

Current Concerns

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Without the reliable provision of essential services there can be no sound political and economic order What it will come down to in the coming elections

by Reinhard Koradi

The provision of essential services by the public authorities is being discussed today under the term “service public”. The new name is based on a change of attitude. Originally the idea of basic supplies arose from a socio-political tradition oriented towards mutual assistance, and it has been supported by a comprehensive state-political concept. The provision of essential services was deliberately set up and developed further as the basis for the securing of the Swiss people’s livelihood. Thus it has been possible to establish, over several generations, a sound basis for our common good and equal opportunities, which is well-anchored in the minds of the Swiss citizens. Though poor in natural resources, Switzerland nevertheless laid the foundations for its very attractive habitat and workplace with a well-developed infrastructure. Both the quality of life for the population and the quality of Switzerland as a business location have evolved over the centuries and have been established at a high level. For the benefit of all, our state created a more than sufficient, well-engineered and high-quality infrastructure for peripheral regions as well as for the agglomerations. Deliberately a policy of decentralized settlement was pursued and the development of rural and mountain areas was promoted, all this with the aim of strengthening social cohesion in our country.

In spatial planning, transport, housing and agricultural policy as well as in the organisation of primary care, the integration and internal cohesion played an essential role, while Swiss values such as personal responsibility and personal contributions or even the principle of subsidiarity were by no means ignored.

Thus the basis for high performance and commitment in the population was created, for a true equality of opportunity, for stability and reliable economic security.

Our educational and health care systems, our transport infrastructure (including post and telephone), the law and security we enjoy, our national defence, energy and water supply as well as the food production and supply in our own country, all these are pillars of our public service. Last but not least the administration was set up and conducted as a ser-

vice provider. All these fields of duties were oriented towards the goal of serving the citizens. “Service to the citizen” was demanded of the involved authorities (executive, administrative and public companies). Of course, it was up to the citizens, respectively the tax payers, to finance these basic services to secure the livelihood of all – without any ranking according to wealth and income. Yet our direct democracy also enabled the citizens to exercise the right of determination and control over the provision of essential services in our country. At the same time the cooperative idea, which is deeply entrenched in our country’s body of thought, offered the necessary flexibility – to close supply gaps by means of self-initiative and personal contributions through the creation of cooperatives.

Effectiveness instead of cohesion

In recent years efficiency and effectiveness took the place of solidarity and internal cohesion. Under a cost pressure which was at least in part artificially constructed everything that turned out to be not worthwhile was rationalized. In the wake of globalization propaganda, the neo-liberal economic doctrine gained more and more acceptance. Previous views on economy and social co-existence were – although tried and tested time and again – rescinded by means of the definition of the “free market” and the indiscriminate application of the economic principle. In order to measure up to global competition, existing structures had to be weakened and ultimately replaced by globally marketable business entities. Small and medium enterprises disappeared or mutated into global players due to mergers and acquisitions. Services which were not profitable were rigorously removed from the range of services. Valuable jobs fell victim to cost pressures or, more accurately, to yield optimisation and so did products and services the potential benefit of which was regarded as too low. Public tasks which had so far been classified as strategically important were tied back, or else diverted into the free-price sector (privatisation of municipal utilities, water, energy, transport and telephone).

The economization of life undermines fundamental values in our society and will

eventually leave gaps which threaten our existence. The internal cohesion between town and country but also between generations is being undermined.

By eliminating the cost-pushing “risk groups” from the efficiency program of essential services, we risk deteriorating into a two-class society.

It all starts with sustenance

An indispensable feature of essential services is food security. We therefore have to assign highest priority to food production in our own country. There may be one or two persons who lack the imagination to understand what a starving population means to a sovereign state. A mere glance at the crisis areas is sufficient to realise how hunger can destroy livelihoods. Although touted repeatedly – the free market has until now never helped to solve the problem of hunger and poverty. There is an opinion prevailing most notably in government circles that Switzerland could compensate for any shortages in the food supply in times of crisis by free access to the market. This is simply wrong.

This is also why the provisions for local agriculture in the Federal Constitution pursue supply-policy objectives. Nevertheless, the Federal Council is adopting an economic and thus a supply-securing policy that could threaten the existence of the Swiss population in a supply crisis. The attitude of the Federal Council towards the claim for food sovereignty and security definitely shows no statesmanlike and responsible supply policy. The decision to delegate this responsibility to the market requires a correction on the part of parliament or in the last instance of the people.

Local agriculture and consequently the security of supply are being watered down mainly by means of the new system of direct payments (formerly federal subsidies). National-policy, social-policy and supply-policy aspects are rationalised away from agricultural policy, true to the rules of the neo-liberal economy. The deliberately targeted structural change (small farms have to disappear in favor of larger

continued on page 2

"Without the reliable provision ..."

continued from page 1

agricultural holdings; i.e. industrialisation of agriculture) together with the insistence on cost competitiveness on the international agricultural markets triggered an irreversible dwindling of the farming community. In this way the vital security of food supply through domestic production is being jeopardised and a gap is opened in the defensive strategy of our state and our sovereignty.

New freedoms for the diktat of the neo-liberal economy

New freedoms were defined: Free movement of persons, goods, capital and services. Growth and competitiveness in the world market prices prevailed as the dominant parameters for a supposedly promising economic policy. In the slipstream of these targets, there was a leveling of the economies of Europe, which once had had a wide variety of performance profiles and competitive advantages. This was done without regard to the different cultures, country-specific capabilities, national circumstances and national political interests. Deregulation, liberalization, and the very narrowly defined competitiveness based only on price led to uniformity, egalitarianism and it finally shut out any competition. An example is the development of the Italian and French automotive industry. *Peugeot, Renault, Fiat*, once the pioneers on the international automotive market, are struggling to survive and lost their independence quite some time ago.

In connection with the four freedoms, the limits have been marginalized, free trade zones were created and free trade agreements were created. The impact of these agreements reaches far beyond the pure freight traffic – because these contracts impose foreign law on the parties and thus massively undermine the sovereignty of nation states. The consequence of such agreements is also the loss of autonomous influence and the loss of shaping economic policy in their own country. The slogan is that the "invisible hand" will make everything alright. Meanwhile we experience and observe the example of Greece, and see where the journey leads when the anonymous market takes over the diktat. High unemployment, economic and financial crisis are impacting the current economy, and politics seems to be powerless and at the mercy of events. But appearances are deceptive. There is no "invisible hand". The "invisible hand" is actually the tangible interests of high finance and in its wake, blinded politicians who impose an economic concept on us that produces many losers and a small elite of winners. Under this aspect we can classify the current economic developments, the indebtedness of the states and the plundering of the citizens

by the Treasury. Meanwhile, the "locusts" have been targetting another worthwhile object, and politics has obediently followed. The so-called public markets are being privatized. These markets have a significant profit potential, as existential needs are covered and which makes them difficult to avoid. Initiated by the WTO (*World Trade Organization*) this process has already begun and corresponding contracts have been negotiated behind closed doors.

New Public Management

New Zealand and Australia are the countries who first started the new management practices of public administrations and enterprises. The wave of reforms under the name of *New Public Management* (NPM) spread across the US and Great Britain and finally reached the European mainland, as well. A reduction of bureaucracy and a modernization of public administrations were promised. In the future, public administrations should fulfill their tasks effectively, efficiently and in a customer-oriented manner. Interestingly, NPM has considerably strengthened the power of especially the administration versus the executive and the legislative branches. The citizen in the role of the customer is reduced to a buyer, and is no longer the creator of public services. This reversal of roles must first be understood and analyzed. Today the authorities tell the customer what to do. Earlier the citizens gave the orders and the competencies to the administration. Particularly striking is the momentum within the administrations, the related, rapidly increasing amount of administrative work, staffing needs and the increasingly pervasive patronization of citizens by the administration (*Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture*, etc.). The administrative, centralized burden of control has infinitely increased in recent years and continues to increase with each reform (education, health). It stresses "the parties responsible for providing information", so that they can barely fulfill their real work. In fact, NPM is unfit for Switzerland. New public management strains not only the principle of separation of powers, but also the direct democracy and the militia system.

NPM is therefore nothing more than an attempt to make the public tasks marketable. In a first step, they are deprived of the determination and control by the citizens (public schools/school administration/school management) and in a second step, they are privatized (*Swisscom* or private *Spitex*). In addition to health care (hospital lists/flat rate per case, etc.), the Post (closure of unprofitable post offices) as well as the SBB (Swiss Railways) are being removed by the commercialization of public tasks more and more from the original order to contribute to the cohesion, and consequently, the internal coherence. Above all, the profitable sectors within the basic services are becoming more

attractive to investors and are marketed according to the free market.

The red carpet is rolled out for a path into the neo-liberal future of basic services. *TiSA (Trade in Services Agreement)* is the agreement which the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, Switzerland, the EU and some countries in Asia and Latin America are currently negotiating behind closed doors. (Current Concerns repeatedly reported about this agreement.) The negotiators call themselves "really good friends of services". Since June 2013, they have regularly met behind closed doors in the Australian UN embassy in Geneva. Secret, because they are afraid of a public discussion of the ongoing privatization of basic services. This signals to us that this is a very important project and we cannot allow ourselves to hand over the future of the basic services with its existential products and services.

More emphasis on internal cohesion and solidarity

There are many reasons to fight the "commercialization" of cohesion and solidarity. The question only arises: Where should we start? In the foreground there is the return to the main pillars of a solid sustainable economy. The livelihood for the population is of central importance. In our country it is about self-determination, about the freedom of action when determining our safety, our social, and economic policies. In recent decades, this freedom of action has been deforested significantly. A reforestation is urgently required. And, just as the young wood in the forests does, reclaiming our sovereignty requires a relatively long time. We will have to set milestones. The first phase includes the understanding that there are industries in which the public interest is to be classified higher than revenue, competitiveness and growth potential. In the second phase it comes to mitigation. We must ensure that in the future the basic services are no longer part of free trade agreements. This means, of course, a clear rejection of TTIP and TiSA. Likewise, the negotiations with the EU have to be conducted in a way that the provision of basic living services for our country remains an internal matter and the interference from the outside is rejected. The next phase is committed to the future determination of basic services in Switzerland. The return to basic values and a stronger emphasis on cohesion and solidarity should be the purpose. Thanks to direct democracy, this return may come from the people of Switzerland. Let's tackle this opportunity. Election Day is on 18 October 2015. Let us elect people's representatives into the Council of States and the National Council, who seriously assume their responsibilities to the voters and who stand up for the freedom and independence of Switzerland. •

Why Russia?

by Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer
(picture ma)

The question is legitimate and it has to be asked right now. 1 September is the day when the outbreak of the World War II is commemorated and it was the Soviet Union that had had to bear unprecedented losses in human lives and

potentials by that murderous war.

