

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

FATCA – adoption of extraterritorial law in Switzerland Sovereignty of Switzerland and other countries violated to a high degree

Interview with National Councillor Lukas Reimann, Switzerland



National Councillor
Lukas Reimann
(picture thk)

The “Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act”, short FATCA, is an American law, which shall be applied in Switzerland. It is a law that infringes and restricts the sovereignty of states to the highest degree, because foreign law, US law, is to be adopted, forcing our country to deliver all the data of a particular group of people or of certain companies to the USA. In terms of state politics the adoption of this law is highly controversial and inconsistent with a sovereign state of law.

thk. The USA are bankrupt and their debts amount to nearly 17,000 billion, therefore “wise” heads are constantly thinking up new schemes to squeeze the other countries of the world out like lemons and to force them to pay for the US mismanagement and war policy. The US administration’s arrogance, whether led by *Obama* or *Bush*, is unbearable, and it would be a blessing if individual states were beginning not to let themselves be forced into the jaw vise of the USA, any longer.

Since the Swiss Federal Council is far too soft and the US authorities are well aware that you just have to exert a little pressure on the Swiss government to make it give in, it takes a population with moral courage. How much the vox populi is asked here, is shown by the appeal of both the Federal Council and the FINMA requesting the banks to voluntarily disclose their banking business with US citizens to the USA and participate in the US program

to settle the tax dispute, so that this way they might escape a prosecution; since no bank knows exactly whether they have broken US law or not. As – according to the head of the Zurich Cantonal Bank – already the opening of an account for a US citizen in Switzerland is considered an active aid to tax evasion in the USA, one can imagine with how unfair the methods will be by which the US tax authority will force Swiss banks to pay. And there is no possibility to appeal. Shall we thus create in Switzerland a place for citizens, banks and other institutions in which the only ruling law is that of the mightier and stronger? According to the UN Charter, each state is equivalent and equal, that is why the equality of rights is internationally certified. What is being used



here is the law of the jungle, of the kind that was invented by the Wild West.

For the Swiss people, unfortunately still the only in the world to be able to have a say in that, the referendum against this unspeakable act must come about. National Councillor *Lukas Reimann* was one of the first who campaigned for the referendum. In the following interview, he talks in more detail about this whole plight.

Current Concerns: What are the basic principles of this agreement, and what happens in case the agreement is ratified?

Lukas Reimann: The FATCA is a very voluminous agreement. It is of crucial importance that the agreement is dynamic. That means that, if we adopt FATCA, we will be obliged to adopt all further developments and amendments to this agreement without being able to say a word on it. The USA can amend this agreement freely, and we will then “be permitted” to dutifully implement it.

What does that mean consequentially?

After the bill had passed in both chambers, the referendum was taken on 8 October. A Swiss committee including all parties and cantons is committed to ensure that the necessary signatures are collected. The deadline for the referendum is the 16th January.

More information, a set of arguments and signature cards can be found at:

www.stop-fatca.ch

www.stop-fatca.ch

"FATCA – adoption of ..."

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We adopt US law, that is foreign law. What we have always been trying to prevent with regard to Brussels, is accepted here tacitly. In the end it is irrelevant whether the law comes from the USA or from some other country. We do not want an automatic adoption of foreign law in Switzerland.

Have I understood correctly, we adopt foreign law and any further developments of this law and will be not allowed to say a word about it?

That is right. The only option would be to cancel the contract. But we know that such a decision will not be taken in Switzerland. The usual argument that it is no longer possible today. However, if we do not stop FATCA now, we never will.

What are the key points of this agreement?

Switzerland shall automatically transmit – starting in 2014 – the identity and asset values of all US clients to the American tax authority IRS resp. give the IRS access to them.

If the USA decide on a law, that is one thing. But if Switzerland transfers this act into Swiss law by a treaty, this is an unprecedented capitulation. The agreement must be rejected! It is true that Switzerland cannot free itself from the stranglehold of the USA, but it can preserve its credibility and uphold central state-political values. And it sends a strong signal of resistance to America and to all FATCA opponents that

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' position on FATCA

"[...] insisting on the counterproductiveness of the approaches rooted, in particular, in the well-known US Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA).

Our position is well known: this law is of extraterritorial nature and is contrary to the principle of sovereign equality. It requires foreign credit and financial institutions to abide by US law. We do not intend to assume unilateral obligations and wish the tax information exchange be mutual and balanced. The Russian party strongly believes that the bilateral Russian-American agreement, which is being developed, should comply with generally accepted international norms, and ensure reliable protection for our financial institutions."

Source: www.mid.ru
of 2 November 2013

there are around the world. It's always the same story! An international blackmail on the small country Switzerland is followed by the next one. There is an urgent need to break through this vicious circle. FATCA provides a unique opportunity to do so.

What people come into focus by the agreement?

Not only the US citizens who live in Switzerland, but also, if for example you visited a US high school or studied at a university in the USA for a year, or if the spouse is a US citizen, you will be affected by this agreement. It's extremely broadly defined who can be targeted by the authorities.

This means that in addition to the NSA's and other intelligence agencies' spying on citizens, the banks will be obliged to deliver these data? How do the banks go about that?

For large banks, such as CS or UBS, that could be reasonably accomplished. These banks have large legal departments, they can live with the requirements at least with respect to the forthcoming work load.

What about the other banks?

In Switzerland we have a number of smaller and medium-sized banks or asset managers that manage the assets for 10–20 people, they can simply not afford this. They have so many regulations and a huge war on forms with the USA, that they will have no chance and will have to look for other customers.

How can the small banks deal with that?

They will have to give the people that fall under this law their notice of cancellation. There is a specific case in the St. Gallen Rhine Valley, both are Swiss citizens, have a small farm in Texas, where they spend two or three months a year. They got a letter from their bank stating that they must close their account because of the FATCA agreement, and are asking now, to which bank they should transfer the money. The couple has been a customer of that bank since 30 years. The banks are starting even now to prepare for it.

That would mean consequently that one puts enormous pressure on the small banks so that they must reject customers. Thus, the big banks that then admit these customers are placed under the control of the US. Does one have to imagine things like that?

Exactly, many medium and smaller banks will the longer, the more have to struggle for survival.

These will be those banks which one liked to take as an alternative to the big banks?

Yes, exactly. It is completely absurd. Since you have to strengthen especially the small banks that are regionally anchored and in many cases organized in cooperatives, and not the big banks. There is talk of systemic relevance and "too big to fail", and in the end we have only the big banks that survive. That cannot be.

Are only the banks affected by the agreement?

No, next to the banks of course there are the insurance companies and insurance data. Also, asset managers and custodians come under this law.

So the agreement is strongly interfering with privacy and of course not only that of US citizens.

Yes, for me it is a question of principle. We are a sovereign, democratic country and we decide locally what law we want, and what rules shall apply with us. The USA have been harassing us for years, and we are always giving in ever more. We reveal more and more of our affairs. With FATCA one could at least claim the reciprocal right, although the fact remains that one must reject the law, but it would at least show a different attitude towards the other countries, and it would be at least legally equivalent. However, this is not the case. It is us, who are giving away everything, the USA are giving nothing.

This attitude can be observed with our Federal Council over and over again, also with the change of the inheritance law with France. Again, it is Switzerland, which is to take over French law, without receiving compensation or reciprocity for it. Are there other branches of industry affected as well, besides the banks?

All industrial companies that have trade relations with the USA also come under this agreement, and there are quite a lot in our country.

If the referendum is concluded and the law rejected, which – according to what you said – would have to urgently come about, what would the consequences be?

None, you would at best have to sit down at a table with the USA and explain the whole thing, more would not happen. The resistance, however, is huge. And these forces would get a big boost by the Swiss No! For example, in New Zealand and Canada, there are citizen movements that are very much engaged against it. In America itself, there is the libertarian Senator Rand Paul.

We are delivering ourselves completely to the USA and even legitimize the industrial espionage.

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A life dedicated to a sovereign Switzerland

An obituary on Benno G. Huber

Benedikt Gilbert Huber – well known as Benno G. Huber – deceased on 7 November 2013. By his death we lost an outstanding personality, who has always fought and committed himself for Switzerland all his life: born in 1924, he began to engage for Switzerland when he was young, since in the late 1930s and during the second World War he had realized that the dangers of the “new time” could only be turned away from Switzerland by with a powerful defense. Throughout his entire life and without any hesitation Benno Huber has advocated for our Swiss militia army – not least in the referendum against the *Army XXI*. Like many other people, he realized straightaway, that this “army reform” would in fact result in the end of the militia army and that the integration of Switzerland in a military alliance, such as the NATO, would mean the end of the perpetual armed neutrality.



He was also very involved in the activities against the incorporation of Switzerland into the EWR or the EU. When he was asked in 1992 whether he wanted to get politically involved and expose himself against the EWR he did not hesitate. Con-

sequently, the *Swiss Association of Entrepreneurs against the Membership in EWR/EU* was founded in the facilities of his own chemical factory in Dällikon. As the foundation president he has remained committed to this work's principles for over 18 years. Later on, he was made honorary chairman of this association. Again and again, it was Benno Huber who took up political problems, who informed and activated his association, and who vigorously worked on solutions for the problems. He always did this in his own way: with commitment, without timidity but with boundless energy in pushing things forward, and with a beautiful sense of humor which won numerous members for his association. Friendships and good relations developed which easily resisted different political opinions. He always wished that the people would not be sad when remembering him after his death, but find the courage to talk about him and to laugh: “Please leave room for me among you just as I had it throughout all of my life”. Without any doubt, he will have that room among all those who knew him.

Erika Vögeli

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Yes, and this is a very relevant area. What we could do is to change our data protection act so that all data that are stored in the USA about Swiss citizens, must be handed over. If a company does not do that, I am thinking of *Google, Youtube, Facebook* and whatever they are called, they should be made pay a million francs

fine per person the data of which they refuse to supply. That would hurt. That would be exactly the same system that the USA is applying with us. Americans respond better to pressure than to buckling.

Can we at all agree to such a draft?

No! You have to refuse it, and I wonder whether we should negotiate that once more. FATCA is based on private contracts between the IRS and the banks. States may oppose, however. They are not

part of the FATCA basic concept. There are no treaties necessary – neither between Switzerland and the USA.

It would be an important signal that Switzerland would send to others with its rejection. For years, we have always given in, however, now it's really enough!

Mr National Councillor Reimann, thank you for the interview.

Interview: Thomas Kaiser.

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Direct democracy is the best protection against the loss of reality by presumptuous “political elites”

The people are the sovereigns –
there is nothing to quibble over the right to the initiative

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

The right of the citizens to claim a change of the Federal Constitution by means of a popular initiative, is a firm and inalienable component of the direct-democratic Swiss state model. A popular initiative accepted by the people and the states (“Stände”) becomes a part of the Federal Constitution and is to be implemented. There is nothing to quibble over it – at least we have thought so until recently. Lately, all kinds of politicians, lawyers and political scientists arrogate themselves to tell the electorate whether a constitutional regulation accepted by the sovereign is “legal” or whether it offends “international law” – whatever is meant by that.

With astonishment we, the voters, hear now on the state radio (SRF, *Echo der Zeit* of 23.11.2013) that we actually cannot really legislate in a substantial way by means of a popular initiative, but that we may introduce merely “an idea” in the political discourse which will then be discussed broadly in the population and to which “the political elite” must take a stand. This outrageous division of mature Swiss citizens into the common people on the one hand and the political elite on the other does not originate from a know-all beyond the Rhine who has not the faintest idea about the Swiss state system, but from a professor of political science of the University of Berne (with a Swiss name) whose lavish salary is financed by the taxpayer. Political scientist *Marc Bühlmann* literally: “A literal implementation or a prerogative of interpretation of only one player is thus not envisaged by this system of half-direct democracy.” Rather the will of the voters must be “interpreted” by several political authorities. A second professor maintained by the voters, *Francis Cheneval* of the University of Zurich, has another go: In former times the right to initiative was almost never accepted. With the acceptance of several national initiatives during the last years, however, “a constitutional dilemma” becomes visible, that is to say: Who has the “prerogative to interpret” the national will?

