

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

“Refusal of dialogue threatens world peace” “International law is universal and must always be uniformly applied”

Interview with Professor Dr phil et iur Alfred de Zayas*

“Whatever region we take, be it the Ukraine, Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Tyrol, the Tamils, West Papua, Rapa Nui, the Moluccas, Sudan, etc., you have to keep in mind that it is about people primarily seeking something legitimate, namely the shaping of their own identity, the right to their cultural development, to their own history.”



Alfred de Zayas (picture ma)

thk. Since the secession of the Crimea peninsula, the importance of the peoples' right to self-determination has again become a focus of public attention. The different, often arbitrary interpretation of this principle of international law becomes apparent. What is being advocated and applied for some populations is being denied to others. Is the attitude of the “first world” justifiable? While, for instance, the secession of Kosovo was immediately recognized by many western states, the same states have resolutely refused to acknowledge the secession of Abkhazia or of the Crimean peninsula. As an outsider, one cannot help feeling that double standards are at play. This contradiction calls for a clarification. In the following interview the renowned American international lawyer and author of many books, Professor Alfred de Zayas, analyses the legal issues involved.

Current Concerns: Professor de Zayas, you presented your annual report to the General Assembly in New York. You were essentially concerned with the peoples' right to self-determination. How does this right contribute to strengthening world peace?

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Alfred de Zayas: We know that in the last 60 years, the failure to implement the right to self-determination has been at the root of many armed conflicts. That is why it is so important now and in the future to put the right to self-determination into practice, because this fundamental norm of international law constitutes a preventive strategy to avoid armed conflicts. Some people claim that the right to self-determination was achieved and settled with decolonization. Not true. Today there are numerous ethnic groups around the world, indigenous populations in North and South America, native cultures in Australia, New Zealand, West Papua, larger minorities who are unhappy with their condition and aspire to self-determination. Just look at the map of Africa and consider how many potential conflicts are there, sequels of European colonization, which drew absurd frontiers and divided ethnic and religious groups, leaving them on both sides of the arbitrary colonial borders. You have to hear their claims for greater autonomy, federalism, and independence before the malaise results in armed conflicts. All of these present and future disputes must be resolved by peaceful means and negotiation. That's why I appealed to the states, on 27 October at the UN General Assembly (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/497/95/PDF/N1449795.pdf?OpenElement>) to listen to their populations and not adamantly insist on the principle of territorial integrity and claim that it must be just so and not otherwise. Digging one's heels in is unhelpful. We need a change of mind-set if we want peace. Intransigence means escalation and is therefore incompatible with the UN Charter. The principle of territorial integrity is important, but it is not absolute. It must be applied in conjunction with other principles of inter-

national law including human rights and the right to self-determination of peoples. A judicious balancing act is indispensable. In general, borders serve stability, but borders can be changed peacefully, and sometimes should be changed to prevent future conflict. Indeed, frontiers have been changed constantly throughout history, unfortunately, often by war. Precisely for this reason – to prevent wars – we must make sure that the populations who live within national borders can effectively exercise their human rights. We always have to keep in mind that this is about people, not just about geopolitics. People have a fundamental right to shape their own destinies. Each expert on international law recognizes the right to self-determination as preemptory international law, but its application seems to be arbitrary.

In how far do you mention the current conflicts, such as the recognition of Kosovo, the secession of the Crimea, the fate of the Tamils?

In my report to the General Assembly and in the press conference, I deliberately did not refer to specific conflicts. I do not arrogate to myself the right to provide the answer to all of these complex problems that unfortunately gravely endanger peace in these regions. What I did elaborate on, and what constitutes the “added value” of my report, are the criteria I formulated and which can be applied to all current and future conflict situations to help resolve them. These criteria include a commitment to di-

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ologue and the demand that governments promote the human rights of all parts of the populations under their jurisdiction and do not discriminate against and harass the people who advocate the right to self-determination, or even defame them as “terrorists”.

How could these problems be resolved?

Whatever region we take, be it the Ukraine, Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Tyrol, the Tamils, West Papua, Rapa Nui, the Moluccas, Sudan, etc., you have to keep in mind that it is about people primarily seeking something legitimate, namely the shaping of their own identity, the right to their cultural development, to their own history. And if a central government demonstrates hostility towards a part of the population, it's the worst thing it can do; for this part of the population will no longer feel obliged to respect the regulations of that government. In principle, it is the people who govern in a democracy. If a government, consisting of elites, no longer cares about the interests of their people, this government will fail and thereby endanger the peace of the state and probably both regional and international peace.

How should a government in such a situation act?

In case a part of the population of a given country – as we saw in Scotland – would like to become independent, the peaceful organization of a referendum is the civilized way to go about it. Remember that this right to self-determination does not necessarily mean total independence. There are nuances. There are different gradations of autonomy, e.g. a federal organization, whereby the human rights of the population might be better guaranteed. Many countries are federally organized. States that have different (and sometimes hostile) ethnic, religious and language groups would be well advised to consider a federal constitution.

Here, of course, the Swiss model of direct democracy could be an inspiration.

The Swiss model works. In Switzerland, with four languages and 26 cantons, the people live in peace with each other and respect each other. They are all citizens of the country. Direct democracy is practised through the people's power of initiative, through referenda and direct participation in decision-making. There is no need for violence, because the Swiss Constitution and the democratic system of government guarantee the rights of all persons in the jurisdiction. Unfortunately, in many other countries it's not like that.

What are you thinking of?

Sri Lanka, for instance. There are the Tamils, who make up a significant part of the population; they differ from the majority of the Sinhalese. The Tamils have a different history and a different identity, which manifested itself in their quest for self-determination. In 1983–2009 the world looked on as the Tamils were being massacred by the central government, and so the Tamils could achieve neither autonomy nor independence. Another ethnic group that, in principle, had

a consequence would demand self-determination and self-protection. On the one hand, we have a government that came to power via an election, and on the other side there is a militant movement that seeks a regime change without elections. This is of course quite a different kettle of fish – and distinguishable from the situation of the ethnic group of Tamils in parts of Sri Lanka, who actually have a legitimate concern of preservation of their culture and identity. One

“The Swiss model works. In Switzerland, with four languages and 26 cantons, the people live in peace with each other and respect each other. They are all citizens of the country. Nobody is being discriminated. Unfortunately, in many other countries it's not like that.”

a legitimate aspiration to autonomy or independence was the Igbo people of Biafra/Nigeria, who fought a war for self-determination in 1967–1970 – and lost. An estimated three million human beings perished during the war and the ensuing famine.

By implementing the right of peoples to self-determination wars could be prevented ...

... and by the application of certain techniques such as plebiscites we can achieve peaceful solutions. A referendum was launched in Scotland, and we witnessed a peaceful public opinion poll in Catalonia. The United Nations themselves organized referenda in Sudan. The last state admitted to the UN was in fact South Sudan. Its formation is a direct consequence of the poll performed by the United Nations. We had the same in the separation process of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The latter evolved from a UN referendum. This model could be applied in many parts of the world where there is conflict. But this requires an alert and proactive General Assembly, which addresses the conflicts before they escalate. I must repeat that not every referendum must end with independence. Quebec in Canada is another example where in 1995 a referendum was held, which did not lead to separation. In any event, a peaceful referendum is always better than an armed conflict.

How can we prevent the abuse of the right to self-determination for geopolitical and power interests? How can we prevent the subversion of sovereign states by revolution fomented and financed from abroad?

From the above cases of self-determination one has to distinguish the colour revolutions and the tragic situation in Syria. Here it seems that the civil war has not developed owing to a deliberate discrimination against a part of the population, such as the Christians and other denominations that as

must be able to distinguish between civil war, a coup d'état and a legitimate claim to autonomy and self-determination.

The US President Obama accuses Putin of threatening world peace in the context of the Ukraine conflict. Do you share this view?

This raises the fundamental question of what threatens world peace? The refusal to enter in a dialogue threatens world peace if the parties engaged in a given conflict refuse to talk. What does the UN Charter in Article 2, paragraph 3 stipulate? All disputes must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy, by peaceful means. If I am not mistaken, *Putin* has for many months proposed dialogue. First, I would have liked to have seen an initiative by the Ukrainian government in Kiev to engage in a peaceful dialogue with the Russian-Ukrainians in Donetsk and Lugansk. That would have been the civilized way to solve the problem. But you cannot be blind to the fact that this destabilization necessarily has consequences for neighboring countries, and here in particular for Russia which has a legitimate interest to keep hostility and revolution away from its borders. Russia had a legitimate concern when the democratically elected government in Kiev was removed in a coup on 22 February 2014. The international agreement of 21 February, in which the Maidan representatives as well as President *Yanukovich* and the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland had agreed to conduct early elections and until then form a new government that would represent all groups, was violated not by *Yanukovich* but by the Maidan violence that carried out a Putsch. The three countries Germany, Poland and France could have protested and had a responsibility to maintain the agreement. Hence a situation of illegality

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TTIP: Will politics capitulate in favour of the corporations?

by Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer

Trade associations of German corporations have prompted economy Minister *Gabriel* to accept the free trade agreement secretly negotiated by the United States and the EU with the controversial investment protection clause.

Whenever something is negotiated in secret, it can be assumed that something is very wrong. Negotiations in Brussels occur solely at a political level with the corresponding officials from the political offices in Brussels. In Brussels only the Politburo officials negotiate for Europe. In America special interest groups partake and influence negotiations. Corporate representatives, government lobbyists and commercial lawyers have a say in addition to Government and Bank representatives. No wonder that the European economy, academics and population perceive a plot consisting of the multinational conglomerates aiming at overthrowing national democratic competition standards by means of the TTIP Agreement (*Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership*).