In a few weeks time we can celebrate the 26th anniversary of the day when Germany regained her unity, which – and more than that unity – had been forfeited by her leadership during world war times. Apart from the active support from Washington it had been Moscow in particular, who had opened this road to us Germans. *Mikhail Gorbachev* was the one who spoke of Europe as a “Common House”. All of us in Europe were so sure we could get rid of the horrors of the past and just settle, each in one of the habitations in that common house. War seemed further afar than ever.

With the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which in its core had been developed from Soviet and Polish ideas immediately after the World War II, this house seemed to have a solid foundation, since the conference proved to be very efficient. Even successful disarmament talks between the highly geared-up enemy states could be launched in its orbit.

Looking back to these days and thinking of 1 September, all enthusiasm to celebrate 3 October evaporates. Pleasant anticipation of the festivities with those East Germans who were present then but are represented by other politicians today, is overshadowed by the creepy worry whether we will actually live to see another 1 September. Once again, German generals give belligerent orders to international troops which are stuffed with nuclear weapons up to the roof and amassed near the Russian border. Ukrainian troops who openly display their Nazi-time symbols are sent forward towards the borders of a country which will definitely associate great distress, death and destruction with these very symbols. Those who have not joined NATO yet are flooded with lucrative cooperation proposals and integrated into international military exercises targeted only at Russia. War is more imminent than ever.

All that did not just mushroom over night. European impotence despite their efforts to secure a peaceful power transition

in a stormy situation in Kiev met with a thumb-down from Washington. Hopes and opportunities not only of the Ukraine were shot to pieces, as per order, in that Maidan square massacre which has never been properly investigated to this day. These events hit Europe hard, since total confrontation had sidelined all efforts towards European integration. Everybody in Europe should ask themselves how large proportions of their populations would have reacted to a putsch regime depriving them of much of their political rights over night? Moreover, since the presence of the Russian fleet with its supply function to the Middle East might have been intended to be eliminated at one go. Today one gets the impression that what happened at Crimea actually saved us from a war then, which seems the more likely now.

What has happened to us during all those years that we find ourselves now again positioned against a country and its people which proved its capacity as an important anchorage ground of our common European culture just recently with the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi?

Taking a sober look at recent years we have to admit to ourselves that the failure of the European foreign ministers at Maidan square in Kiev was only the climax of European impotence which had started soon after the German reunification, the end of European division and the Charter of Paris in autumn 1990. We in Germany were the first to notice and one was to get the impression that “social market economy” and “free democratic government under the law” had only been a concession after the World War II in order to prevent the countries’ defection from one’s own sphere of influence to the other side.

The economic consequences of the division had only just begun to be evaluated when “shareholder value” was utilised to destroy the social market economy which had been so successful and integrative in the German society. The current chancellor even voiced her demand quite bluntly that democracy was to be “rendered compatible to the markets”. If it is true what we know about the free trade agreement TTIP from information that was leaked from the current secret negotiations, this goal will soon be achieved. Should that be the case, constitutional democracy which has much deeper and more solid roots in Germany than allied rule has on German soil, might as well be done away with at one go. How highly esteemed international law and its peacekeeping role had been in 1999 was demonstrated by the NATO war against the Federal Re-

public of Yugoslavia. The aim then had been to enforce a new system of international law in the interest of the USA. For this idea not only the Helsinki conference was sacrificed but the entire system of European international law which had been developed since the Thirty Years’ War in the 17th century.

But isn’t there even much more which has changed? These days it has been emphasised again that in our allegedly so prosperous country the middle class is melting away and poor people keep getting poorer. Families no longer know how to make ends meet. In our schools children are indoctrinated about what ideas of humanity they should have. The stream of migrants, which meets a helpless German federal government and a non-existing common European standpoint, brings people to our country who have been deprived of their livelihoods by our policies and the wars of our allies. Since these people often come from the Middle East, which may be regarded as the origin of our culture, one may say that we have destroyed not only their heritage but ours as well.

And now against Russia? Is it the natural resources they are after yet again, like ten years ago when this goal almost seemed within grasp during the *Yukos* case? On the other hand, with the advent of fracking the controversies have shifted towards Saudi Arabia. Is it anything else then? Viewing ourselves without illusions we cannot but realise that there is indeed something else and this can be said in a country where more than half a million people visit the US every year. Only few people in Germany would entertain the idea to seek a job in Samara instead of Silicon valley. But Russia today stands for something which seems to be a huge thorn in the flesh of those who are so busy wiping out the identities of our states because this might turn out to be more important in the future than all those things which keep changing all the time: fatherland, Christian faith and family values.

Shattered by constant wars and never-ending financial crises as it is, the West has had these issues going to rack and ruin for some time now. Regardless of what reality in Russia might look like today, this alone should be food for thought to those people in Europe who just see their life plans crumble yet again. What is actually important in life? Is it that why we are supposed to be positioned against Russia and their people? Because Russia is a counterpart to the bloody dreams of the one and only world power? ●

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Promoting Swiss Hydroelectric Power

The only trump of domestic power production

by Pierre-Gabriel Bieri

The energy production by hydro-power in Switzerland is facing a strong foreign competition. Nevertheless, Switzerland has a strategic interest to preserve its large energy autonomy. The question arises whether it would be more effective to invest 700 million Swiss francs annually collected for the feed-in remuneration (KEV) into a similarly clean, but more effective source of energy, rather than into the development of new renewable energy sources?

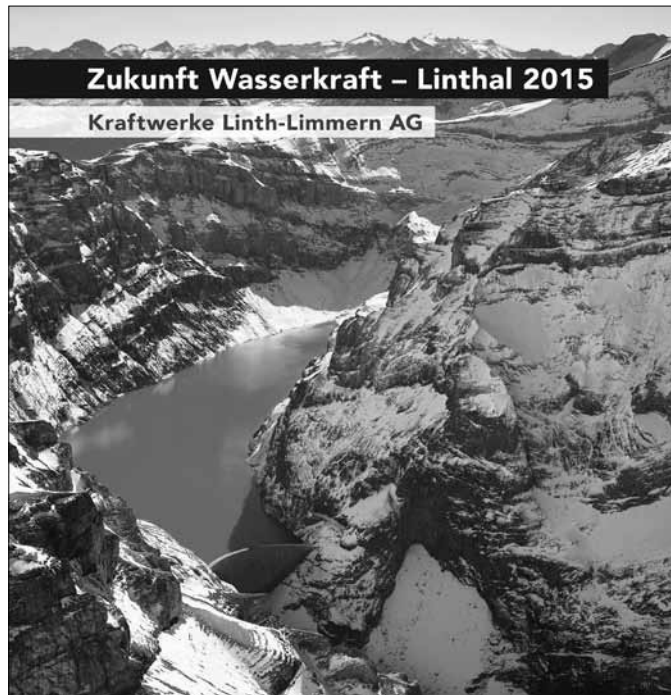
Subsidies of coal and gas drive electricity prices down

Wouldn't it make sense to support the Switzerland-based power producers, who are generating electricity from hydro-power and are complaining of not being able to cover their costs? This issue deserves serious discussion.

On the European market, prices have dropped considerably. This is on the one hand due to the slack economy and low demand associated to the latter. On the other hand, the low prices are caused by overproduction, caused by the massive subsidies to wind and solar energy, and ultimately by the low CO₂ taxes on fossil energies (coal, gas). The wholesale market price fell from 8-10 cents per kWh in 2008 to currently 3 to 4 cents.

In Switzerland, the electricity providers benefit from these low prices. It is true that they are not necessarily depending on them, although they have to be competitive in the area of "large consumers" (more than 100,000 kWh a year), who have the right to choose their supplier from now on. In contrast, they are still free in their pricing policy concerning all other customers without free market access. This does, however, not change

On this background, is it expedient that every year several hundred million francs are invested into the sluggish and uncertain development of production capacities, while hydro-power plants become shaky versus foreign competition in economic terms?



Axpo Leaflet "Future of water power – Linthal 2015"

the fact that the large electricity providers took a liking to purchase energy on the highly competitive European electricity market. Since Swiss electricity providers don't want to lose their business, they are forced as well to lower their prices, even if their production conditions are not as similarly beneficial, as those abroad.

Preserving a clean and especially more productive source of energy

The electricity production in Switzerland is based on hydro-power at about 60%. With the hasty decision to exit forms of nuclear energy, which still covers nearly 40% of the demand, as well as with the lacking capacity of "new renewable energies" to quickly fill the gap (solar and wind energy together account for hardly 1%), it becomes clear that one has to put more and more emphasis on dams and hydro-installations in the future, providing that we do not want to dispense with energy independence and to accept a situation in which Switzerland – with the associated risks, such as supply bottlenecks and supply shortfalls in Europe – would always be depending on electric power from abroad.

In case Switzerland wants to preserve its only source of energy, which produces a sufficient amount of domestic energy and is clean and renewable, it must ensure that the hydroelectric power plants receive

the necessary funding to finance their operation and renovation as well as their expansion and enlargement. Otherwise it would be deprived of its high-quality infrastructure that is more expensive in contrast to other countries.

