

Current Concerns

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A view on the commemorative year 2015

by Dr phil. René Roca, Institute of Research on Direct Democracy

For Switzerland, 2015 was a markedly dense Year of Commemoration. The Swiss population was called upon to remember important historical dates – events *nota bene* – which were central for the formation of state and sovereignty of our country. Historical events of the home country, whether they were crowned with successes or defeats, should always be an occasion for reflection and contemplation. We look at past events with a view from our present,

we weigh them and draw our conclusions from them. Oskar Vasella, Swiss historian with a Catholic background, an almost forgotten historian, wrote about “historical understanding”: “The picture of history arises only in the question about certain contexts and their essence is determined by the value we award them”¹

In this sense, our view of history is completed, enriched, and our human existence is also emotionally linked to our ancestors. This process of understanding, a weighing and by all means also critical appropriation of our national history is central to our identity as Swiss citizens. Thus we create the necessary identity as citizens and can self-confidently handle the problems presented to us in our world today in a philanthropic sense.

Nowadays, most historians teaching and doing research at Swiss Universities have quite a different opinion. When it comes to Swiss history, the approach of de-constructivism spooks about. The guild of historians make their appearance and want to destroy “the prevailing views of history” and construct new



“Tagsatzung” in Baden in the year Jahr 1531.
(picture wikipedia)

ones. Lately de-constructivism is likely concealed with a new label, continually stressing the “transnational aspect”. However, there is no new method or theory behind this, but well-known facts are simply prepared anew. The positive context to the nation must be wiped out, our country must be considered “beyond” the national, speak “transnational” just like the European Union constantly aspires and preaches. National borders must finally eradicated; the nation state abolished. A “post national”, or even a “post democratic” thinking should lead to a “Europe of regions”.

One of these historians, the recently retired Jakob Tanner, is an example for taking this path: Shortly before he left the University of Zurich he managed to abolish Swiss history as an area of studies, which in 2005 was already downgraded to a minor subject. It is interesting how the leftist Tanner commented on the abolition: “The Bologna reform and the competition between Universities are forcing us [...] to simplify the study programmes and to establishing professional profiles.”² Smart reasoning which lastly boils down to a neo-liberal EU reform, used by Tanner straight away to dispose of research and teaching of Swiss history. But it is not only meant to be about destruction, but also to set up a “counter

Editorial

For our country a year of commemorations comes to an end, in which the historical experiences of the events of 1315, 1415, 1515 and 1815 have been far too little reflected regarding their significance for the political present. Instead, various contemporary historians questioned the events, diminished their relevance or completely negated them. This (de-)constructivism of today’s historiography, as René Roca characterises it aptly in his view of the commemorative year, leaves behind especially the following: a mental vacuum in the dispute over the question of imperial, from top to bottom organised versus self-determined liberal – sovereign – forms of human co-existence. Precisely here lies the value of closer examining our country’s history as René Roca clearly points out: a history in which despite all difficulties not the dictate from above, not a monarchist rule has been the central agent of development, but which originated in the cooperative principle of self-organisation and collectively securing the existence, and in which the will to preserve self-determination always remained decisive. And this was only possible when equipped with the will for common defense against claims of third parties the self-determination of the confederates was respected – an idea that today is just as crucial as it used to be in all the conflicts of the Confederates through the centuries as the contribution of Professor Hans Köchler on the dialogue of civilisations shows. Respect for beliefs and ways of life of other civilisations and cultures is on a larger scale to the same extend a requirement of peaceful coexistence on our planet as mutual respect for the eight Cantons of the Confederacy.

Seen in this way, the historical (de-)constructivism intellectually supports a form of imperialist thinking that has been dominating the attitude of Western policy in many areas of our world. Even if the arrogance is rhetorically covered up and tries to hide when speaking of democracy

The editors and the cooperative Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns wish all readers a Happy New Year.

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and human rights. An example of such policies is the history of the Congo which in turn is an example of the history and situation of a whole continent that is nowadays more brutally bled to death and exploited than ever serving the interests of Western powers. The fact that African rulers – mostly educated in the West and always supported by the West – can be employed as henchmen does not discharge the Western powers in any way from their responsibilities, on the contrary.

It would be about time to reflect on the simple but fundamental message of our history: people do not want to be dominated and ruled by arrogant elites – this contradicts human nature, as freedom is the foundation of human dignity. The realisation of the „democratic world revolution“ (Martin Kriele) may be still far away for many. However, Kriele's idea of the awareness of the fundamental equality for all the people is gradually breaking ground. It cannot reasonably be disputed. This is also proven by the human rights rhetoric that covers up their accompanying propaganda for any claims of power or even the most brutal wars. Power politics and war are always accompanied by a restriction of freedom also in the war-mongering countries. This again is another historical experience and logic of power.

But we humans can act differently: we can learn the lessons from our history, we can realise that not striving for power and competition, but cooperation, a sense of togetherness and caring for one another creates values, allows for developments and often finds new solutions to problems that previously seemed hardly solvable.

Erika Vögeli

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image". Almost at the same time Tanner announced his latest big act, a "history of Switzerland in the 20th century". Therefore future students should not be able to study Swiss history any longer and most certainly they should not do any research on the history of Switzerland, because Tanner's historical work is available now and that is, according to the emeritus, not a mere "national 'container history' seen from a domestic perspective".

Beyond postmodern approaches the commemorative year 2015 shall serve below to better understand today's highly praised "model Switzerland", by attempting to link the historical events and to show its contexts. The four historical events of 1315, 1415, 1515 and 1815 are important "elements" for today's Switzerland and have deeply shaped the view of history of the confederates.

**1315: Battle of Morgarten –
"We will accept or receive no judge in
the aforesaid valleys"**

At this point the actual battle itself is not the focus of attention once more, it is rather a report on its implications. On 9 December 1315, only some three and a half weeks after the Battle of Morgarten, the three valleys Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden renewed their *alliance of 1291* in Brunnen. The endorsement and amendment has to be seen in the light of the new situation after the Battle of Morgarten which is further proof that the battle has taken place. The new letter of alliance, also called "Morgartenbrief", was edited for the first time ever in German, a remarkable, sovereign act. Language as an associational element remained important for our later political system but without barricading the path to the current constitutionally guaranteed four languages of Switzerland.

In a timeless sense the alliance of 1291 already formulates an ethic politics cannot do without: "Seeing the malice of the age, in order that they may better defend them-

selves, and their own, and better preserve them in proper condition, have promised in good faith to assist each other with aid, with every counsel and every favour, with person and goods, within the valley and without, with might and main, against one and all, who may inflict upon any one of them any violence, molestation or injury, or may plot any evil against their persons or goods."³

On these foundations the "Morgartenbrief" reaffirmed in 1315 the principle of cooperative in contrast to the principle of rule: "We have also vowed, decreed and ordained in common council and by unanimous consent, that we will accept or receive no judge in the aforesaid valleys who shall have obtained his office for any price ..."⁴ They did not renounce all obligations of obedience but important was the fact that all the three valleys, namely Uri, Schwyz und Unterwalden were already in possession of letters of freedom by the German king for some time and they wanted to still maintain this imperial immediacy after the battle. The later Confederacy was not actually "founded" in 1315 but a further sovereign and autonomous act from the grass roots was established and the alliance was strengthened on the basis of Christianity. To Roger Sablonier the "Morgartenbrief" is "not really suspect of fabrication" and "clearly originated in a close context to the prevailing political circumstances (meaning among others the Battle of Morgarten)".⁵ The reaffirmed alliance was, according to Sablonier, among others a "safeguard after Morgarten"⁶. In the "Morgartenbrief" the partners of the alliance of central Switzerland call themselves "eitgenozen"⁷, confederates, for the first time. Thus the people from central Switzerland make their appearance with an own identity acting as confederates of the valleys solidly united. Sablonier's later theses of a "founder era without confederates"⁸ thus appears fairly (de) constructed. Quite to the opposite; with the "Morgartenbrief" the confederates rather present-

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Recognition of mutual equality – prerequisite for peace and development

"The political enlightenment was a natural law doctrine. It was based on the nature of man as a human being, not as a Catholic or Protestant, as a Christian or Heathen, as European or Asian, as freeman or slave, etc. It states the question for the conditions under which people can cooperate peacefully and friendly. The answer was: by putting themselves into a legal situation, and that means with an established wording by Kant: by people and states mutually acknowledging themselves as having equal rights and by constrain-

ing their freedom according to common laws so that the freedom of each individual can remain with the freedom of all. By doing this, they subordinate their animal nature under a nature with common sense and thus overcome the principle of the right of the stronger, faster, smarter, of the brutal and unscrupulous ones. Thus, they create the freedom where every human being and every people can act self-determined, to materialise his best capabilities, to work together like brothers and to keep peace. Question and answer are pure-

ly of intra-mundane rational character and are not bound to any theological condition. Therein a minimum of natural law is expressed, that includes all religions, cultures, traditions and is essential to establish a universal peace."

Martin Kriele: *Die demokratische Weltrevolution und andere Beiträge.*
Berlin 1997, pp. 15.

(Translation Current Concerns)

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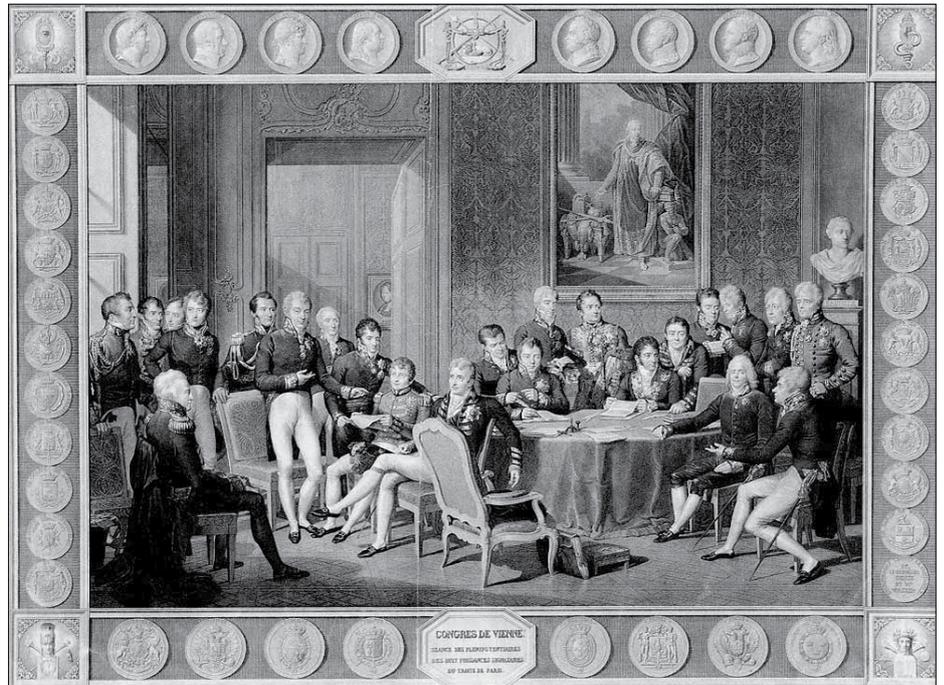
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ed themselves as protagonists with a will to strengthen the principle of cooperatives. Hence it did become an important foundation of Switzerland and has lost none of its validity to this day.