With the TTIP Free-Trade-Agreement all regulations would be removed, and

would be replaced by different standards, prohibitions and safeguards. The US rules and regulations would override the EU based rules and regulations. In this situation each US group would have all the rights that they enjoy in the USA. EU rules would not apply. Europe enjoys an exceptionally high standard of protection in the areas of nutrition, agriculture, medicine, health, research, product certification, environmental and nature protection, labor, social and cultural promotion. Because American Government policy only serves the interests of American corporations the European rules would no longer be applied.

That the German corporations also want the TTIP to be established can be explained by the fact that they facilitate exports, on the one hand. On the other hand international funds already control the majority of German corporations. Therefore, the latter have more international than national interests.

In the secret negotiations regarding TTIP, no one has considered the SME,

the trade unions, the environmentalists, the cultural representatives or researchers or agriculture up to now. So far they have been excluded from negotiations with good reason:

- Public cultural funding would according to TTIP be an “unauthorized distortion of competition” with compensations to be rendered to the international mafia of culture.
- Wherever American standards allow such environmental degradation as oil fracking, large area deforestation, and initiation of acid into rivers or similar practices, in the future, these standards could also be applied on European ground. In their eyes, this would “level playing field”.
- 90% of Germans do not want any chemicals in their food. In the United States the customer must prove that damages and harm had occurred from the use of chemical additives. In Europe this was up to now the other way

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and instability emerged. And after a coup d'état there are always certain predictable but also unpredictable consequences. One of them is that parts of the population of Ukraine simply did not accept the new leaders of the country in Kiev and they did not consider them as democratically legitimate representatives of the entire population. Professor *John Mearsheimer* of the University of Chicago recently published an interesting analysis in *Foreign Affairs* (www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearsheimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-west-s-fault and see. *Current Concerns* No 22 of 20 September 2014).

What role do the media play in this whole debate?

I am particularly concerned that media reports, especially in the Western media, operate in unison with allegations against Russia. Hence the agreement of 21 February is mostly hushed up, the coup is forgotten, as if it had never taken place. What worries me is that the press is actually fueling the conflict instead of calming it down. Instead of calling for a dialogue, the press focuses on the necessity of sanctions and a solution by force, not negotiation. Yet, pursuant to the UN Charter all states are obliged to promote all the possibilities of dialogue. The press does not. Therefore, the question arises whether Article 20 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* is

being violated here? And by whom? Article 20 prohibits warmongering. Currently, sabre-rattling is going on in many states instead of attempts to find a solution within the UN Charter, which protects the human rights of all parties involved, more specifically also the human rights of the population in Donetsk and Lugansk. Furthermore, it must be reiterated that neither the right to self-determination nor the principle of territorial integrity justify massacring a population. No one can approve of the shelling of hospitals, schools and residential areas. In the year 1994/95 the global consensus was that bombing of civilian centers like Sarajevo were illegal. I miss this assessment with respect to the bombardment of the population in eastern Ukraine. As an expert on international law, I would like to reiterate: International law is universal and must always be applied uniformly and not *à la carte*. You cannot say Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo have the right to independence, but the populations of Lugansk and Donetsk do not. This still needs to be clarified. Every day people are dying there. It is the obligation of all states in the human community that the shooting stops. Everything possible should be done to find a peaceful solution, and it must be noted that a federalization of Ukraine or the autonomy of the Russian-Ukrainian districts would have been a viable option in the months of March, April and May. It is not certain that a population that has suffered massive bombardments, would be willing to stay in this state formation today.

We could, however, only answer this question after the negotiations and after the dialogue.

First, the military violence must stop. Nothing will happen without this prerequisite. However, what you can read in the press is that Kiev is considering a new offensive. This involves grave dangers. Attempting to bring these areas under Kiev's control by force would exacerbate the humanitarian catastrophe in the area and result in huge loss of life. For me, the only solution in conformity with human rights are negotiations, in which not only Kiev and Donetsk are included, but also the neighboring states, which have a legitimate interest in the pacification of the area. This is also a democratic solution, because democracy is ultimately an expression of self-determination as self-determination is an expression of democracy. Here the criteria that I formulated in my report could be conducive to a constructive discussion. It bears repeating that the right to self-determination is embodied in the UN Charter and in Article 1 of the *UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and Article 1 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, and in countless resolutions of the UN General Assembly. This right must be put into action. The world has had enough of politicking and enough of empty lip service to human rights.

Professor de Zayas, we thank you for the interview.

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)

"TTIP: will the politics ..."

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round, thus TTIP would convert the obligation to deliver the evidence onto the consumer, which would virtually destroy it.

- The US biotech giants *Monsanto* and *Syngenta* have built seed monopolies throughout the Americas, although GM soya leads to infertility after 10 mice generations. TTIP would ruthlessly surrender the German farmers to the US seed and genetic engineering monopolies.
- European agriculture is structured in small and mid-sized businesses. European agricultural policy does therefore not only protect agriculture, but the environment, as well. With TTIP, however, the international agricultural corporations would overwhelm Europe with low prices. As early as in 1870 agricultural free trade was introduced under pressure by the large industries. Within 10 years this had led to the destruction of more than 100,000 farms of all sizes. This would happen again with TTIP.

The greatest insolence of US negotiators, however, is that they want to eliminate European jurisdiction with the arbitration clause. Lawsuits against monopoly activities of US corporations would no longer be possible in Europe before ordinary ju-

risdiction. And for actions of transatlantic companies against new state laws such as new environmental standards or public funding measures the German jurisdiction would no longer be responsible, either but private secret courts (ICSID), without a second instance. This arbitration would be carried out by American law firms (with corporate affiliation) in the United States. Over 70% of such disputes have been decided in favor of US corporations. Legal remedies, however, no longer exist. This would turn the traditional European legal culture upside down. Thus, with such private justice the American Justice recklessly enforces international discrimination, which is shown in the US charges and penalties against European banks. The US judiciary sees it that way: they have jurisdiction everywhere, where transactions are done in dollars in the world. In particular this would leave the middle class without any rights, by which they might sue or defend themselves in the United States and they would not be able to bear the exorbitant costs of the American lawyer sharks.

In addition, the TTIP means not only dismantling our justice, our social, environmental and health standards, among others, but also our democratic rights are relinquished to the corporations. Namely we could no longer legislate, which they

regard as "disability", without the state becoming liable for compensation (example: nuclear ban action of *Vattenfall*).

However, the Americans do not regard it as anticompetitive, if they spy on all European companies on technology and international business through their intelligence service and submit the results to their corporations – while conversely Europe celebrates the protection of privacy.

So far Gabriel has correctly referred to the investment protection clause demanded by the American companies as unacceptable. Precisely this is what the German corporation lobby is fighting now.

Gabriel should think twice whether he wants to become corporate minister and sell everything to the US monopolies, all that which generations created in culture, health standards, non-GM agricultural diversity, freedom of chemicals, environmental standards. As well he should think twice whether he wants to sell the democratic primacy claim of laws over the economy in secret negotiations. The middle class and the workers would be massively disadvantaged, would be surrendered to US corporations. TTIP is namely not – as claimed – more freedom on the market, but a seizure of power (*Machtergreifung*) by the US monopolies in Europe!

Letter to  the Editor**Ukraine – only the beginning?**

According to the Russian News agency *Ria Novosti* the third Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that fights the heroisation of Nazism. The resolution draft was submitted by Russia. The US, Ukraine and Canada voted against it, 115 states approved of it. 55 states, amongst them member-states of the EU and Switzerland, abstained.

The resolution "expresses deep concern with regard to the glorification, in any form, of the Nazi movement, Neo-Nazism and of former members of the *Waffen-SS* organization, including the erection of monuments and memorials and the conducting of public demonstrations...".

Why has this resolution become necessary? This is due to the fascist Nazi movement of the Maidan underground. Blatantly, these forces show up with fascist symbols, and were thereafter coddled by the US and EU which is continued to date. It is not surprising that the EU abstained from voting for the resolution. For Switzerland the abstention is just as disturbing as the sanctions policy against Russia.

Historians like *Daniele Ganser* have referred to the *Gladio*-network that recruited Nazis and SS-members amongst others.

Simpson, a US-historian calls it a *Blow Back* that fascism is hitting back on Europe. He provides evidence that American fascist movements are closely connected with those of the Ukraine which were financed and preserved by the US-government for a long time. After World War II the US welcomed German scientists who had been members of the SS, with open arms. Argentine was a favourite destination for refugees, as well.

One should not cherish the hope that fascism with all its cruel facets has been ostracized to such an extent that it would not have a second chance in Europe. The fascist groups that have emerged in the Ukraine once again show the opposite. Words, however nice, cannot cover up these facts. The Franco dictatorship was the last fascist dictatorship in Europe. Who is flirting with a remake? We should better think it over before Putin and Russia are being bashed and before, as it seems likely, the next huge armed conflict is being prepared.

Dr Barbara Hug, Tobel

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Pro memoria: Switzerland is a state under the rule of law with a constitution and civil rights

Who arrogates to restrict citizen's rights has to explain his understanding of democracy

by Thomas Schaffner

Again and again Swiss citizens engaging for initiatives and referenda, are not presented by with their objective concerns, but discredited in the grossest way by media representatives and party strategists, a trend, which demonstrates that the latter fellow citizens either do not understand, what the direct democratic philosophy contains, or the afore-mentioned simply lack arguments. An un-culture, which unfortunately has tradition, but should be limited by the Constitution.