It is always painful to provide subsidies for production means. Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that electricity production plays an effective infrastructural role for the economy, that is why the state must rightly deal with it. In particular, one has to remember that today there is an important subsidy: the KEV ("compensatory feed-in remuneration") which was introduced to compensate for the difference between production costs and market price by the KEV Fund, which is fed by the electricity consumers and annually amounts to about 700 million Swiss francs.

Subsidising the KEV, where it is most useful

The problem is that the "great hydro-power" has no longer the right to be subsidised today, which is now solely reserved for the small producers and the new renewable energies. Only, the large hydro-power plants secure a sufficient basic supply of electricity. Against this background the question arises, whether it is expedient that every year several hundred million francs are invested into the sluggish and uncertain development of production capacities, while hydro-power plants begin to totter in economic terms in view of the foreign competition? Wouldn't it be more efficient to subsidise our best and most important sources of energy production wholly or partly by KEV, to help them temporarily overcoming this difficult period?

In the bosom of the parliament, one is recently becoming aware of the difficulties the Switzerland-based hydro-power plants are facing and also of the need to support them. The newly developed proposals remain but still reticent until now, which is doubtlessly based on the fact that no one dares to conjure up a "useful" re-orientation of KEV. But bold measures are needed to protect this valuable capital in service of our prosperity.

(Translation from French into German: Evelyn Gfeller; Translation into English *Current Concerns*)

Source: www.centrepatrional.ch from 19.8.2015

“With respect to Russia, there is no noticeable difference between the EU and the US”

Interview with Philippe Migault, questions asked by Eléonore de Vulpillières, France



Philippe Migault
(picture ma)

Le Figaro: In an interview on French-speaking Swiss TV RTS [Radio Télévision Suisse] on 28 July, Vladimir Putin denounced US pressure, deploring the lack of independence in the EU. He stated: “It is not in the interest of Russia

to confront other states, but sometimes we are forced to protect our interests and there is no doubt that we will continue to do so.” What do you think about these statements? **Philippe Migault**: Regarding the question of European independence from the US, nobody can claim that Vladimir Putin was wrong. Lacking the means and a clear and uniform political view in foreign policy among its 28 members, the EU lines itself up with the US-American positions, particularly due to the influence of the northern European states that are strongly oriented towards the Atlantic like Great Britain, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, but also those of the East like Poland and the Baltic states. Now and then the French and the Germans are trying to introduce a different tune. They did this emphatically in 2003 when they, together with the Russians, refused to support the American assault on Iraq. But these times are over. Since the resignation of Chirac and Schröder, the Atlanticists in Paris and Berlin have the upper hand again. Certainly, there was Minsk II, but what was the result?

As far as Russia’s imperative to defend its interests is concerned, this is natural – it is the basic mandate of each head of state deserving this title.

According to Bruno Le Roux, president of the Socialist Faction in the National Assembly, the recent tour of ten French par-

liamentarians to the Crimean means “submissiveness and a disgrace for the French parliament”. What do you think of this statement?

I think the expression “submissiveness” is unjustified. There are regularly journeys of representatives of the Socialist Party to states which are governed in a much more dictatorial way than Russia. Remember that Francois Hollande visited Saudi Arabia several times, even with a sabre in his hand, side by side with the Saudi royal family, although decapitations with a similar sabre are daily business there. Is it submissiveness to have discussions with people who do not share one’s opinions? I do not think so. To allow discussions only with states sharing our opinions would be very restricting for our diplomatic relations: then there would hardly be anyone left to discuss with. So the expression “submissiveness” is rather an exaggeration than a realistic analysis. The expression “disgrace”, however, would be much more suitable for situations when the French parliament has disgraced itself by refraining from protesting against visits of heads of state who are respecting human rights much less than Russia.

According to Jean-Marie Le Guen [parliamentary undersecretary, ed.] these representatives have placed themselves “outside international law”. Is this a valid argument? Do you think that Russia is targeted harder than other states.

It is obvious that there are double standards when dealing with Russia. Russia is not pardoned for acts that are accepted without any questions from other states. Mr Le Guen is talking of “international law”, but the Russians are well aware that there are double standards and that the West can very well do without that international law as they did Kosovo or in Iraq. Others, like Russia, have to respect international law to the letter. I would like to remind you of an event which does not disturb Mr Le Guen: for some months now, Saudi Arabia and its allies of the *Gulf Cooperation Council* have been bombing Yemen without any UN Security Council mandate. It does not disturb France to sell weapons to these states. It is a paradox to act as the scandalised innocent, refusing to deliver *Mistral* ships to Russia while having no restraints to sell weapons and technology to the Gulf states.

France has acknowledged the independence of the Kosovo but did not acknowledge the referendum which again makes the Crimean a Russian region ...

In 1999 we invaded the Kosovo with the same neglect of international law which the West still tramples underfoot. We neglected *Resolution 1199* of the UN Security Council which did not warrant military action against Serbia outside a UN resolution: Together with the US and Great Britain, France has bombed this country without a UN resolution! From the standpoint of international law, this was completely illegal. We have supported *Resolution 1244* which explicitly stipulated that the Kosovo should remain Serbian, as a widely autonomous province. We are facing a new kind of Cold War which those minds can never forget who see merely Russia as the enemy. The Russian power is seen as a threat that needs to be contained.

Is the break deepening between those who want to maintain the dialogue with Russia and the supporters of the Euro-Atlantic diplomacy?

Your expression “break” is correct. We have left rational thinking. Invectives are flying back and forth between the camps. I am considered a supporter of the French-Russian dialogue: I am regularly called an “agent paid by Moscow”, as an “FSB agent” [FSB is the Russian Federal Security Service, ed.] who gets his orders from the Kremlin, even as traitor of my country. Dialogue or a rational exchange is no longer possible, McCarthyism rules. Those who do not conform to the Euro-Atlantic policy are considered enemies of their home country and kept away from decision making, both in the private and the public sector.

Thierry Mariani [former minister, currently parliamentarian (Les Républicains) for the French living abroad, ed.] is announcing another trip to the Crimean for next October. How will these tight connections between the parliamentarians change the French-Russian relations?

Unfortunately not at all, because these parliamentarians are far from being representative for the majority of the parliament. At most they allow keeping up an alternative tie of French diplomacy towards Russia, an amicable relation which demonstrates that there are numerous French citizens who consider the policy of sanctions absurd and counterproductive.

What is your assessment of the future French-Russian relations from a diplomatic and economic viewpoint?

Currently they are in a deadlock and there they will stay like as long as Russia is considered an enemy of France. In reality

continued on page 6

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The West's seeming impotence

by Stefan Haderer*

Every day now we are getting flooded by new horror stories about the atrocities of the IS, the civil war in Syria and the associated refugee tragedy. But it is not a jeremiad that has been confronting the Western governments with unforeseeable developments. Media mostly try to present Europe in a condition of increasing powerlessness. An almost endless coverage of Syrian refugees and the problems with their accommodation the European population should divert from the root causes of this development – namely, the Syrian battlefield. It is kept secret that most of the current events are the consequence of an intentional intervention policy, with which the Europeans have to live, whether they like it or not.

Only vaguely, if at all, some remember a headline in the “Washington Post” that appeared – ironically – on 11 September 2013, running “CIA begins supplying arms to Syrian rebels”. With the goal of overthrowing Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad the US government is providing radicalised resist-

ance fighters with arms without being criticised, not even by only one EU diplomat.

This type of intervention “in the name of justice” is not new. The “Operation Cyclone” was launched by the US government and pursued from 1979 to 1989 with the purpose to supply weapons to the Afghan Mujahideen supporting their fight against the dominant Soviet military. When the Cold War ended the guerrilla fighters in the inhospitable mountains and valleys of the Hindu Kush formed terrorist splinter groups – the most notorious is al-Qaeda. With the help of the West a phantom enemy has been created who until today holds the world in suspense and on whom a hopeless “war on terror” was declared. Even German Bundeswehr soldiers are taking part.

Meanwhile, al-Qaeda seems to have been replaced by the IS – at least in terms of media coverage. Its emergence, however, has striking similarities to the terrorist network, because Western governments use a proven strategy: Arming of fanatical

rebels, either in Iraq or in Syria, in order to get rid of unwanted rulers.

The fact that this always happens at the expense of the civilian population, is logical and predictable, but obviously accepted. The irresponsibility of the involved actors in this war – the United States, Britain and France – and the treatment of refugees speaks for itself.

Responsibility can mean many different things. Countries may care about the accommodation of refugees. But if governments show no interest in resolving the conflict’s root-cause and continue to reject a dialogue with Assad, the terrible situation will be unsolvable, and any kind of humanitarian aid remains what it is: a drop in the ocean. •

* Stefan Haderer is a cultural anthropologist and political scientist. The text first appeared in the “Wiener Zeitung” from 08.26.2015 (www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/770884_Die-scheinbare-Ohnmacht-des-Westens.html).

(Translation Current Concerns)

A letter of wrath

*Ladies and Gentlemen,
Heads of State and Government*

With your decades-long policy of war and exploitation you have thrust into misery millions of people in the Middle East and in Africa. Because of your policy humans are fleeing all over the world. Every third refugee in Germany comes from Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan. Every fifth refugee originates from Africa.

Your wars are also the cause of global terrorism. Instead of some 100 international terrorists as was the case 15 years ago, we now have more than 100,000. Your cynical ruthlessness is now striking back at us like a boomerang.

As usual, you do not really think of changing your policy. You are only fussing to cure some symptoms. That is why the security situation is becoming more dangerous and chaotic on a daily basis. More and more wars, waves of terror and refugee crises will determine the future of our planet.

One day, war will also knock at Europe’s doors again. Any businessman acting like you act would be fired or imprisoned. You are complete failures.

The peoples of the Middle East and Africa, whose countries you have destroyed and looted, as well as the peoples of Europe, who are now receiving countless desperate refugees, have to pay for your policy, and they are paying a high price. But you are washing your hands of it. You ought to be taken to the International Criminal Court. And each of your political followers should be obliged to fund at least a hundred refugee families.