1415: Conquest of Aargau – "Tagsatzung" as expression of the principle of cooperative

Doubtless, not only the forming of the "Confederacy", but the inner state integration and consolidation of the individual cantons was a lengthy process. However, fact is that this process was initiated around 1300 and continued far into the 15th century. At the end of the 14th century the individual "countries" represented themselves as collectively and territorially defined political associations linked by a common use (the commons), "each one an individual alpine community with its own institutions", meaning among others the "Landsgemeinde", (an assembly dealing with internal matters, editor's note).

Characteristically for the spirit of cooperative and the ideas of balance it was the formation of the federal "Tagsatzung", (each associate partner delegates two representatives to deal with inter-valley matters, editor's note) in the context of the conquest of Aargau in 1415, then ruled by a Habsburg King. Thereby the confederates accomplished a further important step on their path of inner state integration. With the conquest "Gemeine Herrschaften" (condominiums) were established – areas the Confederacy, now consisting of eight Old Cantons, had to administer. This administrative occupation accounted for the necessary "cement" for further



Delegates of the Vienna Congress in a contemporary copper engraving of Jean Godefroy. (picture wikipedia)

mutual growth. The intensified cooperation found its expression and increasing importance in the "Tagsatzung", being the only centralised body of the Confederacy until 1848 (except for a short spell of time during the Helvetic Republic). With their assemblies, where authorised delegates from the Confederate Cantons jointly debated their affairs, the "Tagsatzung" grew to be of imminent importance. *Andreas Würzler* resolves: "The 'Tagsatzung', as a body for political assemblies, was not typical compared to other European representative or state assemblies in early modern times [...] because it was not based on feudal relations with a royal centre but a voluntarily sworn alliances of communities (community)."¹⁰ The expulsion of the reeves from Habsburg was directed against despotism and aimed at gaining more independence. The establishing of the "Gemeine Herrschaften" was, according to *Vasella*, "no sin contrary to the spirit of the alliances"¹¹. "The establishing of areas of bailiwicks can only be understood from the federative structure of the federacy. All the more it allowed the syntheses of demands between the urban principle of rule and the spirit of the rural democracies. Actually the cantons have initially been linked to the common bailiwicks and only gradually to the towns. Especially the joint ruling of the cantons has made a freer development of the subject areas possible. (...) It becomes apparent that the frequently used term village and community freedom is enormously fruitful."¹²

King *Sigismund's* summary confirmation of privileges after the federal conquest of Aargau 1415 levelled the position of the Eight Old Cantons by imperial law,

thus establishing their imperial immediacy. With the de facto dissociation from the Holy Roman Empire German Nation after the Swabian War 1499, the Confederacy consequently performed the next step for a unification process both internally and externally, even if the confessional segregation slowed it down over following centuries. In this process the negotiations of the "Tagsatzung" were the mirror image of a constant striving to achieve an adjustment of the many fold demands. It promoted, like no other institution, the sense of unity of the confederates: "The 'Tagsatzung' was and remains to be the symbol of the Confederacy"¹³

1515: Battle of Marignano – federal structure and neutrality

In his essay "Über geschichtliches Verstehen und das Geschichtsbild der Schweiz" ("On Historical Understanding and the historical self-perception of Switzerland") *Vasella* highlighted the fact that instead of the military conflicts still being given so much emphasis "the importance of the magnificent idea of arbitration ought to be stressed much more strongly".¹⁴ In line with this approach *Vasella* strongly objected to the liberal notion of unity and progress, which not only had an enormous impact on Swiss historiography from 1848 up until the 1950s and even today still resurfaces now and then. According to *Vasella*, what characterised the Swiss Confederacy of the Middle Ages, was not a specifically designed policy for the Confederacy as a whole but local politics. Consequently, according to *Vasella*, the idea of the diversity of Swiss



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politics or – put differently – the idea of “cultural and political importance of federalism” ought to come into the fore.¹⁵ Rather than pursuing the idea of power politics and the ideal of extending the power of the state, the Swiss Confederacy gave priority to a liberty based on the cooperative principle and, most importantly, to territorial self-restraint: “In this manner the foundations were laid for the federal structure of the Swiss Confederacy also for later periods. This structure did not allow in any way for power politics despite major military assets, meaning considerable human resources, represented by masses of mercenaries.”¹⁶ According to Vasella the concept of a politics of expansion for the Confederacy at large was missing: “Thus the Battle of Marignano did not signify the demise of Swiss power politics because previously it had never existed anyway.”¹⁷ What mattered most for the development of the Swiss polity was its federal structure which also lies at the heart of neutrality as a rejection of a deliberate expansion policy for the Swiss Confederacy as a whole.

These historical preconditions continued to unfold their effect in the subsequent era of religious wars ultimately leading the way to Switzerland’s de jure-separation from the Holy Roman Empire in 1648 and its achievement of full sovereignty as a confederation.

1815: Vienna Congress – Confirmation of permanent neutrality

As part of the second Paris peace treaty of 20 March 1815, concluded after *Napoleon’s* ultimate defeat, the European powers recognised Switzerland’s steadily growing status of permanent neutrality and guaranteed its territorial integrity. As the renowned legal expert *Hans-Ulrich Walder* emphasised again and again this treaty of international law has never been suspended and is still in force. In tough and persistent negotiations a number of circumspect personalities, such

as the Genevan *Pictet de Rochement*, achieved a sound solution for Switzerland. Particularly helpful in the process was also the support of Russia. The “Act of Acknowledgement and Guarantee of Perpetual Neutrality of Switzerland” stated: “The powers who signed the declaration of 20 March acknowledge, in the most formal manner, by the present act, that the neutrality and inviolability of Switzerland, and her independence of all foreign influence, enter into the true interests of the policy of the whole of Europe.”¹⁸ How times can change ...

But back to history: In a “Tagsatzung” lasting from April 1814 to August 1815 the Swiss Confederacy finally became a confederation composed of 22 sovereign cantons with equal rights. In the Federal Treaty of 1815, the first self-imposed constitution for Switzerland as a whole and in line with the Federal Charter of 1291 those responsible stipulated: “The XXII sovereign cantons of Switzerland [at this point the enumeration of the cantons follows] unite themselves by the present treaty to assert their freedom, independence and security against all attacks from foreign powers, and to maintain internal order and tranquillity.”¹⁹

With the Federal Treaty Switzerland preserved significant democratic achievements (including the abolition of subordinate relationships or subject territories) which subsequently made it possible to gradually expand popular political rights on the cantonal level. Up until the founding of the Federal State in 1848 the sovereign cantons acted as “laboratories of freedom” and provided a constructive, though conflict-ridden, process of materialising and developing of popular sovereignty and direct democracy. A Confederation army, composed of contingents from the cantons, provided external security.

Those four historical events and their connections clearly show that the study of Swiss history is worthwhile – many research fields are lying idle. What is still needed are – to conclude with *Georg Thürier’s* words – citizens being convinced

“that today it is more necessary than ever to remain Swiss in the deepest sense and to help study, represent and defend our free government based on the cooperative principle.”²⁰ •

- ¹ Oskar Vasella. Über geschichtliches Verstehen und das Geschichtsbild der Schweiz, in: *Arbeiten zur Psychologie, Pädagogik und Heilpädagogik*, Band 16, Freiburg 1959, S. 87–97, hier p. 88
- ² Jakob Tanner. “Die Schweizer Geschichte floriert”, Interview, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 9.1.2015
- ³ *ibid.*
- ⁴ Bundesbrief der drei Orte Uri, Schwyz und Nidwalden, in: *Quellenwerk zur Entstehung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft. Urkunden, Chroniken, Hofrechte, Rödel und Jahrbücher bis zum Beginn des XV. Jahrhunderts*, herausgegeben von der Allgemeinen Geschichtsforschenden Gesellschaft der Schweiz, Abteilung I: Urkunden, Band I: Von den Anfängen bis Ende 1291, bearbeitet von Traugott Schiess, Aarau 1933, p. 776
- ⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁶ Die drei Länder erneuern den Bund des Jahres 1291, in: *Ebd.*, Band 2: Von Anfang 1292 bis Ende 1332, bearbeitet von Traugott Schiess, vollendet von Bruno Meyer, Aarau 1937, S. 412 (own translation from Middle High German)
- ⁷ Roger Sablonier, 1315: ein weiteres Gründungsjahr der Eidgenossenschaft? Der Bundesbrief von 1315, in: *Der Geschichtsfreund: Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins Zentralschweiz*, Band 160, Zug 2007, S. 9–24, hier p. 15, 17
- ⁸ *ibid.*, p. 17
- ⁹ Länder, p. 411–415
- ¹⁰ Roger Sablonier. *Gründungszeit ohne Eidgenossen. Politik und Gesellschaft in der Innerschweiz um 1300*, Baden 2008
- ¹¹ Sablonier, Gründungsjahr, S. 20
- ¹² Andreas Würzler, Art. Tagsatzung, in: *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, Band 12, Basel 2013, S. 181–185, hier S. 182
- ¹³ Vasella, Verstehen, p. 95
- ¹⁴ Vasella, Verstehen, p. 96.
- ¹⁵ Vasella, Verstehen, p. 96.
- ¹⁶ Vasella, Verstehen, p. 90
- ¹⁷ Vasella, Verstehen, p. 97
- ¹⁸ Act of Acknowledgement and Guarantee of the Perpetual Neutrality of Switzerland and the Inviolability of its Territory, signed at Paris 20 November 1815, quoted from *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Times ...*, Vol. 32, 1 February to 6 March 1816, published under the superintendance of T.C. Hansard, London 1816, p. 308.
- ¹⁹ Bundesvertrag zwischen den XXII Kantonen der Schweiz vom 7. August 1815, translated from Kölz, *Quellenbuch*, p. 193
- ²⁰ Georg Thürier. *Kultur des alten Landes Glarus. Studie des Lebens einer eidgenössischen Demokratie im 16. Jahrhundert*, Glarus 1936, p. III

The cooperative principle – its significance for justice and peace*

by Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

The legal historian *Otto Gierke* (1841–1921), renowned as the “father of cooperative legislation”, due to his decisive contributions to the cooperative legislation, is honoured in the *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland* as “fundamental to the science of history”. It states: “[*Otto Gierke*’s] extensive cooperative concept covers any German public corporation based on free association, from the family to the state, where cooperation and dominion are in a dialectical relationship.”¹

This comprehensive cooperative concept also proves to be useful today, when it comes to basic principles of cooperative interaction.