Direct democracy is a demanding model of human interaction and coexistence. It is that type of state, which corresponds best to man's, the "zoon politicon's" social nature. In the 19th century the pioneers of the principle of "one man, one vote" which originates in the cooperative tradition of the Swiss Confederation, named the so-called "veto" – the predecessor of today's referendum – an "institution of education". That way they wanted to draw attention to the fact that popular sovereignty is only then fully implementable if all citizens can acquire a basic education. That was the reason for the demand to introduce compulsory schooling respectively the right to education for all. Since only a good basic training enables the citizens to conduct substantiated votes besides the periodic elections of representatives. And just in this very struggle to assess a draft proposal the literacy in the population has been increasing, since it comes to a lively discussion of ideas on the substantive issues. It is not the experts who are always right a priori – a fact demonstrated by the long history of Swiss referenda as well as confirmed by various studies. It is just this competitive situation, the peaceful struggle of various opinions and also the countless different set-ups in the communes and the cantons in the model of federalism, have led to sustainable and "wise" decisions and are also reflected in the gradual rise of people's prosperity.

Of course, the shaping of direct democracy was a long and tough struggle with those circles, who understood themselves as elites and distrusted the people. "Vox populi, vox stupid fool", so it sounded not only in distant Prussia, and "quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi", (what is due to Zeus, is by far not due to the oxen), was not only the doctrine of greater or small German scholars across the Rhine.

Extracts from the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of 18 April 1999 (Status as of 18 May 2014)

Art. 7 Human dignity

Human dignity must be respected and protected.

Art. 8 Equality before the law

- 1 Every person is equal before the law.
- 2 No person may be discriminated against, in particular on grounds of origin, race, gender, age, language, social position, way of life, religious, ideological, or political convictions, or because of a physical, mental or psychological disability.

Art. 13 Right to privacy

- 1 Every person has the right to privacy in their private and family life and in their home, and in relation to their mail and telecommunications.
- 2 Every person has the right to be protected against the misuse of their personal data.

Art. 15 Freedom of religion and conscience

- 1 Freedom of religion and conscience is guaranteed.
- 2 Every person has the right to choose freely their religion or their philosophical convictions, and to profess them alone or in community with others.
- 4 No person may be forced to join or belong to a religious community, to participate in a religious act, or to follow religious teachings.

Art. 16 Freedom of expression and of information

- 1 Freedom of expression and of information is guaranteed.
- 2 Every person has the right freely to form, express, and impart their opinions.

- 3 Every person has the right freely to receive information to gather it from generally accessible sources and to disseminate it.

Art. 17 Freedom of the media

- 1 Freedom of the press, radio and television and of other forms of dissemination of features and information by means of public telecommunications is guaranteed.
- 3 The protection of sources is guaranteed.

Art. 22 Freedom of assembly

- 1 Freedom of assembly is guaranteed.
- 2 Every person has the right to organise meetings and to participate or not to participate in meetings.

Art. 23 Freedom of association

- 1 Freedom of association is guaranteed.
- 2 Every person has the right to form, join or belong to an association and to participate in the activities of an association.

Art. 136 Political rights

- 1 All Swiss citizens over the age of eighteen, unless they lack legal capacity due to mental illness or mental incapacity, have political rights in federal matters. All citizens have the same political rights and duties.
- 2 They may participate in elections to the National Council and in federal popular votes, and launch or sign popular initiatives and requests for referendums in federal matters.

Source: <http://www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/11101.en.pdf>

Where do the attacks against direct democracy come from?

Today, the direct democratic people's rights of initiative and referendum belong to the core contents of the Swiss philosophy of state. The controversy, however, has never quite stopped. Over and again, circles inclined to elitism have kept trying to restrict people's rights. Be it that they request to increase the threshold, for example the necessary number of signatures – a trick then sold under the label "working out the essentials" of the people's rights – or be it that they propose to

pre-examine initiatives; however, such ideas did not appeal to a majority so far.

At the time of the Second World War, people's rights were restricted, even those of the Parliament; it was to give more leeway to the executive for quick decisions in times of greatest need – a situation that obviously suited those responsible at the time, as it was hard enough to reclaim the powers after the war and to fully restore the people's rights again.

"Pro memoria: Switzerland is ..."

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Unfortunately, today one can observe again that these rights are repeatedly called into question; and this happens without any obvious external emergency. Or are those efforts related to intentions to merge Switzerland into larger entities? As a matter of fact, a membership in the EU and direct democracy might not really be called compatible. To join the NATO as a continuation of membership in the "Partnership for Peace" would be forcefully rejected in any referendum, as the surveys of the ETH (Swiss Federal Institute of technology) show, documenting a 95% consent of the Swiss people to the policy of neutrality. And another incompatibility is obvious, that between membership of NATO and neutrality – especially since the new NATO strategic concept of 1999 became operative, which claims worldwide "out-of-area operations", inter alia to ensure the energy flows – with "robust" missions, which means by armed force. This is in contrast to the postulate of *Brother Klaus*, which the Swiss followed not out of cowardice, as sometimes claimed today, but in clever insight; "not to extend the fences too far" and do not interfere in foreign struggle.

The troubles of self-appointed elites with referendums

The attempts of the above-mentioned elitist and most transnationally-minded circles are unfortunately joined by self-pro-

claimed "opinion leaders" again, trying to deny citizens political rights by means of defamation and insinuations. An approach, that is unworthy of a democracy, especially of a direct one and that grants insight in some leftover oligarchic-undemocratic thought.

The historian *René Roca*, who has essentially contributed to the analysis of the Swiss Confederation's history with his Institute for the Study of Direct Democracy, has elaborated this context in his habilitation dissertation: Wide circles of the former elite, in particular of the liberalism of the 19th century did not like the expansion to referendum and initiative of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation in 1874 and 1891 as a realization of true people's sovereignty. Due to a "Menschenbild" (concept of man) which had some racist components such as expressed by individual exponents like *Johann Caspar Bluntschli*, but was at least presumptuous¹, the majority of the liberals fought against the objectives of the early Socialist and Catholic conservatives, who wanted to have the people participate more in political decision-forming, than only by periodically held elections. Even if it is denied by historiography after 1848, – labeled by Roca as the "liberal historiography of winners", modern Switzerland is not only owed to liberalism, which is legitimately "deconstructed" as a myth: reality can – as is often the case – not be explained by mono-causal considerations, but must account for the diverse contribu-

tions of the defeated. This was recently impressively presented by Roca on a historic conference in the Canton of Schwyz under the auspices of the local Director of Education and by last year's President of the National Council *Ruedi Lustenberger*.

Direct democracy – a model of peace

Because it obviously bothers some citizens and journalists to envision the text and the contents of the fundamentals of our civilized co-existence, despite *Google* and *Wikipedia*, the relevant articles of our Federal Constitution are reprinted as excerpts on page 5: They may allow a recollection of the achievements of our population – particularly in editorial offices – but not only there: a peace model of high quality, which is praised by many states as a model. Who never read the text, should be obliged to do so.

Anyone who stands against this article of the Constitution valid for all Swiss citizens, has to explain to the population what he is aiming at: it will have little to do with democracy, in particular a direct democracy. •

¹ Roca, René. *Wenn die Volkssouveränität wirklich eine Wahrheit werden soll ... Die schweizerische direkte Demokratie in Theorie und Praxis – Das Beispiel des Kantons Luzern*. Schriften zur Demokratieforschung (If the sovereignty of the people is really to come true. The Swiss direct democracy in theory and practice – the example of the Canton of Lucerne. Publications on democracy research), Vol. 6, edited by the Centre for Democracy Studies Aarau. Zurich, 2012. ISBN 978-3-7255-6694-5. Referring to *Bluntschli*, cf. p. 80.

"Contributions of Catholicism to modern Switzerland"**Press Release of the Research Institute of Direct Democracy**

On 17 October 2014 the first scientific conference of the Research Institute for Direct Democracy on the topic "Contributions of Catholicism to Modern Switzerland" took place in Schwyz, Switzerland. Well over 90 participants gathered in the Mythen Hall of the Hotel Wysses Rössli.

The meeting, which addressed scientists, professionals and an interested public, was devoted to the latest findings of democracy research and education in two panels.

The President of the National Council *Ruedi Lustenberger* and the Government Councillor of the Canton of Schwyz *Walter Stählin* delivered their opening words and initiated the Conference. The Director of the Institute Dr phil. *René Roca* made some introductory remarks and expressed the objectives of the meeting. The morning was then dedicated to the first panel "Catholicism and Direct Democracy". The first speaker was Dr theol. *Paul Oberholzer SJ* on the subject "The Catholic Church in Schwyz between

the Tridentine Reform Catholicism and local self-government". He examined the question whether and to what extent the self-image of the Canton of Schwyz had influenced the development of direct democracy in the 19th century.

After a coffee break Dr phil *Pirmin Meier* presented his expositions on the topic "Direct Democracy as a movement of laymen and country people between democratic awakening and demagogu in the cantons of Lucerne and Aargau". In his speech, Dr phil. René Roca examined the early history of the introduction of direct democracy and its relevant actors, the Catholic Conservatives in the cantons of Schwyz and St. Gallen.

In the second panel on "Catholicism and Education", after lunch break, Professor Dr *Heinrich R. Schmidt* provided revealing insights into his research regarding the Stapfer-Enquête. His research suggests that the Catholics in Switzerland had an educational advantage over the Protestants around

1800. Finally Professor Dr *Carlo Moos* acknowledged the achievements of two important sister congregations that had emerged in the mid-19th century on the education of Catholic Switzerland, namely the Sisters of the Cross in Menzingen and the Ingenbohl Sisters. A lively discussion developed in the ensuing question and answer session of the audience.