I see! This is why we stand outside in wind and weather and collect signatures for a popular initiative, so that the “political elite” may tell us how our national will is to be interpreted?!

Up to now, on the basis of our civic education for democratic citizenship we

“There is an effective tool with which the opinions of the population can be ascertained down to the last detail with utmost meticulousness and at any time. The same can be found out about any change of the living conditions and mentality, however, slight. Such a precision instrument which provides the most exact information about the variation of the public opinion has been developed by Switzerland with the popular referendum. The Swiss people as a whole decide for the Confederation just as the gathered men in the valley commune of Urseren [mountain valley in the Canton of Uri] decided on everything that was important to the collective; they did so in community and on their own free will. 50,000 [today 100,000] Swiss citizens eligible to vote can take the initiative to change the constitution: if 30,000 [today 50,000] citizens or eight cantons claim that a bill that was consulted by the parliament must be presented to the people for ap-

proval or rejection. That way it is guaranteed that every controversial issue in the legislation – since 1921 even the concluding of state contracts with foreign countries – is determined according to the opinions of the majority.”

Hermann Weilenmann, Die Schweiz und ihre Demokratie, Zurich, 1959, pp. 264

Dr Hermann Weilenmann, 1893–1970, economist and historian, was director of the “Volkshochschule” (adult education programme) of Zurich from 1928–1964 and led the office of the umbrella organisation of the Swiss Volkshochschulen from 1943–1964. Among others he investigated the beginnings of the Swiss valley communities, the foundation of the Alpine Confederation (“Zusammenschluss zur Eidgenossenschaft” 1940) and the overcoming of the language boundary. As a member of the campaign “National Resistance” he served the intellectual defence of the nation and was appointed Dr hc by the University of Zurich in 1951.

have assumed that our Swiss Federal Constitution, including accepted popular initiatives must be implemented “literally”. Far from it: “[...] the acceptance of the ‘Abzockerinitiative’ (racketeering initiative) or of the deportation initiative is already a great success, because everybody is talking about it and because the political discussion is pushed into a particular direction which is intended in this sense by the ones with the ideas. One should be able to understand that this cannot be implemented literally, actually, from a really democratic perspective.” (Marc Bühlmann)

No, Mr political scientist, we, the citizens need not to “understand” such a daring reinterpretation of the initiative, rather we must reject it. We demand that the constitutional bills to which the sovereign has agreed in a plebiscite are implemented literally without quibbling over it. And we protest in all clearness against the fact that anyone among us unduly claims that he can divide the Swiss people into a “population” and a conceited “political elite”, conceited in the double meaning of the word. The direct-democratic Swiss model is just based on the fact that every single citizen exercises his rights and his responsibilities for his municipality, his canton and all of Switzerland. Every mature Swiss who has obtained his due state education is capable of that. Someone who has lost such fundamentals, be he an expert in constitutional law or politi-

cal scientist, is definitely out of place at a Swiss university. •

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Why that constant Russia bashing?

by Karl Müller

Some claim that the international situation had eased in recent months. A direct war waged by the US and their allies against Syria could be averted and a first agreement was contracted with Iran. Indeed, the US which had led a series of “Western” wars of aggression contrary to international law, had become so weakened that they were no longer able to lead another major war, it is asserted. And US allies, especially the other NATO countries, most of which are also EU member states, were not capable of leading a war without the United States.

The fact, however, that the US is shifting the focus of their immediate intervention to the Pacific and that the EU countries (led by Germany?) – maybe concealed behind the high waves of the NSA affair – have so-to-speak started to act as US deputy in the Middle East and will take over in Africa, might easily disappear from view.

The constant reports covering the “tense” situation in Asia, currently between China and Japan, might meet var-

idents – including the current one – provides clear evidence for these plans.

In the nineties of the last century, with Russian President *Yeltsin*, almost everything seemed to go according to plan. More and more Russia descended into chaos involving all areas of life and faced bankruptcy: politically, economically and socially. In her book, “The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism” (2007) *Naomi Klein* described in detail the attempt of subjecting the Russian economy and especially the wealth of Russian mineral resources to US-American financial interests by US-American “advice” and the false theory of the blessings of unbridled capitalism.

However, the NATO war against Yugoslavia in 1999 was a first turning point. From that time on, it could no longer be ignored that the American concept of a “new world order” was an imperialist one that was not willing to tolerate anything but submission to the “only global power”. And with the change in the Russian presidency in 2000 the new Russian

“Without the values embedded in Christianity and other world religions, without the standards of morality that have taken shape over millennia, people will inevitably lose their human dignity. We consider it natural and right to defend these values.”

Speech of the President of Russia Vladimir Putin before the Valdai International Discussion Club from 16 to 19 September 2013 about “Russia’s Diversity for the Modern World” (excerpt)

There was no big support from the “West”. On the contrary, although the means of Western decomposition attempts became less obvious, they were no less insidious. And whoever publicly denounced these methods and took steps against them, as the Russian government has been doing for some years now, did not make himself popular in the West.

In this campaign against Russia the Western mainstream media have played and are increasingly playing a particularly reprehensible role. While the EU policy and again especially the German policy tries to combine anti-Russian rhetoric with rewarding business relations out of economic considerations, the mainstream media are “let off the leash”. Unlike, for example, with China, which is courted here and there, at least because of its economic benefits (and its sales market), the media coverage on Russia is exclusively negative to an intolerable extent. And so negative that the unsuspecting media consumer is supposed to think the worst about Russia. This negative coverage in fact comprises all areas of life. And resorting to old prejudices against Russia is the order of the day.

Nonetheless, over the past 13 years the Russian government has repeatedly offered to cooperate with the other European countries on an equal footing and to the benefit of all sides. Such offers have been submitted to the present day.

Not for love of the Ukrainian people, but for geo-strategic reasons has the EU been trying to pull away Ukraine from Russia for several years now and to bring it closer to the EU. It is well-known today that already the “Orange Revolution” of 2004 was a smart power action co-steered by the West which was directed primarily against Russia. This attempted coup d’état was ultimately unsuccessful, and now the EU’s plans have again not worked out. As was to be expected, the failure of the EU’s own policies was hidden behind accusations that it allegedly was due to threats

“Comparing the years 2000 and 2010, the results of the Russian path are considerable: The Russian domestic product has doubled, foreign trade has quadrupled, the debts abroad amount to only one-sixth of the initial value, the wages rose – inflation-adjusted – by a factor of 2.5, pensions increased by more than three times, the poverty rate fell by more than half, unemployment fell from 10 to 7%, the birth rate increased by 40%, deaths declined by almost 10%, the infant mortality fell by 30%, life expectancy rose by 5 years the crime rate fell by 10%, the number of murders even by 50 %, the suicide rate fell by 40% and the number of alcohol poisonings by more than 60%.”

ious functions. In the first place, it might be propaganda against China, on the other hand a kind it might present a kind of alarmism in order to provide evidence for the Europeans how important the US presence in the Pacific is. And of course in the third place also preparing for an actually planned war against China.

The EU policy and in particular the German one towards Eastern Europe and Russia are not at all discussed in public even though since 1990/91 – since the end of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union and contrary to the commitments made to the then Soviet government – the NATO countries and with them the EU have been aiming at “penetrating” the East from the West by making more and more Eastern European states NATO and EU members and by weakening Russia at the same time and gradually subjecting it. The book “The Grand Chessboard” (1997) by *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, background adviser of several US pres-

government tried to change course and to free the economy and the country’s wealth, but also the social life and the politics from US seizure – an extremely challenging undertaking probably only to be achieved in small steps, considering the gravity and the abundance of problems.

Comparing the years 2000 and 2010, the results of the Russian path are considerable: The Russian domestic product has doubled, foreign trade has quadrupled, the debts abroad amount to only one-sixth of the initial value, the wages rose – inflation-adjusted – by a factor of 2.5, pensions increased by more than three times, the poverty rate fell by more than half, unemployment fell from 10 to 7%, the birth rate increased by 40%, deaths declined by almost 10%, the infant mortality fell by 30%, life expectancy rose by 5 years the crime rate fell by 10%, the number of murders even by 50 %, the suicide rate fell by 40% and the number of alcohol poisonings by more than 60%.

"Why that constant Russia bashing? "

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and extortion from Moscow that the convergence of Ukraine to the EU was interrupted. However, the fact is rarely mentioned that the Russian government offered negotiations in such a way that the concerns of the EU, Ukraine and Russia would be equally considered in a treaty and that it was the EU that knocked off that offer.

Now the Russian President *Putin* has conducted a 35 minute long talk with *Pope Francis* in Rome. Unlike the usual tenor of the mainstream media the Vatican spoke about a "warm" atmosphere in this conversation. The Russian President visited the Pope not as a spiritual leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, but as a statesman. But as a statesman who has been emphasizing the importance of a basic set of values for progress in the development of his country, but also in international politics for quite some time, now. Unlike in the West, where a increasingly utilitarian and

materialistic policy is quite bluntly being pursued, the policy of the Russian government seems to be rooted in a personal concept of man and world view which resembles that of the Christian churches. Where do you still find in the West that the importance of family, religion and the nation is held up for the good of the people and the progress of the country? Who in the West is still aware of the fact that a free development of the personality is impossible without secure bonding and clear identity in the family and might degenerate into the void of postmodern superficiality and indifference? The Pope and the President of Russia, we may presume, may have understood each other well in terms of the diagnosis of the Western "zeitgeist" and its false theories and with respect to the way to overcome them.

This is not to say that in today's Russia families are all intact, that people there live according to the values of religion and that the state is already giving the people all the support that would be desirable. However, the one who recognises that

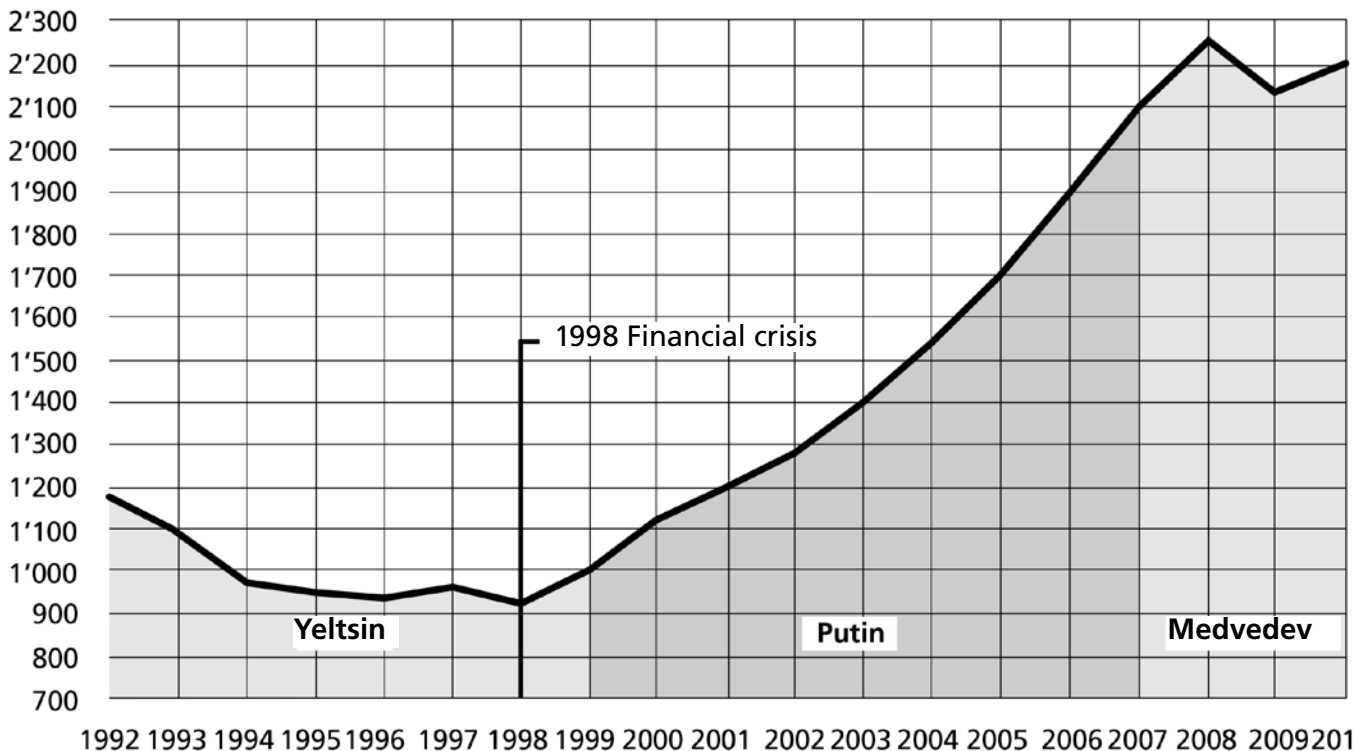
there is still much to do, will remain benevolent and helpful if so desired. And the one who strives for the decomposition of family, religion and nation, will do exactly the opposite.

