trimmed for such tests look for the word "toes" in the text and find it in the second sentence: "His neck and legs are very long, his toes are connected with webs, ...". The rest of the story [...] (see 2nd task).

(Examples chosen by Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education EDK)

How EU and NATO generate crises and pave the way for wars

Interview with Ullrich Mies* by Nicolas Riedl (rubikon)



Ullrich Mies
(picture youtube.com)

cc. Ullrich Mies, entrepreneur and author, has published his new book “Der Tiefe Staat schlägt zu. Wie die westliche Welt Krisen erzeugt und Kriege vorbereitet (The Deep State strikes. How the West-

ern World generates crises and paves the way for wars)”. It resumes the themes of his book “Fassadendemokratie und Tiefer Staat. Auf dem Weg in ein autoritäres Zeitalter (Façade Democracy and the Deep State. On the way to an authoritarian age)”, edited 2017 together with Jens Wernicke. In his new book writers have the say who deal above all with the dangers of war emanating from the Deep State.

Nicolas Riedl: What was it that motivated you after “Façade Democracy and the Deep State. On the way to an authoritarian age” to publish a new book?

Ullrich Mies: At the book launches in 2017, I noticed that we hit a crucial point with the title “Façade Democracy and the Deep State”. The audience consistently agreed with the statement that we are living in a façade democracy. The forces behind the deep state, however, were by no means clear to most people. The first book delivered an answer to this.

The new book “The Deep State strikes” is about explaining how the ruling elites managed to run the peace dividend of 1990 aground and how they managed to lead the world into a new pre-war level. I also take a much more comprehensive approach concerning the Deep State that is common. I refer to the Deep State as the hidden domain of the rulers. Some parts are visible, the essential parts are not. In this domain, the class struggle is organised top down. The actors of the Deep State are neither electable nor are they able to be voted out of office. They are the representatives of the market-radical model of Western capitalism. Here, the neoconservative ideologues play a decisive role. Deep state and neoconservative players cannot be separated from each other.

The book “Façade Democracy and the Deep State” lacked the international perspective of the Deep State. In “The Deep State strikes. How the Western World Generates Crises and Paves the Way for Wars” I present a collection of contributions, the 16 authors show how the ruling western

“That Russia intends to attack any country is the evil propaganda of the Western intelligence and communication complex. It is not Russia that has conquered the US continent or the EU with its military power, but NATO that is constricting Russia. A glance at the map is all it takes to expose the propaganda as a lie.”

elites eroded the international order in a process lasting 25 years.

Which authors were you able to attract to contribute to the new book?

The following authors contributed to the volume in the same order as the table of contents: Rainer Rupp, Eugen Drewermann, Jochen Scholz, Hannes Hofbauer, Tilo Gräser, Annette Groth, Kees van der Pijl, Chris Hedges, Nicolas J.S. Davies, John Pilger, Ullrich Mies, Vladimir Kozin, Wolfgang Jung, Aktham Suliman, Mohsen Massarrat and Ernst Wolff. As you can see from the names, I was able to attract a number of foreign authors, especially from the USA. And with Vladimir P. Kozin there is also an important Russian expert who has been dealing with questions of armament and armament control for many decades.

What coherences would you like to convey to the readers of the book?

By analysing international political trends, the book aims to contribute to a better understanding of the current rejections in international politics. After reading the book, readers can better understand some political developments, especially the West’s relations with Russia. Above all, the propagandistic assertion of the West that the Crimean crisis was an arbitrary act of Russia is not correct. It was nothing else but the result of a 25-year process in which the NATO and the EU enlarged towards the East. The so-called foreign policy establishment of the West and its opinion forming industries deliberately embezzle the historical events that led to the quarrel with Russia.

But anyone who does not understand contemporary history as a chain of decisions and events and instead always takes only the end link of a long chain into account – such as the Crimean secession – will not understand anything at all. The ruling elites of the West are the decisive drivers of conflict and war in this world.

Many honourable politicians played a decisive role as architects in the common house of a peaceful, united Europe, after

the fall of the Berlin Wall. Now their hair stands on end facing the Federal Government’s current policy on Russia. I do not deny that there were and still are honourable politicians. As a rule, however, you will not find these politicians in the leading committees today, rather mostly opportunists and corrupt apparatchiks who have joined forces with the financial and commercial powers. They do not care about the large population, the environment or world peace. One of these stages for Western conflict and war drivers to act is the Munich Security Conference. The writer Tilo Gräser focuses in his contribution on the conference of the year 2018.

Let us come back to the historically unique opportunity after 1989. The destruction of the so-called peace dividend after 1990/91 followed a script written by neoconservative cadres of the Deep State in the USA. After the system competition disappeared when the USSR collapsed, the neoconservatives in the USA had free rein, especially under President Bush junior. After an orientation phase they saw their chance to revitalise the total world domination of the USA, a concept that had existed for about 100 years.

After the experiences of the Cold War, how could the Western world once again fall back into a spiral of mistrust, armaments race and mutual deterrence? How likely is an escalation between West and East?

The very basis of the upheavals on the international stage is the USA’s claim to dominate the world. The USA is defining the whole world, especially the Eurasian region, as area of its security interest. But it goes far beyond that. The US claim to dominate the world is underpinned by the ideology of “full-spectrum dominance” and now includes the three traditional branches of the armed forces, i.e. Army, Air Force and Navy, as well as other branches of weaponry, “space”, “cyberspace”, “information warfare” and total surveillance.

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The admission of ever new countries into the NATO alliance also serves to expand the ideological and power sphere of the USA into the depths of the Eurasian region. From 1990 until today the transatlantic imperialists proceeded in several phases.

First there was an orientation phase of the alliance and a search for new assignments from 1990 to 1993, followed by the revitalisation of the US claim to world leadership, the preservation and strengthening of this dominance, and the consolidation of NATO expansion plans from 1994 to 1998. From 1999 to 2001, the first phase of aggression followed, specifically the Yugoslavian war, 9/11 and the "war on terror", the war against Afghanistan, the first NATO expansion round with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. I call the period from 2002 to 2010 a second phase of aggression, the consolidation of the US claim to dominate the world, the termination of the ABM treaty, the wars against Iraq, Libya, Georgia, the two Nato enlargement rounds with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Slovakia and then Albania and Croatia. I call the period from 2011 to 2013 a third phase of aggression, with the beginning of the Syrian war and the open hostility towards Russia. During these years, military manoeuvres and the deployment of heavy weapons close to the Russian border are taking place. In my view, the fourth phase of aggression begins in 2014 with the coup d'état in Ukraine, the escalation of the Syrian war, the propaganda, sanctions and economic war, the open hostility against Russia, the excessive military manoeuvres, the armament, the withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear treaty and the INF treaty. The fourth round of NATO enlargement to Montenegro in 2017 is also part of this.

In his contribution *Nicolas S. Davies* shows what trail of blood the US has left in its wars since 9/11. His result is: The wars waged by the USA since 2001 have caused the death of 5 to 7 million people.

In my view, neoconservative US foreign policy elites together with their transatlantically oriented vassals in Germany and important EU states have led people in countless countries - even in Europe - into this tragedy. Kees van der Pijl has made an interesting contribution about these coherences with the title: "The axis of evil – the US/Israel Neo Con-Connection".

Sweden recently published a television series about an invasion of Norway by Russia. Is this all a coincidence or do you think that the people are being culturally aligned to a russophobic climate?

Franklin D. Roosevelt, US President from 1933 to 1945, has already said: "In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way."

In plain words: everything is on purpose. Norway, Sweden and Finland are of great importance for Nato strategists and for a potential war against Russia. The fact that two Nato general secretaries in a row are Scandinavians, *Jens Stoltenberg* and his predecessor *Fogh Rasmussen*, is also no coincidence. This serves to bind these countries to NATO.

The russophobic climate was and is always generated using all available propaganda techniques. Very important is the cultural and militaristic infiltration of the audience by films, TV series, advertisements, large posters and the like. These are the subtle techniques that do not fail to have an effect in the subconscious of the people. Thus the evil Russian is subliminally anchored in the consciousness of the people. Most people do not realise the perfidious techniques of power at all, because they cannot think as maliciously as the elites do. The russophobic climate is part of the establishment of the "Cold War 2.0".

People in northern and eastern Germany experience the rearmament and relocation of heavy military equipment towards the east in everyday life, for example army trucks on the roads. The wagons loaded with tanks have now got priority over passenger traffic at "Deutsche Bahn" (German Railways). The EU wants to invest 6.5 billion euros to make the roads and rails to the east compatible to transport heavy tanks. Can you understand that former Eastern Bloc countries welcome these developments?

Certainly, there is still an aversion to everything Russian in the minds of people in the former Eastern Bloc countries. What is more decisive, however, in my view, is that the political elites in Eastern Europe have been mentally brought into line with an US-transatlantic view through long-term investments and various funding programmes, scholarships, research stays, connections and networks.

Germany plays a special role as a transit country for heavy weapons. It is also a nuclear weapons depot, logistics hub, location for roughly 40,000 US military personnel, control centre for the murderous drones deployed worldwide, location of Africom and Eucom. In the new book, Wolfgang Jung explains that Germany is above all becoming a theater of war. I find it extremely disturbing, if not insidious, that Germany's so-called foreign policy establishment does not take these aspects into account.

Should it not be clear to every logically thinking citizen in the former Eastern bloc

states that, from Russia's point of view, it would be totally suicidal to attack one of these countries or even to absorb?