In summary it can be stated that Catholicism in Switzerland – contrary and in contrast to the recent historiographical research – has provided important and fundamental contributions to modern Switzerland. The Conference summarized new aspects and results of research in democracy and education accordingly and will be the basis for further scientific projects. A conference volume is in preparation.

*Oberrohrdorf-Staretschwil,
23 October 2014*

*Dr phil René Roca, Research Institute
Direct Democracy*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Federalism and Concordance – two key contributions of Catholicism”

*Welcoming speech by the National President Ruedi Lustenberger,
Scientific Conference of the Research Institute of Direct Democracy on 17 October 2014, Schwyz*

In his introduction, Dr *René Roca* spoke about how to understand history.

Even as a small boy, my parents gave me a positive picture of Swiss history. This still forms the basis for my understanding of history. My mother grew up in Nidwalden on the shores of Lake Lucerne, and formed my image of a peaceful, charming Switzerland. And my father – he did active service in the Swiss Army during World War II – gave me the impression of a defensive and neutral Confederation. This combination is still the basis of my understanding of history. Moreover, it is also the basis of my political attitude concerning our country.

*Dear host (René Roca),
Mr Regierungsrat (Director of Education
Walter Stählin SZ)
Estimated speakers,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

It's 17 December 1891, in the afternoon. There is a tall, handsome man with a beard standing at the lectern in the National Council and saying: “You made your choice amongst the representatives of the conservative Catholic People's Party. By doing so you demonstrated your will that they should ‘mitraten and mittaten’ (co-counsel and co-operate) in the common work for the country and the people as a Confederation as a whole.”¹ By electing *Josef Zemp* of Lucerne, the Catholic Conservatives attain the status of a governing party, 43 years after the foundation of the Federal State.

That brings me to *Josef Zemp* at today's conference, and this is not a coincidence from the perspective of a CVP politician. A nice coincidence, however, is that I grew up only a few kilometers from *Josef Zemp's* home and that during my apprenticeship as a carpenter in Entlebuch, I regularly passed his memorial in front of the village church. So my illustrious predecessor – *Zemp* had also chaired the National Council – was an idea and a personality that impressed me deeply already in my youth.

Conservative Catholic and modern Switzerland: A contradiction, one might think. This cannot match. And you wonder what *Josef Zemp* and his companions could have contributed to the development of the country. After all, they belonged to the losers of the Sonderbund War, those conservative forces who wanted to hold on to the old order: at the beginning of the new era, the ruling Liberals regarded the Catholics as backwards, this was unceremoniously made understood to them,



Ruedi Lustenberger, President of the National Council 2013/2014. (picture thk)



Dr René Roca talking with the former President of the National Council Ruedi Lustenberger. (picture thk)

calling and tolerating them simply as “second-class Swiss”. This exclusion seemed to inspire the Catholics: There was a liberation movement – similar to the basic movements that we see today. The conservative and Catholic citizens used the resources of the modern constitutional state and founded a number of newspapers (equivalent to today's blogs), as well as associations and parties (now “social media” and virtual networks) to achieve the goal of political equality in the state. Or, as the historian *Urs Altermatt* put it: They represented an anti-modernism using modern means.²

However, in contrast to the peers in other European countries, the local

(Swiss) Catholics supported democracy as a form of government, but rejected the centralist programme of Liberalism. The state should be established in a federalist way. I will come back to this again. The referendum introduced in 1874 proved to be an important resource for the Catholic-conservative side on the way to their destination. It could block the liberal majority in parliament. And the radical Liberals were forced to abandon their claim to supremacy and to include the new player into national politics.

The central breakthrough for the participation of the conservatives on the feder-

“Federalism and Concordance ...”

continued from page 7

al parquet came with the motion remitted on 6 June 1884, which was then called the “revision bomb”⁴ by the press. Its “developer” was Josef Zemp, who won over his influential colleagues *Johann Josef Keel* from the St. Gallen Council and the Ticino *Martino Pedrazzini* for his concern. The motion called for a revision of important articles of the Constitution: An electoral reform with respect to the boundaries of the electoral constituencies and the proportional representation as well as further people’s rights. But at the same time, the motion symbolized the rejection of the systematic opposition, which had prevented almost a dozen bills during the “referendum storms”.

This attitude was accentuated by Josef Zemp in his election speech to the Federal Council a few years later: “So do I add my claim – while assuming the consent of my political friends – that it is not my opinion that in the new office I have to commit myself to the service of a party.”³

The election of the conciliatory and compensatory politician Zemp is marking the first visible step towards a concordance system, which I still consider as ‘modern’ and contemporary and most appropriate for our country. Or, to put it in the words of the esteemed former Senate President and “Landammann” of Innerrhoden: “Switzerland is doomed to concordance”.

Ladies and gentlemen, do not get me wrong. Of course, at that time it was not alone the merit of the Catholic Conservatives. The fact, that after the Sonderbund War in 1847, a Federal State was formed from the loose confederate states is primarily owed to great liberals such as *Henry Dufour*, *Ulrich Ochsenbein* and others. As victors, they did not subjugate the vanquished, but involved them in the creation of the new state. But then it took well about 40 years before the sole rule of

the Liberals in the Federal Council came to an end. It was then, in 1891, also a sign of the times. Josef Zemp and his allies represented a new, pragmatic style, the last combatants of the old Sonderbund War had stepped down. The young Federal State was established. However, to date, the Entlebucher symbolizes the political integration and equality for political Catholicism.

By this integration into the Federal State, the conservative Catholic side introduced that political element into the national policy which is a key to success in our country until today: federalism. The philosophy was of course not quite so new. As early as during the Helvetic (Republic), it was one of the considerations of the opposition, and it was even partly understood by *Napoleon*, because there had been something similar in his native Corsican homeland. “Everything leads to federalism”, he is said to have claimed – in relation to Switzerland of these times – before the Helvetic Consulta in St. Cloud as soon as 1802. The almost first real federalists of the Federal State were the Geneva people around *James Fazy* and of course the Lucerne philosopher *Troxler*, who was considered rather a conservative than a liberal at his death. The Council of States harks back to him, as is common knowledge. But, a politically effective federalism could not have existed throughout Switzerland without the Conservatives.

Of course, from the perspective of the radical liberals, this was then anything but progressive. For a country as ours, federalism as “unity in diversity” is ideal because of its different ethnic groups, languages, cultures, sizes, mentalities and structures. A peaceful coexistence is possible, without having to abdicate to one’s own roots and identities. The independence of the cantons, the consideration for minorities and regional particularities and the equal voice of the citizens keep our country together, as contradictory as that may sound.

Of course there are drawbacks connected to federalist structures, as well: In decentralized structures decision procedures are more complicated, they take more time. Keeping pace with the social and economic development is not easy. Politics is less under pressure this way. We must re-vitalize federalism, which means that we have to adjust or renew the existing in such a way that an appropriate usage becomes possible. Federalism is by no means a phase-out model; the equally-named institute at the University of Freiburg has observed that decentralization and federalism are on the ascendant everywhere.

Just take a look at Scotland or Catalonia. Approximately thirty countries of the world are structured federally due to new claims for autonomy and more independence. Many more are busy organizing their states anew and to say farewell to a culturally uniform state, instead they try to account for cultural diversity and federalist approaches. As you see, former conservative ideas may well develop to become modern and new trends.

Federalism and concordance – for me these are the two essential contributions of Catholicism to modern Switzerland. There are many other contributions, as well, which I am looking forward to learn about.

I wish you an interesting and instructive conference and good conversations. Thank you for your attention. ●

^{1,3} *Bundesrat Dr Zemp – Lebens- und zeitgeschichtliche Erinnerungen*, Josef Winiger, printed and published by Rüber & Cie, Lucerne 1910

² *Die Schweizer Bundesräte – ein biographisches Lexikon*; Ed. Urs Altermatt

⁴ *Josef Zemp – ein Bundesrat schafft den Ausgleich. Sein Leben und Wirken im Dialog mit der Gegenwart. Der historische Kompromiss bahnt sich an*; Urs Altermatt. Ed. “Verein Buchprojekt Bundesrat Josef Zemp”.

C'est le ton qui fait la musique

On the friendly-confederate interaction in the Swiss Parliament

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

If we Swiss hear in the media about how some delegates in the parliaments of our neighboring states insult each other in the ugliest manner, this rude type of interaction between representatives of various parties strikes us as deeply disconcerting. However, in recent times there is also a certain pitch to be heard which does not really match our country's customs. But normally the style of interaction in the Swiss legislative and executive is cooperative, matching with our cooperative authorities system. A large majority of Swiss politicians who have been given a mandate by the sovereign know very well: Switzerland, the nation established by the will of the people lives on the presupposition that every single citizen, with or without a political office, takes on his or her responsibility by supporting the delicate direct democratic and federal structure.

In Switzerland there are no single party governments; the cooperation between members of various parties is crucial at every level of the state (nation, cantons, communes). This is particularly true in the communes: when they are tackling the pending issues it is often of little importance that there are representatives of various parties working together. In addition, many community councillors are not members of any party. Communal elections in Switzerland are mainly personal elections: people know each other and they know whether or not someone is an honest person willing to rate his personal interests second to the common good.