We shouldn't let ourselves be deceived though: It is not possible to create more peace in the world if you go about that way. On the contrary, the policy of decomposition is aimed at conflict and escalation. Is one willing to pay the price? Are the citizens willing to pay the high price for it?

How heated up the atmosphere meanwhile has become in Germany, could be observed at a conference on "The future of the family – Are Europe's peoples going to be abolished?" on 23 November in Leipzig. A bevy of violent demonstrators disrupted the conference massively mauling the guests from the Russian parliament with kicks. And the police on site let things happen for some time, without intervening. Once upon a time the imperative of hospitality and respect for the other opinion ruled. And where are we today? •

Russian gross domestic product since the end of Soviet Union

In billion dollars (2008)



Source: International Money Fond (www.imf.org)

(Graphics: *Current Concerns/roho*)

Draft of “Curriculum 21” – unusable Children are deprived of valuable learning and life time

RI. After six years of secrecy, the draft of “Curriculum 21” was presented to the public at the end of June 2013. Its actual mandate would have been to achieve an adjustment (harmonization) of the transitions between cantonal curricula in accordance with Article 62 “Bundesverfassung” BV (Swiss Federal Constitution). This task has not been fulfilled (for example in the language area). Instead, a paradigm shift in the whole Swiss education system is intended and shall be enforced that will have far-reaching consequences for entire generations of students, but also profound consequences for the business location Switzerland.

Secrecy instead of open discussion

During six years, a planning team had been commissioned by the EDK–Ost (Conference of Educational Ministers–East) to implement a new curriculum for all German-speaking cantons. The public, even the specialized academia, were largely excluded from this process. The team worked behind closed doors following an already pre-established script, unreachable for professional objections and cut off from any open discussion.

Curriculum 21 – unreadable

Thus, the now submitted Curriculum draft – to the opinion of many experts – is neither readable for teachers nor for parents, let alone usable. This objection is a grave one as it certainly is a matter of course that parents who give their children into the care of state institutions, must be able to clearly and distinctly comprehend from a state curriculum what should be taught and how it should be learned.

The suspicion stands to reason that the presentation of the Curriculum draft was deliberately designed illegible and often downright confusing. It is unexplainable why these “experts” weren’t able to successfully line out school objectives and

contents in a simple and clear way. The vague argumentation cannot apply that on the basis of “competence orientation” goals and contents cannot be clearly expressed.

Undemanding, illogical and bloated

If you take the time to compile the learning contents scattered on over 540 pages – the content is divided into 463 “skills” with 4,754 “proficiency levels” – and compare them with the existing teaching and learning contents of previous curricula, you perceive fundamental deficits.

On the one hand, the teaching and learning contents of important subjects such as mathematics or German partly turn out alarmingly low (see the articles on mathematics, German, etc. in this issue) or follow unusable didactic approaches (constructivism). On the other hand there are contents that are preponed up to 4 years, with the – even for laymen – predictable result that pupils cannot build a solid foundation and therefore will not be able to meet the necessary requirements of following objectives (see sections on geometry in this issue as well as *Current Concern* issues No. 34, E. Schaffner, p. 5). Pupils will certainly be unable to form a “competent” opinion as Curriculum-inventors are repeating mantra-like.

Hidden behind many nice-sounding concepts (“learning environment”, “take into account heterogeneity”, “productive practice,” etc.) the Curriculum draft is to introduce a closely regulated way of teaching that is extremely isolating (so-called “individualizing”) on a low education level.

Rather than content the Curriculum draft sells ideologies and values as “competencies”. The children and young people are much too soon encouraged to “judge” or to “compare” without being allowed to acquire sufficient foundations beforehand (see *Current Concerns* No 34, E. Schaff-

ner, p. 5). This design gives rise to grave and justified concern.

Waste of valuable lifetime

With the approach to enforce a completely new Curriculum on the “inter-cantonal level”, rather than to approximate existing cantonal curricula where it would have been necessary the Ministers of Education of the EDK East are attempting to bypass sound pedagogical objections and the resulting political resistance (*HarmoS* referendum) (see *Current Concerns* No 31/ 32, M. Wüthrich, p. 3).

Rather than building on the tried and tested and to respect the democratic rules of the game, a bad draft is being presented all over the country, which one wants to implement blindly as soon as possible. In its consequence this Curriculum draft is going to sacrifice our children to a failed education policy and deprive them of their utmost valuable learning and life time.

Contradiction to European education

The overall purpose and design of this draft contradicts the basic idea of European education. Instead of educating to maturity, the students will only be able to produce prefabricated opinions on the basis of a one-sided pedagogy (constructivism) after years in which they did not obtain an adequate education.

Equally serious is the objection that due to its concept of radical isolation (“individualization”) this draft will lead to a grave loss of solidarity. This is in contradiction to the principles of public primary and secondary school, but also to the equality of opportunity.

If we fail to connect to and clearly build on the European tradition of education and its underlying values our children will merely be able to hopefully contribute their “skills” and “competences” as employees of a subcontractor for spare parts of Chinese or Vietnamese product lines. •

Curriculum 21 – Education cuts in the school subject mathematics

by Marcellina and Robert Tauschke

In the following article we analyze important parts of “Curriculum 21”. The first part deals with the performance loss in the field of computation, i.e., arithmetics (LP 21: “Number and Variable”). In the Annex we present a table that illustrates the education cuts.

In a second part we discuss the complete change of the geometry lessons (LP 21: “Form and Space”), which on the one hand confronts 4-8-year-old children with topics that do not match their perceptivity and on the other hand neglects the quality of geometry and construction teaching by large.

Furthermore we give two brief remarks on a) the ideological background of the Curriculum design and b) the problems caused by the lack of objectives for the respective grades in the context of the so-called “harmonization”.

Parents, vocational schools, companies with apprenticeship positions or secondary schools expect elementary school to give a sound basic education in mathematics on which they can later build on. For example, it is expected that children have thoroughly mastered the basic arithmetic operations in writing as well as orally. A systematic and solid foundation is expected. It is assumed that pupils will be guided step by step, by a teacher who is specially trained in the matter and by the respective didactics. In addition, parents assume that all children are taken along. Secondary schools and companies offering apprenticeship positions need to rely on the fact that all pupils have been taught this basic knowledge.

Failed learning models in Curriculum 21

The didactics on which the Curriculum is based and which is to be established nationwide, combines failed learning and teaching models of the “free” schools of the years 1970/1980 (self-discovering learning, open lessons, action-orientated lessons) with the systemic-constructivist philosophy which has flowed in from the USA at the end of the 90s. In its radical form it denies the recognition of reality and claims that everybody constructs his or her own reality. In fact, the individual student is left to himself because systematic instruction is missing.

Teaching materials are already inadequate today

Even today this is less and less the case. Fewer and fewer students master the basic arithmetic operations. Many pupils are neither fluent nor confident in basic arithmetics. Neither the multiplications nor the written calculation methods are secured. Also, the class contents are less and less systematically presented, i.e. they are not taught in small steps and with sufficient exercises. One reason for this misery are the already inadequate teaching materials and their underlying so-called “constructivist-discovering” didactic. This approach is finding its way into schools by the current teacher training and post-graduate training.

Cementation of the shortcomings

These very shortcomings are cemented today by the new Curriculum 21 in Switzerland. The draft Curriculum’s objectives and contents are at a significantly lower level than that of today’s cantonal curricula and would result in blatant education cuts.

Up to the end of a cycle (1st cycle: 1 year of kindergarten to 2nd grade; 2nd cycle: 3rd to 6th grade; 3rd cycle high school: 7th to 9th grade) only “minimum standards” for all pupils are obligatory. The minimum standards are very low and do not reach the current standards.

For example, minimum requirement at the end of the second class are, “pupils can find out most of the results of the One Plus One up to 20 easily.”¹ (p. 12, 3.1c) As of today this was one of the topics to be mastered in first class already. Furthermore, it is no longer required that pupils are familiar with additions and subtractions of integers up to 100. Completely missing is the very significant step of decimal cross-over in the range of integers between 20 and 100 (p. 12, 3.1c). In consequence, this means that the pupils are not able to add up, subtract, multiply and divide in writing fluently and confidently. Mental arithmetic without crossing boundaries cannot be mastered.

To “be aware” of the multiplication tables instead of “knowing” them

Mastery of the multiplication tables has been removed completely from the Curriculum draft by end of grade 2, meaning it might be covered as late as in grade 3. Pupils need only to be “aware” of the multiplication tables. That means, they no longer know the tables by heart. It is only expected, that pupils “know” the multiplication results of each number by 2, by 5 and by 10. As a result, a well founded and fluent knowledge of the whole multi-

plication tables is no longer expected. Divisions and their exercises are no longer mentioned at all. But if the multiplication results are not learnt by heart when students enter secondary school classes, pupils will not be able to do multiplications and divisions solidly in writing. Subsequently, they will be lacking the skills to do fractional calculations (e.g. finding common divisors).

This fiasco continues in the 3rd – 6th grade (2nd cycle). The multiplication tables are not further solidified, they are no longer a reference baseline. Learning, practicing and solidifying written calculation methods for multiplication and division are no longer part of the curriculum! Instead, multiplication and division problems should be solved either by mental maths, by individual calculation paths or by calculators (p. 12, 3.2f). That is, basic numeracy and calculation methods will no longer be ensured knowledge.

In the second cycle there is no longer a systematic introduction of numerical ranges. After an extension to the numbers up to 1,000, which until now was a topic for the 3rd grade, the next step forward is the introduction of numbers up to 1 million, now a topic for 6th grade. Through this huge step in the numerical range without a gradual development (previously 4th grade: 10,000; 5th grade: 100,000, 6th grade: 1 million) most of the students will be overexerted and cannot develop a clear and certain conception of the numerical space.

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No “harmonization” by means of Curriculum 21

With the introduction of the new Curriculum many parents expected that in future they might easily move with their children from one canton to another canton. If one examines the Curriculum draft one can see at first glance that this will even become more difficult in future: 3 or 4 school years will be recombined to a “cycle” in which the school performance of the individual students can move individually. So there will be no more objectives appropriate for the age group! This means that with the Curriculum, it will no longer be possible to find out what an individual child, e.g. until the end of the 4th class, should be able to accomplish. Thus a trouble-free transfer to another school will be difficult even within one canton.

“Curriculum 21 – Education ...”

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Calculating exclusively with the calculator

The extremely low level of curriculum objectives culminates in the minimum goals after finishing 6th grade: “The pupils can perform basic operations with the computer.” (P. 13, 3.2g). In primary school no calculators have been used until now. They are introduced – for good reasons – only in the upper classes. At first, the fundamentals must be well-mastered. How should pupils recognize for example gross typing errors on the calculators without mastery of the basic operations and understanding of the numerical space?

From these first six years of schooling, according to the draft Curriculum, many pupils will not have learned any basic calculations, currently part of elementary school (see table). They will come to secondary school (7th – 9th grade, the Curriculum 3rd cycle) without solid foundations!