In essence, the people of the world should now rise and resist your warmongering and exploiting. As once Gandhi by means of in non-violent “civil disobedience”. We need to found new movements and parties; movements for justice and humanity. They need to place wars in other countries just under the same punishment as murder and manslaughter in their own

countries. And you, who are responsible for war and exploitation shall go to hell for ever. It is enough! Get off! The world would be a much better place without you.

Jürgen Todenhöfer

Dear friends, I know you should never write letters in anger. But life is much too short to always beat about the truth. Isn’t your anger so great as well that you could cry out about that blatant irresponsibility? About the infinite suffering that has been caused by these politicians? About the millions of dead? Did the warmongering politicians really believe they could go on bashing other peoples and fill their own pockets by robbing them for decades? We must no longer accept that! [...]

Yours, JT

Published on the Facebook page of the author, end of August 2015

(Translation Current Concerns)

“With respect to Russia ...”

continued from page 5

there are no serious differences between France and Russia, but a lot of common interests. As long as the people who have a peaceful and reasonable view of diplomacy do not take things into their hands, the problem will continue.

Can France improve its relations with Russia in the framework of the European Union?

With respect to Russia, there is no noticeable difference between the EU and the US! The EU does not have an own diplomacy because their members’ interests often differ. *Federica Mogherini* [High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy] does not speak a word that might contradict American interests. The independence of France from the US is nothing but hot air. With regard to *TTIP* we can easily see that we are willing to give up our economic independence. Resuming stable diplomatic relations between France and Russia

cannot take place in the framework of the EU, but only bilaterally. But since we have been joining the Euro-Atlantic camp under full sail ten years ago, that is, since the return of France into the integrated NATO command structure, initiated by *Nicolas Sarkozy*, and since this Atlanticism is fully shared by *Francois Hollande*, we will never dare to take a position that might deviate from that of the US.

Source: © Philippe Migault, *Eléonore de Vulpières/LeFigaro.fr/2015*

(Translation Current Concerns)

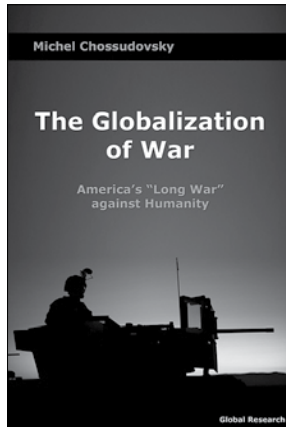
America's long war against humanity

A new book by Michel Chossudovsky

by Dr phil Henriette Hanke Güttinger



Early in 2015 the Canadian economist *Michel Chossudovsky* presented a study on the connection between globalization and the wars of the past 15 years in English language. Already as a professor of economics at the University of Ottawa – retired today – he did research in the field of globalization. He founded the *Centre for Re-*



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search on Globalization (CRG) in Montreal, which he presides today. He is as well the editor of *Global Research*. Thanks to his incorruptibility and straightforwardness in the analysis, Chossudovsky enjoys international reputation. On that point *Paul Craig Roberts*, former Assistant Minister of Finance under the *Reagan* administration wrote: "He is a model of integrity in the analysis; his book provides an honest assessment of the extreme danger, which the hegemonic US Neo-C conservatism represents for life on earth."

The "Globalization of War", as it is pursued by the United States until today since NATO's war of aggression against Yugo-

"Totally dependent: United States provides secret code for Swiss army"

hbg. Reading the "Aargauer Zeitung" (AZ) of 13 August 2015, you might first rub your eyes in disbelief and see whether you have read correctly. There is actually an article entitled "Totally dependent: United States provide secret code for Swiss army". Our air forces with its F/A-18 fighter jets, the Super Puma Helicopters, Cougar and Eurocopters have a military GPS with a special code. "This is manufactured by the US Intelligence Service NSA. The encryption usually changes every week." Thus, our army receives their new code from the United States on a weekly basis. "Without that key, the GPS devices are falling back in the civilian, error-prone mode" – the AZ reports. But it is even more absurd. The F/A-18 are equipped with the guid-

ed missile AMRAAM which is crucial for the Swiss air defense. Now, the software of AMRAAM needs an update periodically. This is made in the United States. During that process, "no Swiss staff is accepted. The source code that the Americans are programming remains hidden" – says AZ. Hence the control of the F/A-18 missile is in the hands of the United States ... This is in absolute contradiction to the Constitution of the Swiss Confederation which codifies the "general provisions" of the Swiss Confederation in Art. 2 as follows: "1. The Swiss Confederation shall protect the liberty and rights of the people and safeguard the independence and security of the country."

Source: "Aargauer Zeitung" from 13 August 2015

slavia, serves the expansion of American hegemony – so Chossudovsky. In pursuit of this objective the Western military alliance wages wars or destabilizes sovereign states with intelligence operations. Up to now they have targeted the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Africa, Central Asia and the Far East. The long-term goal is the encirclement of Russia and China. These plans also correspond to the arrogance of the United States to divide our earth into six "areas of responsibility" over which they claim the military control. This hybris shows that the United States have lost touch with reality in our today's world: Reality means a more equal cooperation between the countries around the world.

Closely associated with US military action is the approach in the economic sphere. Free trade agreements in favor of transnational corporations and the destabilization of financial markets and national

currencies are to disrupt the national economies. Chossudovsky labels this process with the term "economic warfare".

On the basis of careful case studies on Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria or Libya Chossudovsky shows, how the United States have attempted to extend their hegemony since September 11, 2001 under the pretext of "self-defense" with the "war against terrorism". The example Libya makes it clear that it was a matter of driving China's *National Petroleum Corporation* as a competitor from the field and to put hands on Libyan oil fields. At the same time Libya should serve as an access to Sahel and Central Africa an endeavour which Chossudovsky characterizes as "Redrawing the Map of Africa".

Subject of discussion in his book is also the USA's today's fateful role today in connection with the various rebel groups and the IS-state in Syria and Iraq. This allows the reader to weigh the messages received from the territory accordingly and to bring things into meaningful lines. These considerations here address only some aspects of the rich wealth of geopolitical facts included in this book.

Former Canadian Minister of National Defence, *Paul Hellyer*, recommends the book as follows: "Michel Chossudovsky's book is a must for anyone who gives preference to peace and hope versus permanent war, death, rootlessness and despair". One can only join this recommendation after reading the book.

Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalization of War America's 'Long War' against Humanity*, 2015 ISBN 978-0-9737147-6-0

US run by 400 oligarchs

US politics is determined by about 400 people with a combined wealth of trillions of dollars, *Lawrence Wilkerson*, former chief of staff to former US Secretary of State *Colin Powell*, said in an interview with *Radio Baltkom*.

The ex-diplomat claims that government decision-making is controlled by 0.001 percent of the US population.

"It is the oligarchs who control the decision-making from the backstage", he says. "In the US there are about 400 people with a combined wealth of trillions. It is an impertinent and degrading way of

distributing the wealth in the country. It is great inequality. The power is concentrated in the hands of about 0.001 percent of the population", Wilkerson added.

For 16 years the 60-year-old was one of *Colin Powell's* closest staff, between 2002 and 2005 Wilkerson was chief of staff in the State Department. The retired colonel served in the Vietnam war, later he served as deputy director of the Marine Corps War College at Quantico, Virginia.

Source: <http://sputniknews.com/us/20150829/1026327916.html>
<http://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20150829/>

“The failure of the new learning culture”

Education researcher demands: “Give up this misguided course, immediately”

by Karl Müller

With the provisions of the OECD and paired with “competence orientation” throughout Europe, teaching and learning at public schools is more and more affected by the “new learning culture”. Part of this “new learning culture” is above all the so-called “self-directed”, “individual” learning, specifically: Each student is to have an individual learning plan allegedly precisely tailored to his needs on which he is to work by himself, but with the help of worksheets (and computer programmes). The teacher is to largely withdraw from the learning process at school and only be “facilitator” and “coach”.

Already for 20 years this “new learning culture” has been raised to question by experienced teachers, previous scientific studies and in particular by the meta-research results of John Hattie. However, this did not change a farthing in education policy. But now criticism increases massively, because even those research institutions which are proponents of the “new” learning methods, have to admit how questionable the concept is.

In the middle of Baden-Württemberg’s summer holidays on 17 August 2015, editor Heike Schmoll, since many years responsible for education, published a contribution to the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” entitled “Swabian suicide mission”. The lead reads as follows: “A devastating assessment, provided by a report on the showcase project Gemeinschaftsschule (community school). Especially individual learning proves to be extremely ineffective.”

At high speed the Green-Red state government established community schools in the school law of the state in 2012. The “new learning culture” is the hallmark of this new school.

Heike Schmoll writes that the report is being kept locked up, but that it is available at the newspaper. The report is part of the accompanying research of the newly established so-called community schools in Baden-Württemberg – “so-called” because this new type of school has nothing to do with the classical community schools, for the core concept of the new school is indeed opposed to that of community education.

From a formal point of view the report is valid only for one school, a community school in Tübingen. According to that report, so the newspaper article says, “neither does the new teaching method of independent learning with learning facilitators succeed, neither does the inclusion

or the special support of the weakest and the strongest”. “It is above all that individual learning” that had “proved extremely ineffective”.

The students, teachers and parents, surveyed by the researchers, so the newspaper quotes the report, “agreed that learning times are not used effectively and that one would actually work too little”. Since learning, so the newspaper article goes on, “takes place either in the group room, in the learning studio or even in the hallway, there is a lack of discipline”. Again the article quotes the report: the time spent on active learning was “very little, and in this case, the rate of disruptions often correspondingly high”. The weaker students, in particular, would fall behind even more than was the case before”.

The teachers in the examined “learning groups” “lose track, which student is working on what, how much progress he makes, and the control of the results comes up badly”. In the assessment made by the teachers the “substantive quality of the students’ work” was “neglected”.

Instead of presenting the report to the public and dealing seriously with its results, the relevant ministry and the research group itself responded with criticism concerning the publication of the results. Four professors of the research team from the State’s Universities of Education in Freiburg, Heidelberg and Weingarten on 18 August presented even a “correction”. However, it does not refer at all to the content of the issues mentioned above. Instead, it is claimed, that the report refers only to the “stage of development of a single school” and that it was “not exemplary of the community schools’ experience in Baden-Württemberg”.