That Russia intends to attack any country is the evil propaganda of the Western intelligence and communication complex. It is not Russia that has conquered the US continent or the EU with its military power, but NATO that is constricting Russia. A glance at the map is all it takes to expose the propaganda as a lie.

Until 1977 there were plans to raze the USSR to the ground with 10,000 nuclear weapons. Does this spirit of insanity still exist today?

Of course, this insane spirit continues and the insane ones, to stay in the picture, have the power to turn their ideas into reality. Or do you think the peoples would be so crazy to threaten each other or the planet with nuclear extinction?

This evil spirit continues to exist. The USA wants to spend over 1,200 billion US dollars in the coming 30 years to establish a full-scale the nuclear terror capability. Sociopaths and psychopaths who get lost in eradication strategy games are a great danger for mankind. The population should never forget: The politically responsible for all this insanity are sitting in the governments. They squeeze out the people's money through scaremongering and enemy stereotypes in order to invest into developing further these apparatuses of mass destruction. Vladimir P. Kozin informs about these coherences in his contribution "The New Cold War and the Planned Escalation of the Conflict USA/Europe versus Russia". In order to understand the whole madness, I myself provided some aspects in my contribution "How the Western community of values established the Cold War 2.0".

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By proceeding against Julian Assange, America will dig its own grave

by Karen Kwiatkowski*



Karen Kwiatkowski
(picture ma)

There is great evil being perpetrated by Washington D.C. here and around the world.

A persistent terrible hate for life, liberty and humanity arrived on little cat feet and has taken over our country.

This did not begin with *Trump*, but sadly it also is not going to end with him either.

Trump promised to drain the swamp, implying change, transparency and accountability.

Instead he brought in neoconservative king-makers and warmongers, and allowed their influence to grow disproportionately, while his co-dependents in

the other party facilitate the agenda of death.

The criminal pursuit and indictment of Wikileaks founder, *Julian Assange* is the proof in the pudding. The 40 page criminal complaint contains a lot of detail but not much crime.¹ In fact, the “crimes” are more like descriptions of how journalism is done in the information age, if it is true that the job of journalism is to tell the stories, name the names, and state the facts that governments don’t want told, named or stated.

In a normal world, none of this is worth much energy or attention. There is very little legally here to work with, and success so far on the part of the US Government has been solely via a reliable judge in the Eastern District Court of Virginia, and other people’s money and other peo-

ple’s governments, beholden or paid by the US.

But in the world that exists today, we see these overblown aggressive tactics and we can feel the excitement, the goosebumps and the hot necks of the FBI and CIA suits as they make their bones.

Chelsea Manning is back in prison, ordered back into solitary.² She is not the person she was after years of torture, isolation and chemical interrogation. Ironically, her cognitive function as a result of her previous treatment is likely to render any future interrogation useless in court, legally and practically. She received the “*José Padilla* treatment”³, albeit refined by some years of USG practice. Her resultant mental malleability may have produced the ideal Soviet Amerikan Woman [sic].

The US appears to be a nation of laws, and yet, we absolutely are not. One of many lessons and perspectives we gain from the study of Julian Assange is just that. US political influence and debt-funded largesse resulted in Assange’s ejection from the Ecuadorian Embassy into the UK prison for terrorists in Belmarsh. US domestic corruption and misreading of the Constitution produced his indictment.

Furthermore, US government employees, from the DoD, FBI and the CIA have been interviewing Assange in Belmarsh Prison, prior to any extradition decision.

Interviewing is the wrong word. I’d like to say doctoring him, because it would be more accurate, except that word implies some care for a positive outcome. *Chemical Gina*⁴ has her hands in this one, and we are being told that Assange is being “treated” with 3-quinuclidinyl benzilate, known as BZ.⁵ What BZ does, from the *New Yorker*:

“Exposed soldiers exhibited bizarre symptoms: rapid mumbling, or picking obsessively at bedclothes and other objects, real or imaginary. ‘...The drug’s effect lasted for days. At its peak, volunteers were totally cut off in their own minds, jolting from one fragmented existence to the next. They saw visions: Lilliputian baseball players competing on a tabletop diamond; animals or people or objects that materialized and vanished.

Soldiers on BZ could remember only fragments of the experience afterward. As the drug wore

* Karen U. Kwiatkowski (born 24 September 1960) is a retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel. She received an MA in Government from Harvard University and an MS in Science Management from the University of Alaska. She has a PhD in World Politics from The Catholic University of America in Washington DC; She began her military career in 1982 in Alaska, she also served in Spain and Italy. Kwiatkowski was then assigned to the National Security Agency (NSA), eventually becoming a speechwriter for the agency’s director. In 1998 she became an analyst for the Pentagon, first on sub-Saharan Africa policy, from 2002 to 2003 she served in the Pentagon’s Near East and South Asia directorate (NESAs).

There she witnessed how, under the influence of the Neocons, the Office for Special Plans within NESAs worked to produce the justifications for the Iraq war by twisting and censoring information. Since she did not want to support this, she resigned in 2003. Her disclosures have been confirmed by other intelligence officials. This is because, as she told journalists of „Die Zeit“, she „wants as many people as possible to understand how vulnerable democracy is“. Karen Kwiatkowski is a founding member of the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). Today she lives with her family on a farm in Virginia. In addition to her work on the farm, she also works as an author and part-time professor.

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If the US empire, or rather the transatlantic elites, are interested in forcibly opening up Russia as a new market, is it completely irrational to make the desired land area uninhabitable for the next centuries through nuclear bombardment? Can you explain that?

Yes, these diabolical genocide drivers in the US military apparatuses and transatlantic think tanks believe that a limited nuclear war is indeed manageable, indeed even desirable under certain conditions, in order to pre-empt the enemy, to whom they always insinuate the worst intentions, with a preventive strike.

The maximum scandal is that even the ruling caste of Germany is now preparing or involved in the third attempt against Russia in the space of about 100 years. If the Berlin ruling cliques actually entered the war against Russia, many Germans would refuse to follow the attacking re-

gime. I am sure of that. In my view, a war against Russia is only possible at the cost of a civil war. But who knows what developments will actually occur in such a case? The war of aggression against Russia is only to be waged at the cost of the complete peremption of civil rights through the implementation of the state of emergency and thus at the cost of a possible civil and/or partisan war in one’s own country.

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* The original version of this interview was published on 14 March 2019 on the *rubikon* website in German (www.rubikon.news/artikel/die-schattenmacht). Ullrich Mies shortened and revised the text for *Current Concerns*.

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off, and the subjects had trouble discerning what was real, many experienced anxiety, aggression, even terror. Ketchum [Dr. James Ketchum, DoD Edgewood Arsenal, MD] built padded cells to prevent injuries, but at times the subjects couldn't be contained. One escaped, running from imagined murderers. Another, on a drug similar to BZ, saw 'bugs, worms, one snake, a monkey and numerous rats,' and thought his skin was covered in blood. 'Subject broke a wooden chair and smashed a hole in the wall after tearing down a 4-by-7-ft panel of padding,' his chart noted. Ketchum and three assistants piled on top of the soldier to subdue him. 'He was clearly terrified and convinced we were intending to kill him,' his chart said.

One night, Ketchum rushed into a padded room to reassure a young African-American volunteer wrestling with the ebbing effects of BZ. The soldier, agitated, found the air-conditioner gravely threatening. After calming him down, Ketchum sat beside him. Attempting to see if he could hold a conversation, Ketchum asked, 'Why do they have taxes, income taxes, things like that?'

The soldier thought for a minute. 'You see, that would be difficult for me to answer, because I don't like rice,' he said.⁶

BZ is an interesting drug⁷, certainly not the only one used by the US government, but one of them.

Why give it to Assange? What do they want from him? Is it truth they seek, or more information, or is this whole farce something more like obsessive retaliatory rage at feeling powerless, as the world laughed at US State department memorandums and became angry at the idiocy and hate demonstrated by US soldiers 15 years ago.⁸ Or maybe something more sinister – that they need Julian Assange psychologically and physically drawn and quartered because he revealed state corruption and weakness? Is it because to the state this is the war, the real war it always fights, a war with the rest of the population for its very survival? Or is Ray McGovern on to the real reason the deep state wants to destroy him?⁹

It is difficult to know if the state is more sociopathic or more psychopathic. What US government employees and/or contractors are currently doing to Julian Assange, and those who may have used Wikileaks as a journalistic avenue,

may indicate it is the latter. Torture, isolation, brutality, and the use of psychotropic drugs during interrogations and hiding this from the defendant's own lawyers by denying them access – this is Lubyanka¹⁰ in the 1950s, not London and DC in 2019.