Without solid foundations to secondary school

So it doesn’t come as a surprise that even the simplest tasks in secondary school have to be solved with a calculator or computer. For example the area of percent calculation or calculation of powers and roots will be done with the calculator : “[...] can use the calculator for percent values, percentages and base values” or “[...] are able to calculate powers and roots with the calculator (e.g., $4^3 \times 4^3 = 4096$, $4^3 + 4^3 = 128$)” (p. 13, 3.3j).

Lack of binding objectives for secondary school

In many areas, Curriculum 21 does no longer set minimum objectives for high secondary school! This means that young people up to the end of the 9th grade are not required to reach standardized binding minimum objectives. Blatantly, this includes central chapters: “Pupils can add, subtract, multiply, divide and multiply” (p. 12, 3).

As well, the contents of the so-called “extended objectives” which are a prerequisite for secondary schools or advanced vocational training, are well below the current level.

Wasted lifetime

Much effective learning time is wasted by Curriculum 21 due to its ideological foundations (constructivism) by “self-directed” or “discovering learning” in so-called “learning environments”. Instead of systematic teaching that will do justice to all pupils, they are to be engaged in finding “their own solutions”, “to search solutions in open-ended tasks“ (p. 16, 1.1d), “to explore ways to solve basic operations of arithmetic” (p. 16 , 1.2 f), “to identify structures “ (p. 7), “to formulate conjectures” or to “engage in open tasks” (p. 16, 1.2f). By all that way valuable learning and lifetime is wasted. The majority of children will be overstrained because they are left without continuous teaching. The teacher is mutated into a “learning sup-

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	Objectives in mathematics up to today (1990s)	Objectives in mathematics in the draft curriculum (minimum standard)
1 st grade	Range of numbers up to 20 Understanding, carrying out and consolidating of basic operations: adding up, subtracting, completing, reducing Crossing over the tens	–
2 nd grade End of 1st cycle	Range of numbers up to 100 Basic operations up to 100, with crossing over the tens	... know the products of multiplication, especially with the factors 2,5, 10 ... can add up and subtract in the range of numbers up to 100 without crossing over the tens. (p. 12, 3.1c)
	All times table of the multiplication up to 100 Dividing in the times table without remainder	–
3 rd grade Start of 2nd cycle	Automatization of multiplication tables up to 100 Compound multiplication Dividing with remainder Range of numbers up to 1,000 All basic operations up to 1,000	... know the products of multiplication, especially with the factors 2,5, 10. Range of numbers up to 1,000 ... can count forward and backward in the range up to 1,000 (P.11, 2.2e)
4 th grade	Range of numbers up to 10,000 Written basic operations up to 10,000 (Adding up, subtracting, multiplication division)	Range of numbers up to 1,000,000 ... can count forward and backward in appropriate steps in the range up to 1,000,000 (P.11, 2.2f) ... can add up and subtract in writing (p. 12, 3.2e) ... can multiply (... while taking down notes about their own calculation pathways (e.g. 45 x 240) ... can do divisions while noting down their own calculation pathways (p. 12, 3.2f)
5 th grade	Range of numbers up to 100,000 Written basic operations up to 100,000 (operations with decimals, introduction into fractions)	
6 th grade End of 2nd cycle	Range of numbers up to 1,000,000 Written basic operations up to 1,000,000 doing fractions: comparing fractions, extending fractions, reducing and multiplying fractions, adding up and subtracting fractions	... can do basic operations with the calculator (p.13, 3.2g) ... can add up and subtract decimals while noting down their own calculation pathways (e.g. 30.8+5.6). (p. 13, 3.2g) ... can reduce, extend, add up and subtract fractions with denominators 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 20, 50, 60, 100 (in particular with the help of the rectangular model) (p. 13, 3.2g)

Lessons in geometry and design neglected

Contents fail to meet the developmental age

by Marcellina and Robert Tauschke

A quality seal of Swiss engineering sciences but also of craftsmanship in Switzerland is solidity, precision and ingenuity. A basis for this quality is and has been formed in addition to the handicraft training by high quality instruction in geometry and technical drawing at primary school level. Of course, the number of lessons in these fields has been reduced in recent years. But for good reason a solid education in the school subject geometry could be maintained over the years.

Training of imaginative power

Thus the teaching of geometry in the intermediate level educates toward precision and accuracy by practically operating the geometric drawing instruments (scale, geodesic triangle, compass); it fosters dexterity and trains the imaginative power. Thus the conditions are created for geometry lessons on the upper level. There the pupils get the opportunity to perform sophisticated designs. Precise operation, targeted action and accurate consideration require the entire strength and concentration of the adolescent. Many abilities and skills for subsequent professional training can be trained here. The role of this teaching as a contribution for the quality of Swiss innovation and products cannot be underestimated.

Systematic development and closely guided lessons

This level is developed methodically throughout the school years. What is required is a systematic structure, a good and closely guided teaching beginning on the intermediate level and continuing to the graduating classes of secondary school. However, it is in this area that

massive reduction could be observed for several years.

“Curriculum 21” demands too much of the children

Considering the geometry part “Form and Space” in the Curriculum 21 draft, it is noticeable that the geometric syllabus of the existing intermediate level is shifted down to the lower level. Already for the 4- to 8-year olds contents are provided, which do not correspond to the developmental stage of the child at this age. It will demand too much of many children accordingly. For example: “The pupils can trace figures in grids, supplement or mirror them symmetrically.” “[...] can draw axes of symmetry.” (p. 25, 2.1c) And further, “[...] explore symmetries of figures and practical situations and make conjectures.” (p. 28, 1.1c) And “[...] can compare side lengths and surface areas of triangles and squares as well as volumes of cubes and cuboids to standard sizes.” (p. 26, 4.1d)

Basic construction greatly reduced in the upper level

In contrast, basic geometric constructions are largely neglected on the intermediate level, despite the necessity that on this level the foundations ought to be laid. So it is no longer part of the minimum requirement at the intermediate level that students can construct angles with the angle measure – the construction of perpendicular bisectors, angle bisectors, right angles, 60° angles are not even mentioned anymore. This content appears only on the higher level (see p. 33, 2.3h). Instead, the students can “enter commands for draw-

ing shapes within a programming environment, change them and examine the impact” or “draw, change and arrange forms with the computer.” (p. 30, 4.2b)

On the upper level geometric constructions are greatly reduced. For example, no more triangle constructions are made, prisms and pyramids are no longer designed, but only outlined, the elongation of cuboids and cubes is missing, reflections and rotations are reduced to 90°, 180°, 270° (p. 25, 2.3j). Instead, “dynamic geometry software” (p. 30, 4.3d) can be used “for the exploration of geometric relations”.

Development of the imaginative power restricted

Similar to the argumentation in favor of a pocket calculator, drawing and design are said to be unnecessary due to the technical opportunities of the computer. But the lack of intellectual work in constructing narrows the development of a “technical” imaginative power. Moreover, the learning of a systematic, accurate and clean work attitude is neglected. Both the use of the calculator and a drawing program do not replace intellectual training. Through “playful discovery”, “exploration” or “continuation of ornaments and patterns” in a “learning environment” designed for that, the currently achieved level cannot be maintained.

The required “Competencies” of Curriculum 21 in the geometric area of mathematics will make our students waste important learning time by fulfilling tasks that are not at all appropriate to their age while necessary basics are no longer taught. •

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porter” or “coach”, which is expected to restrain from classroom activities. This concept of the Curriculum design contradicts the findings of modern research on teaching. Effective teaching can only take place in a structured and well managed way by an active, teacher who is challenging and supporting at the same time (see also *John Hattie*, “Visible Learning”).

Unequal chances

A fundamental problem of Curriculum 21 is the enforced individualized teaching: Good students and pupils who receive help at home may proceed; pupils who are slower, bluesy or dreamy will only reach very

low minimum goals with even further reduced objectives, so-called “learning objective adaption” (Curriculum 21, overview and instructions, p. 7). By design it is left to chance (support by parents, extracurricular courses, perception of individual pupils) how far the individual pupil will get and what knowledge he is able to acquire. The discrepancy between low and high achieving students will widen ever more, only a few students still will find their way in mathematics. The greater part of the children and young people will become low-performing or will fail completely in mathematics. These consequences are in stark contradiction to the postulates about equal opportunities and the general concept of elementary school.

The striking lowering of educational standards by the new Curriculum will mas-

sively impact vocational schools, companies with vocational positions or matriculation schools as the deficits that need to be made up for will become bigger. It will become impossible to preserve the “workplace” Switzerland at its present niveau. Especially, the young people themselves will be hit hard as they are betrayed of precious learning years. Furthermore, our strong basis of SMEs will be even less able to count on well-educated juniors. For direct democracy, this means that less and less general expertise can be built across many levels. •

¹ The One Plus One includes all additions and subtractions in the number range 0-20.

Fragmentation versus a holistic approach in the school subject German

Does Curriculum 21 meet the objectives of teaching German sustainably?

by *Elsbeth Schaffner*

As an experienced primary school teacher I expect Curriculum 21 to set a clear objective that meets the task of a sustainable basic education in the school subject German. As part of the consultation, I have carefully studied the competence structure and I noted that Curriculum 21 does not provide any orientation for us teachers for teaching the fundamentals of the school subject German (at the elementary level).

Curriculum 21 divides the subject German into six competence areas: listening, reading, speaking, writing, language in focus and literature in focus. Thus the holistic approach to language teaching, which is essential for primary education gets lost. Language is the basis of thinking. It cannot be separated from contents and cannot be acquired fragmentarily.

With children linguistic education needs to be performed by considering a subject within a child-friendly topic together such as "We are building a snowman". Expressing thoughts correctly in one's language has to be the objective of any good instruction. When the teacher asks primary school children to form sentences describing what is needed to build a snowman, the children listen attentively. They ponder, imagine how the snow ball is being rolled, search for fitting words and practice making sentences. Nouns, verbs and adjectives are terms not yet playing a role in the development of language skills. They are simply words expressing how things are called (snowflake, icicle, ...), how something looks or feels like (white, cold, ...) or what is happening or

what the children are doing (it is snowing, they are rolling ...). Sentences always express thoughts and mental pictures. In order to become aware of one's reflections and to be able to share them with others, the capability to express oneself in language must be trained. This is done in spoken and written language. At that, listening is not a competence objective, but a prerequisite. Teachers being trained on the basis of a personalist concept of the human being, know how to direct the children's attention to themselves, to a subject (a phenomenon, a fact, ...) and to the other children. Usually, it is not the restless children that present the problem, but the fact that it is not sufficiently ensured that the children are patiently and according to their capacity helped to approach a topic. We allow ourselves to be too much irritated by the disturbances caused by fidgety children, instead of helping them to focus their attention on something. To do so requires a firm, benevolent teacher personality, who is enthusiastic about the subject matter the children are to be introduced to. Nowadays, we unfortunately tend to demand too much at a time, not least because we have been pushed through all these failed reforms. We no longer bound a topic, instead we start out from complex situations in a problem-oriented way and allow the children to freely explore, to debate, to reflect and develop their own solutions. This way, we actually ask too much of them. At the same time we ask too little of them: we do not create the necessary tension to make the children try to express their thoughts appropriately. By

the simple request to describe a situation accurately and to help each other with it, motivation is created in the children to listen and to speak correctly. They eagerly try to find proper phrases. In a concentrated way they try to organize their thoughts and to establish a connection between phrase and content. This way they are challenged. The segmentation of language into partial aspects, as the Curriculum prescribes, is artificial. They go hand in hand in an integrated learning process: The children learn to listen carefully, they speak, write and read.

I feel that I owe it to my profession as a teacher to draw attention to the consequences of the competence formulations in Curriculum 21. It demands, for example, that 4- to 8-year-old school children "are able to interpret nonverbal means (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, body posture) and paraverbal means (e.g. intonation, flow of the speech) in the listening situation." They "are capable of establishing a listening expectation" (D.1, A e) or, "are able to follow conversations and to show their attention in a nonverbal way (e.g. facial expressions, body language), in a para-verbal way (e.g. intonation) and in a verbal way (words)" (D.1, C c) or "they are capable of expressing their feelings and thoughts verbally and nonverbally with the help of the teacher" (D.3, B d).