Even before the end of World War II, in 1943, the famous Swiss historian *Adolf Gasser* submitted proposals on how “peace [could be] achieved” i.e. how such a disaster could be prevented to happen again. In addition to numerous lectures, which he gave after the Nazi dictatorship in war-torn Europe, he wrote down his suggestions in a very readable book called “Communal freedom as salvation of Europe”². In it, among others, he explains that there are basically two opposing types of state systems: the one is built from bottom up and the other from top down. The first is the cooperative type, the second an authoritarian one. The cooperative nature is based on voluntary agreement and mutual trust, but also on mutual responsibility. The authoritarian state system is based on a centralistic command that makes use of a strong army and a tightly-organised civil service. Only in the cooperatively built states can true freedom develop, because only there the moral forces are formed which may prevent a predominance of social and political contradictions. *Alfred Gasser* writes: “The contrastive pair ‘dominion – cooperative’ is perhaps the most significant contrast that is known in social history. The contrastive pair ‘authoritarian state – society state’ is about fundamental things: namely, the elementary foundations of human communal life. In a fundamental way, the two opposing state organisations differ primarily by spiritual and moral criteria. Depending on the predominance of one or the other principle the states seem to be inspired by the opposite spirit with

respect to the community, either the dominion spirit or cooperative spirit.”³

Today, the cooperative concept receives increasing attention and dissemination worldwide: cooperatives across all divisions worldwide offer more than 100 million jobs, which means 20 per cent more than the multinationals offer. Approximately one billion people worldwide are members of cooperatives. Thus, the UN General Assembly has declared the year 2012 the *International Year of Cooperatives*. Especially in troubled times, in times of crises, of rebuilding, when the political system is limited due to lack of funds, people are increasingly challenged to take initiative themselves. Cooperatives in their various forms foster the participation of people in the economic and social development, they contribute to the eradication of poverty and make an important contribution to social peace. The cooperative principle includes fundamental values of human coexistence in equality, freedom and it is oriented towards the common good. The principle of cooperation is fundamental. The historian *Helmut Faust* puts it like this: “Uniting for mutual assistance in a community is also the simple sense of the cooperative concept. While it corresponds to human nature, its implementation embraces the highest ethos people can achieve.”⁴ The cooperative principle therefore does not only apply to economic and material issues, but includes the entire human nature, it is thus a basic anthropological constant.

More and more people move away from the notion of “*homo economicus*” and put the welfare of the people and the common good back at the centre of their considerations. They do not consider the human being an only utility-maximising machine, but a moral person who is capable of taking decisions and actions based on an ethical foundation. It is the free and responsible people and not the market forces which determine the nature of our economic, social and political actions. Considering different economic and social systems, we can see that it is in fact the cooperative movement which is deeply imbued with precisely this concept of man.

From an anthropological perspective cooperative interaction is an ancient form of human coping with life in *self-help*, *self-responsibility* and *self-management*, which has evolved in different forms in many places of the world. The foreword of the booklet published by the *cooperative Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns* says:

“In Switzerland, the community-building and integrating element of the cooperatives has significantly contributed to the formation of a bottom organised statehood with its direct democracy. [...] The basic principles of cooperative interaction correspond to the basic principles of human nature: the freedom to regulate fate by human beings themselves, the awareness that it is necessary to take their fate into their own hands, and the cooperation, interaction for a common goal to the benefit of all. [...] Cooperation in freedom, ‘one for all and all for one’ – in other words: ‘together – for one another’ – the core principle of cooperative activities – is fundamental to personal initiative, creativity, responsibility, and finally also for social and individual development and is a constitutional element of the dignity of man.”⁵

The personalist concept of man

Fundamental to the cooperative principle, as we understand it, is the personalist concept of man.

The personalist concept of man sees man as a fundamentally social being whose personality fully develops in and through the community, and who is capable of reason and ethics. Man is able to create culture and to set moral values. The personal concept of man is based on Christian values applicable to natural law, which are confirmed by psychology. The historian and psychologist *Dr Anne-Marie Buchholz-Kaiser* writes about this in her essay “Personalist Psychology – The contribution of psychology and education to human dignity”⁶, which dealt with the question how social responsibility and solidarity can be developed together with the fellow human beings: “Morality does not need to be imposed on the people: It has its roots in the empathy, which develops in a positive bond of the child to its first caregiver. The formation of conscience, ethical behaviour and moral sense, which take their beginning here, are [...] rooted in human nature. Empathy and compassion are the qualities which put people in a position to assess the consequences of their actions for their fellows and cause them to behave in a socially responsible manner.”⁷

The individual psychologist *Alfred Adler* described the sociality of man in the concept of the “*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*” (common sense) which has been the core of his teachings. For Adler, humaneness is the basic structure of human existence. Man

* Speech delivered at the International Science and Public Conference on the issue of “Yalta-Potsdam-Belgrade: In Search for Secure World Order” hosted by the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals in Belgrade on 24 and 25 November 2015.

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is a social being, because he is only viable in the community and can only reach self-realisation, life fulfillment, satisfaction and contentment in the cooperative coexistence. Man can only become a human being in the community of cooperating fellow beings and thus contribute to peace. First of all this has to do with his biological imperfection and the emerging helplessness and dependence. People are only capable of coping with the tasks to ensure peace and preserve life by joining forces with other people, by division of labour and by cooperation. "Gemeinschaftsgefühl" is thus a biological fact. All cultural achievements, such as language development, have developed on the grounds of social interest. Co-

operation, solidarity and the principle of mutual aid are constitutive for the development of social interest, for the social progress of mankind and for peace. Thus humanity is the real sense in life. Any form of striving for power, the lust for power oppose the common sense diametrically and will lead to man's downfall.

The basic principles of cooperative interaction, the association of people to help themselves in self-responsibility and self-government for a common purpose corresponds to the nature of man. Cooperation in freedom and equality, self-determined and responsible action are essential.

Cooperative principles are founded anthropologically and in their content they correspond to the findings of psychology. They are essential for the development

and for the preservation of social peace in a country. ●

- ¹ Historical Dictionary of Switzerland, 1998-2014, Berne, www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D8970.php.
- ² Gasser, Adolf, Gemeindefreiheit als Rettung Europas – Grundlinien einer ethischen Geschichtsauffassung, (Communal freedom as salvation of Europe) 2nd edition, Basel, 1947
- ³ loc. cit. , p. 13
- ⁴ Faust, Helmut: Geschichte der Genossenschaftsbewegung, 3rd edition, Frankfurt a.M. Knapp, 1977, p. 17
- ⁵ We establish a cooperative – Living and working together and for each other, Cooperative Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns/Horizons et débats/Dicorso libero, 2014, foreword
- ⁶ V. Conference "Mut zur Ethik": Die Würde des Menschen (The dignity of man), Feldkirch 1997, publishing house Menschenkenntnis, Zurich, 1998.
- ⁷ ibid.: Buchholz-Kaiser, Annemarie: Personalist Psychology – The contribution of psychology and education to human dignity. p. 87

"An entrenchment in one's own culture, meaning the inner understanding of our culture's universal values, is the condition for having a firm place in this world and in this time. It is also the condition for establishing a respect for other people and their culture, and it is the condition for a productive co-existence among peoples. [...]

Freedom is equally necessary for life as air is to breathe. Voluntariness in human life is also an essential condition for a child to become secure within the

family and internalise its values. Coercion only interferes with this, whereas insight and solidarity represent far more powerful and viable moving force in the long run.

The highest possible level of freedom as has been realised in direct democracy, is a subject that once again must be brought to discussion. It is imperative in the face of a new form of oppression on a global scale, and also in the face of a ruthless globalizing economy solely geared towards shareholder profit while sacrificing human well-being, the

"bonum commune". The economy must serve life and not the other way around: Natural Law, Christian Social Teaching, and also every ethic that is based on human nature and life, and Personalist Psychology have all come to this conclusion."

*Excerpt from:
Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser,
"Strengthening Human Beings",
Zurich 2000*

*Source: Current Concerns No. 20/21
from 29 June 2013*



Development of EU law – What does it mean for Switzerland? Considerations from a viewpoint concerned with constitutional law and the politics of sovereignty

Interview with Thomas Minder (Canton of Schaffhausen), member of the Swiss Council of States

In some of the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU, we find provisions according to which Switzerland has undertaken to apply the so-called “development” of EU law, that is, to take over EU edicts which were not yet in force at the time when Switzerland signed and ratified the agreement and which had often not even been expected by anyone. According to the Swiss Confederation’s website, this includes the Schengen/Dublin agreement: “Through association with the Schengen and Dublin agreement, Switzerland is committed to implementing developments of the Schengen and Dublin legislative frameworks.”¹

So far, there have been three “developments” of the Dublin Agreements, called Dublin I, II and III. They each were addressed with a so-called exchange of notes between Switzerland and the EU. The Federal Council took note of the changes and made sure that Switzerland would adjust its legal system accordingly. Currently the European Commission is calling on Switzerland to comply with the allocation of EU asylum seekers according to the proposed permanent distribution key. In the course of this it is not the first time, that the constitutionally burning question arises of whether and how the implementation of these EU decisions are compatible with direct democracy. We, the citizens of Switzerland and our elected parliamentarians, have to remind the Federal Council from time to time that they are committed in the first place to the Swiss sovereign and not to the Brussels potentates. In this sense, member of the Council of States, Thomas Minder (Canton of Schaffhausen, entrepreneur, independent), submitted his interpellation to find out what the Federal Council’s point of view about the Brussels request mentioned was and how they intend to safeguard the democratic rights of the parliament and the people.²

In this context it is clearly to be noted that the author of this interpellation and along with him the vast majority of the Swiss population do not at all question the humanitarian obligation of Switzerland towards refugees and other people in need. Of course, Switzerland will continue – as it has always done – to allow every human being with a reason for asylum, and many others who come from war and crisis areas, to come to Switzer-

land either permanently or temporarily. We citizens expect the Swiss government to ensure that Switzerland will decide its own affairs as a sovereign state rather than continue to submit itself to EU law – even the future ones! – with usually only a barely audible protest.