Cooperative authorities without a boss

In Switzerland there is no head of state – neither in the cantons nor in the communes, but the executives are cooperative authorities deciding by majority vote. The Swiss Federal President is actually “President of the Federal Council”, that is, he is not the President of Switzerland but only the one of the seven Federal Councillors who chairs the common meetings and makes or receives official visits. The fact that he has not more power than his colleagues is underlined by the fact that he is elected for one year by Parliament and then returns to being a “common” Federal Councillor. And everyone of them will become Federal President once, one after the other: if one of the Federal Councillors is in the office for more than seven years, he can be sure to become Federal President, one day.

By the way: the “Supreme Swiss” is not the president of the executive but the



Ständeratssaal vor der Renovation. (picture thk)

president of the Federal Council which is elected by the National Council, also for one year. He chairs the sessions not only of the National Council but also of the United Federal Assembly which is convening in the room of the National Council, mainly in order to elect the Federal Councillors and the Federal Judges. To this purpose the members of the Council of States join their colleagues of the parliament and assume their reserved positions at the wall of the room, each two under their canton's coat of arms. For all other parliamentary tasks the Council of States and the National Council are debating and deciding independently, and they are completely equal in rights and importance. Needless to say that also the “Supreme Swiss”, the President of the National Council, does not have any more power than the other councillors. Only at a pairing of votes has he the decisive vote.

The Government Councillors in the cantons are also elected periodically – I just had to look up who is currently acting as the President of the Government Council in the Canton of Zurich where I live. For politically interested Swiss it is standard knowledge to be informed about authorities and current political issues in one's home canton, but the current name of the head of government (elected also for only one year in Zurich) is of lesser importance. The Communal Presidents, however, are generally elected for longer periods – of course this depends on the canton or the commune in question –, this is why everyone in the village or city knows him by name. But he is only “primus inter pares”. The other Communal Councillors are just as known and recognized in the local pub and they know

the villagers in turn. Nobody would imagine that a Communal Councillor or President was superior to the other citizens. In the small communes they have their office next to their job/business, anyway. In their primary profession they might be a farmer or craftsman, a housewife or teacher.

Principle of secondary occupation and free vote

Also the members of the cantonal parliaments and even the National Councillors and the members of the Council of State exert their office next to their primary profession. *Ruedi Lustenberger*, for example, whose inauguration speech as President of the National Council is partially reproduced here as an appendix to this article, is “eidgenössisch diplomierter Schreinermeister” i.e. graduate carpenter, heading his own business, a carpentry. This would be unthinkable in Germany or France. There the members of parliament exert their office full-time and are, consequently, depending on its revenues. If a German Member of Parliament is no longer elected, he has to look for a new job at first. And he also depends on his party: ahead of a parliament debate, his parliamentary party issues a party line to which each member is committed. Those who dare to deviate from this line in a vote will be put under a lot of pressure.

In contrast, a Swiss member of the National Council or the Council of State is free and independent in every respect. If he is no longer elected by the people, he still has his farm or his law office or his carpentry; he just has more time for it now. And in every parliamentary vote he is free to vote

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"C'est le ton qui fait ..."

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according to his personal position. It frequently happens that not all councillors of one party hold the same opinion.

Cooperation across party lines and language cultures

In Switzerland, unlike in our neighbouring states, there is no governing party or coalition on the one hand and an opposition on the other. The Federal Council and Parliament always consist of several parties. In the "Bundesrat" (Federal Council) with its seven members, five parties are currently represented. In the National Council and the Council of States, there are three small parties (Greens, Green Liberals and BDP) and other individual Council members in addition to the factions of the four major parties (SVP, SP, CVP and FDP (Swiss People's Party, Social Democratic Party, Christian People's Party and Liberals)). The individual Council members each join a faction in order to participate in various committees when preparing business. There are four language cultures whereof at least three (German Switzerland, French-speaking Switzerland and Ticino) are represented in the Federal Assembly. The current Chancellor, in other words the Chief of Staff of the Federal Council, *Corina Casanova*, comes from the trilingual Canton of Graubünden and masters all four national languages. Since all have to get along with each other – in Switzerland this interaction is called "concordance principle" – the collegial tone is usually friendly or at least objective, although there might be great differences in substance.

Elections of the Council President – an example for the friendly confederate dealings with one another

According to Article 152 of the Federal Constitution each Council selects one President and two Vice-Presidents from its members for the period of one year. Re-election for the following year is excluded. In addition, the *Standing Orders of the National Council* (GRN) determine in Article 6 that the size of the factions and the three official languages have to be considered. In the *Standing Orders of the Council of States* (GRS) Article 3, such regulation is missing. However, it naturally is part of the political culture that also in this chamber parties and linguistic cultures do alter.

This way in the past eight years, for example, the National Council appointed its

Governing Board alternately from the four largest political groups. Each party chosen by consultation appoints one of its council members. This member is regularly elected with large or even vast majority. Thus, it obtains almost all votes from the other parties, as well. In 2012, a female president from the fifth-largest group, the Green Party, was elected for the first time. There were five Swiss Germans, two French-speaking and one Ticino among the eight past presidents.

While I am writing this in the afternoon of 24 November 2014, the winter session of the Councils has just started. On top of the agenda on the first session day is the election of the new presidents. This is going on right now. Nevertheless, last year's proceedings will be documented below as an example.

Council of States: Winter Session 2013 – First Session – 25.11.13 – Extracts from the minutes

"1. Election of the President of the Council of States

1. Election du président du Conseil des Etats

Il presidente (*Lombardi Filippo*, presidente): È proposto il Signor Hannes Germann. Invito gli scrutatori Hêche a Bischofberger a consegnare le schede di voto.

The former president, the Ticino *Filippo Lombardi*: Proposed is Mr *Hannes Germann*. I request the tellers *Hêche* and *Bischofberger* to distribute the ballots.

Outcome of the election – Résultat du scrutin, handed out ballots – Bulletin délivrés 43, received – rentrés 43, empty – blancs 1, invalid – nuls 0, valid – valables 42, absolute majority – Majorité absolue 22. Chosen – Est élu Germann Hannes by 42 votes.

President *Filippo Lombardi* congratulates *Hannes Germann* in his Italian mother tongue for brilliant election results, presents him with a bouquet of flowers and invites him to take his place on the president's chair. Prolonged applause.

Germann Hannes takes the chair. *Germann Hannes* prend la présidence."

Source: *Official Bulletin, Winter Session 2013*. Transcripts of the National Council and the Council of States from 25.11.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Comments :

- The candidate received 42 votes out of 43 attending persons, in other words also from almost all other politically quite different-minded colleagues.
- The minutes are bilingual in German and French which means that all bills and ballots are bilingually spo-

ken and recorded. Each member of the Council gives his votes in his language, except for the small minority of Ticino. Each of them chooses German or French as his councillor language. As you can see here, a Ticino speaks but once spontaneously Italian, if need be. The two newly elected presidents switch between French and Italian and this way show their affiliation with the other language cultures.

Extracts from the inaugural address of the Council of States President Hannes Germann (SVP, SH), elected in 2013

(picture parlament.ch)

"Our nation is based on the division of powers and a federal structure. Our direct democracy guarantees far-reaching rights to the people, and our two-chamber system is a model highly appreciated everywhere in the world. Four

approved national languages, different cultures and religions, big and small cantons, towns and rural areas unite under one flag; this is something unique. This is Switzerland's strength. We must watch over the fact that this specific feature will be preserved, and support the institutions that protect it – the Council of States is part of it. The small chamber was actually established according to the Constitution of 1848 to counterbalance the National Assembly.

In addition to guard the autonomy of the cantons, the Council of States watches over the provision that the voice of the minorities is heard and that the input of the Latin cantons for the federation is appreciated. Like the majority of the French-speaking cantons, Schaffhausen lies at the foot of the Jura-mountains. The drinking water is as calcareous here as in Delémont or Neuenburg. [...]

Every canton has its own history that shapes its relationships with the other cantons. It is worth to take the trouble to be interested in them to better understand our confederates."

Source: *Official Bulletin, Winter Session 2013*. Transcripts of the National Council and Council of States from 25.11.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Extracts from the inaugural address of National Council President Ruedi Lustenberger (CVP, LU), elected in 2013



(picture thk)

"For the confidence that you placed in me with the election to the President of your Council and the United Federal Assembly, I thank you from my heart. Vi ringrazio di cuore per la fiducia che mi accordate con l'elezione a presidente della vostra Camera e dell'Assemblea federale plenaria. Je vous remercie de tout coeur pour la confiance que vous me témoignez en m'élisant à la présidence de votre conseil et de l'Assemblée fédérale. [...]

Before one may take one's seat on the Council President's chair, one has to complete – so to say – a two-year apprenticeship as Vice President. I was lucky enough to have two good teachers. In the last two years I often remembered my apprenticeship as a carpenter forty-five years back, and I discovered some parallels to that time. *Hansjörg Walter* and *Maya Graf* bear a certain resemblance to my former teachers: He, my former teacher, was a very cautious, generous businessman and liberal mayor of Entlebuch; she, his wife and my mentor, was a smart, dedicated businesswoman and mother who always kept track of everything. And next to them was the apprentice *Lustenberger*, an inquisitive boy who at lunch time preferred to discuss world politics with the boss and sports with his wife rather than carpentry. Indeed, that was part of our dual education system in those days and still is now: during the appren-

ticeship you do not receive merely practical training and professional knowledge, the period of apprenticeship is also a school of life par excellence. So we have every reason in the future to take care of this unique system that opens up so many good opportunities to our young people, today more than ever. The apprenticeship does not lead to a dead end, but is a stretch of your life path. It is no coincidence that Europe and many countries of the world show great interest in our dual system of vocational education and are particularly interested in the apprenticeship. Every time I am happy our young people perform so well at the World Skills Competition. [...]