Allow me to get to the point. The latest word I have received from England is as follows:

"[Julian Assange] is presently under close observation in prison hospital because he has suffered 'severe transient psychotic episodes.' My source(s) indicate these episodes occurred after two sessions of coercive interrogation at the hands of UK and US officials. The source(s) stated the HUMINT interrogators used psychotropic drugs in the course of the sessions." [HUMINT: Human Intelligence, intelligence gathered by means of interpersonal contact]

There are no words. Nothing can be said. 2 plus 2 does equal 5. The FBI is our own special Cheka. The CIA Director's hands are wet and her organisation does not serve American values. Rather than choosing to stay secretive for national security, the modern CIA must stay secretive in order to survive, because it has become functionally illegal. Our president, who puts America first, is putting American values last, even as he tweets his concern for freedom of speech.¹¹

The agenda is to destroy Assange as a human being, and they may well succeed. In doing this evil deed, in all of our names, America herself – whether we put her first, last, or somewhere in the middle – will have dug her own grave. •

Copyright © 2019 Karen Kwiatkowski, 7 May 2019

Source: www.lewrockwell.com/2019/05/karen-kwiatkowski/pray-and-weep/

¹ <http://cryptome.org/2019/04/assange-001-002.pdf>

² <https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/international-news/rule-of-law/federal-judge-orders-the-torture-of-chelsea-manning/>

³ José Padilla was a terrorism suspect in solitary confinement. According to "Der Spiegel", US President Obama had secret CIA memos on the admission of controversial interrogation techniques published. "The memos document the use of sleep deprivation, painful postures, exposure and blows to the face and abdomen. The technique of waterboarding, in which the interrogated person thinks he is drowning, will also be performed. Human rights organisations classify such interrogation methods as torture." Further methods were the use of drugs during interrogations and sensory deprivation, i.e. the deprivation of all audible sounds and vision.

⁴ Since May 2018, Gina Haspel has been director of the CIA, for which she has worked since 1985, for many years as a secret agent. She has received various awards, for example for her fight against terrorism. What worries critics and former ambassadors is her monitoring of various brutal tortures of terrorism suspects, which were also reported in the New York Times in 2017. Because of her involvement in torture, she was transferred away as head of the CIA's secret police department.

⁵ Wikipedia writes about this substance: 3-quinuclidinylbenzilate (BZ, QNB, misleadingly short-

ening also benzyl acid ester) is a chemical warfare agent. It belongs to the group of psycho warfare agents and since 1997 – like other chemical weapons – has been officially banned internationally by the Chemical Weapons Convention; development, production and storage are also prohibited.

At first headaches, confusion, hallucinations, then anxiety, concentration disorders, general restlessness alternate with apathetic phases. After a short time the affected person is in a state of complete loss of reality. He no longer has conscious contact with his environment. On average, the effect lasts three days, sometimes up to six weeks. In individual cases there are said to have been permanent changes in his nature.

⁶ Khatchandourian, Raffi. Operation Delirium. In: *The New Yorker* from 9 December 2012. www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/12/17/operation-delirium.

⁷ <https://www.revolvy.com/page/3-Quinuclidinylbenzilate?styp=topics&cmd=list>

⁸ <https://collateralmurder.wikileaks.org/> [A secret US military video published by Wikileaks in 2010 documenting the arbitrary murder of over a dozen people, including two Reuters employees, in the suburb of New Baghdad. Reuters unsuccessfully attempted to obtain the video under the Freedom of Information Act. Filmed by an Apache Helicopter, it shows the murder of an injured Reuters employee and his rescuer. Two children involved in the rescue were also seriously injured.]

⁹ Orwellian Cloud Hovers Over Russia-gate. By Ray McGovern. consortiumnews.com, 6 May 2019. (Ray McGovern is also a former CIA analyst).

¹⁰ The Lubyanka was the infamous prison of the Soviet KGB in the Stalin era. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-09-07-mn-1571-story.html>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/302530722453921793>

Current Concerns

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What exactly is the “Mittelstand”? Its importance for society and economy

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, Hanover (Germany)



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

The “Mittelstands-institut Niedersachsen e.V.” (SME Institute Lower Saxony) has been conducting independent research into small and medium-sized businesses as well as the middle tier of our society (the “Mittelstand”) for almost 50 years. In this institute, “Mittelstand” economics was created – today a discipline of the study of economics, concerned with the independent companies and family enterprises in our economy.

For five years now, this institute has also developed a previously non-existent “Mittelstand” sociology concerned with “Mittelstand” employees.

The “Mittelstand” in society

Since *Karl Marx*, society as a whole has been divided into three strata:

1. a small upper class of about 5 % (Marx called this the capitalists).
2. the “Mittelstand”, formerly 20%, now about 50% (which Marx mistakenly called the vanishing “bourgeoisie”).
3. a lower class that used to make up the majority of the population, but today comprises less than half (which Marx called the proletariat).

These three strata live from different sources of income:

- The upper class lives from capital assets, i.e. not from its own work, but from that of others. This source of income has always been privileged, i.e. not taxed at all or taxed least of all, in history and even today.
- The “Mittelstand” lives from its own work, either from self-employed or from qualified salaried work. Since this factor is the main tax feature, the “Mittelstand” is also the main payer of all public taxes.
- The lower class consists of poorly paid, unskilled workers, but also receives many state and semi-state transfers.

Probably not least because Marx, among others, saw the middle class as dying and therefore pictured only two classes – capitalists and proletarians – engaged in a class struggle, the “Mittelstand” has so far been neglected scientifically, socially and politically.

The term “middle class” (or “Mittelstand”) for the middle stratum of society developed in the corporative state of

the 19th century and has remained popular to this day, although we have long since turned from the corporative state into a functional society.

“The decisive function of the “Mittelstand” in society is to bear responsibility. Either self-responsibility i.e. personal responsibility for their own existence in their own company or practice as ‘self-employed person’ or externally responsible in their exercise of responsibility in the public sector or in the private economy or society (“salaried Mittelstand”). This own or external responsibility usually requires higher qualifications and training than that of the lower class, but remains decentralised responsibility, while the upper class demands central responsibility for itself.”¹

Accordingly, SME research distinguishes between economic SMEs and societal SMEs under the generic term “Mittelstand”.

The “economic Mittelstand” includes not only the self-employed (entrepreneurs) as individuals, but also the personnel companies of the self-employed, entrepreneurs, freelancers, farmers and foresters, artists and others. Characteristic of the members of this independent “Mittelstand” is that they want to lead their life with independent responsibility and to acquire their income according to their own goals. In this aspect, they are connected with the upper class, which also leads its life self-responsibly and lives from its own capital property or participation.

The “salaried Mittelstand” exercises its leadership and responsibility function and its freedom of decision not in its own name but in the name of others, either from a position of responsibility or because of its higher qualifications. This includes senior employees and civil servants, but also persons who exercise responsibility for other external tasks as researchers, specialists in industry, government or as teachers or artists or with other special qualifications.

Employees of the middle and lower classes do not work on their own but under external responsibility. They work for others, and their wages are paid by others – persons, companies or organisations. However, the “employed Mittelstand” distinguishes itself from the lower class by having more responsibility, higher qualifications, a higher position and thus an above-average income.

However, SME research no longer includes employed top managers from business and administration, such as *Friedrich Merz*, as these are seen as belonging to the

sociological upper class of “rich capital owners”.

According to the aforementioned criteria, we have an upper class of about 5 %, a middle class of about 47 % and a lower class of about 43 % in our society. The latter, however, is tending to grow as a result of immigration.

The “independent Mittelstand”

According to our laws, anyone who acts independently in his own name (§§ 1 and 17 HGB), on his own account (§ 2 para. 1 EstG) and at his own risk (§ 145 et seq. BGB) (§ 1 GewO) for the purpose of making a profit in business life (§ 1 GewO) is deemed to be independent, i.e. self-employed.²

Self-employed persons include not only entrepreneurs in manufacturing occupations (1.25 million) or in service enterprises (3.3 million), but also farmers and foresters (0.21 million) and independent asset managers (0.24 million). In total, the 5 million self-employed account for 11.6 % of the working population (44 million).³

Compared to the 88% of employed persons in our society, the self-employed have a completely different function and life situation:

- The self-employed always act in their own name and on their own account because they themselves are the company. All employees, on the other hand, act in someone else’s name and at someone else’s risk.
- The self-employed person always has total responsibility, the highest competence and the final decision in his company. Employees, including managers, are always under the control of a superior or supervisory body.
- Self-employed persons can determine their own goals and purposes in their activities and in their business (e.g. family goals). Employees, on the other hand, serve the purpose of the company, the authority or the organisation which pays them.
- An entrepreneur has a profit in the event of success, but a total loss or loss of livelihood in the event of loss. Employees receive a fixed wage or salary (possibly even bonuses), but do not participate existentially in the losses. It is above all this risk in self-employment that discourages most dependent employees – including managers – from self-employment.

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The “employed Mittelstand”

As a non-self-employed person, you belong to the “Mittelstand” if you earn a salary above the median income. This in turn presupposes a position of responsibility, which again can only be achieved through appropriate qualification. The only way to get into a function or position of the “employed Mittelstand” is through education.⁴

A total sum of about 8.1 employees work in such qualified and therefore higher paid positions, especially in the economy (about 5 million), but also in the public sector (about 2.8 million) and in other organisations (0.3 million).⁵

If we add the self-employed (5 million) and the persons of the employed “Mittelstand” (8.1 million) together, this results in a total sum of 13.1 million persons.

If to these middle-class working persons we also add their spouses (4+5 million = 9 million), their children (3+6 = 9 million) and their pensioners (1+8 = 9 million), a total number of more than 40 million persons belonging to the “Mittelstand” can be calculated for 2017; this is about 47% of the total population and almost as much as the local lower class population share up to today (before immigration).

The role of the “Mittelstand” in society

A. Self-determination as the foundation of bourgeois society

According to their higher education, qualification, position or level of independence, the people belonging to the “Mittelstand” want to live in a self-determined and self-responsible way. In 1517, the religious uprising against the guardianship of the Church began with the Reformation, when people wanted to read God’s Word in the Bible for themselves and face divine grace directly. This development continued with the ethical sequel of Kant’s categorical im-

perative and the moral self-responsibility of each individual, with political self-responsibility in the French Revolution, and eventually with freedom of trade. The “Mittelstand” was always the driving force behind these demands for freedom and self-responsibility. In the long run, the citizens did not want to be dictated to theologically, morally, politically or economically, but wanted to take over responsibility and decide for themselves.