However, the fact is that the examined school is considered a model community school and the criticisms raised in the report correspond exactly to what you hear from other community schools in the country and what probably is a logical consequence of the pedagogical concept. Another educationalist, *Matthias Burchardt*, explained that. He does research and teaches at the University of Cologne, where his focus is on general education and educational policy, and he was an interim professor at the Ludwigsburg University of Education in Baden-Württemberg, in 2012/2013. In an interview with the “Stuttgarter Neue Nachrichten” dated 27 August 2015, he presented his view on the matter.

Matthias Burchardt was allowed to have a look at the evaluation study, which

has not yet been open to the public, and he distinguishes between the results that concern only the examined school and those that are generalisable and therefore probably apply to all community schools.

Matthias Burchardt is asked what from his perspective the core results of the report are. His answer: “The failure of the new learning culture”.

He explains: “Teachers and students are often unable to cope with the new forms of learning. In the report the manner is described, for example, in which the students are largely busy with working through learning packages. Those packages are copied lists or tasks that you do independently and without a teacher or a classmate, ideally at a rapid pace. The class situation that is familiar to all of us from our own schooldays, with a teacher in front explaining something to the students or discussing with them, so that a community situation arises, no longer forms the core of educational action. Instead, each student is isolated in learning.” And he adds: “The teacher only controls how many work packages have been completed, but not what has actually been learned. The report shows that the teachers have not even managed to correct the textual errors in the learning packages. The student therefore does never know whether he did it right or wrong.”

When asked about the consequences, he would like to draw from the present report, Matthias Burchardt replies: “From my point of view, this misguided course should be given up immediately.” He said he was surprised that, instead, the research group even proposed more new learning culture: “The very object cannot be to enforce a new method by all means, but the aim must be to help the children to succeed.” That can certainly be achieved “better on the proven paths of the school system than on those paths in a community school.”

Matthias Burchardt considers it “very dangerous to entrust a half-baked system that shows strong indications that it is bound to fail, with a whole generation of students”. And: “Politics ought to admit that this system has failed.”

But this admission is still missing. Therefore Matthias Burchardt considers it an ideological project. This is apparent from the fact that there is no willingness to return and no objectivity: “It is alarming that they do not argue on the merits, but instead make personal attacks on the critics.”

continued on page 9

Built without a foundation and yet on sand

Heretical thoughts on community schools and Curriculum 21

mw. School reforms are an interesting affair. Generations of educational scientists' findings are labelled as "no longer up-to-date" and thrown onto the rubbish heap. The corresponding teaching materials are disposed of as well. Teachers do not fare any better: those who rely on their own decades-old practical experience in teaching are ridiculed at best and sent off to early retirement at worst.

"He does not even realise that knowledge becomes so quickly obsolete that it is not worth storing it in your brain (this used to be called 'learning')!" Haven't they heard anything about the half-life of knowledge? So stop that learning by heart! And why should anybody make the tedious effort and memorise multiplication tables or spelling rules when pushing a button delivers the correct results? Whole class instruction is completely outdated by the way – anybody is able to google on his own. And then there is this ingenious thing about individualised learning: Everyone can find their own solutions because the notion of right and wrong in today's school does no longer exist. Hurrah, no more corrections of exercise books, all students are allowed to correct themselves – or what are those correction programmes for? Anyway, spelling used to be taken too seriously and today it is only important that the other people annestan you – did you mean 'understand'?"

After millions and millions of tax money has been poured into "*Lehrplan 21*" in Switzerland (the so called *Curriculum 21*) and the community schools in Baden-Württemberg, and teachers have passed through the appropriate education and training programmes, a team of evaluators come along and find out that the brave new theories are untenable: "Neither the new teaching method of independent learning with teachers as learning coaches nor the inclusion or the special support of the weakest and strongest are successful." Of course this

is all top secret. Nobody would want the citizens to poke their noses into this! (source: Heike Schmoll, Studie zur Gemeinschaftsschule, Schwäbisches Himmelfahrtkommando, "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", from 17 Aug 2015). So in Baden-Württemberg they now quickly start with accompanying research to the already introduced "new" forms of learning – a little late, isn't it? By the way, this study is pulled together by the same team which has pushed ('encouraged', excuse me) the community schools and the underlying ideology of individualised learning in "open" schools for a long time (<http://www.erziehungswissenschaft.uni-tuebingen.de/forschung.html>). Will they assess this totally unbiased?

Hush, don't be so fussy: the main thing is to abolish the existing school system, sooner rather than later. In Switzerland, most cantonal curricula are at least 15 years old and therefore obsolete per se, according to the president of the German Swiss Conference of Education Directors. Imagine, curricula from 2000, they are almost prehistoric! Whatever they contain is in any case irrelevant.

For the implementation of these monumental projects the taxpayer must fork out more millions – or should we already say billions? For the transformation or new construction of Swiss elementary schools into learning environments with individual booths; for the equipment with hardware and software; for the training and supervision of teachers (we don't want that anyone keeps teacher-centred lessons up, do we?); for the creation, implementation and evaluation of learning programmes and computer tests, including fees for the external testers. The entire tests in all "fields" ("subjects" are indeed outdated) in all three cycles of the Curriculum 21 will of course be computer-based, starting with the second year of primary school. This is logical: future communication is digital because it is good if the children in kindergarten

or playschool already know to press the right button or know how to follow the contours of a circle or square on a screen with their fingers. The little ones then can pull the conceptual link from the digital circle to a circle of cardboard – or can't they, not quite? What was that again about the children's developmental stages?

Let us stop such petty considerations, because *Bill Gates* and other child-friendly people ultimately want to sell their smartphones, tablets, laptops and whatever they are called to the people or rather the cantons and communes; every child from kindergarten onwards has its own tablet, with which it can spin the yarn of its own reality. Bertelsmann & Co are already waiting in the wings to produce the many expensive training and testing programmes.

And then, when everything is running smoothly to the approval of school reformers by the grace of the OECD, an annoying evaluation turns up and comes to the conclusion that nothing works as it was propagated from above ... Which reminds me: our universities usually produce umpteen studies on everything and everyone. Only on this question of truly great importance, – whether it is better for our children if they are taught in the classroom by a teacher and by means of the relationship with their teacher, or if every child works on their own, by following their weekly schedule – there are apparently no useful studies in this country, only those which are now kept locked up in Baden-Württemberg. That is why in Switzerland a Government Council can now have the idea to replace our curricula because they have existed for a few years. That is why we still need to rely on the valuable study of a researcher from the distant New Zealand (*John Hattie*) for years and years, because our school is simply turned on its head without any reasonable argument, on the basis of mere allegations from the OECD, which have neither head nor tail, as every teacher and every set of parents know from their own experience if they are able to think clearly.

Well, in Switzerland we fortunately have the chance to prevent the introduction of the Curriculum 21 with a popular initiative in the individual cantons. In Baden-Württemberg there is incidentally a similar instrument, a referendum against the establishment of a community school, which was recently carried out and clearly accepted in Rielasingen. Unfortunately it did not achieve the prescribed quorum of 25% of the electorate – but in a democracy citizens may overcome that hurdle as well.

"The failure of ..."
continued from page 9

In fact, ideology also dominates the latest project of the green-red state government with the amendment to the school act in order to converse the hitherto highly successful intermediate secondary schools of the country. Despite enormous pressure from the ministry, so far hardly any of these intermediate secondary schools has been willing to be a community school. Now they are to be forced

bly converted by law into a "community school light". There, too, the "new learning culture" shall be the standard, even here against any concerns that have already become apparent for months and recently again at the public hearing in the relevant committee of parliament on 22 July 2015. Even the "Staatsanzeiger", official gazette of the federal state, had to write on 23 July: "There is a lot of criticism concerning the plans for the intermediate secondary school in consultation in the state parliament".

The “Great Stucki” – a Swiss negotiator with character

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

Who is represented by the Swiss Federal Council – Switzerland or the EU? This question was raised here recently at a media conference of the Federal Council (“Thick fog and scarce information about the plans of the Federal Council”, *Current Concerns* No 19/20 of 28 July 2015). Since the No of the Swiss people to a membership in the EEA on 6 December 1992, critical citizens have become ever more upset by the fact that the Swiss negotiators – from whatever motives – have little intention to achieve the best possible results for our country in negotiations with Brussels or Washington. However, everyone knows: As a small state, Switzerland can only reach its goals vis à vis a great power, if the Federal Council or its negotiators do not buckle at every imperial bluster, but meet their contractual partners on an equal footing and be certain of their strength.

One who has committed himself with all his might and his whole personality for Switzerland and often achieved amazing things, is Walter Stucki (1888–1963). This upright and courageous Swiss allowed neither the Nazi regime nor the victorious powers of World War II to frighten him, but continually represented the interests of Switzerland; but wherever he was and where it was necessary he also did what he could for people of other nationalities. Reading his biography, especially with regard to his work as the chief negotiator and ambassador in the period from the First until after the Second World War, is a special experience for today's readers – not only for the Swiss! (Konrad Stamm, “Der ‘Große Stucki’ Eine schweizerische Karriere von weltmännischem Format”, Zurich 2013).