In 2013, our Confederation celebrates a special anniversary that indeed deserves to be a briefly mentioned due to its historical significance. The union of the thirteen old cantons has its 500th anniversary on 17 December. In the period before 1513 peace and harmony did not prevail among the various classes, quite the contrary: since the cities of Lucerne, Berne and Zurich pursued a different policy than the rural original cantons, they stood on the brink of a civil war. Following the wise advice of *Niklaus von Flüe* in Ranft, the "Tagsatzung" (Diet) approved the so-called *Stanser Verkommnis* on 22 December 1481. As a result, Fribourg, Solothurn, Schaffhausen, Basel and in 1513 finally Appenzell were sequentially allowed to join the Old Swiss Confederation.

The differences in interest between town and country are by no means new for the Confederation. Recently, in our

country there is a tendency towards this increasingly noticeable. We are well advised to commit ourselves to avoiding this trend to continue, because history teaches us that it is important to talk to one another and negotiate to find solutions and to be ready to somewhat move away from one's own position, to take a step in direction of the counterpart. This recipe has been proven over centuries, and in 1848, during the transition from the confederation of states to the present federal state, it passed the litmus test in an impressive way. [...]

The Swiss "Tagsatzung" created the concordance system. It was applied for the first time in 1891 with the election of *Joseph Zemp* as Federal Councillor. The concordance guarantees a balanced policy in our state, which is based on direct democracy. When we think of the difficult negotiations to form a coalition government in neighboring Germany, we may be proud of our system and give it without hesitation the label *swissness*.

[...] An experienced, skilled craftsman acts in the same manner in politics as in business: take effort together with the employees, to perform the assigned work well, correctly and to the satisfaction of the customers. Our customers are the citizens of the Confederation. For them, we want to do a good job. [...]"

Source: Official Bulletin, Winter Session 2013. Transcripts of the National Council and Council of States from 25.11.2013

(Translation Current Concerns)

National Council – Winter Session 2013 – First meeting – 25.11.13 – Extracts from the transcripts



Maya Graf
(picture
parlament.ch)

Maya Graf, President, GP BL: "It is my pleasure and honor to guide as my last official act the election of a new President of the National Council. As President of the National Council I step down today with great satisfaction and many experiences. I hope that I have executed this year's task in the spirit of the Parliament.

Much obliged! Merci beaucoup! Grazie di cuore! Grazia fitg! (Standing Ovation) – Thank you very much, your appreciation moves me greatly!"

First election of the President of the National Council for 2013/14 1. Election du président du Conseil national pour 2013/14 Ruedi Lustenberger is elected with 175 of 183 valid ballots.

Presidential election 24 November 2014



Claude Hêche
(picture
parlament.ch)

A year later, on 24 November 2014, *Ruedi Lustenberger* led the election of a new President of the National Council, *Stephane Rossini* (SP, VS) and then ceded his place to his successor. In the Council of States *Claude Hêche* (SP JU) was elected President of the Council, with 44 of 46 votes.

Extract from the speech of the new President of the Council of States (translation): "Dear colleagues, I see in this election a sign of affection towards the youngest Swiss canton and its population. By entrusting me with this office, you hand over a beautiful bouquet of flowers at the end of the celebra-

tions for the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Canton of Jura. I will use my position to honor the founding fathers of the canton, who fought and won for the realization of their ideals. Let us recall that this important change in the political structure of Switzerland was an act of respect for democracy. It testifies that the greatness of Swiss federalism lives. A country that dares change its inner borders, is a country which we can be proud of.

I am proud that I will be President of one of the two chambers of parliament as the first representative of the Canton of Jura. With this my canton proves, that it is worthy of the trust, which was awarded it by the Swiss population and the cantons on 24 September 1978. [...] The next step will be the election of a Jurassian to the Federal Council, but I am not willing to announce a date nor a name!"

The “Seville Statement on Violence”

In November 1986, the 25th UNESCO General Conference decided by its resolution 25C/Res.7.1 to disseminate worldwide the statement on the question of violence formulated by 20 scientists on 16 May 1986, as a contribution to the International Year of Peace 1986 and to use it as a basis for their own expert meetings. The “Seville Statement”, in which the Spanish biochemist Federico Mayor was also involved, who was elected as UNESCO Director-General at the end of 1987, was and still is an intellectual encouragement to the UNESCO’s efforts at international understanding, peaceful co-operation and respect for human rights. UNESCO has by now disseminated the text of this statement in its six official languages, the UNESCO National Commissions of Finland, Sweden, Greece and Italy in four other languages. In a situation that leave many people speechless, the UNESCO as an information service of the German UNESCO Commission wanted to bring the “Seville Statement” up for discussion in German language as well for the first time in 1991. The statement vigorously opposes the fatalistic adherence to the idea that violence and aggression were a sort of “natural law”, and no activities, no matter how well-intended they might be, could help it. The “Seville Statement” has by now been approved by more than 100 national and international scientific societies and associations, including the International Council of Psychologists and in the US, the national associations of psychology, social psychology and anthropology (American Psychological Association; Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues; American Anthropological Association). (Translation Current Concerns)

Believing that it is our responsibility to address from our particular disciplines the most dangerous and destructive activities of our species, violence and war; recognising that science is a human cultural product which cannot be definitive or all encompassing; and gratefully acknowledging the support of the authorities of Seville and representatives of the Spanish UNESCO, we, the undersigned scholars from around the world and from relevant sciences, have met and arrived at the following Statement on Violence.

In it, we challenge a number of alleged biological findings that have been used, even by some in our disciplines, to justify violence and war. Because the alleged findings have contributed to an atmosphere of pessimism in our time, we submit that the open, considered rejection of these misstatements can contrib-

ute significantly to the International Year of Peace.

Misuse of scientific theories and data to justify violence and war is not new but has been made since the advent of modern science. For example, the theory of evolution has been used to justify not only war, but also genocide, colonialism, and suppression of the weak.

We state our position in the form of five propositions. We are aware that there are many other issues about violence and war that could be fruitfully addressed from the standpoint of our disciplines, but we restrict ourselves here to what we consider a most important first step.

Ethology

It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors.

Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal species, only a few cases of destructive intraspecies fighting between organised groups have ever been reported among naturally living species, and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons. Normal predatory feeding upon other species cannot be equated with intraspecies violence. Warfare is a peculiarly human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals.

The fact that warfare has changed so radically over time indicates that it is a product of culture. Its biological connection is primarily through language which makes possible the co-ordination of groups, the transmission of technology, and the use of tools. War is biologically possible, but it is not inevitable, as evidenced by its variation in occurrence and nature over time and space. There are cultures which have not engaged in war for centuries, and there are cultures which have engaged in war frequently at some times and not at others.

Biogenetics

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature.

While genes are involved at all levels of nervous system function, they provide a developmental potential that can be actualised only in conjunction with the ecological and social environment. While individuals vary in their predispositions to be affected by their experience, it is the interaction between their genetic endowment and conditions of nurturance that determines their personalities. Except for rare pathologies, the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence. Neither do they determine the opposite. While genes are co-involved in es-

tablishing our behavioural capacities, they do not by themselves specify the outcome.

Evolutionary Research

It is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behaviour more than for other kinds of behaviour.

In all well-studied species, status within the group is achieved by the ability to cooperate and to fulfil social functions relevant to the structure of that group. “Dominance” involves social bondings and affiliations; it is not simply a matter of the possession and use of superior physical power, although it does involve aggressive behaviours. Where genetic selection for aggressive behaviour has been artificially instituted in animals, it has rapidly succeeded in producing hyper-aggressive individuals; this indicates that aggression was not maximally selected under natural conditions. When such experimentally-created hyper-aggressive animals are present in a social group, they either disrupt its social structure or are driven out. Violence is neither in our evolutionary legacy nor in our genes.

Neurophysiology

It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a “violent brain.”

While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialised. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

Psychology

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by “instinct” or any single motivation.

The emergence of modern warfare has been a journey from the primacy of emotional and motivational factors, sometimes called “instincts”, to the primacy of cognitive factors.

Modern war involves institutional use of personal characteristics such as obedience, suggestibility, and idealism, social skills such as language, and rational considerations such as cost-calculation, planning, and information processing. The technology of modern war has exaggerated traits associated with violence both in the training of actual combatants and in the preparation of support for war in the general population. As a result of this exaggeration, such traits are often mistak-

Increasing youth violence – challenging the democratic state

by Dr Eliane Gautschi, special education teacher and psychologist and by lic. phil. & MA Moritz Nestor, psychologist and anthropologist

For years, scientific studies have reported the continuously increasing violence among young people. In Switzerland violence and threats of violence (including personal injury) increased fivefold since 1984/86.¹ This trend was confirmed again at the 5th network meeting of the cantonal and municipal contact points for violence prevention in Aarau on 22 May 2014. Such developments should not be taken lightly. Living together in a democratic state only works if citizens recognise the constitution and law as a binding foundation and if these are passed on from one generation to the next. It is up to us adults to introduce the adolescents therein. This foundation must be maintained, otherwise interpersonal relationships are destroyed, living together is shattered and the communal fabric breaks apart.