So only the “Mittelstand” wants a decentralised system of self-responsibility. The upper class wants to dominate others centrally and hierarchically, demands power for itself, for the king, the dictator, the Politburo or the EU Central Commission. The lower class wants security, and is in this quest also controlled hierarchically and dictatorially by its functionaries.

Only the “Mittelstand” has therefore always been the bearer of democracy vis-à-vis dictatorships of the upper and lower classes. Self-responsibility in all areas has always been fought for, supported and defended by the bourgeoisie. But wherever the “Mittelstand” melted down or became too weak, the decentralised system of democracy based on the sovereignty of the individual was never strong enough to hold its own.

A strong “Mittelstand” is, therefore, an important prerequisite both for the emergence and the continued existence of all decentralised regulatory systems as well as for democracy.

Nobody profits as much from democracy as the bourgeoisie, whose whole existence arises from self-determination and self-responsibility. The upper class and the functionaries of the lower class, on the other hand, want power concentration instead of self-determination. If they gain power in a state, power no longer springs from the people, but from above, from the power elites of the upper or lower classes.

B. “Mittelstand” and culture

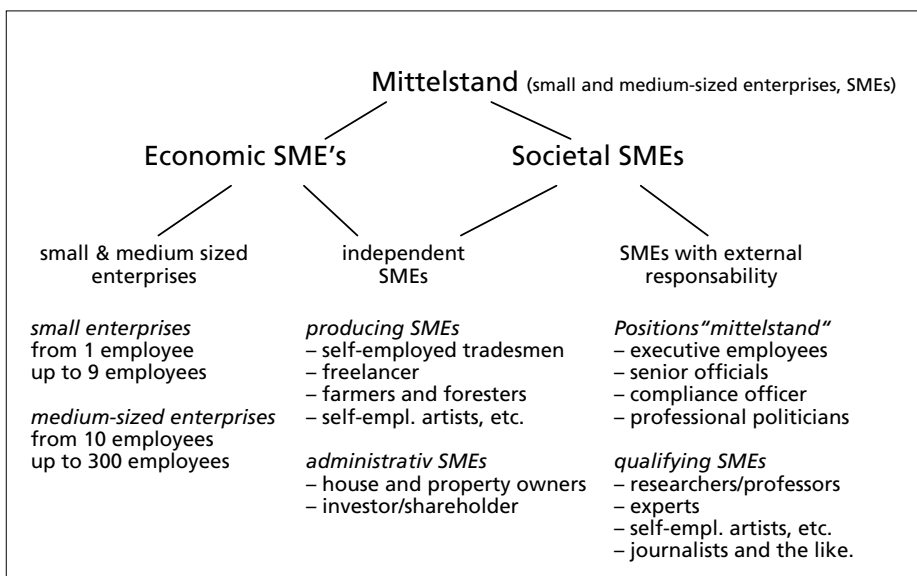
Luther’s Reformation brought not only freedom from the dictatorship of faith, but also a decisive leap forward in education. Luther demanded from the princes that every child should have to learn to read and write in order to read the Bible itself. This was the beginning of compulsory schooling in the protestant countries. So, starting from the parsonages as the cultural nucleus, more than half a million places were created for teachers – one of the largest groups of the employed “Mittelstand” – and the education system became a core area of our bourgeois life. Without one of the world’s best education systems Germany would not have been a leading research country and world export champion in the last century, and the education-based “Mittelstand” would not have become so dominant in Germany.

“However, the importance of education for the employed “Mittelstand” is not only apparent from the outside, but also applies internally. Education plays a central role in “Mittelstand” families – even more so than in the upper tier of society – in contrast to the lower tier. The families of the “employed Mittelstand” speak differently, think differently and talk about different topics than the lower class, and the education of their children is of central importance.”⁶ The reason is that the “Mittelstand” can only qualify its children for higher tasks and achievements in a free functional society through education. This also makes clear why education has remained, for decades, to be politically one of the most important social issues for the “Mittelstand”, more so than for marginalised groups.

C. The middle acquires our prosperity

More than 80% of our gross national product is created by or through work. Official statistics show a total population of about 82 million in 2018. However, only half of them (43.5 million) are economically active. These working persons not only financially support 20 million (24%) relatives with their earned income, but also 19 million (22.8%) pensioners and 6 million recipients of social benefits – a total majority of 54.7%.

The picture becomes more dramatic when one differentiates the type of employment according to the different sources of income, the market on the one hand and public transfers on the other. Only one third of the population works directly for the market, namely the self-employed and employees of private enterprises (33.9%). These market providers provide not only for their relatives (28.4%), but also for all recipients of transfer income living from taxes and social security contributions



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(37.7%). The latter group also includes those employed in the public service who, although they also work and pay taxes, do not receive their income from the market but from the taxes and social security contributions of the market providers, so that on balance one third of the population on the market has to earn the national product for two thirds of the population, i.e. dependents and transfer recipients.

Therefore only a strong and capable “Mittelstand” has so far been able to create that prosperity from which even the upper class has profited and which, through redistribution, has up to now also managed to finance the lower class so abundantly.

So if our “Mittelstand” as driving force of our prosperity were to lose out in a crash or crisis, this would not only affect them, but also the capital gains of the upper class and the social benefits of the lower class.

D. The “Mittelstand” as the payer of society

So far, only our “Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen” has calculated who is financing our state, on the basis of official statistics.⁷

- Concerning direct tax burden of the three tier groups, the “Mittelstand” bears the main burden of direct taxes, namely 63.1%, while the lower tier group bears 22% and the upper tier group 14.9%. In other words, almost two thirds of direct taxes paid to the state by all households are contributed by the medium tier, i.e. “Mittelstand” households.
- Also in the case of indirect taxes, 52% come from the “Mittelstand”, 47% from the lower class and not even 1% from the upper class.⁸
- The case is not different concerning social security contributions. Medium-tier households bear 56% of the total social security contributions, the lower-tier group 44%. The upper-tier group is practically not subject to social security contributions (less than 1%).
- In the case of corporate taxes, small and medium-sized enterprises pay 70% and large enterprises only 30%.

Overall, the “Mittelstand” is therefore the gross main payer in all tax burden areas by about two thirds.

If, on the other hand, we compare the above-mentioned burdens with state reliefs such as subsidies, transfers and social benefits and calculate the net contribution of the three population stratum groups, the burden injustice becomes even greater: the capital income of the upper stratum is not only taxed less than the work of the other two strata; the free movement of capi-

tal also gives capital owners the opportunity to flee to foreign tax havens, so that in relation the richest pay the least taxes, as they can evade taxes being imposed on them by the German tax administration. The same applies to corporations, most of which belong to foreigners,⁹ whose profits are thus passed on, away from German tax law. By contrast, large companies receive more than 90% of all subsidies, so that the total net financial contribution of the upper stratum group is only 13.73% – or only 17%, if we include corporations.¹⁰ Social benefits received by this subgroup are even 7.83% higher than its own financial contribution, i.e. instead of contributor it is net recipient of public finances.

As a result, the middle tier finances our society, our state and our social system to a gross value degree of two thirds and to a net value degree of 80% (one third of GDP).¹¹

“Our public financial system takes and gives. It takes mainly from the “Mittelstand” and gives to the other groups – mostly to the lower one. Therefore the standard of living of the entire population is crucially dependent on the performance, taxes and levies of the “Mittelstand”. Above all, it is the source of blithely flowing state revenues, healthy finances, lush social systems, a high standard of living and political stability. If the “Mittelstand” or its performance is reduced, this inevitably also means a loss of prosperity for all.”¹²

Political importance of the “Mittelstand”

If a social class not only makes up half of the population, but even bears four fifths of the net financing of state and society, should it not effectually be the decisive political force in the state?

In fact, however, middle-class policy and consciousness only take place rhetorically – if at all.

In 1992, I had to close my SME institute in Magdeburg because the CDU state government told me that SME and SME research were not needed for “Aufbau Ost”, the rebuilding of East Germany. Also the injustice in the redistribution of subsidies to the upper class and transfers to the lower class at the expense of the “Mittelstand” shows that the exploited “Mittelstand” apparently has no power and no political advocates.

In the 20th century socialism became the political power of the lower class, which at that time not only represented the majority of the population, but also emerged from the collapse of the corporative state as the ideological leading force. The consequence was the greatest historical redistribution in favour of the lower class (one third of GDP). We have experienced this in the time since then, and it was exclusively made possible with the accomplish-

ments of the “Mittelstand”. Even today, many left-wing politicians dream of greater prosperity through more redistribution, right up to a transfer income for the unemployed.

With the turn of the millennium, however, the political power structure changed, the representatives of the lower class play only a minor role, and the representatives of capital set the tone nationally and internationally. The battle order in the parliaments is therefore no longer left against right, but rather national against global. The global Anglo-Saxon financial syndicate with its four freedoms (freedom of capital movement, freedom of products, freedom to provide services, free labour mobility) has blown up national borders and structures, eliminated national taxation by transferring capital and profits to tax havens, relocated production worldwide to low-cost locations, monopolised services globally (IT companies) and emptied them from taxes.¹³ It has also globalised international labour for its labour market with its demand for free borders for workers from all countries, so that now only national medium-sized companies are fully taxed nationally, burdened with social security contributions and subject to all bureaucratic state constraints.