Current Concerns: Mr Minder, what did you want to achieve with your interpellation?

Mr Thomas Minder, Council of States: I am concerned with the question how such a development can be organised in our legal framework, for instance, the EU’s ideas of distributing the refugee quotas. That issue will not only come up in bourgeois circles. In what way will this concern Switzerland? I am glad that the response of the Federal Council makes things clearer. I am sitting in the Political Institutions Committee of the Council of States, which deals with the political asylum system. Some time ago we were discussing the so-called Dublin III Agreement. At that time it was a matter of Lampedusa because so many refugees were arriving there. At that time, Federal Councillor Ms Sommaruga came and said that we would not have time for the ordinary legislation, because that would take two years, and the EU wanted us to move “as fast as the fire brigade.” Therefore, the adjustment was regulated via temporary federal ordinance. (It took scarcely two weeks from the Federal Council’s press release to the provisional entry into force of Dublin III. And this was at the time of the official holidays!³) It was not until a year after this fait accompli that the Federal Council issued an ordinary decision, which was then subjected to an optional referendum.

Now I suppose that there will be a “Dublin IV” concerning the refugee quotas, again accompanied by an exchange of notes between the EU and Switzerland. But this time it will not be possible to rubber-stamp this so easily by way of the Federal Council and the committees (meaning the pertinent commissions of the National Council and the Council of States). If it really comes down to an exchange of notes, and if again there is to be no law but due to time pressure just a regulation, we would have to assure to subject it to an optional referendum from scratch. I imagine that it would come to a referendum vote in that case.

So you want to clarify the legal situation above all?

I do, especially with regard to the quota refugees. For me, the haste with which the Lampedusa Dublin III Regulation was composed was unpleasant. Because in the beginning there was a referendum on the Dublin Agreement, thus there should always be one on its further development. Apparently, the Dublin III Regulation was subject to a referendum. Because it was not so very important, the referendum question was not an issue. But it is still unpleasant to see that we concede the point and rubber-stamp a regulation and go without the legislative procedure, for reasons of time and because the EU is pressing ahead.

What do you think of the currently available written response of the Federal Council, that this is not a case of EU Diktat?

When I used the word diktat I meant that the EU wants to allocate quota refugees to us. But the Federal Council has clearly assented voluntarily; they are in favour of the allocation formula. The EU Council has indeed not yet adopted the regulation, it is a Commission proposal. Although the Federal Council is in favour of the previously discussed four factors (population, GDP, previous asylum applications, unemployment rate), this topic will be intensively discussed in parliament. The key question, by the way, has not been answered: Will all the refugees who come to Switzerland be allocated via Brussels?

So does the Federal Council agree before the EU Member States are agreeing?

Yes, they say they are in favour of the EU Commission’s proposal. But I am glad that it is not simply a development of Dublin, in which we would have almost no say, but that there will at least be an exchange of notes. As Dublin III was subject to a referendum, then Dublin IV, that is the issue of quota refugees, must be all the more subject to a referendum.



*Councillor of State
Thomas Minder
(picture ms)*

"Development of EU law – ..."

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So it was an important goal of your interpellation that the voters can have a say. You even posed the question of whether Dublin IV would not have to be subject to a mandatory referendum. We can probably already negate this question, can't we?

Talking as we are, you are right. It would need "scho es bitzeli meh" (Swiss dialect: "just a little bit more") for a mandatory referendum. But of course we have to think in this direction: At the beginning there was the referendum on Schengen/Dublin, and the refugee quotas represent such a new system that they cannot be simply waved through without the participation of the electorate, the people. Since our asylum system is federalist (cooperation between the federal government and the cantons and communes), it is impossible that a fourth level, which is Brussels, is virtually empowered to make final decisions about how many refugees we are to receive.

This would be a new phenomenon, and would have constitutional status.

So your main concern was also to clarify whether important decisions bypass the people, also bypass parliament ...

Not quite by parliament, but Dublin III was only submitted to the commissions for a consultative review and not to the entire Parliamentary Councils, and that is questionable, that the processes are in this way bypassed due to time constraints. In my capacity as an entrepreneur I am also a person who likes to move full throttle, but if the EU says it is urgent, and we just need two years until a law is passed by all democratic processes ... For instance the Lex USA was pushed through in the course of 3 weeks, and the same goes for the flat rate withholding tax for Austria, Germany, the UK. When a demand comes from outside, then we push the thing through as if it were a fire run. But such an accelerated procedure does not comply with the Swiss concept of democracy – that is what I wanted to remind the Federal Council and my colleagues in the Council of States.

Mr Minder, member of the Council of States, thank you very much for the interview.

(Interview Marianne Wüthrich)

¹ www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/internationales/internat-zusarbeit/europa-migpolitik/schengen-dublin.html

² cf. Interpellation 15.3915, "Permanenter EU-Verteilschlüssel für Flüchtlinge. Reaktion der Schweiz und Vereinbarkeit mit der Masseneinwanderungs-Initiative" (Permanent allocation key for refugees. Reaction of Switzerland and compatibility with the Popular Initiative "Stop Mass Immigration")

³ "Der Bundesrat hat heute entschieden, einen Grossteil der Bestimmungen der neuen Dublin-III-Verordnung gleichzeitig mit allen anderen Dublin-Staaten ab dem 1. Januar 2014 vorläufig anzuwenden. Die Verordnung betrifft den Asylbereich und hat zum Ziel, das Dublin-System effizienter zu machen und die Rechtsgarantien von Asylsuchenden zu stärken." (Medienmitteilung des Bundesrates vom 18.12.2013)

(The Federal Council decided today to provisionally apply the bigger part of the new Dublin III provisions simultaneously with all the other Dublin-states starting from 1 January 2014. The regulation concerns the area of asylum and aims at making the Dublin-System more efficient and at reinforcing the legal safeguards for asylum seekers." (Press Release issued by the Swiss Government on 18 December 2013))

Danish people defend their sovereignty

mw. It's all over town: It is not just the Swiss but all the peoples who want to decide themselves on their own affairs. On 3 September 2015 also the majority of the Danes have voted in a referendum against the abolition of their special rules with the EU. In 1992 the Danish sovereign had rejected the Maastricht Treaty and therefore does not participate fully in the EU's security policy, justice and home affairs. The accession to the Monetary Union was rejected as well in a ref-

erendum held in 2000: the Danes remained with their national currency, the Danish krone. In their latest decision now, the Danes said "no" to closer ties with EU's security policy, justice and internal affairs. Specifically, they also said "no" to a centralised regulation of police cooperation with Europol. This happened despite the recommendation of the government and most of the political parties.

Particularly interesting for us Swiss: As Denmark is not willing to partici-

pate in the supranational Europol regime, it has to make efforts to achieve parallel agreements with the EU (according to the daily press, e.g. "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" of 3 December 2015).

Aha, listen to this, independence loving Swiss speaks to himself. It is possible after all to negotiate parallel agreements with Brussels. How about a renegotiation of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the EU?

Letter to the Editor

A protection clause – what for?

At first glance it might be assumed that the Federal Council has become somewhat encouraged in the matter of the free movement of persons. It takes into consideration, perhaps against the will of the EU, to implement a safeguard clause relating to the free movement of persons. This could also be rhetoric. For this reason, the alert citizen may make a specific enquiry: What precisely does the Federal Council intend to protect with its safeguard clause? Is the population growth to be inhibited? Are territorial claims of the Swiss citizens to their home to be protected from foreign infiltra-

tion? Is the right of Swiss citizens to work in their home country be protected by preference of nationals? Does the Federal Council want to prevent that Swiss citizens have to emigrate into the EU because of unemployment? Currently, the EU nations do not have things under control. Do we have control in Switzerland and do we want to keep it up? Do we want to pass on direct democracy to future generations or do we want to end up in the non-democratic EU? We must be aware that what we call the free movement of persons today, already exists in the EU as a de facto complete free movement of

all citizens. Does the Federal Council want this complete free movement of citizens with the EU or does it want us to remain an independent country with its own civil rights? This question has to be honestly answered by the Federal Council at all levels in the next months. If not, we should have the courage to enquire precisely.

Ivo Muri, Switzerland

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Germany at the end of 2015

Only thriving for sovereignty may have a future

by Karl Müller

For quite some time now in Germany, polemics are directed against everything and everybody who emphasises the value of national sovereignty. In recent weeks, this polemic has tremendously increased in pungency. It displays – on the part of the established power politics as well as of some governmental institutions, discriminatory and law-breaking features by word and deed. We must assume that domestically motivated “false flag operations” are being employed as well.

This sharpness, however, is nothing but an unmissable sign of weakness. This becomes obvious if you look at the results of those policies which repeatedly called national sovereignty into question during the past 25 years. The long list of violence and injustice must not again be submitted here. The polemic against the idea of national sovereignty is there (deliberately) per-

verting the concept that distinguishes the striving for national sovereignty.

In his book “Die Souveränität Deutschlands” (The sovereignty of Germany, ISBN 978-3-86445-043-3) published in 2012, *Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider* explains carefully and profoundly why the pursuit of sovereignty is an indispensable part of the dignity and freedom of man. He begins his writing as follows: “The defense of the nation states’ sovereignty against the post-national world domination is the current occupation of those who refuse to give up the freedom of citizens as human beings. Sovereignty is freedom. Only in constitutional states, democracies and welfare states, which means in republics, it can become reality.”

And the following remarks he concludes: “In case Germany is not sovereign, there will be a different state or a community of states or a person or a group of persons, i.e. any

power, ruling Germany.” A politician who does not respect Germany’s sovereignty, does not act “as a representative of the German people. In any case, his policy does not serve the welfare of the German people, does not augment its benefits, but harms it, he neither respects nor does he defend the Constitution and laws of the Federation; he does not exercise his duties conscientiously nor does he practice any justice to all, as his oath of office, evidenced by Article 64, paragraph 2 of the Basic Law in conjunction with Article 56 paragraph 1 of the Basic Law, obliges him to do. Rather, he serves foreign interests. This can no longer be masked.”