No turnaround

Between February 2012 and March 2014 various media reported a decrease in youth crime in Switzerland. These reports contradict the results of various studies that have been working on this issue for a long time. The reason for the reported decrease seems to be that the number of teenagers decreased by about 30% from 2006 to 2013. Therefore the absolute figures admittedly have fallen from 2006 to 2013. However, the percentage of young people who committed crimes increased altogether. At the network meeting of 22 May Thomas Vollmer, head of the youth pro-

tection programmes at the Federal Social Insurance Office (FSIO) therefore warned against putting one's hands into one's lap, since the figures are in contradiction to the trend which were assessed by long-term studies. Vollmer referred to the first results of the "International Self-reported Delinquency survey (ISRD 3 study)"² for Switzerland, submitted by Prof Dr iur Martin Killias, Professor of Criminology, and Anastasia Lukash at the network meeting on 22 May 2014. The ISRD is an international study on self-reported juvenile delinquency, which was carried out in 12 countries for the first time in 1992 (ISRD-1). The second survey was carried out in 2006 (ISRD-2) in more than 30 countries. Currently, the third study (ISRD-3) is conducted in more than 30 countries. In Switzerland and other countries it was already completed. As Switzerland participated in all three studies, trend statements as presented on 22 May in Aarau, are possible. In 2013 nearly 3,000 high school students at the age of 13 to 16 years from all over Switzerland were questioned (ISRD-3). The results were compared by Killias et al. with the results of ISRD-1 (1992) and ISRD-2 (2006).

Increasing number of bicycle thefts, burglaries, robberies, assaults and drug sales

The figures of the study indicate an increase instead of a decrease in youth violence in Switzerland: In the areas of bike theft, burglary, robbery, assault or drug sales the number of offenses rose in

2013, compared to 2006 and 1992. Cases of shoplifting and group fights increased again in 2006 after a temporary decrease. (Table 1)

(N = number of interviewees)	1992 (N=529)	2006 (N=3648)	2013 (N=2857)
assault	0.5%	1.2%	3.2%
drug sales	1.5%	2.8%	6.3%
bike theft	1.5%	3.7%	6.8%
burglary	0.6%	0.9%	1.8%
robbery	0.0%	0.9%	1.5%
group fights	10.0%	8.4%	8.5%
shop lifting	15.3%	9.1%	13.5%

Table 1

Increasing number of victims

The number of victims was recorded in the same study. It had increased, as well. (Table 2).

(N = number of interviewees)	2006 (N=3648)	2013 (N=2857)
victims of theft	22.6%	27.8%
victims of robbery	2.3%	3.5%
hurt (medicated)	2.4%	4.4%

Table 2

The alarming rise of various offences also includes a growing number of victims. From now on they will bear an experience, which has deeply affected their mind. The trust in interpersonal relationship is always damaged in addition to possible physical consequences; the result can be fears, distrust, resignation or feelings of revenge.

Declining victim reporting

The increase in offences cannot be explained by the fact that they were more often reported to the police, since the willingness of victims to do so declined between 2006 and 2013 (Table 3).

(N = number of interviewees)	2006 (N=3648)	2013 (N=2857)
victims of theft	32.3%	23.4%
victims of robbery	22.3%	22.2%

Table 3

"The 'Seville Statement' ..."

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en to be the causes rather than the consequences of the process.

Conclusion

We conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors.

Just as "wars begin in the minds of men", peace also begins in our minds. The

same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace.

The responsibility lies with each of us.
Seville, 16 May 1986

List of signataires

David Adams, Psychology, USA – S.A. Barnett, Ethology, Australia – N.P. Bechtereva, Neurophysiology, USSR – Bonnie Frank Carter, Psychology, USA – José M. Rodríguez Delgado, Neurophysiology, Spain – José Luis Díaz, Ethology, Mexico – Andrzej Eliaszyk, Individual Differences Psychology, Poland - Santiago Genovés, Biological Anthropology, Mexico – Benson E. Ginsburg, Behavior Genetics, USA – Jo Groebel, Social Psychology, Germany – Samir-Kumar Ghosh, Sociology, India – Robert Hinde, Animal Behaviour, UK – Richard E. Leakey, Physical Anthropology, Kenya – Taha H. Malasi, Psychiatry, Kuwait - J. Martín Ramírez, Psychobiology, Spain – Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Biochemistry, Spain – Diana L. Mendoza, Ethology, Spain – Ashis Nandy, Political Psychology, India – John Paul Scott, geneticist, Animal Behaviour, USA – Riitta Wahlstrom, Psychology, Finland

Source: <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/seville.pdf>

"Increasing youth violence – ..."

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The declining number of victims making a complaint to the police is thought-provoking. It is important to know why the use of the rule of law is no longer regarded as a matter of course by the upcoming generation.

Acts of violence under the influence of high-percentage alcoholic drinks and/or cannabis are on the increase

The analyses of Kiliass and Lukash are particularly alarming because they showed a likely important correlation between the violent acts of adolescents and the regular consumption of high-percentage alcoholic drinks and/or cannabis. (Table 4)

(N = number of interviewees)	2006 (N=3648)	2013 (N=2857)
Alcohol total	39.1%	42.6%
Beer and/or wine	38.8%	37.7%
high-percentage alcoholic drinks	16.2%	27.7%
Cannabis	7.2%	11.8%

Table 4

The disinhibiting effects of alcohol and the increase of uncontrolled emotional outbursts, that make the drinkers tend

to violence, have been known for a long time. But the severe disorders of the mental emotional development of potheads are hardly ever noticed and still trivialised in this country. They range from increased susceptibility for suicide³ to psychoses accumulating among potheads – these are serious excitation and delusional states, often with dangerous consequences for life and limb, culminating in violence and murder! For several years German newspapers have reported about the shocking results of the cannabis study from *The Lancet* in 1987. The "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" of 26 April 2014 wrote:

"Out of a hundred respondents who had smoked up to ten joints, fifteen developed the typical symptoms of schizophrenia within the next 15 years. Among those who had indicated more than fifty joints there were even thirty. In contrast, only five of a hundred subjects who had never come in contact with cannabis showed a schizophrenic disease pattern (The Lancet, 26.12.1987). 2002 and 2012, the study participants were interviewed again, more or less with the same result. [...] 'There is no safe use of cannabis in childhood and adolescence' says Rainer Thomasius, an addiction expert of the University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf. He deals with adolescents who

*suffer from serious disorders. According to a NDR report, the number of cases in which young people were taken to psychiatry after cannabis use tripled in the last ten years."*⁴

Furthermore, the amount of the inhaled addictive substance THC per gram of hashish has increased so dramatically since the late sixties, including the hashish bred in indoor facilities, that the addiction-producing effect of hashish may often approach that of heroin, today!

The development must be stopped

The first results of the new study by Prof Dr Killias et al. show how a disturbing trend in society continues, which was noticed already several years ago in comprehensive studies conducted by the Suva Central Office for Statistics in Accident Insurance (SSUV)⁵ and the Criminological Institute of the University Zurich.⁶ *Current Concerns* reported.⁷ The study of SSUV noted at that time that violence-related injury in the public sphere had increased massively and had accelerated since the mid-90s. In 2011 a further study of the *Criminological Institute Zurich* proved that, regarding security, Switzerland had sunk to the European level⁸ and that in Switzerland at that time the rates were already higher, especially in bur-

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Scientific evidence on cannabis known, but ignored for a long time

eg. *Imn*. It was as early as at the end of the eighties of the last century that the *Association for the Promotion of Psychological Knowledge of Human Nature* (VPM) has researched and analyzed the scientific evidences concerning cannabis to disseminate them with the help of scientific publications, seminars and symposia. Just to mention two of the most important events: every year since 1987 on 26 June the association VPM, in cooperation with UNO¹ and together with leading international researchers in the fields of science, drug prevention and combatting drugs organized over several years the United Nations "International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking" in Switzerland.

On 19/20 November 1990 VPM staged the "I. International Symposium on Drugs in Switzerland 'Yes to Life – No to Drugs'".² More than twenty leading international scientists in the field of prevention and illicit drug trafficking such as *Gabriel Nahas, Jonas Hartelius, Thomas Ced-erquist, Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser, Karl-Ludwig Täschner* have present-

ed their findings and discussed "ways to a drug-free society and the pathophysiology of drugs." On the occasion, Dr phil Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser, psychologist and historian, presented the "VPM's drug prevention concept", not a single word of which had to be taken back until today.³

The extensive documentation can be read in English and German. Given today's development, which the study of *Killias* and *Lukash* impressively shows, it is still of utmost importance. Against these efforts aiming at the maintenance of public health, a ten-year media campaign was run against Dr Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser and the VPM at the time, in order to suppress their voices and the contributions from the vast majority of the world's leading experts. One of the leading campaigners then stated with regard to the motif behind the campaign: "The VPM is in the way with regard to the drugs issue." The time has come to take objectively and un-biased note of the research, the collection of facts and the publications of that time, already 25 years

ago. The cemeteries have been filled with drug-related deaths – and none of it would have been necessary. As, among other things, the survey of *Killias* and *Lukash* shows, the campaign of lies only postponed the real problem at the expense of countless addicts and their families. Since 1989/90, Dr Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser had aimed at seeking and finding "ways towards a drug-free society", a problem which is still unsolved.