Now the global financial elite – a small group of persons – extraterritorially dominates not only central and private banks, but also the 500 largest companies in the world. It apparently exerts so much global pressure on the national governments that they even disadvantage their national voters in favour of global capital, such as shown by *Angela Merkel’s* assumption of debt within the monetary union, the energy turnaround or the mass immigration demanded by the financial syndicate at the expense of the German population.

The Global Financial Syndicate controls, finances and corrupts policies such as those in the US deep state by its financing the substitution of national politicians with employees of the Financial Syndicate, such as *Draghi, Juncker, Macron, Merz* or *Poroschenko*.

Globalisation is meant to establish the global financial syndicate’s upper class rule everywhere, hierarchically from top to bottom, in contrast to the democratic right of citizens to self-determination and the responsibility of governments towards their citizens. Thus globalisation always means the abolition of nations, the drying up of democracy and the centralisation of citizens’ rights of control over their government.

International financial capital is now claiming power all over the world and therefore also in Germany. As a result, the “Mittelstand” is globally even more exploited than it would be through nation-

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al redistribution in favour of the lower class. World finance demands not only levies from “Mittelstand” performance yield, but even total dispossession through money explosion and currency reform, by opening the national social systems to the world’s poor, by global sanctions against competitors or by relocations of national productions or services. The international redistribution is reflected in the European liability, debt and financial union.

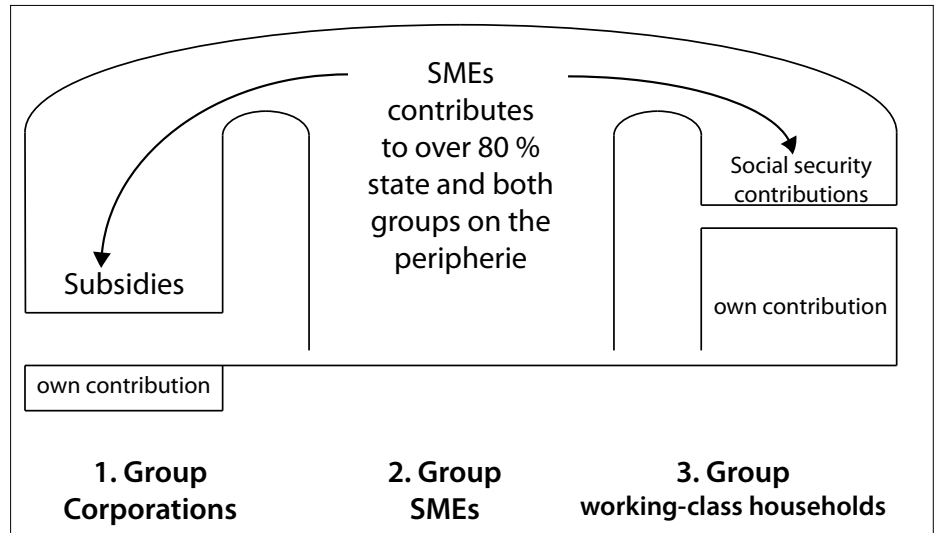
Today, the “Mittelstand” is threatened by the greater danger posed by the global upper class of the World Financial Syndicate with not less but more exploitation and political incapacitation.

If our bourgeois central group is to remain the source of our society’s performance and prosperity, then not only national but above all additional international plunder must be prevented. The “Mittelstand” must become more politically active in resistance, because at present the greatest danger for the “Mittelstand” no longer comes only from below, but even more so from above.

If global centralisation continues – including centralisation of the EU – the “Mittelstand” would no longer stand a chance against the power of the upper class. So as long as we still have remnants of national sovereignty and democratic structures, we must use them to fight the dictatorship of capital by political means:

The old parties have betrayed or neglected the “Mittelstand”:

- The former “Mittelstand” party FDP (Free Democrats) has sold itself to big business and is following its instructions.
- The CDU (Christian Democrats) is no longer a party of the middle, but a party of international redistribution.
- The SPD (Social Democrats) has always been a party of the lower class and in favour of national redistribution.
- The Greens dream of an income free of work, of a world without production, without cars and of a dictatorship of functionaries instead of market freedom, i.e. the opposite of everything the “Mittelstand” lives for.
- The AfD (Alternative for Germany) did emerge from the protest of the bourgeois “Mittelstand”, but it has not continued to distinguish itself as a “Mittelstand” party.



Source: Hamer, E. “Wer finanziert den Staat?” Munich,² 1982, p. 146

The “Mittelstand” could mobilise voter majorities on its own and thus force a different government and different politics. If even the 5 million entrepreneurs with their family partners (10 million) alone mobilised their 23 million employees for genuine “Mittelstand” politics, this would already result in 33 million voters out of 61 million, i.e. already a majority.

The “Mittelstand” groups allow themselves to be exploited only because they have not yet recognised the power wielded by the international financial capital and the personal danger this spells to themselves, so they are not yet afraid and do not mobilise.

It should therefore be our task to mobilise our people, our media and our politics and to make them realise that it is to their own advantage to maintain a strong central force for our people! We will then be able to use the majority of “Mittelstand” votes to impose a “Mittelstand” policy.

To sum up, our bourgeois middle-class is

- the social core of our society, on which the life of our entire society depends,
- the core force for the development of our prosperity for all our people,
- the promoter of our education and culture,
- the source of 80 % net of tax of the finances for government, social security systems and subsidies to the upper class as well as social benefits to the lower classes

- and the potential wielder of the main political power in our democracy, if it were only awakened and mobilised.

Since democracy is the self-responsible “Mittelstand” system of government, all democrats should fight for political power of the “Mittelstand”. Democracy lives from the middle. If the centre becomes weak, so will our democracy.

And as long as we can still assert national democracy against global financial dictatorship, we need parties that rediscover the central function of the middle tier for our economy and society and take it more seriously than before. •

¹ Hamer, E./Jörgens, O. “Mittelstandssociologie des selbst. und angest. “Mittelstandes” (Sociology of the “independent” and the “employed Mittelstand”), Hannover 2019

² Hamer, E./Jörgens, O. loc. cit. Section 3.2

³ Federal Statistical Office. *Erwerbstätigenübersicht*. (Mikrozensus Overview of gainfully employed persons). *Microcensus* 2017

⁴ Jörgens, O. “Der angestellte Mittelstand” (The “salaried Mittelstand”). Hanover 2015, Chap. 8, pp. 115.

⁵ Jörgens, O. loc. cit. p. 136/137f.

⁶ Jörgens, O. loc. cit. p. 152

⁷ Hamer, E. “Wer finanziert den Staat?” (Who is funding the state?) Hannover 1982; id. In: “Mittelstand unter lauter Räubern (“Mittelstand” amongst the robbers)”, loc. cit., pp. 17.

⁸ Hamer, E., loc. cit., p. 166

⁹ 70 % of DAX companies are in foreign hands.

¹⁰ Hamer, E. loc. cit. p. 168

¹¹ Hamer, E. loc. cit.

¹² Hamer, E./Jörgens, O. loc. cit., chapter 6.5

¹³ Due to relocations to tax havens, Amazon paid only 1 % taxes in 2017 instead of 34 billion.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Should Switzerland automatically have to adopt EU law in future?

In a big PR campaign on 7 June, Swiss Television announced in the evening news that the Federal Council had agreed in principle to the framework agreement with the EU.

ds. It is well known that the EU has a serious democratic deficit. This applies in particular to the legislative procedure. After a proper legislative procedure, the elected European Parliament has no right of initiative, which means that the parliamentarians elected by the people cannot bring forward any legislative proposals, but only submit proposals to the Commission, which then decides autonomously whether it wants to accept them. The citizens of the member states are thus practically incapacitated, because the EU Commission is appointed by the governments of the member states without direct elections and it has the sole right of initiative.

In addition, contrary to the ordinary legislative procedure with one or two public readings in the EU Council and Parliament, depending on the source, 80 to 90 per cent of the laws are negotiated behind closed doors in so-called “informal trilogy procedures” and then are only nodded

through by the Council and Parliament. The trilogy procedure is not regulated by law anywhere. It is used by lobbyists and representatives of associations to assert their interests – in case of doubt for the “big money”. EU laws prevent individual member states from protecting their domestic economies or public services and from promoting local and regional businesses.

Anyone who has so far been of the opinion that today’s EU is a misguided development of a project based on peace, freedom and democracy will be disappointed after reading the interview with *Philip de Villiers* and the review of his book¹ by *Rita Müller-Hill* in *Current Concerns* No. 10 from 30 April.

According to Villiers, it is obvious “that the ‘founding fathers’ did not correspond to the sacred image of the mythological narrative”. It was done by people who were weakened and dependent in the hands of the Americans. “The Americans wanted an additional market with an executive commission, that is, a technical, post-political authority, led by officials and independent of state control.”

The “Monnet Method” was conspiratorial and directed against the people. As president of the *Committee for the United States of Europe*, Monnet received “secret payments through the ‘Ford Foundation’ from ‘CIA circles’ and through an account at the *Chase Manhattan Bank*.”

The European Community was not a goal in itself for him. It was important to him “that the old nations of the past with their respective sovereignty should no longer be the framework in which the current problems are solved”. In the community as such he only saw a “stage on the way to organisational forms of the world of tomorrow”.