Born in 1888 in Berne, Walter Stucki studied law, history and economic policy

Trade negotiations with countries abroad as the essence and most sustainable success

“Looking for the essence, for the key point and most sustainable success of Stucki's eventful career, we will find a straight answer after only little reflection: Without any doubt, the trade negotiations with countries abroad that Stucki led [...] are to be considered as the most important events in his professional activity. The result of these negotiations was a network of agreements due to which Switzerland, at the outbreak of the World War II in 1939, was much better positioned in terms of supply with foodstuffs and sources of energy than in 1914 and a fortiori it was thanks to his negotiating skills that at the end of the war Switzerland was again supplied with coal and grain. [...]” (pp. 375)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

at the Bernese University. (pp. 27) At the age of 29, the young lawyer, who worked in a Bernese law firm, was appointed General Secretary of the FDEA (Federal Department of Economic Affairs) by Federal Councillor Edmund Schulthess. This was in the summer of 1917, i.e. towards the end of the First World War. (see p. 37)

1917–1919:

First economic negotiations at home and abroad in difficult times

In the Commission for Economic Issues, whose leadership Stucki took over, for instance, maximum prices for food were fixed in consideration of the population's need. However, the commission also enabled many soldiers to take some days off at the time of cereal and fruit harvest, because they were indispensable on their home farms. Walter

... always at least on equal terms

“Regardless of his vis-à-vis being a personal envoy of the President of the United States of America, a member of the Swiss Federal Government, a German Nazi General or a French Marshal, Stucki never negotiated from a position of weakness, from the position of a petitioner or representative of a second-rate small state. With clearly worded and objective arguments, with legally supported applications and proposals, with personal conviction, patience and persistence [...] he always remained at least on equal terms with his negotiating partners and never let himself be pushed to a lower-rated position.” (p. 378)

“In the small state of Switzerland, in which the superiority and arrogance of

the major powers and their representatives were felt ever more heavily in the inter-war period, the strong and intrepid appearance of a representative of the Swiss Confederation towards his foreign negotiating partners was greeted with enthusiasm. [...] His compatriots soon realized that Stucki was a representative who did not mince words and leave the field to the representatives of states whose territory, population and military strength were several times greater than those of Switzerland when grappling with problems at the negotiating front simply because he was a member of a small state.” (pp. 379)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)



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Stucki with his energetic and skilful actions gained the entire Federal Council's trust within a short time and with only 30 years of age he was already head of economic negotiating teams at home and abroad, because it soon became clear “that he was an excellent negotiator who understood and applied all agents of negotiating tactics purposefully and usually successfully”. (p. 42)

In the following text, three of the most impressive examples of Walter Stucki's rich experience of interactions will be chosen, all of them taking place in extremely difficult geopolitical situations in which the “Great Stucki” – he was given this nickname by the Swiss of his time not only because of his height of 1.87 meters (!) – achieved everything that was possible. First, the economic negotiations with the Nazi Reich Economics Minister Hjalmar Schacht, which were so necessary for Switzerland's survival; secondly, how Walter Stucki became honorary citizen of Vichy and thirdly, the negotiation of the Washington Agreement of 1946.

Showdown with the national-socialist Minister of Economy Hjalmar Schacht

Some of today's politicians and negotiators should be recommended to read what the “Great Stucki” was able to achieve against the Nazi regime and how he did not give up one millimeter of ground in the preservation of Switzerland's dignity and sovereignty.

Although the 1933 trade agreement between Switzerland and Germany favored German exports against the Swiss, the president of the German Reichsbank and later Reich Minister of Economics, Hjalmar Schacht accused the Federal Council in December 1933 of not realising “the signs of the times” with its allegedly anti-German policy. (see pp. 74).

continued on page 11

"The 'Great Stucki' – ..."

continued from page 10

"Plain words combined with expertise are often more effective than diplomatic pussy-footing: We could act more assertively in our dealings with other countries all the time." (Lucius Wasescha, trade diplomat, quoted from "Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag", 12.8.2012)

(Translation Current Concerns)

Three days later Walter Stucki replied in a two and a half hour presentation, to which the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" paid tribute by publishing it on the front page as the "speech of a statesman of truly significant format" ("Neue Zürcher Zeitung" from 14 December 1933).

"We must not run after the Germans now and we must above all not give in!"

The marathon negotiations that followed this verbal prelude, was characterized on the German side by frequent ultimatums or by abandoning negotiations, on the Swiss side by a steady weighing, how far they had to insist on what was indispensable to the Swiss population and the enterprises in the difficult times of the economic crisis, and in what points they wanted to come to an accommodation with Germany while at the same time respecting one's own dignity and sovereignty.

Thus the German regime requested Switzerland to pay millions as a precondition for a new trade agreement. On 29 March 1935, the agreement was con-

cluded "thanks to substantial concessions by Switzerland – including a *compensation payment to the German Reichsbank amounting to 4.1 million Swiss francs.*" (p. 76) The next day the German delegation said they had just received the instruction from Berlin that the agreement, negotiated the day before, was null and void: "*Precondition for the resumption of talks was the increase of Swiss payments to the Reichsbank from 4.1 to 6.5 million francs.*" (p. 76) Things went on that way.

Now, in the 21st century we experience similar attempts at blackmail by our northern neighbor, but also by Brussels and Washington. Walter Stucki however at the Federal Council's session of 1 April 1935 warned: "*We are facing a brutal ultimatum and cannot run after the Germans now and must not give in under no circumstances!*" (p. 77)

And lo and behold, the clear stance of the Swiss government and its negotiator bore fruit: Only six days later, Walter Stucki, after five hours of negotiations with Schacht in Basel a "new decent agreement" had been achieved. (p. 78)

Conclusion: This is only a small part of the lengthy and difficult negotiations, which Walter Stucki, on behalf of the Federal Council, had with such untrustworthy contracting partners as the National Socialist government. We modern readers can only guess to a small extent the extraordinary precarious situation in which Switzerland was on the eve of World War II. Reading the book gives us an insight into the time and compels us to respect the achievements of our parents and grandparents' generations – Walter Stucki was one of them.

How Walter Stucki became honorary citizen of Vichy

When war broke out on 1 September 1939, Walter Stucki was Swiss ambassador in Paris. In June 1940, when Paris was occupied by the Germans, he and his embassy staff moved to Vichy, the new capital of the provisionally unoccupied France. There he stayed during the German occupation until it ended in September 1944.

Neutral Switzerland takes over the representation of 20 states in occupied France

When the German tanks crossed the demarcation line between the occupied and the hitherto free France in November 1942, the majority of foreign embassies left Vichy, among them the Americans, whose free passage Stucki had successfully negotiated. After that, twenty states entrusted Switzerland with the representation of their interests, so Stucki's embassy staff had to be enlarged. (p. 196)

June 1944 – *Only a strong and well-armed Switzerland was able to successfully mediate*

In June 1944 the situation in France was confusing and explosive: After the landing in Normandy, the Allied troops were advancing, while various resistance movements were active, and the Germans turned the town of Vichy into a fortress under strict surveillance, since they were daily expecting an attack by the Résistance. In this situation, Walter Stucki tirelessly endeavored to make the transfer of power happen with the least possible bloodshed. While other diplomats barricaded themselves in Vichy or continued to surreptitiously move under camouflage, Stucki drove across the highly dangerous area in his diplomatic car with his big Swiss flag on top honking all the time to attract any check-posts' attention in time in order to explain them the neutral position of Switzerland and also, for instance, to bluntly tell the German post that he wanted to meet with Resistance people for talks. He visibly carried his officer pistol and a machine gun with ammunition on him. (pp. 227–232)

Konrad Stamm writes, "*According to Stucki's ideas only a strong and well-armed Switzerland was able to successfully mediate. If someone revealed signs of weakness, he was not recognized as an arbitrator by the quarreling parties. Only those who held up the banner and fearlessly looked into the eyes of the gunmen from both sides had a chance to be taken seriously and his proposals to be accepted.*" (p. 236)

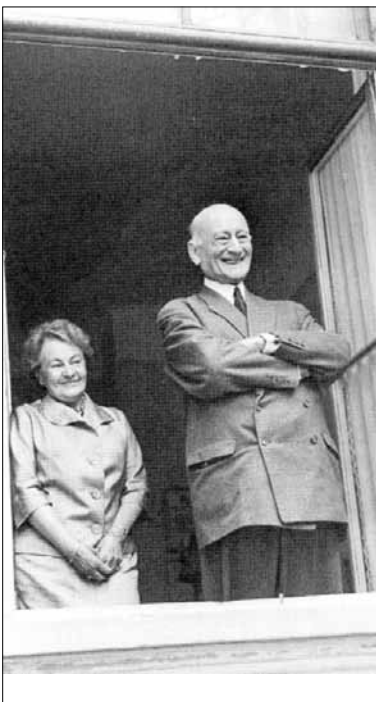
In early September 1944, the legendary act of the "Great Stucki"

After Walter Stucki had first achieved his aim that the 88 year old *Marshal Pétain* (President of the French puppet government in Vichy) was arrested by the Germans in dignity and without use of violence in a mock assault (pp. 234–238), he persuaded the commanders of the German troops not to cross Vichy for their retreat route, but to steer clear of the city. He thus saved the inhabitants of a last violent affliction. (pp. 238) At the same time Stucki convinced representatives of the Résistance, in whose eyes the inhabitants of Vichy consisted of collaborators for the most part to also spare Vichy. Finally Stucki brought it about that under the shield of the Red Cross thirty severely wounded German soldiers were taken to the hospital in Vichy and well kept and treated by the French doctors and nurses. (p. 240)

In the night from 5 to 6 September 1944, the French Resistance troops took possession of Vichy without a single shot being fired. The next day, the entire diplomatic corps departed to Berne, headed by Walter Stucki.

Appreciation by the biographer:

"Stucki was the only authority that had proven functional and assertive in the



In 1961, the town band of Vichy surprises Walter Stucki with a serenade – still in recognition of his services to the rescuing of the city in summer 1944. (Picture: Konrad Stamm, Der grosse Stucki, p. 377)

continued on page 12

"The 'Great Stucki' – ..."

continued from page 11

capital both before and after the change of power. It was due to him that the residents of Vichy could still live in their intact homes [...]. They thanked him with the honorary citizenship of the city and with a great farewell ceremony, for which on 7 September almost the entire population gathered." (pp. 241)

What is left to be added? Maybe this: In 1961, Vichy's town band serenaded Walter Stucki before his Berne home.