The competencies, as they are listed in Curriculum 21, miss the target of a comprehensive education, they even hamper it. Competences that a child has or does not have, should, if at all, only be checked and evaluated as a basis for further promotion or as a catalogue of requirements issued by the respective successors of elementary school. Moreover, I would like to point to the fact that the enumeration, laid down in the Curriculum, inevitably leads to the exclusion of competences that are not listed. With this approach, the Curriculum when attempted to be applied will either be unusable or will prescribe the teachers to use the pre-fabricated teaching materials marketed by the teaching aids corporations. If we adhere to this redefinition of the function of education a massive reduction of the ability to express oneself and to read will be the consequence.

Neither is reading an isolated process. When reading we establish a personal approach to the contents of what we are reading. Understanding cannot come about in isolated exercises, but requires knowledge of the language and the vocabulary. A text (and not only) for children, who are be-

Max Bolliger

Max Bolliger, who died this year at the age of 83 years, bequeathed a rich work. In 1966, he obtained the "Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis" (German Youth Literature Award) and in 1973, he was awarded the "Schweizerischer Jugendliteraturpreis" (Swiss Youth Literature Award). In 1974, he obtained the "C.-F.-Meyer-Preis", in 1976 the "Silberner Griffel" (Silver Pen) and in 2005, he obtained the "Grosser Preis der Deutschen Akademie für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur" (Grand Prize of the German Academy for Children and Youth Literature).

Before he was able to live off writing, Bolliger was a pedagogue: After completing the teacher's seminary, he first worked as a village school teacher. Afterwards he studied remedial education and psychology and worked as remedial teacher in Luxembourg for two years and as special education teacher in the Zurich commune Adliswil for ten years.

In 2000, he published his book "Kleines Glück und Wilde Welt" (Small luck and wild world), with illustrations by *Klaus Enssikat*, from the age of 6, Aufbau Verlag, Berlin 2000, ISBN 9783351040116.

In the book "Bolliger tells the story of two very different brothers. One of them is a daredevil, full of boundless passion for adventures, full of curiosity about the wide wild world. The other brother is a silent, contemplative character who prefers watching butterflies, working in the flower garden and dreaming behind the stove. The narrator shows us the poetry of silent luck and the heart flutter of the adventurer who loves dangers. Both yearn for each other. A loving parable about courage and contemplativeness, wanderlust and homesickness, daredevils and nestlings." (Quotation from the blurb.)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Fragmentation versus a holistic ..."

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gining to read is brought to life by jointly reading and talking about it. The contents are most important, they give birth to mental pictures, they are beautiful, moving, touching, exciting, exhilarating, or simply interesting. Learning to read has to be done by reading and not by writing, as certain teaching methods prescribe. Learning to read is work, is discovering, is a challenge and gives pleasure because it enables the children to grow. This requires simple texts with contents positively addressing the children. Children want to be taken seriously when reading and they do not want to consume the fantasies of intellectuals. Who wants to take a glimpse into the intellectual life of the recommended "Children's Literature", should read the nominations of the annual Children's and Young Person's Media Prize.

Recently I took up the first reading booklet of the Swiss reading training course "Leseschlau" (smart reading); one title is: "Du nervst!" (You are getting on our nerves!). It is about a boy who finds all comrades stupid and clones himself (in a dream), because he is looking for someone who is just like him. However, since he finds his clone just as stupid as all the others after a short time, the story ends with the clou that he wakes up and is happy to see his classmates again. Since the booklet does not include any positive creative possibility to get along in a relationship, everybody may imagine how long it will take until the boy will again not be able to get along well with his classmates.

What a contrast to the earlier stimulating and enriching leaflets of the "Schweizerisches Jugendschriftwerke", SJW, (Swiss Youth Writings)! Is there anyone today, reading "Bim the Little Donkey"? If you do, however, you will be introduced into a story that opens the heart to the social context and situation of today's world. This booklet builds a bridge across rich and poor, fills terms like solidarity, loneliness, greed, friendship and adventure with content.

The famous Swiss children's and youth book author *Max Bolliger* (see box on page VII of our "Education Supplement") had written small first reading booklets for the teachers, which were characterized by child-friendly, value-forming content. Until today, the attractively designed booklets – e.g. "Nimm mich mit" (Take me with you), "Wer spielt mit mir?" (Who's playing with me?) – are up to date with regard to content and fill reading beginners and learners with enthusiasm.

In the following I will contrast this traditional reading culture with some quotes from Curriculum 21:

4-8-year-old children "are able to exchange information – with the help of specific questions – about what their reading interests are and thus become able to reflect other reading choices in the library or or in the reading corner." (D.2, D b).

With support, 9-12-year-old children "are able to research, select and organise factual topics in books and on the Internet and are able to present their knowledge (e.g. specialist lecture, description, report, podcast)" (D.3, D c).

13-15-year-old children "are able to describe their interest in reading, to choose books accordingly and to read independently," (D.2, C i) or "are able to talk about what their reading interests are, and can justify their reading choice." (D.2, D d).

Please note that young readers can orient themselves only by the range of books that are on offer. It would be the educators' task to select appropriate literature from the arbitrary range of today's media by specific criteria. Since Curriculum 21 does not indicate any criteria for literature, which would be suitable for a comprehensive youth education, this selection will be left to the teaching aids corporations.

Many German teachers, for example at grammar schools, have also raised similar criticism which, unfortunately, was not taken seriously even in the development phase of Curriculum 21. As follow-up schools, they have a legitimate interest in a good basic teaching of the German language at the elementary level. So writes *Susanne Balmer*: "As president of the VSDL (Swiss Association of German Teachers) I had a seat on the team of experts SEK II and was able to see and comment on various curriculum designs. Since the subject-specific requirements of the SEK II experts were not implemented in the subject German for the most part, we as an association decided to draw attention to our concerns." (For the VSDL *Susanne Balmer*, July 2013)

According to the VSDL following important problems are ignored by Curriculum 21:

- "The Curriculum refuses to bridge the gap between the analysis of spelling and grammatical phenomena, as they are taken up in the competence area 'language focus' on the one hand and the correct use of language, especially in writing and speaking, on the other hand. Thus, concerning specific issues of correct language use, the area 'focus language' only ranks the application of certain rules in isolated exercises among the required competences. In the area of 'writing' (d4f) language correctness only occurs in the sub-section 'revise texts' and there it is restricted to punctuation and spelling; grammatical aspects, however, are left out completely. [...]"

- By splitting the body of what is to be learned into six areas of competences, holistic aspects, which are, for example, a feature of the curriculum for grammar schools (language as a basis of thought, etc.), get lost.

- The competence orientation of the Curriculum makes measurability of performance almost impossible. Attempts to give quantifying descriptions (long text, longer text) in the course of the three cycles intensify this problem.

- In the 'focus literature', the minimum objectives formulated for the transition to grammar school are recognisably not sufficient (historical dimension, artistic character of literature, etc.)."

From my own practical grassroot experience I agree with this criticism and, regrettably, I have to say, I also agree with Professor *Mathias Binswanger's* assessment of Curriculum 21: "Knowledge is pushed into the background." Instead a "meaningless chatter culture" is supported. In the Curriculum there is much talk of self-reflection, autonomy, and also interpersonal abilities and ability to deal with conflicts. But these were "nothing but empty words". (Source *BAZ*, 20 November 2013). Some quotes from Curriculum 21 illustrate Binswanger's assessment: 13-15-year-old children "are able to assess the language behaviour and the inherent strategy of the other in discussions and debates and to respond with their own contributions appropriately" (D.1, C h) or "are able to use non-verbal and para-verbal signals in conversation consciously to reinforce their own intention" (D.1, C i).

I would like to summarise my opinion as follows: Curriculum 21 does not fulfil the humanistic educational mission of the subject German and deprives our youth of a holistic language education. It can not even fulfill its own promises: "In German lessons, the pupils learn to use dialect and standard language carefully, adapted to the situation and linguistically correct" (see introduction Curriculum 21).

I expect from the new Curriculum that it will return to a language teaching that is carefully structured and appropriate to age and will correct the mistakes of the previous reforms.

As a result I want to entrust the following to the Swiss Curriculum makers: to take the experiences of practitioners at all levels seriously and to again consider and include the classical virtues of justice, courage, wisdom and moderation. A curriculum must guarantee equal opportunities. It must embody the courage not to sacrifice the Swiss understanding of education to global trends. It must not contradict the wisdom of the practitioners. And while fulfilling its task of harmonising, it has to moderate the desires of central control!

Suggestions for language teaching at the elementary level

A) Learning to read and write in the first grade

By learning to read the children receive food for thought that stimulates their own thinking and develops internal images. They get the opportunity to memorize something since it can be read over and again. Letters become words and make sense – for the children mastering the letters in the alphabet is a key to the world.

The children need words and phrases that convey images, something they may rejoice in, words and phrases with which they can share their own experiences with others. They need words and phrases that convey reality, truth and love for life.

The development of thinking and the development of inner pictures are closely connected with the language development.

B) Basic language lessons in the second grade

By practicing words in clauses terms are being formed. The contents may not be chosen at random or used merely in a “playful” manner. At school they must be chosen consciously according to their substance and thus create a relevant reference to reality.

Thinking is being developed by understanding contexts. When reading, the well-placed sentence is understood in its inner context and used as an extension of the own way of expression and understanding. When writing sentences the intellectual connection of linguistic components is being practiced as an active process.

Poems and short texts arouse the joy of using language and promote a sense of togetherness, if they reflect real life. Joy in the people of the family, of the village, of the district, in the animals and in nature and the activities related to them are contents that stimulate children of this age to think and talk.

C) Holistic language teaching in the third grade

Texts and stories have to help understand and communicate culture. They should describe the valuable things that the world has to offer to the children, they should keep their cultural riches and pass them on. Language teaching should establish relationship and promote the love for truth. This includes texts that help form the conscience and allow to feel empathy with the others.

Books in which the children can find themselves in their own situation in life

in the family, in the commune and the school, books which are written realistically and conciliatorily, in an understanding and explaining manner inspire and give them something for their future.

The teaching of grammatical and associated spelling skills hardly take place by rule training with these younger children. Especially through the enthusiastic teaching of contents that appeal to the children’s minds appropriate to their age words and phrases are anchored as connections and patterns. This is done by means of daily repetition and application in shared acquired contexts.

D) Structured, field-tested teaching materials

The Swiss *Lehrmittelverlag Trauffer & Hochstrasser* (publisher of teach-

ing materials) has recognized the gaps in the offer of spelling and grammar teaching tools. Since 2006, two experienced teachers have published well-structured teaching portfolios on the topics “New ways in teaching spelling” and “grammar” for the primary school.

In contrast to the “Lehrplan21-compatible” expensive teaching tools “Sprachfenster”. (*Lehrmittelverlag Zurich*, 1st edition 2000) and “Die Sprachstarken” (*Klett and Balm-er Publisher Zug*, 1st edition 2009), the materials of the TH-publishers “Lernen mit Struktur” (“Learning with structure”) are suitable for practice, and that is why they are purchased by many primary-school teachers in addition to the compulsory teaching materials and used with success in the German lessons.

E) Incomplete list of suitable books for children

titel	author	suitable from
<i>Sardon</i>	Marianne Stutz-Stocker	6 y.
<i>Barri, The True Story of a Rescuer on Four Paws</i>	Cratzius B., Blancke U.	6 y.
<i>Grandpa’s Amazing Computers</i>	Ursel Scheffel	7 y.
<i>Der kleine Schäferhund</i>	Käthe Recheis	7 y.
<i>Kleiner Bruder Watomi</i>	Käthe Recheis	7 y.
<i>The Foundling Fox</i>	Irina Korschunow	7 y.
<i>A Letter for Tiger</i>	Janosch	7 y.
<i>Tim Fireshoe</i>	Ursula Wölfel	7 y.
<i>Saskia, der Blindenhund 1–3</i>	Lisbeth Kätterer	8 y.
<i>That’s why They Call Me Strong Bear</i>	Irina Korschunow	8 y.
<i>Der kleine Clown Pippo</i>	Irina Korschunow	8 y.
<i>Isabella Zirkuskind</i>	Willi Fähmann	8 y.
<i>Wilhelm Tell</i>	Leserabe	8 y.
<i>Der kleine Biber und seine Freunde</i>	Käthe Recheis	8 y.
<i>Der Räuber Schnorz</i>	Astrid Eringer (SJW)	9 y.
<i>Stone Fox</i>	John Reynolds Gardiner	9 y.
<i>Heidi (Penguin)</i>	Johanna Spyri	9 y.
<i>Louis Braille</i>	Jakob Streit	9 y.
<i>Helen lernt leben (Helene Keller)</i>	R. Schindler, A. Marchon, C. Camil	9 y.