These “foreign interests” appear in German politics every day. From TTIP to the Germany’s war deployment in Syria, from the so-called education reform to the redef-

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“Actually, this is not about Syria”

by Hermann Ploppa*, Germany

The German Federal Government deploys “Bundeswehr” (German Military) planes to the war in Syria. Experts regard that as an aimless activism. Yet that activism is part of a long term strategy.

So now an overwhelming majority of our parliamentarians agreed to the Bundeswehr mission in Syria. Such energy and vigour of fighting evil manifested in the terror squadrons of the Islamic State is impressive, isn’t it. We democrats do not let bearded headhunters in sandals intimidate us. We do something.

Four German Tornado fighter jets are meant to impress the Stone Age Muslims. In addition, we are protecting French aircraft carriers and we are also supplying staff for the French mission’s headquarters. We do something.

It is just a bit embarrassing that even two experienced former top-ranking military staff label the German contribution an “aimless activism”. *Harald Kujat*, a former German Air Force General. Kujat qualifies the German military debut in the Middle East as a purely symbolic gesture to-

wards our ally France¹. The “Bundeswehr” mission was not embedded into any overall strategy which was lacking anyway, he said. It does not make any military sense to bomb ground targets from a high altitude. The IS fighters approach the battlefield in civilian vehicles and otherwise live among civilians. Attacking them will lead to the so-called collateral damage among the civil population. Air operations would make sense only if they were in cooperation with ground troops. However, this was only the case for the Russian Air Force mission in Syria. They are collaborating closely with the Syrian government’s ground troops. And since apart from the Russians nobody had a coordinated command structure, too many over-active cooks were spoiling the broth. And this leads Kujat to the conclusion: “Any additional air power will additionally complicate the situation.” Only political and humanitarian solutions could help.

Even more harshly the obviously distressed former lieutenant colonel and NATO mission planner *Ulrich Scholz* in an interview in the *Tagesschau* attacks the German military involvement in Syria². The mandate was “strategically meaningless... just a gesture towards France”. Scholz also complains about the lack of collaboration between ground troops and air force. In addition, the Tornados were simply completely obsolete: “... this is Vietnam technology we have here ... drones and F-16 now on site there can do this

much better.” So there are some German Flying Dinosaurs plodding behind the up-to-date fighter jets, getting a commission now and then, out of pity and to have them out of the way for a while? Do we have to look at it that way?

It is German tradition that senior officers raise their voice against obvious strategic nonsense. We can safely assume that these veterans are speaking in the name of their active comrades in the “Bundeswehr” who are not allowed to speak up due to their political loyalty to the Federal Government. We can also assume that it is incompatible with the professional ethos of a soldier to perform obvious nonsense abroad.

But: Though this be idiocy, yet there is method in it. Why are there a lot of fighter planes flying over Syria, aiming at the ground, with no overarching strategy (with the exception of the Russian Air Force)? The German *Tagesschau* cites *Guido Steinberg*, an expert of the US-related think tank *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*³, an institution officially counselling the German Federal Government, who openly states: “Actually, this is not about Syria”⁴. Rather it was about Chancellor *Merkel* trying to support her French colleague *François Hollande* in his struggle against *Le Pen*’s right-wing populists in the elections – in France! By the way, Steinberg predicts that the IS would be further strengthened by Germany’s military activism.

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Hermann Ploppa is a political scientist and publicist. In addition to numerous articles for *Telepolis*, *Junge Welt*, radio *Deutschlandfunk*, *Nachdenkseiten*, *Crashkurs* or *Current Concerns*, Ploppa published two books on contemporary history: “Hitler’s American Teachers - The elites of the United States as an obstetrician of National Socialism” (2008), and “The people behind the scenes – a transatlantic networks subvert democracy” (2014).

“Actually, this is not ...”

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In case this was true, an impeachment procedure against the current Federal Government would have to be urgently initiated: German soldiers operating abroad, risking their life as a campaign aide for the French Socialists? However, Steinberg’s statement lacks plausibility. No Government has ever sent soldiers abroad in order to help a foreign chief of state that is stuck in the mud. Steinberg’s hypothesis should rather be understood as an ideological smoke grenade.

The *Don-Quixote* operation of the Bundeswehr in Syria is in fact only part of a long-term military presence in the Middle East.

The fact is well camouflaged with the term “Syria commitment”. Who precisely examines the mandate approved of by a Parliament majority, notices the following: With this mandate “Bundeswehr” missions have not only been approved in Syria, but actually in all countries where the IS is wreaking havoc.⁵ Consequently, the mandate provides a carte blanche for military missions in Iraq, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and all adjacent sea areas. Only reserve: The affected states must agree to the military mission. The local governments are vulnerable, the infrastructures and security architectures are weak, so are the governments concerned. If required, they will be happy to consent to the dismantling of their national sovereignty. In the post-9/11 era no-one cares about such formalities any longer. Turkish troops have occupied parts of Iraq without asking for the Iraqi government’s permission. Turkey is a member of NATO. So far, NATO has not prompted Turkey to immediately reverse this invasion – not to mention NATO possible sanctions against Turkey.

The Bundeswehr is now firmly caught in the cobweb of Middle Eastern entanglements. Officially, the mandate is limited to 31 December 2016. Well, that’s an old story: How often was the deadline for the Afghanistan engagement extended? We will

not get out of this adventure so soon. That much is certain, the German taxpayer presently contributes amounting to 134 million EUR for the engagement in Syria and surrounding areas. However, this will probably resemble the cost estimate for a new home: After completion the cost will exceed the budget by far. But actually we would urgently need these 134 million plus euro to support the states and municipalities in their crisis management in the refugee disaster.

Let’s go back to the two former top officers of the Bundeswehr, General Kujat and Lieutenant Colonel Scholz. In the above mentioned interview both emphasize that from now on, Germany will be the target of terrorist attacks more than ever before. This is as sure as day follows night. Just as Paris, sooner or later Berlin will burn and blood will flow. And Germany as well is going to become a high security prison. Just as is already the case with France. For the first time since the Second World War residents of a Paris suburb have been placed under collective house arrest. “Security” forces in full gear dominate the street. People are in shock and simply tolerate everything.

France is being transformed into a military state. And every act of terrorism accelerates the already long-planned armament of our western neighbour. The assassination of the editor of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in spring of 2015, gave the Grande Nation the opportunity to bleed their taxpayers dry with a monstrous four billion euro increase of the defense budget.⁶ The massacre in Paris in the autumn of the same year created the atmospheric conditions to extort from the French citizens an additional one billion euro for armament.⁷ Shocked, the citizens of France are willingly giving their money and renouncing their civil rights and their entitlement to social progress.

All of that is held in store for us, too. The Federal Republic of Germany and in particular the capital city of Berlin are currently still very open and relaxed compared to the highly controlled and in sections locked up public spaces in France, England or the

USA. If we bury our heads in the sand and hope that all things will be fine; if we do not prepare ourselves immediately and seriously for the terrorist attacks that will happen in retaliation for our military intervention in already now hopelessly muddled combat situations; we indeed have already given up our civil society. Germany with its wealth is in fact an extremely interesting growth market for the cancer-like growing global military industrial complex.

After the dreadful massacre in Paris on Friday, November 13, 2015, champagne corks popped in arms companies. The following Monday the shares of the arms industry at the New York Stock Exchange sky-rocketed.⁸ The shares of Lockheed Martin rose by 3.5% and Northrop Grumman increased by 4.4%. Of course, the arms industries have their own analysts, as for example the company Stifel located in Missouri in the United States. For the year 2016 Stifel predicts Golden times for the arms industry: “As the most likely outcome we will see political support for defense spending, and that in the year 2016 more focus will be put on national security and terrorism in the debates on the occasion of the elections, which will bring positive headlines for military corporations with high probability.”⁹

¹ Former-Nato-General Harald Kujat. Interview in armed forces and strategies, NDR, 28.11.2015, 19.20 h www.ndr.de/info/sendungen/streitkraefte_und_strategien/Anti-Terror-Kampf-Gesamtstrategie-nicht-in-Sicht,streitkraefte366.html

² Interview with retired lieutenant colonel Ulrich Scholz in *Tagesschau* of 26.11.2015 www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/video/video-136135.html

³ zur SWP: Hermann Ploppa, *Die Macher hinter den Kulissen – Wie transatlantische Netzwerke heimlich die Demokratie unterwandern*; Frankfurt 2014, p. 92f.

⁴ *Tagesschau* of 6.12.2015, report by Michael Stempfle, quoted Steinberg www.tagesschau.de/inland/bundeswehr-syrien-111.html

⁵ *Tagesschau*, Hintergrund, 1.12.2015 www.tagesschau.de/ausland/syrien-einsatz-

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“Only thriving for sovereignty ...”

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inition of all fundamental values in communal life. Deconstruction and chaos are on the agenda. Discord and injustice. The lust for power of merely a few. International Governance instead of a free and democratic constitutional state. Market radical profit orientation rather than common good. Incapacitation of the citizen and his and her denigration down to a stupid *Homo economicus*. Dictatorship instead of democracy. Again, the list is long and terrible.

70 years after the end of World War II as well as the founding of the United Nations and the adoption of its Charter, the impe-

rialistic market radical world trampels on the fundamental achievements of the international community. This must be stopped!

By the way, sovereign nation states were and are, of course, able to conclude international agreements about cross-border international tasks and conclude contracts. They are able to adopt solutions that reflect the will of the peoples involved. Contracts which have equal and sovereign contractors and which are binding, and which follow the principle of good faith – but which can also be terminated and renegotiated if it is the will of the people.

The question remains: why is there such a poignant polemic against the idea of national sovereignty and the people who

want it. The equation national sovereignty equals nationalism, chauvinism and racism equals injustice, violence and discord has never been an all-inclusive truth. However, national sovereignty, self-determination and equality of sovereign nation states disturb international relations and international politics, in case someone wants to create and dominate entire continents or even the whole world according to his ideas – for whatever reasons and whatever purpose: ideological, material or power political.

The full sovereignty of a country like Germany cannot be achieved overnight. But every citizen is called upon contributing to put things on the right track for the future of his or her country.