Washington 1946: Western Allies trying to lay down the law

"On March 4, the negotiations decisive for the future of Switzerland were to begin in Washington [...]. Walter Stucki, "was believed to be the only one, who [...] one could entrust to defy the Western victorious powers of World War II, i.e. United States, England and France." (pp. 9)

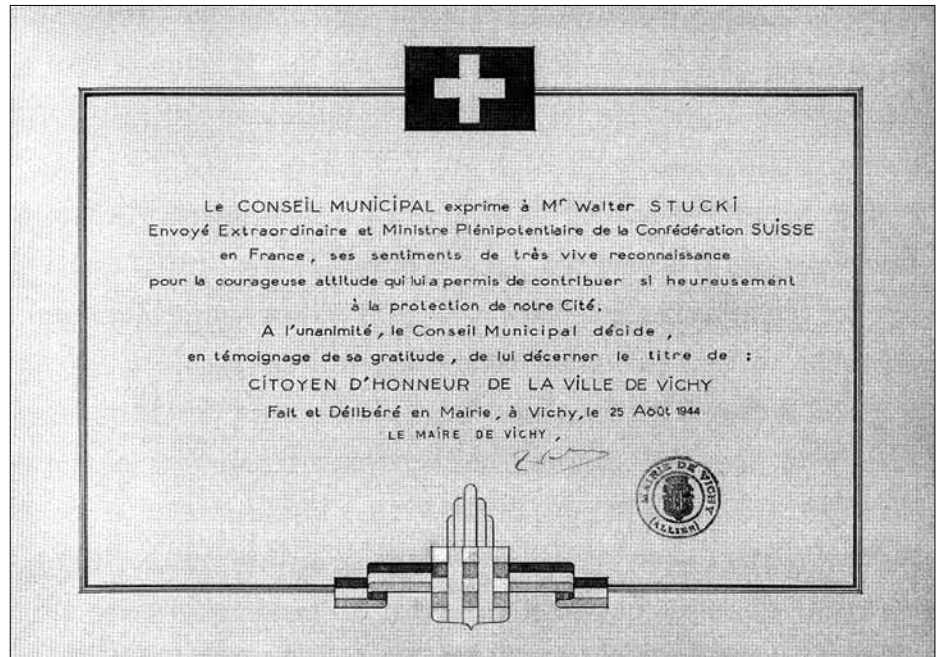
Since the Allies had to pay their huge war debts, their urgent need of money gave them the idea to enforce the "right of the victor" not only on the losers of World War II, but also on the neutral countries. So they planned to seize German private property in Switzerland and use it to pay for their war expenses. It was as early as then that they invented the fairy tale of Switzerland having procured the foreign currencies which the Germans needed desperately to continue the war, by purchasing stolen gold. As a lever, the US had already blocked the Swiss assets in the United States in a precautionary measure, and established "black lists" of Swiss companies who would therefore no longer be able to do business on the territory of the Allies. (see pp. 13).

The whole construct lacked any basis in international law: neither the intention to make neutral Switzerland pay for World War II nor the blocking of Swiss accounts or the de facto elimination of Swiss companies were legitimate. In addition to the

Federal Councillor Petitpierre's tribute to Walter Stucki

"In the history of our small country there have been one or at most two personalities in every generation that by their abilities, by their actions, and by the role that was imposed on them could alter and improve the course of Switzerland's destiny in their life journey in a decisive way. Minister Stucki was one of those outstanding personalities. [...] He devoted his best efforts to our country. For this we owe him a debt of gratitude." (Federal Councillor Petitpierre at the funeral service for Walter Stucki on 11 October 1963).

(Translation *Current Concerns*)



Certificate of honorary citizenship presented to Walter Stucki on 25 August 1944. Citoyen d'honneur de la Ville de Vichy. (picture: Konrad Stamm, Der grosse Stucki, p. 241)

massive economic impact of such measures, they meant undoubtedly a serious encroachment on the sovereignty of Switzerland. Hence foreign law would have been applied by foreign judges on Swiss soil.

Let us now compare Walter Stucki's appearance and conduct of negotiations with the nervous immediate surrender of our present Federal Council concerning inheritance tax matters in "agreements" with France or the FATCA "agreement" with the United States – both dictated from abroad.

Walter Stucki had not particularly wished to adopt the Washington mandate due to the unfavorable situation. "But when on 18 March 1946 he walked towards the lectern and opened the conference in the nation's capital, [...] he again outgrew his already striking size of 187 centimeters." (p. 12) With this composure and his speech, he compelled the necessary respect by the delegation of the three Western powers: "We know that your official documents speak quite openly about increasing the measures of economic pressure against Switzerland even more, if that seems you necessary. You certainly have the possibility to force us to our knees, like Hitler could have done throughout the war. But we cannot believe that you have simply forgotten one of the most beautiful and important statements of your late great president." Stucki concluded by quoting *Franklin Roosevelt* in 1943, "The rights of every nation, big or small, must be respected and preserved [...]. The doctrine that the strong should dominate the weak is the doctrine of our enemies, and we reject it." (pp. 12)

The tough negotiations took two months. Switzerland had no choice but to agree to a contract, otherwise it would have

had to face further blackmailing in the following years. (see pp. 14) Stucki himself was not completely satisfied with the negotiated agreement, he had offered \$ 100 million and now had to accept a substantially higher amount, namely 250 million.

However few years later the realization prevailed that Walter Stucki had achieved a good success for Switzerland: Following the agreement of 25 May 1946, the Swiss accounts were released in the US, the "blacklists" of Swiss companies abolished. And also according to the agreement text all the "questions related to looted gold were done with."¹

This provision of the agreement had obviously been forgotten when in the nineties the Americans demanded more billions of the major Swiss banks.

An obligation for the later generations

In his epilogue, titled "Why this biography had to be written" Konrad Stamm explains that in the 50 years since Walter Stucki's death "not a historian, not a journalist and not a PhD student [has] dedicated the necessary attention and time to Stucki's exceptional and far outstanding personality for a biography". (pp. 386)

We later generations that we have been born into and were allowed to grow in a well-kept house thanks to the hard work of those Swiss men and women living before us, it must be an obligation to show the generations of our parents and grandparents the gratitude and appreciation they deserve. Konrad Stamm has succeeded with his biography, that one of them, the "Great Stucki", has come alive for the reader. However, there is still a wide field to plow for Swiss historians. •

¹ Washington Agreement of 25 May 1946

Comprehend more precisely

Ethics and culture – Leo Tolstoy, Ilya Repin and the “Travelling Artists”

cc. From 13 to 27 September 2015 the anniversary exhibition „10 Jahre Kunst Schwyz“ (10 Years of Art Schwyz) is on display on the site of the Old Cement Plant in Brunnen. Since 2005 the exhibition “Art Schwyz” has been the annual culmination point for the association of artists of the same name from Central Switzerland. The association was founded in 1992 as a counter-position to the art scene backing and seeking to profit from the destructive Switzerland bashing – “700 years are enough” – in the context of the World Exhibition 1991. Urs Knoblauch spontaneously joined this countermovement and became a founding member of the artists’ association in the Canton of Schwyz.

As a part of this year’s exhibition, he presents his artistic tribute to *Leo Tolstoy* and *Ilya Repin* and the Russian travelling artists. In the present work of art (installa-

tion) by Urs Knoblauch, the important issues of social justice, agriculture and food security are represented through the example of the two great Russian artists Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and Ilya Repin (1844–1930). The large-format acrylic painting of 2011 (215 x 195 cm, on canvas, to be rolled up like maps or school pictures) takes up the motif “Tolstoy plowing” (1887) and his famous short story “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” Various everyday items, objects, studies and a photo-text work referring to Chingiz Aitmatov (1928–2008) from 2009 complement the theme.

With his work, the artist also hints at the original meaning of the term culture from Latin “agricultura”. “However, meanwhile, one has forgotten that nourishments of corn, vegetables, and fruit raised from the soil by one’s own labour is the pleasantest, healthiest, easiest, and most natural nourishment, and that the work of using one’s muscles is as necessary a condition of life as is the oxidation of the blood by breathing.” (Leo Tolstoy, “What is art?”)

In the 19th century democratisation was strengthened, good culture was to be made available to all people. Realism developed into a common sense visual language. Fourteen young Russian artists turned away from St. Petersburg Academy in 1863. They sought their motives in everyday life, in direct contact with the population and especially with the oppressed peasantry. In 1870, they founded the “Cooperative of Travelling Exhibitions” and dealt extensively with the ethical and moral tasks of art and culture. The “Peredwishnikis” (travelling artists) created Enlightenment art, took their “travelling exhibitions” from cities to remote rural regions and praised the people and their agricultural work. The cooperative was joined by numerous significant painters of Russian Realism. A central personality was Ilya Repin, who was a friend of Leo Tolstoy. For decades, the “traveling painters” were highly influential. Changes in society, arbitrariness and formalism



(picture uk)

Current Concerns

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led to the dissolution of the “Peredwishniki” in 1922.

The art work is to be thought-provoking, how power politics, greed, wars, colonialism and social misery can be overcome. The whole world community needs more ethics, social solidarity and non-violent conflict resolution. Europe must go back to its humanist culture substance in order to contribute to a peaceful and equitable coexistence of all people. Everybody, especially the artists are invited to contribute. Switzerland made a major contribution in 2014 by publishing a joint issue of two stamps under the slogan “Partnership – 200 years of diplomatic relations between Russia and Switzerland”.

Urs Knoblauch: www.kultur-und-frieden.ch

Exhibition opening hours:

Urs Knoblauch’s Installation “Ethics and culture – Leo Tolstoy, Ilya Repin and the Travelling Artists” can be seen in the anniversary exhibition “10 years of Art Schwyz” on the site of the Old Cement Plant, Industriestrasse 15, 6440 Brunnen, from 13 to 27 September 2015. The exhibition is open: Wed–Fri 3 – 8 p.m., Sat/Sun 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Vernissage with anniversary celebration:
Saturday, 12 September 7 p.m.

A piece of Swiss cultural history

The importance of the Open-Air Museum Ballenberg for today's Switzerland

by Thomas Kaiser

Anyone visiting the Open-Air Museum Ballenberg is given an impressive and memorable experience. A further stimulus is added to the visit if it takes place on the First of August, i.e. the Swiss national holiday. The speeches given amidst this Swiss cultural assets create an atmosphere that touches the soul – as I had the chance to experience this year. The Ballenberg Museum is not a Swiss miniature, but on 66 ha the visitor gets an impression of the Confederates' traditional construction art and craftsmanship of the last almost 700 years. One faces the achievements effected by our forefathers with respect and esteem.