All picture books by Alois Carigiet (A bell for Ursli, Maurus und Madleina, ...)

All children’s books by Max Bolliger (e.g. Stummel, Das Hasenkind, ...)

Several Globi-books (above all also the recent editions and “Globi Wissen”)

English – How to purposefully destroy the joy in a language

Impressions of an English teacher at Secondary Level I

by Stefan Bucher

Since many years I have been teaching English at Secondary Level I. In the former school years I acquainted students with the structure of the language by means of a systematic English teaching book. From the beginning I told them to learn vocabulary microscopically exactly and to specifically practice the grammar that I taught them on the basis of exemplary sentences in order to lead them to a relatively free use of English in different areas of life within three years obligatory secondary school and at the same time provide the tools they needed to work on other aspects of English language and society.

Grammatically the students used to master the present simple, present continuous, present perfect, past simple (including a list of the most common irregular verb forms), past continuous, will-future, going-to-future, the three conditionals at the end of their school time. The systematic work and the close support convinced students that English (which is not too complex for beginners) is a new language one can learn. The effect was that the favourite subject of most of my students became English. A few students even successfully completed the *Cambridge First Certificate in English* (FCE) after a stay abroad.

This year for the first time I received ex-primary pupils in my new “Level E”-class, now installed in a new streaming system at our school, with E representing the highest level! These kids had already been taught the so-called “Frühenglisch” (learning English from the third grade on). Hence they had had 2 lessons of English per week at primary school, and this for four years. The result was shattering.

Based on the assumption that the new students had visited about as many English lessons as the third grade students that I had dismissed shortly before (three lessons in the course of three years are about as much as two lessons in the course of four years), I thought I could draw on a broad vocabulary and that students would be able to understand me in the spoken language.

In the first lesson I spoke English for five minutes until I recognised that I was not understood. At my request who had understood what I had said, I got one single (!) vague hand sign in the whole class. All right, then. I begin to do it again on a lower level: I explain what they are expected to do in my lessons. They do not

know the word “vocabulary” ... They have not written one vocabulary-test yet. They do not know a grammar-booklet. They have done observations of nature for half a year in their English lessons.

Quiet disillusioned I check the primary school English book in order to find out what the students’ skills are supposed to be. What learning objectives are put down there? I come across a list of basic vocabulary comprising 1,300 words students should be familiar with according to their primary school English book. Students are supposed to know the present simple tense, the present-continuous tense, the past simple tense (plus some of the most common irregular verbs), the will-future tense and the going-to-future tense. In the first week I carry out a so called “Übertritts-Check” – a test, which is to inform the teacher at secondary level what skills students will bring along. Individualized teaching materials are provided in order to close the gaps that have emerged. The test shows exhaustive lack of knowledge and furthermore presents a multiple-choice-procedure containing a confusing variety of wrong forms that students repeat perpetually in the following weeks.

In a following review course of all those topics which have been declared as learning objectives (except the two future-tenses) students get familiar with structured grammar entries and are provided with practising materials. In a second test after four weeks the result again is disappointing: Students are not used to learning, they do not know that some things have to be learned by heart.

When returning this test I cannot help to tell my students about my former English-teaching experiences. Students were amazed and at the same time fascinated and look at me longingly. They begged me, wouldn’t I please start with them from scratch. I would have liked to do that, would not the new teaching book in my E-level-class force me – as a first step – to deal with the order of all (!) adjectives within a sentence, compound nouns and aspects like architecture on the example of the Chrysler-Building, art deco (hubcap, cowl, radiator mascot ...), design the floor-plan of their dream of residence, etc. Why forced? Because students who move up the “level ladder” must have dealt with the same subject matter as we had and vice versa students who would have to move down the lad-

der would not be able to keep up with the intermediate level.

The streaming system hinders the free provision of school books and equipment and hence the freedom of the teacher’s methods.

Presumably also in primary school certain framework conditions exist today which make it impossible even for determined English teachers to teach the language in a structured manner.

At a meeting of primary and secondary school designed to exchange experiences a discussion about the new primary school subject “Frühenglisch” is taking place. The warning, not to attach too much importance to orthography and grammar was rammed into primary school English teachers’ heads in their teacher’s training at the “Pädagogische Hochschule” (that is the local university for education); instead teachers were ordered to further the students’ joy in using the language by wholeheartedly relying on the communicative approach. At this conference primary teachers reported that they were forbidden to learn grammar and conduct vocabulary tests, because these would destroy the joy in using the language. I ask myself how one should develop joy in using a language if one does not understand it ...

Nota bene

Today, from the third week on regularly once a week vocabulary tests are performed which catch up on the mentioned basic vocabulary. This work up takes a lot of time which actually had been available at primary school. Nevertheless it is worth doing this work up, because now after a good three months, students have begun to learn diligently and are delighted at their excellent results. 50 words per week are learned and tested and class averages of 2 mistakes are quite common. Students slowly accustom themselves to the fact that grammar-entries are relevant. Lessons can now predominantly be conducted in English – but honestly I will rejoice if I succeed in leading the students to the same competence as I did with previous generations that started to learn English when they entered secondary school.

Why is this valuable time at primary school not used for core subjects like German language or mathematics instead of wasting it on this kind of failed endeavour?

Independent, innovative and open-minded – Taking care of Switzerland as a center of education and industrial work

On the illustrated book „Ingenieure bauen die Schweiz -Technikgeschichte aus erster Hand“ (Engineers Building Switzerland – a history of technology first hand)

by Urs Knoblauch, Grammar School teacher and cultural publicist, Fruthwilen TG

The recently published book “Ingenieure bauen die Schweiz – Technikgeschichte aus erster Hand” (Engineers Building Switzerland – a history of technology first hand) by Franz Betschon, Stefan Betschon, Jürg Lindecker and Willy Schlechter (Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung 2013, 525 pages) and the fifty co-authors appears at the right moment. The banks and insurances are put too much into the center of interest today, although they contribute only little to the gross national product. Those who contribute to our prosperity to the major part by honest and solid work are our producing companies and our many SME companies. It is just not the banks and stock markets that make up our common good. It is in this sense that the authors point out that Switzerland must not become a service provider country populated by computer scientists, nurses and investment consultants.

Our present successful economy relies on the well-proven dual vocational training system with secondary schools and on Switzerland as an innovative technology center. Teachers and schools can the youth make familiar with this exciting occupational scene by means of this richly illustrated book. The level of education must be raised. But this objective cannot at all be achieved with the propagated planned new “Curriculum 21”. The much-needed new generation of engineers and technicians must be prompted. Young people can be enthusiastic enough about technology, the historical background and references to the world. It is in this field as well that the disastrous ideological technophobia of the *Frankfurt School (Dialectic of Enlightenment)* must be revised and the meaning of technology must be explained – as a contribution to common weal.

“The editors and the authors want to preserve the knowledge about these mat-



Hydroelectric generator for the Nile power plant Aswan, 1952, three groups of machines per 49,500 kVA by BBC, vertical axis, 100 U/min. (Picture Historical Archive ABB Switzerland)

ters and write about amazing and unique things. They tell about visions and emotions, successful products, but also about missed chances, understandable for everyone. The book looks back, at the same time deals with the future and is a homage to the creators of modern Switzerland.” Highly topical are the references to the present time: “The editors went for an emotionally moving undertaking to compile a book about Swiss technology. Talks with almost fifty co-authors and informants conjured up memories of outstanding personalities of the younger Swiss industrial history, technical excellence, economic breakthroughs, but also of destructive management decisions and corporate breakdowns. Often, the decline was initiated by a change in management, own-

ers were followed by financial investors, who put short-term profits first and foremost. This way widely renowned, traditional industries were ruined. This book recognizes the achievements of important engineers, it wants to be more than just a history book. Even if important episodes of recent technology history are presented, also the rise and fall of major industrial companies are traced, the book is not just intended as a review of the past but also as one that ‘copes with the future’.”

This excellent book and the recognition of the great achievements of Swiss companies and of the great results of the work of engineers strengthens “model Switzerland” as a nation of will, fosters a solid education and the industrial economy.

Preserve the strengths of Switzerland: independent, innovative and cosmopolitan

The contributions in the book and the concern for international competitiveness make it clear that the Swiss industry is leading today and is the decisive factor to the prosperity of our country. The President of the Swiss Academy of Technical Sciences *Ulrich W. Suter* writes in the introduction: “Switzerland has experienced an unprecedented economic growth and a massive social transformation in the 19th century due to mechanization and industrialization. The engineers are the driving force in this development. It seems that the engineering corresponds well to our character and our habits.”

Also our agriculture with valuable and most modern machines is part of Switzerland’s industry. Diverse and independent local projects of small and medium-sized

"Independent, innovative and open..."

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enterprises together with our big companies form the ideal mix of a healthy economy. It is based on the will for innovation and commitment and the high level of education.

It is impressive to see, how responsible entrepreneurs and our efficient, larger and smaller producing companies developed this success with all their employees, as described in the book. Modern and innovative industrial enterprises have led to the flowering of the Swiss economy regarded as a model all over the world. "Switzerland owes its economic power and its wealth to the producing industry in the 19th and 20th centuries: the major companies such as *Brown Boveri*, *Saurer*, *Sulzer*, *Rieter*, *Wild Leitz*, *Bühler*, etc., hundreds of SMEs, as well as outstanding engineering achievements. Today, many of these companies have disappeared, and many of the technical pioneering achievements are little known or even forgotten."

Examples of leading Swiss engineers and entrepreneurs

In the following some further insights in the area of rotational machines, electrical machines, turbomachinery, reciprocating engines, production technology, infrastructure, vehicles and aircraft, optics industry, watch industry, information technology, communications indus-

try and education shall be given. For example, the contributions concerning the "power-site Oerlikon" with the history of the *Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon* (MFO) are interesting. An insight is granted here into the "genesis of electricity generation and distribution of electricity". It draws attention to many places of Switzerland as "sites of power", especially our biggest power source – the Swiss Water Reserve.

With the Foundation of the Confederate State in 1848, the railway construction with all its technical requirements evolved. High-quality forging and casting technology, electrical engineering and the "White Gold" of our alps, glaciers and lakes were crucial for the electric power generation and transmission lines to the factories and households. The site of industries and factories was becoming independent of water. The great success of Swiss hydroelectric power plant technology was global. It was the entrepreneurial spirit of *Peter Emil Huber*, son of the silk manufacturer *Johann Rudolf Huber*. Born 1836 in Zurich, he was one of the first students at the newly opened *Swiss Federal Polytechnic Institute*. The developments in the *Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon* became a joined effort of all those involved from the workers to the engineers. The book reports these technical innovations and masterpieces in detail, from the three-phase power up to the steam turbines, and hydro- and Turbo-generators of major im-

portance in the future. Short biographies of the concerned personalities are inserted and worth reading. I remember well, when growing up in my first years as a boy in Oerlikon, that people were proud of the factory and of working there.

Also exciting are the references and connections of the MFO with the other big Swiss industrial companies such as *Brown, Boveri & Cie* (BBC), *ABB*, *Escher Wyss AG*, *Gebrüder Sulzer AG*, *Alstom*, *Bühler* and many smaller, specialized firms. BBC delivered a milestone in mechanical engineering when developing the power-generating gas turbine, which today is developed for and used in complex cogeneration power-plants. The reader learns about special technical details, but also about fundamentals: "A gas turbine is a rotary engine where the energy of flowing gases is converted to mechanical power."