If the Federal Council agrees in principle to the adoption of EU law, present and future, and demands only a few changes of detail, and if we contrast this concentration of power in Brussels with the fine web of direct democracy, which is intended to prevent abuse of power, does this not raise the question of whether this does not fulfill the condition of treason? •

¹ de Villiers, Philippe. *J’ai tiré sur le fil du mensonge et tout est venu*. Paris Fayard, 2019. (I pulled on a thread of the web of lies, and it all came to light)."

A more direct democracy in Germany (Part 3) Federalism

by Christian Fischer

This article is the third part of the series on A more direct democracy in Germany. Part 1 and 2 were published in Current Concerns No. 8 of March 26 and No. 12 of May 21. In this part, the focus is not on the concrete abuse of democracy in Germany, but primarily on the existing institutions available to the sovereign, the citizenry, as well as on the opportunities of developing those institutions towards more direct democracy.

This article focuses on federalism, which many people today hardly understand as a core element of democracy, even though it is. Democracy works basically decentralised and subsidiary. What can be decided at lower levels should be decided there. For further decisions, decision-making authority is transferred from the lower levels to the higher levels – but without any loss of sovereignty! The lower level can revoke this transfer at any time. So much for the ideal. You would therefore always have to start with the community when talking about democracy, but here we consider the national level. We will look at the communal level in another part of the article series.

Reality

Germany is a federation of different countries (Länder: german plural of land). The Länder are individual states! Each of them has a constitution, a legislature, an executive, and a judiciary. This is more visible in the US, where they are also called states. In Switzerland as well, the canton is seen as a state. The Confederation is a federation of states. In a mutual association each member has equal weight.

The states of the Federal Republic of Germany were founded after the Second World War, partly even before the Federal Republic was established, partly they were incorporated afterwards and partly also reformed by referendums! The relationship between the Federal Government and the Federal States is today regulated in a complicated manner and has gradually changed over the decades in favour of the Federal Government. This trend continues to this day.

Article 70 of the Basic Law (German constitution) defines that legislative authority lies with the Länder, with the exception of the issues described in Article 73 of the Basic Law, namely foreign policy, foreign trade, customs and border management, aviation, federal railways, industri-

al property rights, weapons and explosives law, use of nuclear energy, to name the most important ones. Article 74 of the Basic Law defines a “competing legislation” for a number of topics which can be regulated by both the Federation and by the states. Up to date, the Federal Government has taken over the lead on many things.¹ Currently, education policy, a classic state task, is the subject of increased federal influence. The states are to relinquish some of their competences in exchange for financial assistance from the federal government, which has met with resistance from some state governments, but was approved by a majority in the “Bundesrat” (German Federal Council) in March 2019.

There are numerous committees within the executive bodies of the Federation and the states where joint tasks are negotiated and decided. The legislative bodies of the states work practically only as final approval bodies, not as noteworthy actors. In fact, the financial sovereignty of the states has been continuously undermined by the increasingly centralised distribution of tax revenues. No wonder with a German Bundestag that in the early 1990s disempow-

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ered itself with the new Article 23 of the Basic Law in favour of the "superordinate" Brussels executive-legislative.² The same anti-democratic spirit was at work. For someone who even surrenders national sovereignty, Länder sovereignty has been worth nothing.

At the federal level, there is the "Bundesrat" as a Länder chamber, which has a say in the laws passed by the Bundestag, as far as Länder interests are concerned. This affects about 40 % of all federal laws. However, the "Bundesrat" is not a democratically elected Länder chamber. Here, pre-democratic traditions were continued. Since the 17th century, under the emperors, the chamber existed as "Bundesrat" and adhered to this function in the Prussian Empire until 1918.³ In 1949, this tradition was continued by creating a chamber of state governments as "'Bundesrat'". Although today's "Bundesrat" has a legislative function, it consists of executive bodies, i.e. the representatives of the Länder governments. This is unique in the world of democracies – apart from the European Union, which does not deserve the name democracy anyway.

Depending on the population, the Länder have 3–6 votes in the "Bundesrat", which is actually a conference of governors. But not every citizen or every state is equally weighted. The number of inhabitants of the federal states vary between less than 1 million and about 17 million. In addition, each state may only vote unanimously, even if the state government is governed by a coalition of parties and opposition is in place. This dictates a uniformity that cannot nearly reflect the electoral will of the state. Minorities have no say here. Remoteness from citizens is thus forced on this executive legislature almost institutionally. With "success", because many citizens see the "Bundesrat" as nothing more than another, rather dispensable power body of the parties, but hardly a chamber for Länder interests at the federal level.

Outlook

The states must fully exercise their sovereignty as intended by the Basic Law and reclaim competences that have been transferred to the federal or even European level. This is a major project which cannot be elaborated on here. Nevertheless, it is a democratic necessity in the sense of sovereignty that must act from the bottom up. The reverse direction is a hallmark of dictatorships or central states, which the Federal Republic is not according to the Basic Law.

The "Bundesrat" should be constructed as a genuine legislative body of the Länder, which would be possible within the framework of permissible amendments to the Basic Law. This is the case in the USA and

Switzerland, exemplary in this respect: here the state representatives at federal level are directly elected and the same number is elected from each state. In the second Congress Chamber, the Senate, two senators sit in Washington for Vermont with 700,000 inhabitants and for California with 39 million inhabitants. The same applies to the Swiss Council of States.

Is this unfair? No, because at the federal level the Länder are units with equal rights, hence also the units have to be weighted equally. Is not every state equally weighted in the UN? The citizens of the individual states could only have the same weight in this context if the states happened to have the same number of inhabitants. But they are political entities that have emerged from history, sometimes democratically legitimised by decisions taken in advance, sometimes afterwards – but have now grown into units that in some cases have even been confirmed by referenda in Germany! As a member of a federation, no country may stand above or below another. This is a fundamentally democratic principle of a cooperative. Otherwise it would not be a cooperative but a kind of public limited company with greater weight for the larger participants. At the federal level, "one state, one vote" applies by analogy, just like "one man, one vote" applies in the case of elections within each unit.

The principle that every citizen has an equal vote applies, by the way, to the professor of economics as well as to the citizen without a diploma. Should this also be called into question? It would not be cooperative-democratic if the weight of the countries were to be measured according to their internal strength and not according to the fact that each country forms an equal unit next to the other. By the way, "one man, one vote" is not really precise in citizen elections, too: every citizen votes in his constituency. On average, the electoral constituencies comprise 200,000 citizens – but in fact the electoral constituencies differ considerably in their number of inhabitants so that unfortunately the individual citizens are weighted differently. Should a census be carried out before each election and the constituency rules changed in a new and "fair" way? No, one must live with these "injustices" as long as they do not take blatant forms.

In the case of the federal state chamber, however, there would be no injustice if every state represented in the federal state chamber had the same right to vote. The only alternative would be different divisions of the states which would have to be wanted from below. In France such a thing has been ordered centrally with the Departements, certainly very "fair", but not for the benefit of a democratic culture.

For the promotion of a federal and thus democratic consciousness, the following is particularly important: The "Bun-

desrat" should be elected directly. This would strengthen the citizens' awareness of the importance of their own country as part of the Confederation. A different electoral law could come into play than in the elections to the "Bundestag" and "Landtag". The "Bundesrat" does not represent 299 constituencies, but 16 states. At present, the "Bundesrat" has 69 members with 3-6 votes per state. One could, for example, give it 64 members, 4 for each federal state. There is no need for a double vote for person and party, if one wants to realise personality choice and minority protection.

A proposal: Every citizen has one vote, he votes for one person, but the first 4 candidates are elected. They can be party members, but do not have to be if they have a certain number of supporters in their country. It may be unfair that the candidate with the most votes is elected in the same way as the fourth-placed candidate. This would certainly privilege small parties or non-party representatives. At the same time this can be a compensation for the overemphasis especially on the large parties in the Bundestag which can still exist according to the proposal in part 2 of this article. It may also be an incentive to form new electoral alliances specifically for the interest of the state.

Granted: This proposal can be further optimised. A direct election of the Bundesrat and the implied right to vote is only one of the ways to strengthen the good intent of the Basic Law for a federal state. At least as important is the more consistent implementation of practical state sovereignty in view of the creeping erosion of state competences. The Länder must be more consistent in keeping their constitutionally desired tasks in their national parliaments or in bringing them back there. What is decisive here is an appropriate distribution structure and decision-making authority for tax revenue. This must also take place from the bottom up, not top-down. Switzerland is an instructive example for this. If the citizens can also decide directly on their tax revenues (Part 1) and free themselves more from party representation (Part 2), this can also be an incentive for strengthening the Länder and thus for decentralised democracy.

The basic idea remains: institutional structures facilitating the participation of citizens in political life will also promote this participation. And a more direct participation of citizens in political life will impede tendencies among political actors who are not oriented towards the common good and the honest mediation of various interests. That is the perspective for a sustainable democracy. •

¹ Rudzio, Wolfgang. *Das politische System der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden 2019, pp. 304

² Fischer, Christian. <https://zeitgeist-online.de/exklusivonline/nachdenkliches-und-schoengeistiges/1040-demokratie-braucht-nation.html>

³ Rudzio, Wolfgang. loc. cit., pp.255

A valuable cultural bridge

To the newly published art book “Julius von Klever - Maler am Mare Balticum” by Alfried Nehring

by Urs Knoblauch, cultural journalist, Switzerland

With the beautiful art volume “*Abendglocken an der Wolga – Russische Künstlerkolonien um 1900*” (“*Evening Bells on the Volga – Russian Artist Colonies around 1900*”), the theatre and art scholar Alfried Nehring not only impressively depicted the life and work of the world-famous Russian landscape painter Isaak Levitan (1860–1900), but also contributed to the tradition of good neighbourly relations between Germany, Russia and other European countries. (Current Concerns introduced the book in No. 11, 2017.) In his new art volume, the important Baltic-German-Russian landscape painter Julius von Klever (1850–1924) can now be discovered.