The oldest house displayed here origins from the Canton of Schwyz and is almost 700 years old¹, a fact which alone gives rise to a certain reverence for our ancestors' skills. If you take your time to look a little more closely at the farms and homes from different historical periods and different regions of Switzerland and to carry your mind back to those times, you will get an impression of the enormous diversity of Switzerland, of its architecture and the abilities of its people. What is shown here on smallest space reflects what National Councillor *Ruedi Lustenberger*, President of the Patronage Committee of the Ballenberg Museum, expressed in his speech on 1 August: "Here, on this 66-hectare site, we meet the Swiss Confederation with its rich history and manifold culture. Each canton is to be found in the form of at least one historically valuable object. Each and every Swiss man and woman will find an object of special interest and attraction – I for example knew the Escholzmatt farmhouse when it still stood on its original site. You feel at home in the Open-Air Museum and proud of your own regional, cantonal, and especially our national history."²

The foresight seems to have been lost

With our present standards and technical capabilities we can hardly appreciate what people accomplished back then. If you erect a house or barn today, you will only in the rarest of cases expect this to last for a hundred years, or even for two or three hundred. Frequently homes, office buildings and other modern buildings are pulled down again after 20, 30, or 40 years, because the user requirements have changed or because materials were used which have turned out to be toxic by



now. In agriculture old stables often have to be replaced by new ones because, according to EU standards (!), they are a few centimetres too short for the livestock and therefore need to be torn down or completely rebuilt. The foresight that was still inherent in the people of three or four hundred years ago seems to have been lost, and everything is geared towards speed and ephemerality. So from the present time, hardly any such typical and well-preserved houses will be left to posterity.

The buildings now on display at Ballenberg were dismantled at their original location, transported to their new one and there faithfully reconstructed, so that the visitors are able to ramble from one canton to another over short distances and within a very short time and thus to get closely involved with these manifold samples of the art of construction.

Feel the spirit of the past

In connection with the materials that were used it is noticeable that wooden houses are no less durable than those made of stone. Already 300 years ago the sizes of houses was an expression of some prosperity, as it is today – although the situation in those times can hardly be compared to ours. Farmhouses and stables are completely different in architecture and design depending on the region they come from, but the central place in almost all the houses were the kitchen and the parlour. Here domestic life mainly took place. Depending on the age a tiled stove or an open fireplace ensured cosy warmth and at the same time served for smoking sausages. This form of preservation is practised at Ballenberg up to this day, and the smell of smoked meat is very appetizing indeed. The remaining rooms of most homes were unheated or only slightly warmed by the rising heat from below.

The principle of the "open house" allows the visitors to get an idea of the lifestyle of those days. On entering the premises we almost fancy that we can feel the spirit of a bygone era.

Life skills were particularly necessary to ensure survival at a time that was often characterised by diseases and poverty. So we feel somewhat ashamed looking at the tools and implements created without machines or even computers by the people of those times in order to cope with the tasks of daily life. More than 45,000 items

are exhibited at Ballenberg. The collection of various "special" tools is a particular "showpiece". Several of them were owned by the vagrant *Karl Rudolf*, called Charly, who distinguished himself by his technical virtuosity and accordingly had a variety of different tools. Shortly before his death in 1997, he bequeathed some items belonging to his occupation to the Ballenberg Museum, which was a matter of the greatest importance to him.³

Not forgetting the traditional skills

In addition to viewing the many buildings and their interior design, visitors can also take a look at the craftsmanship of those past days. Among other things one can find a carpenter and even a drug store there, and one can admire exceptional rarities everywhere. In certain places people can take matters in their hands themselves and have a bout at processing a piece of wood or fabric. It makes sense, even in the digital age, not to forget the traditional skills, which depend primarily on the individual's capacity of remembering to practice and pursue them. If for once and for whatever reason the power supply should fail or other energy sources become scarce, then all of these skills would be in great demand. You can learn specific details about food, drink, life, cooking, etc. directly from the staff of the Ballenberg Museum, since they explain everything to the visitors very accurately and in a fascinating way on the spot. Whether it is the smoking of meat or the drying of flax, the breeding of silkworms, the cheeses, the roofing of thatched roofs and much more, their knowledge is immense. One can also learn so much about the construction of the houses and their age, that would remain uncomprehended by indi-

"A piece of Swiss ..."

continued from page 14

vidual visitors who had not resorted to the available knowledgeable explanations.

In agriculture animals are partly used instead of machines. Whether it is plowing or tedding with horses, *Hermes Thöni* who is employed in the agricultural team of the museum, expresses what it takes: "It requires well-trained animals and great patience. Then, one can tackle also more difficult tasks such as plowing for example ... The work is hard for the animals. Moreover, it is not really easy to get the furrows straight. The team must also harmonize well."⁴ *Hermes Thöni* likes the traditional way of working very much. Apart from the fact that he is convinced of the value of horses in modern forestry for example, *Thöni* appreciates the old mechanics which is easier to understand than computerized high-tech solutions.

In most cases, livestock was not just an acquisition, but also an important part of self-sufficiency. The animals are on-site here, 250 in number, and may be viewed by visitors. The races are mainly of Swiss breed that is partly threatened with extinction. Therefore, there is a close collaboration with the organisation *Pro Specie Rara*. In summer the animals are on the Ballenberg, in winter they return to their owners.

Autonomy of communes allows citizen-friendly solutions

After a day of exciting and moving impressions one has seen only a fraction of what is available to the visitor at the Ballenberg. Only a small part of the cultural diversity of traditional Switzerland can be captured in one day. A diversity that is ultimately reflected in the political configuration of Switzerland. As *Ruedi Lustenberger* put it in his speech of 1 August, this includes above all federalism. This diversity could develop and be maintained because of the extensive political and cultural sovereignty of the cantons. The great autonomy of the municipalities allows citizen-friendly solutions, which in turn further the identification and satisfaction of the people.

"We have managed to build a system with our own values and to make our diverse, colorful Switzerland a story of success. In a small area we unite four national languages, great cultural diversity and maintain a unique high degree of autonomy of municipalities and regions. Our success is crucially rooted in our dealing

A visit to the Ballenberg Museum with students is worthwhile. If you want to experience something special, there is a whole range of opportunities: So there are days dealing with special themes or advanced training courses for school classes and groups. The adventure days which are oriented on a theme allow visitors to immerse themselves in the life of that time and to acquire traditional skills. One can participate actively in bread baking, wood carving and even building houses. More information is available at www.ballenberg.ch.



with this large variety that also changes continuously over time. Since the first alliances of the old Confederates in 1291, Switzerland has constantly undergone a process of integration. This process has been coped with quite well so far."⁵ If Switzerland abandons its peculiarities or loses them by lack of awareness as described above, it shall fall into mediocrity and will no longer be distinguished from other states, as predicted by *Simon Geissbühler* in his book "Die Schrumpfschweiz" (The Shrink-Switzerland)⁶. That would be the end of a unique political and cultural and ultimately democratic model. In the often invoked "era of globalization", which means nothing else but the unrestricted freedom of global capital and trade, the economic and financial oligarchy – instead of the citizens in their countries – will determine, in what direction politics has to work. Everything will be subordinated to the economic and financial benefit of the global players. If at all, man emerges merely as an economic factor that is supposed to consume as much as possible.

Shared coping with pending tasks

Those who move on the Ballenberg with open minds will experience something else. Human life does not consist of maximizing profit and economic benefit. Pri-

mary aim has been to ensure food security and survival. Not big money had priority, but human interaction, the shared working on and coping with pending tasks. A visitor recounted that when he was young he "had" had to lend a hand with the harvesting of hay in summer while his classmates had gone swimming. That kept him busy at the time. In retrospect, however, he had to realize that the work together with siblings and adults, the shared mid-morning and afternoon meals as well as the harvest of the crop had filled him with pride and satisfaction already at that time, although he would not have admitted it then. That is why a visit on the Ballenberg brings back memories and inspires reflecting more deeply about the existence of today. *Beatrice Tobler*, who has worked at the Ballenberg Museum since 2012 and is Head of Science ad interim puts it this way: "The lifestyles and strategies of the people of earlier times may be of interest for us today and in future. I am thinking of handicraft and building techniques as well as of the use of resources in general. In this context there are popular keywords like sustainability, urban gardening, recycling and neighbourhood assistance."⁷

Anyone who wants to experience a part of Swiss cultural history and feel more connected to the country and its peculiarities as well as to its residents, must visit the Open-Air Museum at Ballenberg. •

¹ Edwin Huwyler: Schweizerisches Freilichtmuseum für ländliche Kultur, Berne 2008, p. 38

² Ruedi Lustenberger: Speech on 1 August 2015

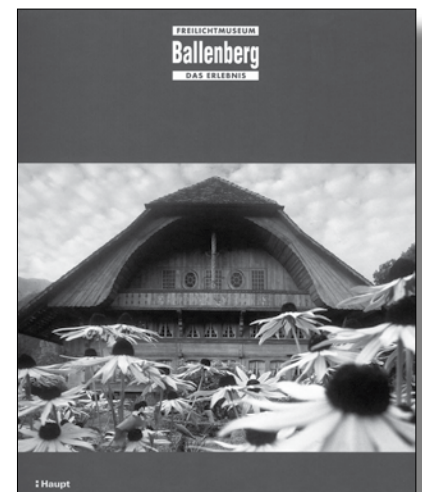
³ *Der Ballenberger* 1/15 annual magazine, pp. 6

⁴ Ibid, p. 5

⁵ Ruedi Lustenberger: Speech on 1 August 2015

⁶ Simon Geissbühler: *Die Schrumpfschweiz*, 2014

⁷ *Der Ballenberger* 1/15 annual magazine, pp. 4.



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