"Giving away secrets"

Many contributions telling personal experiences of the engineers are especially valuable. So in the chapter "Giving away secrets" an interesting experience is reported concerning the worldwide activities of the textile machine manufacturer *Rieter AG*. The spinning machines are working around the clock. That requires a professional and conscientious care and is well-performed mostly by semi-skilled personnel, often from faraway places: "It absolutely doesn't matter to the machine in which language contribute anything here, contrary to school. Conscientiousness, reliability, attention and perseverance are everything. Operating a hall of spinning machines is a similar responsibility to running a system of the complexity of a business jet. The yarn produced per hour has a value of several thousand Swiss francs, as much as the business jet per hour costs." Equally amazing are the explanations about the sophisticated technology in modern devices for the cleaning of yarn in textile fiber manufacturing. 25 million cotton fibers are used for the tissue of a blouse, and "no foreign fiber is allowed". Here, the reader is reminded of the arduous history, poverty and work in the beginnings of the textile industry. Whole villages and the way of life were changed by the factories in Switzerland, a worthy social situation for the workers had to be fought for. The ethics and attitude of the patron of the factory, the democratic decision-making process and the statutory provisions were crucial. In the world's emerging producing and industrialized nations the social and the labour dimensions had to be fought for as well. Young people are very responsive to fair working conditions.

Cosmopolitan Switzerland, UNESCO and technology and science as a part of culture

uk. The history of technology and engineering shown here takes the reader back to the founding of *UNESCO*, the "United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization", which was established as a subsidiary organisation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and ratified in 1946. Its basic concern was "to promote world peace and the general welfare of mankind through cooperation among the peoples of the earth in these areas – objectives for the sake of which the United Nations was established and which are proclaimed in its Charter".

Switzerland is part of the global community and has been a member of *UNESCO* since 1949. Amongst other things, it then committed itself to impart to "teachers and students of all levels the most important information about the existence, objectives and activities of the major international organizations of the UN system and especially about *UNESCO*".

Switzerland was also an active founding member of the international network of *UNESCO* associated schools. Many qualified teachers and

engineers from Switzerland put themselves out for the construction of *UNESCO*-schools and institutions in Africa and Asia. Today, this is reinforced by the *SDC* and many other organizations. Here, too, cosmopolitanism and humanitarianism show themselves quite clearly. This ethical and scientific attitude and the demands of *UNESCO* as well as the spirit of *J. H. Pestalozzi* were central in our established schools and curricula. This should be taken up again. With our "model Switzerland", we have successfully and consciously taken our own special path as a nation established by the will of the people. Our successful history of technology was made possible by the cooperation of all citizens as equal partners in our direct democracy, by our high level of education and our willingness to perform. *UNESCO*, too, must refocus on its original goals and tasks once more. The US should not be allowed to jeopardise this important organization by means of threats and by refusing to pay their financial contributions. The member countries and peoples must not let that happen.

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Improving the education of junior staff and qualified personnel

Another important intention of the book is to point out that all this was only possible if Switzerland's hitherto high and exemplary school and education standard was preserved. Numerous reforms, however, have weakened the well-proven school education. Now we know that, according to a study of the University of Lausanne, the best students come from cantons with very few school reforms. In a highly interesting chapter on "the mother of all machines", Franz Betschon, using the Swiss machine tool industry as an example, describes the high educational level which especially this type of modern machines require: "The machine tool is the mother of all machines – in theory it is capable of producing itself. Its size ranges between the portal milling machine used for producing extremely long airplane structure parts to the delicate clockmaker lathe. Every exotic material that the tool engineers propose needs to be put into a form by a machine tool." In the emerging countries, engineers with a university education are needed to operate these machines. In Switzerland, this standard is fulfilled also by toolmakers. This is underlined by the example of the machine tool. The author states: "This demonstrates the practical efficiency of our dual education system that teaches engineering knowledge even to our toolmakers. They master all disciplines necessary to understand a machine tool: mechanics, control engineering, computer science and software, hydraulics, material knowledge, etc. The machine tool is a highly specialized multi-eventer. Producing machine tools is ideal for Switzerland – a land without mineral resources, but inhabited by people with education, industriousness and ingenuity."

Likewise, *Beat Kappeler* in his "Homage to the makers of modern Switzerland" emphasizes that in many European countries deindustrialisation and the abandonment of traditional culture, businesses and agriculture have led to mass unemployment, especially among the youth, as well as to misery and state debts. These big and far-reaching mistakes have not yet been committed by Switzerland. However, a fundamental re-orientation is still necessary. There is a lack of educational institutions "from the ETH Zurich to secondary schools"; the industry is lacking junior staff with scientific education. Today, a large number of researchers and engineers are coming from abroad. *Beat Kappeler* judges that the main cause for this is to be found in the past mistaken school reforms: "Years ago already, science slipped away in the last grades of primary school.

The Swiss National Exhibition of 1939 – a collective achievement of a fortified Switzerland

uk. This important collective achievement was moulded by the great Swiss architect *Armin Meili*, the director of the "Landi", as the Swiss National Exhibition of 1939 was lovingly called by the population of Zurich. (In its issue of 5 September 2013 *Current Concerns* impressively reported about it in the article "perseverance in difficult times".) *Armin Meili* also won the best artists and staff of his time for the common cause and touched the hearts of all visitors. The younger generation is no longer aware of this great military will and this cultural collective achievement. However, there are valuable documents, books, and two detailed volumes (of almost 2,000 pages)

with texts and pictures: "Switzerland as mirrored by the 1939 national exhibition." Also the published work "The Landi – Memories, documents, considerations" (Rothenhäusler Verlag 1989) contains moving accounts by eyewitnesses. All this could open the eyes of current generations and might lead to a reevaluation of values. Fact is that at that time, the mentality of national defence was shaped and supported across all party lines, denominations and interest groups by a large majority of the population. This achievement and the many contemporary witnesses with the reports they have left us deserve to be taught to the next generation in an appropriate way.



Two Swiss engineering masterpieces meet: the Golden Gate Bridge, designed by Othmar H. Ammann, and the PC-12 from Stans. (Picture Pilatus)

Chemistry, biology and physics were combined with history and geography to cuddly-and-fuzzy subjects like 'nature-human-environment'. There are no methods, no models and professional descriptions for this subject. Meanwhile most teachers have gone themselves through this un-specific run-of-the-mill education. That is why a huge ramp-up is required in renewing the Curriculum and the training of teachers. Students have to be educated in special rooms to be instructed in biology, chemistry and physics. There they must realize that science cannot be learned arbitrarily by dealing with umbrella themes like water, city, Indians, forest or wood."

It is urgently afforded to intensify proven values, knowledge and the exchange of knowledge between schools, the dual vo-

educational education and training, universities and industry and to give highest priority to the promotion of the young. Here as well the reader is stimulated to think about fundamental issues. It means taking the wrong direction if the Curriculum strategists take the Anglo-Saxon education system as a guideline, its tendency to operationalize and standardize fragmentary knowledge, as it is propagated by the OECD, the EU and by wrong theories like constructivism. Switzerland and the cantons have their own well-proven substance of school politics and pedagogics. Reading, arithmetic and writing have to be taught systematically and thoroughly. Mathematics teaches logic and clear

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thinking, fundamental for all professions and aspects of life. History needs to be imparted thoroughly and in its interrelations.

A return to our proven education is urgently required. Our youth is determined to performance if it is led enthusiastically towards meaningful tasks.

Our young people have a right to a solid education. School and parents together have the task to strengthen our excellent dual education system with manifold secondary school types and to take over responsibility for our national economy and our Swiss state model.

Integrated cooperation of the sciences

One chapter is dedicated to the "aesthetics of technology", exemplified by the gas turbine building near Sulzer. Here *Viktor Beglinger* deals with the success factors of the Swiss history of technology: "sense of responsibility for the environment", "creativity combined with discipline", "responsible risk management" and "the engineer as an artist". The chapter on infrastructure and bridges in Switzerland is particularly pleasing. Please note the love and care towards the matter and the landscape that went into our railroad lines! The unique Albula line is an example for this. Also the bridge constructions like the Sitter viaduct of the Lake Constance – Toggenburg line near St. Gall is still a technical and aesthetic feast for the eyes. Built in 1910, it has a span of 120 meters which makes it the largest Swiss railroad bridge. During the construction, scaffolds of 99 meters height were used to form the bridge from the steel beams and the natural stone viaducts. Also the wood bridges are technical masterpieces. The book also draws the attention to the wonderful Grubenmann Museum in Teufen. In the course of several generations, engineers and carpenters have created great things with wooden constructions. This reminds of the UNESCO's mission: Founded in 1946 it had the goal to contribute to a peaceful cohabitation of all nations by education, culture and science. Switzerland joined the UNESCO in 1948 (see box).

Fascinating are also some examples demonstrating the construction of vehicles and aircraft, the unbelievable achievements of infrastructure like e.g. the Gotthard base tunnel as the world's longest railway tunnel. The globally successful firm *Stadler Rail* is an example of how a

responsible and innovative entrepreneur facilitated the cooperation of various fabrication and production sites. Here and in many other sections, the context of Swiss history of technology, education, jobs, responsibility for the community and national economy becomes very clear.

A new "intellectual and cultural defense" is necessary

The broad spectrum of history of technology and engineering in Switzerland incites reflection on the leading values of our state. Many things are in a sorry state, also in our country. Attacks from within and without are meant to weaken Switzerland and to bring it to heel. Here the book provides strength and the will to defend, encouraging a constructive buildup. To be able to cope with future tasks, we need to strengthen our coherence. The book also contributes to a justified pride and gratefulness for the work of our ancestors. The contributions give evidence how a positive identification with our country facilitates great achievements. In some articles the Swiss State Exhibition "Landesaussstellung" (Swiss State Exhibition) 1939 is as well mentioned. One example is the famous locomotive "Landilok Ae 8/14" as a "corner stone of spiritual defense". This powerful and beautiful locomotive also impressed people abroad. Thus it was rebuilt as a landmark for the "Landesaussstellung" of 1939 where it was admired and achieved the status of a "beacon of our spiritual defense".

Another picture shows one of the first industrial gas turbines of the world. It was developed by BBC and also presented at the "Landesaussstellung" of 1939 in Zurich, attracting many visitors. It is worthwhile to review the pictures and books and the stories of the parents' generation and to acknowledge the exemplary achievements of the Swiss population during that time. In a time with an imminent threat, surrounded by enemies, shortly before the beginning of World War II, strengthening the military, spiritual, agricultural and moral coherence with the ability to defense was crucial. In spite of the later distortion of history and the ideological polemics coming from the left-wing spectrum of historians, this great work of dignified resistance and self-assertion is still living, with the help of impressive contemporary witnesses, in the soul of Switzerland. An appreciation, a fact-oriented presentation, thoughtfulness and a dialog about it are now more im-

portant than ever. Our youth has a right to know about this exemplary cooperation of constructive forces in order to create a positive identification with the country. Only a social and meaningful cooperation between work, education and finance, based on a state political feeling of responsibility can preserve and strengthen the successful model Switzerland. Appreciation of these great achievements and the exemplary entrepreneurs is most important today. We have to learn from mistakes. "It seems like a certain change is under way lately, as if the profession of an engineer is valued more. Could it be that the global banking crisis has caused a return to the importance of real economy?"

Along these lines the book is highly recommendable. The authors are convinced that we can never do without an efficient industry. Our economy and the model Switzerland requires a secured state of law, readiness for defense and responsible, educated and motivated citizens.