The importance of dialogue between civilizations for international relations**

by Prof. Dr. DDr. h.c. Hans Köchler



Hans Köchler
(picture ef)

Today it is important that we look beyond our garden fence and try to understand the different lifestyles, worldviews and value systems of the peoples of our international community, and see this diversity as an opportunity to de-

velop our own point of view. Although this may seem idealistic in view of recent events, we could also say that cultural hermeneutics, especially in the era of globalization, has acquired an eminent political significance that reaches beyond the traditional concerns of the educated middle class.

The *Alliance of Civilizations* is an initiative of now 139 member states of the United Nations. When one looks at the name, those states obviously seek more than mere dialogue, namely a kind of union of civilizations. When it comes to states, and not individuals or groups of civil society, one must, however, always raise the question as to what concrete aim, and on the basis of what ulterior motives, such an alliance has been forged for – and if need be, against whom or what. This is quite justified, because among the 139 states that have officially declared themselves “Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations” many are actively involved in armed conflicts – which are often wars with civilizational undertones.

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bundeswehr-101-_-origin-57931567-6f5a-4dcc-b7cd-a5ac1b8b2c88.html

⁶ Grande Nation, Charles Liebherr, 29.4.2015

www.chli.paris/2015/04/29/frankreich-erhoeht-militaerbudget-um-10-prozent-nach-den-attentaten/

⁷ *Manager Magazin*, 17.11.2015, Frankreich bittet EU-Länder formell um Beistand.

www.manager-magazin.de/politik/europa/eu-frankreich-bittet-formell-um-beistand-a-1063231.html

⁸ Mother Jones, 18.11.2015, Weapons Companies’ Stock Surge after Paris Attacks. www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/11/weapons-company-stock-rally-paris-attacks-isis

as well as CNN Money, 18.11.2015, ‘War on ISIS’ stocks rise after Paris attacks. <http://money.cnn.com/2015/11/16/investing/paris-attacks-defense-stocks-isis/>

⁹ Mother Jones, loc. cit.

“My point with these remarks is to scrutinize the very approach to dialogue in the context of contemporary politics. In that regard, I see myself in the tradition of Dr Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser who unequivocally pointed to the multi-polar structure of today’s world and stressed the resulting need to reach an understanding beyond ideological boundaries. In her article in *Current Concerns*, No. 28 of 18 September 2013 she wrote: ‘Let us join hands whatever our worldview may be.’ This is the immediate problem we are facing; what we are experiencing here and now is a serious failure, indeed a shambles, of the international policy of dialogue.”

With regard to politics, it is by now a generally accepted fact that – since the not yet fully explained events of 2001 – the formula “dialogue of civilizations” has become the epitome of global “political correctness”. The phrase has already been used in global discourse in the year 2000 – that is before the events of 2001 – by the then President of Iran, *Mohammad Khatami*. On his instigation, the UN subsequently decided that 2001 should be the “United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.”

Given the political monopolization of this formula by virtually all sides and parties in the global interplay of forces, a philosophical examination seems appropriate.

Very briefly I would like to touch on the history of the term – from the time before it became a buzzword in world politics. I developed the dialogue paradigm and the related philosophical concepts more or less in the period of the Cold War. In the early 1970s – precisely in 1972, when we were about to found the *International Progress Organization* – I gave a lecture at Innsbruck University on the question, “How can peace be secured in an era of ideological confrontation between communism and capitalism?” This was the time of the East-West conflict. My conclusion then was that peace can only be permanently secured on the basis of a genuine dialogue between the various cultural and civilizational identities. In this year (1972) I wrote a letter to the Division of Philosophy of UNESCO and suggested that the organization attend to the subject of a “dialogue between civilizations” as a basis of world peace. Unfortunately, the time for the idea had not yet come; the political environment was simply not conducive to the pursuit of such a goal – and our initiative did not trigger anything at the political level. This, as we

know now, happened only a quarter of a century later.

I cannot speak here in detail about the philosophical principles of dialogue among civilizations. However, I would like to give brief a historical hint before I address the current constellation: Back then, when we launched the concept in the early 70s, we also organized a conference on the cultural identity of peoples. Since the world cultural organization of the UN had responded positively to our initiative, it eventually happened in cooperation with UNESCO in 1974. It is worthy of note that at the time at least one international statesman, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, *Kurt Waldheim*, understood the importance of the paradigm of dialogue among civilizations and cultures also at the political level. In a special message, addressed the participants of our conference in Innsbruck, he said: “There is no future for mankind unless tolerance and understanding between cultures and nations become the rule rather than the exception.”

My point with these remarks is to scrutinize the very approach to dialogue in the context of contemporary politics. In that regard, I see myself in the tradition of *Dr Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser* who unequivocally pointed to the multi-polar structure of today’s world and stressed the resulting need to reach an understanding beyond ideological boundaries. In her article in *Current Concerns*, No. 28 of 18 September 2013 she wrote: “Let us join hands whatever our worldview may be.” This is the immediate problem we are facing; what we are experiencing here and now is a serious failure, indeed a shambles, of the international policy of dialogue.

Two circumstances characterize the current situation:

"The importance of dialogue ..."

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First: Armed conflicts – despite all the protestations of the powerful – continue to be waged with undiminished force. An example is the confrontation, with strong ideological undertones, between the Muslim and Western world, which is again escalating dangerously. This is most obvious in what is happening in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Mali, Nigeria and other countries and regions. There is not only the ideological confrontation "Islam – Western world," but also an intensifying intra-Islamic theological conflict between Shiite and Sunni Islam, and also between different factions within the Sunni community concerning the interpretation of the doctrine. Furthermore, it should be noted that new ideological divides between East and West are emerging even in Europe, as is evident in the Ukraine conflict. It is a regrettable fact that war is still considered as a means for settling disputes. In this respect, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, banning any threat or use of force between states, have not been implemented yet.

Secondly, it should be noted: Unlike perhaps as in earlier epochs, technological and economic development today does not allow a precise separation of the international (intergovernmental) and national dimension any longer. The so-called "clash of civilizations", as Huntington called it, does not only occur at both levels; there is also an interdependence between the national and international level. This, for instance, is becoming obvious in the increasing number of disputes in the context of multiculturalism in Europe. They cannot be separated from the conflicts in the Middle East, in which European states have interfered directly or indirectly in recent years. As early as in 2011, at the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring – or "Arab Revolt," to use a more neutral term – I warned against interference from outside. I have said this in various Turkish newspapers. However, as we know today, the state chancelleries did not heed my ad-

vice, and now we are faced with the consequences.

A chain of events has been set in motion the consequences of which make the proponents of a dialogue of civilizations appear helpless, if not totally untrustworthy. The question arises whether we are dealing here with – as the Americans would say – "unintended consequences" of political and military interference, or whether long-term considerations of power politics are behind these developments.

In the present situation, the crucial question is the following: How can one, when gathering in beautiful Bali in Indonesia [site of a UN conference in August 2014] in order to talk about the Alliance of Civilizations and the promotion of dialogue, pursue such noble objectives by brute force, i. e. a policy of armed intervention aimed at "régime change" in foreign countries?

The protagonists of world politics who have officially devoted themselves to dialogue have actually created a political climate that brought about a new era of crusade-like conflicts – however one may evaluate this personally. One could refer here, inter alia, to the ongoing interventions in Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Libya (2011) and Syria (since the beginning of the year 2011 as well). Looking at these cases of armed intervention, one cannot avoid being skeptical of all the idealistic rhetoric.

Furthermore, it has become a regrettable fact that repeated Western interventions in the Muslim world have led to a situation in which the survival of the indigenous Christian communities throughout all of the Middle East – and especially in Syria and Iraq – is no longer to be taken for granted. This is an issue to which the Western media should pay much more attention. In this regard, I notice the total helplessness of the global political establishment vis-à-vis the so-called Islamic state, and especially the phenomenon of "Caliphate proclamations" (e.g. for an area that includes large parts of Iraq and Syria, as well as in Nigeria).

One should also mention here to the utter geostrategic confusion in the face of the disintegration of the political order that was imposed on the region of the Middle East in the wake of World War I. It is no coincidence that those who speak for the "Islamic State" have grandly declared that the emergence of this entity is about to trigger the end of "Sykes-Picot", the secret agreement concluded in 1916 between a diplomat from Britain and his counterpart from France, which established the boundaries in this region against the will and without the consultation of the peoples concerned. In our era that has seen the proclamation of a "dialogue of civilizations," one is, thus, well advised to investigate the political and historical causes behind these developments.

I would like to make the following three points:

First, despite all assurances to the contrary, the political actors denied to each other even the most basic respect. In particular, the Western world for decades, and especially since the end of the Cold War, aimed to shape the Eastern – and specifically the Muslim – world in its own image. It is now absolutely crucial to analyze the situation as rationally as possible and sine ira et studio [without hate and zealotry, i.e. absolutely factually] because emotional convictions will not get us anywhere. One has to face the historical truth. In the case of Iraq, we should realize that initially the citizens of this country were subjected to a cruel and comprehensive policy of sanctions, which lasted more than ten years (from 1990 on) and caused the death of up to one million people, and that subsequently – after the 2003 war of aggression – the Sunnis in Iraq were systematically marginalized and humiliated; one might also say they were delivered to the revenge of their enemies. How – I would like to ask here – was then British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who converted to Catholicism, able to reconcile such a genocidal policy with his conscience – he who, as a public figure, used to emphasize the value of religion and morality in his speeches?

The developments in Syria and Iraq – with the emergence of a new entity (the so-called Islamic State) of which I do not know how it will consolidate and how long it will exist – did not come out of the blue. It happened against a particular historical and social background. In relations between collectives, the law of action and reaction has always applied throughout history.

Second point: The political reorganization in accordance with the vision of the so-called Greater Middle East was primarily pursued by violent means. These

An addendum to the climate conference

Of course we have to take care of our beautiful Earth and naturally of its atmosphere. It is the respect for life and our care for our children that makes such a claim self-evident. It is also apparent to everyone that we look for new sources of energy and that we must promote their use, if only because the energies that we are using today are finite. Even the skeptics, who doubt that we humans can control the global warming or the cooling of the earth at all, let alone the exact degree, will not object to that, espe-

cially since such a reorientation definitely makes sense economically.