Also with this artist the close relationship between Russia and Germany becomes apparent, as well as his openness towards Europe. In his life’s work his strong connection to the Baltic States, Germany and Russia are evident. He was one of the great Russian artists of Realism of the 19th century. He developed a style that was related to late Romanticism and in particular to *Caspar David Friedrich*. The study of nature was always in the centre: “The study is the artist’s most intimate dialogue with nature”, says *Julius von Klever*. The painter lived in Germany for many years and took part in major international art exhibitions. He was the best-known Russian painter in his lifetime in Germany and France and he was the darling of the Petersburg salons. In 1880 Julius von Klever was one of the first to exhibit at the then famous Paris Salon. He became famous with his Russian landscape motifs, which influenced his entire life’s work. Today his paintings are in great demand in numerous museums and on the art market, not only among Russian art collectors.

Biography as key to an artist’s life

Julius von Klever is born on 31 January 1850 in the tradition-rich university town of Dorpat, today Tartu in Estonia, as the son of a chemist and grows up multilingual. After graduating from grammar school, he studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg. Following the family tradition, he bears the same first name as his father and passes it on to one of his sons.

Alfried Nehring vividly introduces the interesting family history: two years before the birth of Julius, “his father had earned a master’s degree after studying pharmacy. He wrote the required work in German.



*Julius von Klever “On the beach of Ahlbeck», 1904, Oil on Canvas
© Auktionshaus Neumeister München*

The 56-page treatise mainly dealt with the use of phosphorus as a fertilizer and was based on the research of the famous German agricultural scientist and chemist *Justus von Liebig*. Although the Klevers, like many German-Baltic families, have a title of nobility, he refrained from naming them in his master’s thesis. After passing the exam, the young scientist marries *Maria Magdalena Gradek*, who also comes from a German family. His hopes for a brilliant career at Dorpat University are not fulfilled. He only finds employment as a pharmacist at the Veterinary Institute. Four children are born in marriage” (Catalogue, p. 13), *Julius* with the second name *Sergius* is the eldest son along with two daughters and the youngest son. Family life is turbulent and full of joie de vivre. From the “hunting trips to which friends of his father like to take the nature-loving boy Julius Sergius, he often brings along drawings of woodland animals” (p. 13).

The author refers to the complex geographical and political conditions. For example, the “Livonian Government of Russia” is “of course administered from Riga, by a Russian governor appointed by the Tsar,” and the “judicial authorities, the military command and the police and county administrations are filled with Russian officials. Neither the Estonian nor the Latvian population is represented in the social upper class. Nonetheless, the various population groups live together peacefully and without conflict to a large extent.” (p. 13)

To the ruling Tsar family and the *Romanov* dynasty “the scientific and cultural potential of the German-Baltic families in Dorpat is worth quite a bit, and so [they] pour out ample medals and decorations. The pharmacist Klever is also “appointed State Councillor and Knight”, but nevertheless remains at the lowest level of the Veterinary Institute in his 40 years of work. In the last decade of the 19th century a “russification campaign of the tsarist government” was carried out in the governorate of Livonia. “In 1893 Dorpat was renamed Yuriev and had to use this name until the Estonian independence in 1918.

Russian becomes the sole official language. A ukase of the Tsar thus ends the liberal ‘Baltic relations’.” (p. 14)

These insights are intended to demonstrate how influential the family and cultural-political factors were for the further development of the young artist. Julius von Klever’s early interest in nature and in drawing and painting was vital for his life as an artist. Although, at the age of 17 in 1867, he intended to study art at St. Petersburg University, personal contact with his drawing teacher at grammar school, the well-known artist *Konstantin von Kügelgen*, was crucial. He was a friend of the family and court painter of the Romanovs and became his role model and promoter of his talent. As early as 1874 Julius von Klever became a founding member of the *Petersburg Art Exhibi-*

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tion Society and received the first prize at the exhibition. Without graduation he finally advanced to become a member of the academy and professor in St. Petersburg. Nehring stresses the importance of this human relationship: "How important he was as an almost paternal mentor for Julius von Klever" is shown by the fact that Konstantin von Kügelgen also cultivated family ties from St. Petersburg. Julius von Klever himself then became a good fatherly mentor for the artistic education of his son *Julius Juljewitsch Klever II*. From 1908, he studied at the Academy of Arts in Munich and became a successful still life artist. He accompanied his father on his numerous journeys and nature studies. Unfortunately, he died "during the Leningrad blockade by the fascist Wehrmacht" (p. 42).

Against the background of these insights into the biography of the young painter, it is also understandable that the young artist Julius von Klever did not turn to the group and tradition of the *Peredwischniki* and their social revolutionary concerns around *Ilya Repin*. The travelling painters travelled from the cities to the countryside and paid tribute to the peasants and their environment in impressive pictures. Klever's path to becoming an artist and to achieving his goals was formed early in his family, especially in the inspiring family relationships, in particular in the circles of the upper classes and under the influence of his teachers and supporters: "The sensational career that the young Klever had at the Academy in St. Petersburg was attributed by many of his fellow painters to the protection of *Tsar Alexander II* and the Grand Duchess *Maria Nikolaevna*. Nehring continues: "The Tsar's sister was president of the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg. (p. 11) Famous art collector and patron *Pavel Tretyakov* also contributed to the artist's success by purchasing a painting.

**Landscapes of Realism
in a magical atmosphere of light**

Julius von Klever's paintings are characterized by an extremely precise and at the same time poetic realism. His landscapes and his numerous sea paintings radiate a magical atmosphere of light. One is transported into romantically transfigured nature experiences and worlds of nature. In his beautiful woodland pictures, strong inner pictures and nature experi-

ences from his own conception and the first drawing experiences in the mysterious forests are evident. According to *Alexander Benois*, director of the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, the paintings "seemed to exude such strong illusions that real scandals occurred at the exhibitions; visitors climbed over the partition wall to find out whether there was any deception behind this 'miracle' and whether the paintings were illuminated from behind with a transparent model. Some of them poked their fingers into the canvas, caressed them, looking for any kind of tricks. These daredevils had to be expelled with the help of the police." (p. 11)

**Seductions of luxurious life
and return to the meaning of life**

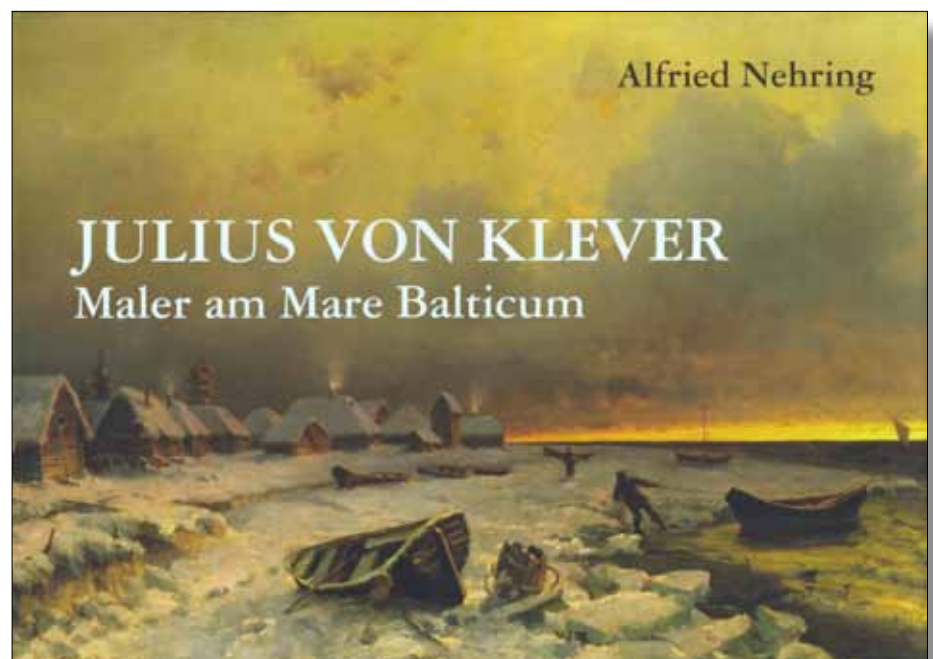
The artist paints many pleasing paintings, sells well and in 1889 is invited by the Moscow multimillionaire *Kuznetsov* to paint a mural for the gallery in his summer palace in Foros (in Crimea), the "place of longing" of many artists in its Mediterranean beauty. *Alfried Nehring* writes: "The luxurious life in the summer palace of Foros has something seductive about it and does not remain without influence on the further development of the painter". (p. 53) The artist's great success, his increasing wealth and prosperity, his restless travel and exhibition activities and the world of big money, seduce the painter to a dangerous lifestyle of passionate gambling, which leads him astray and into debt. He can free himself from these dangerous entanglements "and find his way back to his artistry and hon-

est work". He "leaves St. Petersburg, travels to Finland, lives for several years in Riga and Belarus, until he finally finds his way back to himself in Germany". (p. 58) In 1990, in the "Petersburger Newspaper", the artist impressively describes his "bad, lost years" in an open and honest way. "I stopped exploring nature, exploring it for new motifs." "I had to decide whether I would surrender to the strong current, [...] as long as it was not too late already ..."