In conclusion I would like to repeat the words that *Georg Thürrer* spoke at the "Landesaussstellung" of 1939: "There are many reasons why our Confederation was able to stand its ground as a democracy with the guiding principle of responsible human beings in the middle of a black-brown storm surge of dictatorship. One thing is clear, however, i.e. that the exhibition strengthened many Swiss confederates in their will to recognize our free federal state with open hearts and minds and to defend it with all their might." •



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Awaken the joy with technology through considering, trying and constructing

by Eliane Gautschi and Urs Graf

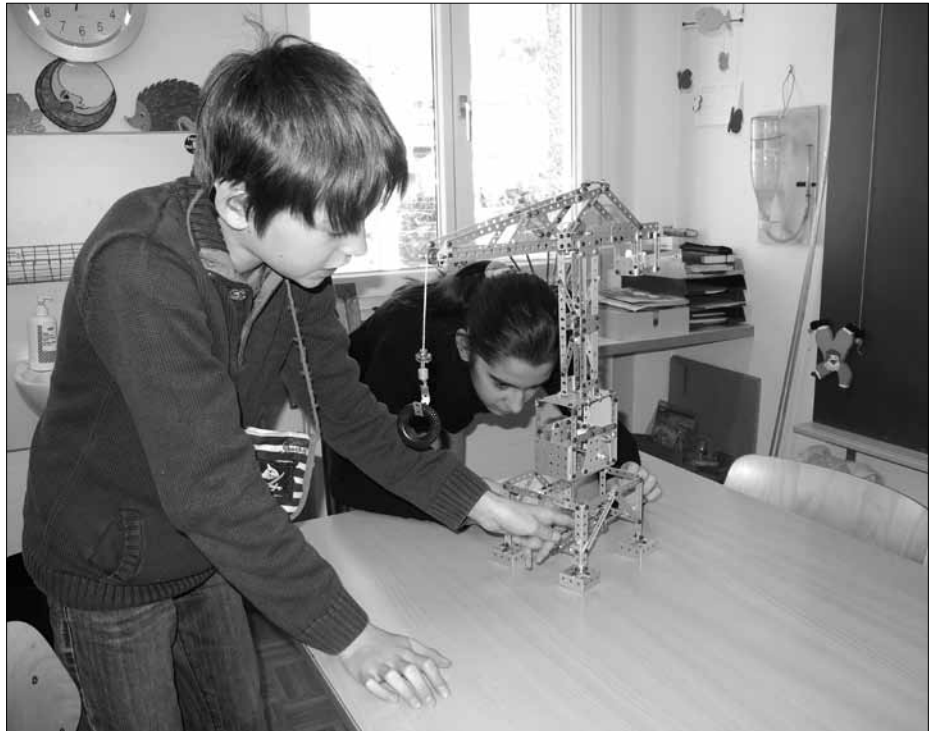
For several years, we have supplemented our school lessons through technical work with the *Stokys* metal construction sets which are again available. Intrigued by the website, we ourselves wanted to get to know the small company in the Zurich Tösstal. The route takes us past many abandoned factory buildings. They are evidence of a thriving culture of the textile industry that used to shape the Tösstal, but which in competition with the production in the so-called low-wage countries was finally ruined. It also brings back memories of the touching books by *Olga Meier* and her life images of children who had to work in the spinning and weaving companies until this child labor was fortunately prohibited by the Factory Act of 1877. Shortly before reaching Bauma, a company sign draws attention to the *Stokys* company.

Stokys – a meaningful construction toy kit

Who still does not (yet) know the metal strips with holes that could be assembled to cranes, lorries, houses and more with the help of screws? Whether they were from *Stokys*, *Meccano* or *Märklin*, for decades they used to be the preferred toy boys spent their leisure time with. In a playful way they were introduced into constructing and technical thinking. With tools and screws they train their fine motor skills. It is not self-evident that these construction kits are still or again available today.

The Stokys company – an eventful history

The company history has its beginning in the Second World War, when the procurement of toys became increasingly difficult. Because of the war events in Switzerland, the import of toys came to a virtual standstill. The precursors of all learning and teaching games, *Meccano* construction kits and their German counterpart *Märklin*, were practically no longer available. There-



Concentrated and mindful. Children acting as designers. (Picture hh)

fore, the foundation of the *Gebrüder Stockmann* company at the outskirts of Lucerne was a stroke of luck for Swiss children and toy stores. Six years ago, after several changes of ownership in the 70 year old brand company, the entire remaining stock of production has been transferred to the Zurich Oberland. This is where most individual parts are again manufactured and sold according to the original design. All bought components come from local suppliers. Good Swiss quality at Swiss prices.

From toys to learning system

Since the 1940s, there has been an assortment of additional consecutive system boxes at *Stokys*. Everything possible from the simplest exercises to complex study models can be realized. The limits of design options are determined alone by the imagination of the user. According to all educational experience, the creative imagination is more inspired while using such basic construction parts than with complex, highly functional electronic toys. The beautifully designed parts are essentially made of aluminium, steel and brass. They are very durable and are often in use over several generations.

Today, *Stokys* has outgrown the toy sector. It also supplies professional schools and even colleges with technical learning systems. Newly developed motor parts and, besides purely mechanical com-

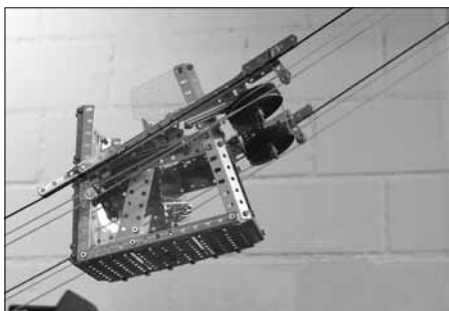
ponents, motors and remote controls complement the range of products to form a basis for highly demanding courses for example in robotics. A new basic kit specifically for engineer training is planned.

The *Swissmechanic* association, which comprises approximately 1,500 mechanic-technical SME enterprises, makes use of *Stokys* models in their apprenticeship as well.

There is a robotic laboratory in operation at the *Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW)*, where students can build comparatively inexpensive test models with universally applicable *Stokys* components. Currently, a group is involved in a worldwide competition. It is building a robot that can handle the *Rubik's Cube* (the cult toy of the 80s).

Passing on what one has obtained from life

We owe the fact that *Stokys* has come to life again to the two founders of the company, *Peter Meier* and *Ernst Schmid*. At the end of 2007, they took over the *Stokys AG* and in 2008, started the resumption of the production of construction kits and individual parts with the *Stokys Systems AG*. *Peter Meier* is a retired electrical engineer. Previously, he had founded the *Micronel* company in



Both on the small and large scale. (Picture ug)

continued on page 12

"Awaken the joy ..."
continued from page 11

Tagelswangen which he lead to world-wide success. Now, at 75 years of age he simply wants "to pass on something he has obtained from life". Therefore, the company sees itself as a social project and is offering some internships for job-less school leavers. It shall prepare them for the working life until their start of the apprenticeship. Due to the dedicated personnel, the young people have a good chance to prove themselves in internships and start their professional career in revived self esteem.

To attract young people's interest in technology

Concerned with Switzerland lacking engineers, Peter Meier aims at increasingly arousing students' and young people's interest in technology. Stokys' modular learning systems offer a solid and, in the actual sense, a comprehensive matter. They represent an alternative to the virtual world which today is so popular with many young people and at which they waste their time. The model kits are also useful in the classroom, in particu-

lar to train artisan skills and spatial and functional imagination. Soon, the establishment of the Stokyslab in Winterthur is to be opened. This is a workshop for children and adults who want to replicate or even invent models. The older ones, however, come into play at the "Schrübli-Abig" (small screws evening event) who once again want to test their skills at designing and technical reflection.

From industrial history we know that because of this curiosity and the joy with playful puzzling over something – the public's technical intelligence – time and again innovations have emerged.

Figurehead for Swiss tourism projects

By now, many companies appreciate using the range of Stokys products as advertisement for their own customers. On order are custom-made models or kits which they then, for instance, pass on as business gifts or make use of them as presentation in advertising.

Thus, the cable-car company *Doppelmayr/Garaventa* has been campaigning in Washington DC for their newly developed convertible car to the Stanserhorn with a demonstrative functional Stokys replica.

A meaningful and creative activity in school ...

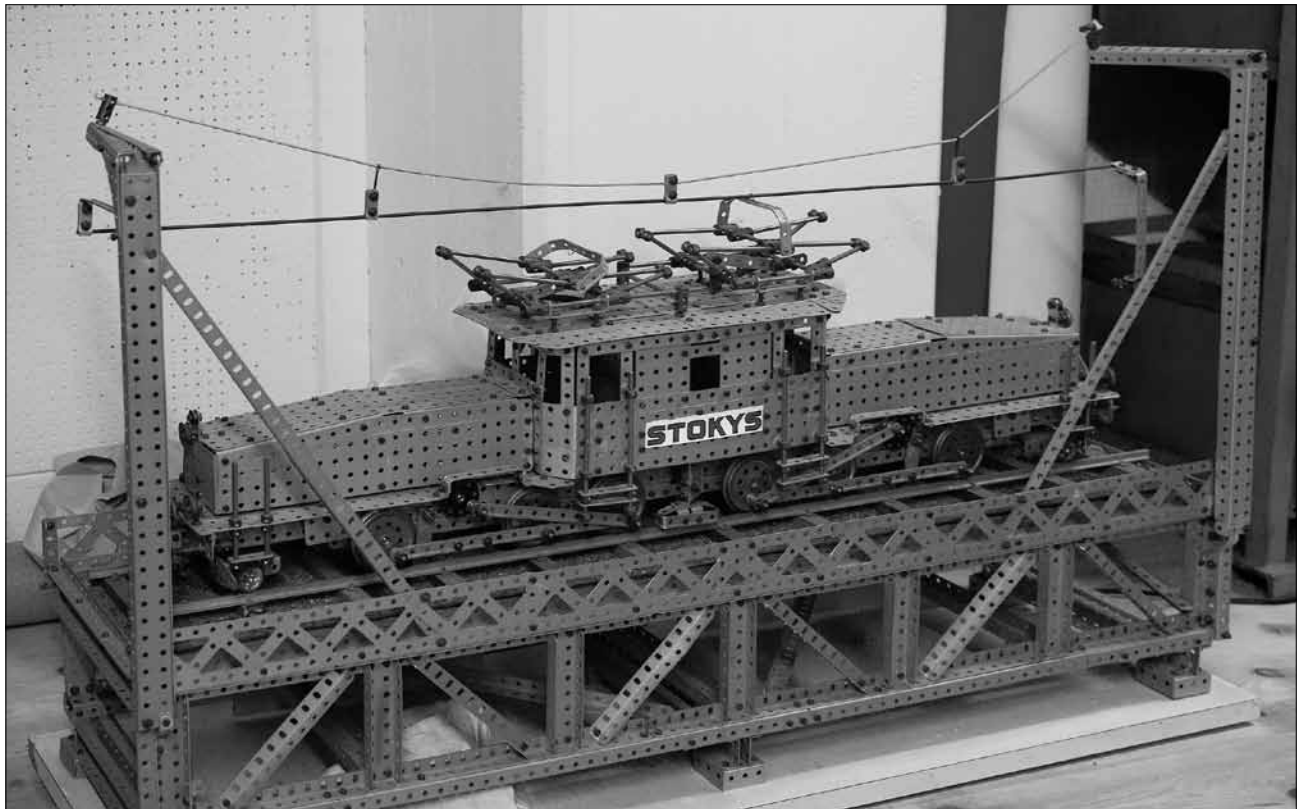
For several years, the Stokys kits have proven a popular addition to our school curriculum. Above all, children also practice work-sharing and cooperation when constructing larger models.

We can only recommend this to other schools, for instance as project across generations with seniors. Under guidance, boys and girls build a variety of models from the basic kit. This way, they not only train their fine motor skills, the dealing with tools and their technical understanding, but above all also enjoy the interesting constructions. They playfully develop some basics of mechanical engineering. A meaningful perspective for the profession may result from this.

... and the family

Now, Christmas is around the corner and many will think about what to give to their children, godchildren and grandchildren. Why not a "sustainable investment" in a Stokys basic kit? Possibly as a common hobby for the father and the children? As alternative to a computer game or an iPad?

Sources : www.stokys.ch. Here, the full range of the product may be viewed and ordered.



Although almost a hundred years old, the "Crocodile" has lost none of its fascination. One result of Swiss engineering. (Picture ug)