What I miss in the Final Declaration of Paris is the demand to end all wars immediately. In my view this request has to come first, especially if you – apart from the endless human suffering – consider how much energy is wasted with every bomb that destroys our world; and that is certainly not CO₂-neutral.

Dieter Sprock

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"The importance of dialogue ..."

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included sanctions and outright armed intervention, but also – as integral part of this strategy – patronizing and ideological indoctrination of a population that was seen as to be proselytized or re-educated according to our Western notions of democracy and freedom.

Third point: As already indicated, this policy resulted — in a growing alienation of the Muslim population in Europe and in a casting of doubts – on both sides – on what is commonly referred to as “multi-culturalism.” After all, this is the “shambles” of which I spoke earlier.

Consequently, the propagation of a dialogue of civilizations remains mere lip service if this project is not embedded in an overall peaceful policy of co-existence, including the renunciation of proselytizing and ideological patronizing. In this context, I do not understand “proselytizing” in a theological, but in a political and ideological sense, similar to how the leading global power has acted so far. What I say here applies, of course, to both sides, not only to the West.

By now, the civilizational and cultural fault-lines appear everywhere, not only in European societies, but also in the Arab world – and there they appear with greater sharpness than we could ever have imagined. This has become evident, for example, in the developments in Egypt the details of which I cannot elaborate here, and of course in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

In terms of world politics, this means that all of us – not only the people in the Middle East – will have to face a long period of instability. We will also have to recognize that the dream of “splendid isolation” – here, in our Europe, just north of the Mediterranean – has come to an end with the mass migration from the South, triggered mainly by the interventionist policies of the West.

In conclusion: Quid nunc? – What now? For short-term symptom cures it is simply too late. Air strikes are indeed convenient for the West (by the way also a cowardly approach), but they are mostly inefficient, even counterproductive. The damage has already been done.

Given the chaos caused among others by the West, and given the popular feeling of insecurity and the loss of confidence in the political system in the Middle East as well as in Europe, a strategic reconsideration of politics, and in particular of the political relevance of the dialogue of civilizations, is necessary. This must include a return to the paradigm – i.e. the fundamental concept – of dialogue in the contemporary system of interstate relations.

I refer here to only a few aspects, which one should bear in mind:

“Under the prevailing conditions, the implementation of an agenda of ‘dialogue’ or ‘alliance’ of civilizations can only mean:

1. To refrain from trying to set the other right, i.e. not to claim moral superiority, looking down at the other as target of one’s “educational” mission in the name of civilization.
 2. Non-interference, not only in military but also in ideological terms (including metaphysical worldviews). This also means to refrain from self-righteousness of any kind.
 3. Civilizational reasoning should have no place in the pursuit of concrete policy objectives. The real, especially economic, interests behind political action are to be made transparent. That would mean that the global play for power and influence does not hide behind false ideological motives. Plain and simple: when politics is about oil, it should be openly stated; when it is about the interests of an ally (see US policy in the Middle East), it should also be said so openly, and the public should be spared hollow references to the noble principles of freedom and democracy.
 4. In the maintenance of international peace and security, states should refrain from unilateral use of force and only adopt measures of collective security within the framework of the United Nations Organization. The alternative would be a protracted conflict of the type of medieval religious wars, a “war of the worlds,” so to speak, which, in the age of weapons of mass destruction, may inadvertently take on an apocalyptic dimension.”
-

Dialogue is incompatible with the ethos – of course, one may also say: pathos – of missionary work, both on the Islamic and the Western secular or Christian side. If dialogue is to be more than mere talk, mere conversation, one will have to consider the rational element of human action – and here specifically not only of individual, but also of collective human action. It is about the particular “logos” of a civilization or religious worldview, namely its systemic structure. As the human being is a *zoon lógon échon*, it is quite legitimate, one might also say rational, to aim at a structural comparison between different worldviews. That is the only way to understand them, and it is the only way to comprehend what we ourselves believe or propagate.

The political leaders should actually be able to understand and appreciate that one’s own worldview cannot entirely be reduced to the other without some spiritual or cultural loss. This means, on the other hand, that one cannot exclusively assess the other view with one’s own standards. The spiritual claim to absolute validity of a *Weltanschauung* must never be politically exploited. A clear line has to be drawn between the spheres. Accordingly, it should at least be possible to analyze the now emerging ideological conflict situations in a philosophical and rational way. One might thus come to the conclu-

sion that mutually exclusive explanations of the world, contradictory doctrines of salvation, can only preserve their integrity – and, consequently, ensure their survival and international acceptance – if they agree on a policy of peaceful co-existence based on the principle of reciprocity. In the case of an eschatological doctrine of salvation (e.g. “Islamic State”) this may be mere (survival) tactics. However, for the global community of nations it is better than nothing. It will not guarantee a high-minded dialogue on metaphysical and ontological principles, but it may allow a more or less stable peace.

I would like to refer here briefly to some historical examples:

I said earlier that we are currently faced with a crusade-like atmosphere between Islam and the West. In this connection it may be of interest – even though the historical context was completely different – that in the era of the Crusades there were singular great personalities who made an effort to enter into a conversation with the other side, even though this did not mean that they would have been prepared to question their own eschatological or metaphysical conceptions. Just one example of what might be possible across ideological borders on the basis of reciprocity and coexistence, and partly also of phi-

"The importance of dialogue ..."

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losophy: *Charlemagne* – at the turn of the 8th to the 9th century – was quite capable of maintaining friendly relations with the Abbasids in Baghdad.

One could also refer to an example from the 13th century, with specific philosophical implications: Though this was difficult to understand for many of his contemporaries, *Frederick II*, King of Sicily and Jerusalem, displayed sincere, philosophically inspired openness towards Islamic culture and philosophy and even sought the advice of Muslim scholars – and this despite of his participation in the Crusades. In the context of medieval realpolitik, arrangements between leaders on both sides were quite possible, but this did not mean that one would have tried to proselytize the other. That is, I believe, even now the decisive factor: one at least has to make an effort to understand the other position and – on this rational basis – to elaborate the principles of peaceful coexistence (as we also know them from another political constellation in 20th century Europe).

For a more distant future we may perhaps hope that both the Islamic and Western civilizations remember their common roots in classical antiquity, namely Greek philosophy. Although this is often overlooked, those who received a humanistic education with Latin and ancient Greek will understand my point. Both civilizations in their heyday – Islam in the era of the Abbasids in Baghdad and later of the Emirate of Cordoba and Granada in An-

dalusia, Europe in the subsequent Renaissance – developed their respective worldview in the terminology of Greek philosophy, especially the metaphysics and ontology of Aristotle, using Greek notions to work out the conceptual structure of their respective systems. In the Middle Ages, European science and philosophy were widely under the influence of Arab-Islamic thinking, especially in Spain, that was itself strongly based on classical Greek scholarship. I cannot go into details here about the influence of Islamic thinkers and researchers on some of the great Doctors of the Church.

This historical reminiscence may appear somewhat nostalgic – in view of what happened in later centuries and the situation we are faced with today; however, such a review may make us aware of what could also be possible.

The objectives of dialogue and a stable order of peace cannot be achieved at all if people – as still seems to be the case in global politics – engage in a denial of reality and only pay lip service to the formulas of tolerance and mutual understanding, without creating the necessary conditions for their realization. These noble goals will remain empty phrases as long as there is no precise political strategy that defines:

- a) what is to be achieved with these objectives, and
 - b) how they can actually be implemented.
- This is what the political leaders in the "Alliance of Civilizations" should commit themselves to.

Under the prevailing conditions, the implementation of an agenda of "dia-

logue" or "alliance" of civilizations can only mean:

1. To refrain from trying to set the other right, i.e. not to claim moral superiority, looking down at the other as target of one's "educational" mission in the name of civilization.
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4. In the maintenance of international peace and security, states should refrain from unilateral use of force and only adopt measures of collective security within the framework of the United Nations Organization. The alternative would be a protracted conflict of the type of medieval religious wars, a "war of the worlds," so to speak, which, in the age of weapons of mass destruction, may inadvertently take on an apocalyptic dimension. •

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50 years ago Mobutu Sese Seko revolted in the Congo (part 1)

A never-ending Kleptocracy?

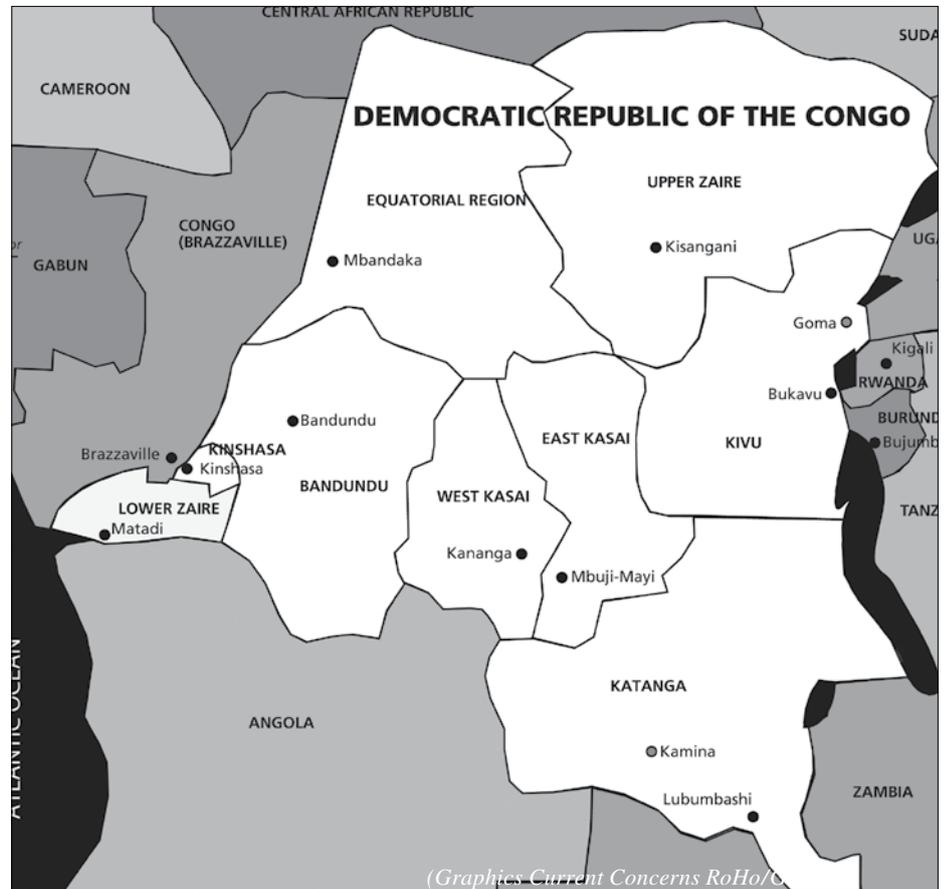
by Dr Peter Küpfer

November of this year marks the 50th anniversary of the coup bringing the Congolese dictator Mobutu Sese Seko to power. On November 24, 1965 the at that time still young Commander of the Congolese armed forces occupied all the strategically important areas of the State and had the radio proclaim that the Constitution was suspended, the Parliament dissolved and that all the power was concentrated in his hands. With the blessing of the West, the Congo suffered for over 32 dark years in which Mobutu and his corrupt cronies bled the State and the population of the Congolese giant empire.