The artist dies on 24 December 1924 surrounded by his family and is buried next to his famous painting colleagues "at the Smolensk cemetery in St. Petersburg, the traditional burial site for professors of the Imperial Academy of Arts and St. Petersburg University" (p. 79).

The beautiful art volume, the first German-language work on Julius von Klever, should be widely distributed. The author writes: "My wife and I have visited St. Petersburg and Moscow several times in research for this book. We also followed the biographical traces of Julius von Klever in Estonia and Latvia. We will never forget the friendliness we experienced on these educational travels. To us, Europe does not end at the external border of the EU in the East. May this book be a small contribution to a better understanding and peaceful partnership". (p. 84) •

The canvas hardcover book (Selbstverlag, ISBN 978-3-941-064-75-1) can be ordered for 24 Euro (without shipping costs) from the author *Alfried Nehring*, Weg zum Hohen Ufer 21, D 18347 Ahrenshoop, Tel. 0049-38220-66189, e-mail: nehring.ag@t-online.de and post@julius-klever.com as well as via internet at www.julius-klever.com



About the pedagogical value of confidence

by Carl Bossard



“Especially pupils with learning difficulties do need teachers who encourage them and thus build a bridge to their success and thus to confidence and understanding.” (picture caro)

The world as a gigantic pile of problems! This impression is given to those who read current publications and school curricula. That’s why confidence is needed.

Those who are on the way with children, those who accompany young people on their path of learning and life, must have a couple of siblings by their side: confidence on the one hand and optimism on the other. Not the blind optimism and not the naive, illusionary confidence with the easily quoted positive thinking. Not even the kitschy look through rose-coloured glasses. No, it is the confidence in the Enlightenment, confidence as a basic human attitude – for young people a kind of mental life insurance and thus the basic fuel of life. Mental resources live from this fuel of confidence.

“Resignatio” is not a beautiful place

Those who consult the current list of books and study the titles will find food heavy to digest with oppressive findings: “the collapse of democracy”, “how democracies die”, “mankind abolishes itself”, “empty hearts”. The list is long and the tenor often rather gloomy, the social swan song audible and resignation perceptible. Here and there it is even a dalliance with apocalyptic fears, at least with pessimistic words. But “resignatio”, according to the sharp political thinker and some-

what quaint Swiss writer Gottfried Keller, is “not a beautiful place”.¹ This also applies to school. It must not cultivate a positive anthropology on the one hand and on the other hand sound the pessimistic trumpets. “Resignation” means poison for the children. It would be a climate crisis of a different kind. The school must resist and educate to confidence.

The world is more than just a pile of problems

Curriculum 21, a reflection of our time? The question arises to those covering the 470 pages and studying the 363 competences with their 2,300 competence levels. Here, the human enigma tends to be downgraded to the concept of competence and the world essentially appears to be a gigantic, monotonous pile of problems, where primarily the thing to do is: to solve problems and acquire controllable competences. Highly complex world problems are formulated here, combined with a lot of answers that can be retrieved anywhere.² They are to be dealt with in a competence-oriented and self-directed manner. In this way, each pupil will become his own learning manager and thus learning will be left to self-experience. Many children cannot cope with this complexity, especially those with learning difficulties and pupils with medium levels.

They do not experience enough of how learning can be successful and enjoyable and that it can make sense. However, that is exactly what young people need; that is what strengthens them and conveys confidence.³ Nothing is more stimulating than (learning) success.

Of course, being able to solve problems is part of human existence. That is imperative. However, is this why the entire school education must be reduced to ability and handled technically? But that happens. “All goals in Curriculum 21 are formulated with the verb ‘can’,” the Zug Education Directorate recently announced to the public.⁴ This sounds as follows: “Male and female pupils can perceive their bodies senso-motorically differentiated, use them and react in a music-related way. And furthermore: “[They] can orient themselves to music in the room and in the group”.

There is an education beyond verifiable ability

When everything is turned into a problem, music and poetry, communication and aesthetics, the school forgets that the world still invites us to marvel and to be carefree, receptive to beauty and mystery, to passion, to devotion to a task, to

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Hilal starts to speak

by Ursula Felber

Hilal, a Turkish girl, came to me in first grade. She had barely spoken at kindergarten. Her parents, living in Switzerland for some time already, told me that Hilal could express herself very well in her mother tongue and communicated normally with them and her two brothers.

Hilal is a small, petite girl who works very accurately and reliably. Except, she didn't want to talk. You could tell from her eyes and all her expression that she was interested and highly attentive. Within half a year she learned all the letters and how to read. After a few months at school she made friends with *Emire*, a girl from Bosnia. The two also arranged to meet outside school. Emire didn't speak Turkish, so they inevitably had to talk in German. A few words were enough for them to communicate. Much was clarified by hand signals and non-verbally.

In some meetings with the parents I tried to find out the reason why Hilal was so reserved. Her older brother translated the conversations. Hilal was already known everywhere as the girl who does not speak. At the teacher's request to take part in the lessons, she remained silent. Only in the

one-two-one situation did she sometimes hesitantly say a few words. She was often taken by surprise by her loud, fast, pushing classmates. I often wondered how she spent the breaks. But she never stood apart.

After a year I had to consider how to go on with Hilal. If she did not start to speak, she would not be able to keep up and develop her linguistic abilities.

Again, I invited the parents for a talk. This time, the mother came with a Turkish translator. She was very surprised at what I told her about her daughter's level of school achievements. She was not aware of the difficulties and their consequences for the future in school. It turned out that the older brother had not translated correctly out of consideration for his little sister. The mother told me that Hilal could be very stubborn at home and could produce temper tantrums if her wishes were not fulfilled. I encouraged the mother to demand of her daughter to stop her fervour and to express her needs and desires like everyone else. She also had to accept what her mother demanded of her.

In the conversation with her mother it became clear that Hilal's restraint

at school had to do with her being very ambitious, that she did not want to make mistakes and be the best. With this hypothesis it was possible to demand more from Hilal at school. After only a few weeks the wall of silence was broken and Hilal spoke as a matter of course. Not quietly and hesitantly. No, as it fit her temperament, lively and loudly. Even if Hilal's vocabulary was still small and she made mistakes in the sentence structures, one always understood what she meant. So she could develop her language skills. If I had adhered to the picture of the petite, small, shy Hilal, she might perhaps not yet speak today. Perhaps she would have been given the status of a student with special needs. We can only guess at how much this would have affected her school career and her development at all.

This example shows how much every child wants to participate in the community and fill his or her place from an equal footing. With the acquisition of the German language an important element in the integration into our society is gained. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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confidence. Also to wilful behaviour, to thinking out of the box and to resist. Competence is not just what you can do and know. Both can be acquired and implemented; both can be kept under control and tested and certified. But beyond that there is something else: the human being, the basic human attitude. Am I my own competence? Am I curious and reliable, sensitive and committed, respectful of others and the environment, confident?

Loving the world and caring for it

There is a duty to confidence, wrote *Immanuel Kant*. Especially in precarious times. Children must be given examples set by adults. Also at school. According to effectiveness research, teaching is an encounter from person to person, a dialogical occurrence. Every Socratic pedagogue knows this. The competence and attitude of the teacher are decisive; their trust and confidence, their role model and their ex-

pectations, their confidence and their passion for the world.⁵ From this grows the passion for pedagogy and teaching.

Not without purpose did political philosopher, *Hannah Arendt*, said: "Education decides whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it."⁶ Love the world to take care of it responsibly. Perhaps the French poet *Romain Rolland*, with his sentence from the *Michelangelo* novel, hits the nail on the head: "There is no heroism other than to see the world as it is and to love it nevertheless". How trivial is that! And yet so difficult.

Children need human bridgeheads

Especially pupils with learning difficulties do need teachers who encourage them and thus build a bridge to their success and thus to confidence and understanding: "I can do it!" Often these bridgeheads are not the heads, but the hearts. What happens at school between teacher and pupil, between pupil and teacher, does not happen foremost from brain to brain, but from eye to eye, from mind to mind.

Thus, physically and emotionally. Encouragement and the living example of confidence too. The pedagogical duty of confidence is today at the top.

The world needs people who venture out into the world and make their contributions, people who, like *Faust*, confidently say: "I feel courage to venture into the world, to endure earthly weal, earthly woe". •

¹ Pestalozzi, Karl. Gottfried Keller. *Kursorische Lektüren und Interpretationen*. Basel 2018, p. 237

² cf. Kaube, Jürgen. *Illusionen der Pädagogik*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* from 19 May, p. 33

³ see Schnabel, Ulrich. *Zuversicht. Die Kraft der inneren Freiheit und warum sie heute wichtiger ist denn je*. München 2018

⁴ Endspurt für den Lehrplan 21 in den Zuger Gemeinden. In: *Zuger Zeitung* from 22 April 2019, p. 21

⁵ Hattie, John & Zierer, Klaus. *Visible Learning. Auf den Punkt gebracht*. Hohengehren 2018, p. 146f.

⁶ Arendt, Hanna. *Die Krise der Erziehung*. In: Dies., *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München 1994, p. 276

(Translation *Current Concerns*)