1 See eg. www.kmdd.de/-26-06-13--26--Juni-2013-Anti-Drogen-Tag.htm (inspected at 6.9.2014 12:48:47)

2 *Association for the Promotion of Psychological Knowledge of Human Nature (Ed.): First International Symposium on Drugs in Switzerland 'Yes to Life – No to Drugs'. Towards a drug-free society and pathophysiology of drugs. Verlag Menschenkenntnis 1991.*

3 *Buchholz-Kaiser, Annemarie: The drug prevention concept of VPM.: In: Association for the Promotion of Psychological Knowledge of Human Nature (Ed.): First International Symposium on Drugs in Switzerland 'Yes to Life – No to Drugs'. Towards a drug-free society and pathophysiology of drugs. Verlag Menschenkenntnis, 1991, page 81–94.*

Let us promote and maintain good books as cultural assets

The “Bücher-Chorb” (basket of books) – An example of a cooperative bookstore as a valuable asset to community culture and personality development

by Urs Knoblauch, cultural journalist and high school teacher, Fruthwilen, Canton of Thurgau

For many years now the cooperative bookstore “Bücher-Chorb” has been in existence in Aadorf in the canton of Thurgau. The experienced bookseller *Gisela Hassenstein* has established the “Bücher-Chorb” as a cooperative bookstore together with parents, teachers, friends and other book-lovers, all united by their interest in good books. The members’ sense of ethical responsibility shown by working together voluntarily for their culturally valuable objective provided the impetus for Mrs Hassenstein to contribute in this way to the common good and to the culture in her community, in spite of her rather modest salary. The cooperative interaction for the common good has a long tradition in our culture and in the direct democratic political system of the Swiss Confederation. It is a social way of life, helpful in managing life’s work together successful-

ly. Mutual help and the principle of “one for all and all for one” are the fundamental concern and principle of a cooperative and they also correspond with the social nature of man. Precisely in economically challenging times, it gives individuals the chance to contribute in a responsible manner. We may not allow that competition and pure profit maximization enable a few large publishers to control and dominate the book market.

So it is all the more gratifying that a dedicated team of volunteers, together with all the members of the cooperative and their customers, contribute to the success of the “Bücher-Chorb” with their ideas and their commitment. The guiding principles “What we want” were also developed in a joint action. They are now available on the neatly arranged website www.buecher-chorb.ch, together



(picture ma)

with lots of information as well as ordering options.

“With love and skill, the cooperative bookstore ‘Bücher-Chorb’ has dedicated its work to books as a valuable cultural asset. However, in times of globalization

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“Increasing youth violence – ...”

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glaries and assaults/threats, than in about half of the European countries.⁹

What needs to be done?

Education and training as the basis

Prevention of violence begins with the education of our adolescent generation. There, the psychological fundamentals for a healthy sense of justice and human sensitivity are laid in the child. This mental step of maturity leads to the development of a healthy conscience as a guide for assessing one’s own and other people’s actions. Children and adolescents need to learn to respect the principles of our constitutional state, to take care for themselves and their fellow humans and to take precautions so that no harm will be done to anybody. This includes showing repentance, possibly admitting one’s own guilt and making amends or vice-versa reaching out for a conciliatory solution. School is challenged as well. Teachers, as important attachment figures outside the family, have the task to support the children and adolescents, to introduce the subject matter with care and to exploit the class community as a smaller copy of society in order to teach the sense of justice and social human bonds. Today many children and adolescents suffer from the fact that they have no longer any guidance and role models, neither at home nor at school, that would give them orientation and a sense and purpose in life.¹⁰ They feel lost

inwardly and lean on ineligible role models in the electronic world or show business. Often the children and adolescents also lack solid and specific knowledge of the culpability or severity of an offense. As to this respect as well, it will be up to us as adults to teach the rising generation the basics and to demand compliance to the law from them.¹¹ The reasons for aggressive and violent behaviour are known today, violence prevention programmes must build on these if they are to have a lasting effect.¹²

¹ See Killias, Martin et al.: *Studie zur Kriminalität und Opfererfahrungen der Schweizer Bevölkerung. Analysen im Rahmen der schweizerischen Opferbefragung 2011*. Herausgegeben vom Kriminologischen Institut der Universität Zürich. (Study on crime and victim experiences of the Swiss population. Analyses within the context of the Swiss victim survey, 2011. Published by the Institute of Criminology at the University of Zurich.) p. 29.

² Killias, Martin and Anastasia Lukash. “*International Self-reported Delinquency survey (ISR3) Erste Ergebnisse für die Schweiz. Präsentation 5. Netzwerktreffen “Gewaltpräsentation”*. (First results for Switzerland. Presentation 5th network meeting “Presentation of violence”. Aarau 22.5.14).

³ *Jugend ohne Drogen: Fakten zu Cannabis* (Youth without drugs: Facts on cannabis.) www.jod.ch (consulted at: 09/06/2014 12:29:18)

⁴ Jörg Albrecht: Bis die Birne qualmt. (Until the bonce is smoldering.) In: “*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*” dated 26 April 2014. www.FrankfurterAllgemeine.Zeitung.net/aktuell/wissen/medizin/zusammenhang-zwischen-cannabiskonsum-und-psychoesen-12911918.html (consulted at: 09/06/2014 12:29:31)

⁵ See Lanfranconi, Bruno. *Neuer Höchststand der Gewalt unter jungen Menschen. Ergebnisse der Statistik der Unfallversicherung nach UVG*. Herausgegeben von der Sammelstelle für die Statis-

tik der Unfallversicherung UVG. (New peak of violence among young people. Results of the statistics in Accident Insurance. Published by the Central Office for Statistics of the Accident Insurance (SSUV)). 31 August 2011

⁶ See Killias, Martin, Walser Simone. *Kriminologisches Institut der Universität Zürich. Jugenddelinquenz im Kanton St.Gallen. Bericht zuhanden des Bildungsdepartementes und des Sicherheits- und Justizdepartements des Kantons St. Gallen*. (Criminological Institute of the University of Zurich. Juvenile delinquency in the Canton of St. Gallen. Report to the Canton of St. Gallen Education Department and the Departments for Security and Justice). August 2009.

See Killias, Martin et al.: Study on crime and victim experiences of the Swiss population. Analyses within the context of the Swiss victim survey, 2011. Published by the Institute of Criminology at the University of Zurich

⁷ See *Current Concerns* No. 2 dated 9.1.2012

⁸ See Killias, Martin et al.: Study on crime and victim experiences in the Canton of Berne. Swiss population. Analyses within the context of the Swiss victim survey, 2011. Published by the Institute of Criminology at the University of Zurich

⁹ See. Killias, Martin et al.: Study on crime and victim experiences of the Swiss population. Analyses within the context of the Swiss victim survey, 2011. Published by the Institute of Criminology at the University of Zurich. p 29

¹⁰ This is a development that will be exacerbated by Curriculum 21 planned for German-speaking Switzerland, since there teachers merely act as facilitators and animators providing learning environments to the children.

¹¹ For making up for this lack of introduction to the basics of a constitutional state, the excellent children’s and youth nonfiction book is suitable “*Kennst du das Recht?*” (Do you know the law?) by lawyer Caroline Walser Kessel, Editions Weblaw. Berne 2011

¹² See Alfred Burger and Eliane Gautschi. *Jugend und Gewalt. Unsere Kinder und Jugendlichen brauchen Erziehung*. (Youth and violence. Our children and young people need education.) Published by *Zeit-Fragen*. Zurich, 2011

"To Make Use of Our Potential ..."

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and of structural change, small book shops have difficulties to compete with large bookstores and their broad range of immediately available books.

It is a great advantage of our cooperative bookstore, however, that – in addition to profiting from the profound professional experience of our employees – we can also draw on the cooperative members' extensive knowledge of books. In this way, we are able to enjoy a bibliophilic wealth of ideas otherwise rarely available. It is our primary concern to use this in order to serve our customers using our broad experience and a wide range of expertise.

Our strength lies in the cultivation of a range of ethically sound, informative and entertaining books, which gladden the heart, stimulate the senses, and sharpen the understanding. We are always happy to assist our customers in finding a second-hand book, and of course you can buy or order any current book.

In addition, we pay special attention to providing books for children and the young with an educationally valuable content. It is more important today than it has ever been before to teach adolescents human values and sympathy and to strengthen their community spirit through the medium of literature.

Parents, grandparents, teachers – all our customers – should be able to 'feel good' when they buy books in the 'Bücher-Chorb'. We take the time to provide you with our professional advice, also gladly over a cup of coffee."

Books, the development of the personality and democracy

It is easily understandable that the authorities and the population of Aadorf are very grateful for this small cultural centre, this meeting place with its excellent advice and carefully chosen books. Many parents increasingly realize that good books can convey and illustrate universally valid



core values such as honesty, respect, helpfulness, and human sympathy and compassion in the home, at school, and in society in general.

Good books, great literature, and the experience of reading are extremely important in developing empathy and a sense of responsibility, as well as for the forming of the mind, the values, the character. In his article "Reading – the royal road to the education of the mind" (*Current Concerns* No 18 of 10 August 2014), *Peter Küpfer* has highlighted this in an impressive way. Especially at a time when these crucial ethical attitudes are hardly taught any longer, it is vitally important to return to values that provide social cohesion and classical and humanistic ideals. In addition to general education, delving into a subject or into a human problem make reading good books, thinking and talking about them a very significant contribution to education in democracy, ethics and civic responsibility. It is the quiet contemplation in reading and the internal processing of a good text that usually lack with the consumption of modern electronic media and its bustle. These media can certainly be useful working tools and aids. Schools and parents should, however, ensure that the children do not use these media prematurely, excessively and never without the necessary ethical responsibility of adults. Careful reading, writing and discussing one's ideas in a direct interpersonal relation are irreplaceable and

crucial cultural experiences that only the good book can provide. Writing, reading and learning should always be aligned to the personal perfection and the common and peaceful interaction. Hence schools, parents and policy makers share a responsibility for the preservation of book culture and also for the return to the great tradition of good textbooks in Switzerland's schools. The many customers and friends of the bookshop "Bücher-Chorb" are an example of how to exercise this responsibility. With the purchase of a good book, a gift, we all support the author, the publisher and bookseller, and contribute to personal development and social bonds. •



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