In November 1965 Mobutu's violent assumption of power put an end to the so-called "Congo turmoil" lasting for 5 years. These events, the long-standing turmoil in the Congo and finally the coup of *Mobutu*, were seen by many Western commentators as a proof that the former African colonies were not viable. They forget that the Congo turmoil, its dictators and the rundown of its resources and therefore its people are not done by the Congolese themselves. These are rather the most obvious ravages in a history in which the greed of the West plays a key role, just like the shameful slave trade hundreds of years ago. In this economical and geopolitical explosive part of the world, the Mobutu dictatorship is just an episode, but a grim one.

Private property of the King

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the giant country on the river Congo is officially named again, has such a large territory that France would comfortably fit in seven times. However, the population living there is not much bigger than that of Germany. Today's boundaries of the huge country were established by former colonial powers, at least in its broad outlines, at the *Berlin Conference* of 1885/86; not a single African participated in this conference. The world powers did not really know what to do with the – at that time still uncharted – huge forest areas at the Big River in the centre of sub-Saharan Africa and its endless savannahs in the South. So they gave their approval to the idea, to assign the whole area with the many white spots on the map as private property to Belgian King *Leopold II*. First, he rubbed his eyes, and then his hands, when besides trading in ivory and tropical timber the caoutchouc extract-



(Graphics Current Concerns RoHo/C)

ed there peaked in a steeper and steeper price rise on the world market. With the invention of vulcanization by *Dunlop* in 1890 and later the development of the automobile, then the aircraft, the need for raw rubber for the tire production boomed tremendously. In contrast to Latin America, Congolese rubber was not taken from the Hevea tree, but from rubber vines that quickly died when tapped in excess. That forced people who were "used" to extract the crude rubber, to go for longer and longer marches through the jungle and to additional hardship. Draconian penalties were the order of the day, whipping and hacking of hands because of too little productive work or escape attempts. In 1905 the Congolese rubber trade lost importance, because most of the rubber vines were destroyed (Strizek, p. 39).

Sought-after commodities

In 1908, Congo became a colony of the Belgian State and remained a colony named "Belgian Congo" until the year 1960. Although forced labour introduced in the "Free State of Congo" under Leopold was abolished, nothing changed with regards to the exploitation of the natural resour-

es of the Congo. On the contrary, exploitation was pursued even more systematically. Additional huge resources of raw materials were discovered, including gold and diamonds. In southern Congo, in the province of Katanga (former Shaba), the colonists found a metal causing similar furore as the rubber: there were and still are huge copper deposits. You may imagine what this meant during the early times of electrification of the Western world at the beginning of the 20th century. All electric cable is actually made out of copper. The targeted exploitation of other sought after resources followed right away, especially silver and diamonds in Kasai. The colonists realized soon that they were sitting in their vast colony on riches, for which they were envied by the world. Also Uranium was found in Congo, a metal with deposits only in a few places worldwide. The Americans developed their first atomic bombs with Uranium of Congolese origin. Also the atomic bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were built of and ignited with Congolese Uranium, with the consequences everybody knows. Nowadays, criminal

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armed gangs, most of them in the pay of the creepy neighbour of Congo, Rwanda, plunder among other things especially Coltan deposits in Eastern Congo and transport it to Kigali. Coltan is indispensable for the functioning of electronic controls anywhere in this world and for every mobile phone. Rwanda, in the past a poverty stricken country exporting only coffee and tea, has become a major exporter of Coltan in the meantime. Even today, as during Leopold's time, the shamelessly and continuously performed exploitation of Congolese resources is a substantial reason that the resource-rich East of the country (North and South Kivu) does not come to rest. For years unimaginable atrocities against the civil population are still happening in spite of numerous so-called peace agreements (whose provisions no one enforces in this world!). Atrocities either not acknowledged by the international community or treated with a shrug. This is also the reason for the immense streams of internally displaced persons in this part of Africa. The criminal gangs working for Western interests in raw materials can enrich themselves easier as their targeted terror against the civilian population depopulates entire regions of the country.

"Independence" under a bad omen

In the fifties of the 20th century colonialism became a political burden also for the western world. It was not possible to invoke

sustainably the defence of freedom, human rights and democracy on the one hand – especially under the condition of the enduring confrontation with communism, that was at that time still very potent all over the world – and on the other hand withhold those values from a huge mass of people who unfortunately had been born at a distance of some hundred or thousand kilometres from the western power centres, if necessary by use of brute force (as in the Indochina War and the Algerian War). Even in Congo, there were political circles that began to remind Belgium at first moderately but later more severely that human beings with a dark skin had rights as well. Africans at that time had been excluded from higher education in Congo and were not allowed to take charge in the army as officers. Everybody who claimed education for himself was dependent on the Catholic Church and their schools, which were excellent but did not lead to University graduations. In his much-noticed speech in Brazzaville in 1958, just opposite the Congolese capital Kinshasa, President General *de Gaulle* triggered the development for the independence of the French African colonies. The Christian Democratic professor *Jef van Bilsen* had already caused a sensation in December 1955 in Belgium and the Congo. Commissioned by the government he elaborated a "Thirty-year plan for the political emancipation of Belgian Africa" (which at that time also included Ruanda and Burundi) which then "came like a real bombshell" (Strizek 1998, p. 77). Though

among the so-called "évolués" (Congolese refined persons) who had been educated in the catholic schools criticism emerged rapidly. The dawning nationalistic movement was not willing to be fobbed off with another thirty years dependent on Europe. Amongst them the young ardent patriot, democrat, brilliant speaker and biting critic of the Belgian colonialists, *Patrice Eméry Lumumba*, – who studied political science in Brussels – increasingly made his presence felt. While the moderate people joined *Joseph Kasavubu* and his Alliance des Bakongo "Abako" founded in 1950, the MNC (*Mouvement national congolais*) under *Patrice Lumumba* spoke a fiercer language and vehemently took a stand for the immediate independence of the Belgian colony. After longer hesitation of the Belgian government, events followed in rapid succession. Finally, it complied with the independence process and greenlighted free and secret provincial elections and general parliamentary elections in 1959. The political main exponents *Kasavubu* and *Lumumba* had been released from prison and had been invited due to their high esteem amongst the Congolese population to join the preparatory discussion for independence at the Round Table from 20 to 30 January 1960 in Brussels. All of a sudden, Brussels wanted to proceed fast. According to a confidential information by the responsible colonial minister *De Schrijver* in autumn 1959, the hidden agenda behind this hurry was "to

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An indispensable historic monograph regarding Congo

pk. *Helmut Strizek*, born in 1942, studied political science, history and French.

He has been part of the European Union delegation in Rwanda from 1980-1983 and was in charge of the project processing for the countries of Rwanda and Burundi, working for the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (MECD) between 1987 and 1989. *Strizek* lived in Rwanda from 1980-1983. He is the author of various books and publications with the focus on the history and the current state of all countries in the region of the Great African Lakes.

In his above stated monograph about the newer history of the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, he analyses the "new" Africa policies of the Western World, especially those of the US, in those regions since 1997. After the downfall of the Eastern bloc and after *Mobutu* had been driven from power in Kinshasa, the US reorientated their Africa policy. Now that communism was no longer the main threat, it changed into Islamic fundamentalism. In this new option, the Americans as well as their strategic al-

lies supported regimes which guaranteed them a frontline against modern African Islamism: *Laurent Désiré Kabila* in Congo, *Museveni* in Uganda, *Kagame* in Rwanda and *Buyoya* in Burundi. Counting entirely on imperious military regimes, those with little or no democratic legitimation now and then, were willingly accepted. A highly problematic decision in the eyes of the author. In his reliable portrayal, *Strizek* is looking for answers to the question of what happened to the many one hundred thousand Rwandan Hutu refugees in East Congo, who had been driven out of their refugee camps and later "disappeared" in the jungle during the *Kabila* War in 1997/98. Back in 1998, *Strizek* already named those responsible for yet another genocide, a genocide which is still a taboo even today. The book is not only highly reliable in its historical sources, it also has the advantage of not just showing a pure national, but a regional perspective, in which the effective strategy of the Western World for that highly volatile region is displayed in its whole dubiousness.



Helmut Strizek, Kongo/Zaire-Ruanda-Burundi – Stabilität durch erneute Militärherrschaft? Studie zur "neuen Ordnung" in Zentralafrika, Munich/Cologne/London (Weltforum Verlag) 1998; ISBN 3-8039-0479-X

"50 years ago Mobutu ..."

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be asked for help" in the inevitable chaos (Strizek 1998, p. 79; Strizek quotes the trustworthy witness Jef van Bilsen). Jef van Bilsen did not draw the development plan for thirty years without a cause. The major nation of central Africa simply did not have any experts before its independence. The Belgian experts had already left the country at that time and local experts did not exist. It was not until 1956 that the first African was able to successfully complete his studies in Belgium. In the year of its independence, the former colony had not more than about ten persons with academic grades outside clergy, amongst them no medic, no engineer and no lawyer.

The parliamentary elections in May 1960 led to a victory of Lumumba's MNC, followed by Kasavubu's Abako. After some hesitation, the colonial administration accepted this vote and appointed Patrice Eméry Lumumba to be prime minister. The parliament thereafter elected Joseph Kasavubu as president of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Lumumba built his new government and made a deserved and modest young man his secretary, *Mobutu*, who later called himself *Sese Seko* (proud cock) and surrendered Lumumba to his murderers.

One speech too much

30 June 1960, Kinshasa: in the festive decorated national palace towering over the Great River, at the festive independence ceremony of the new African state in presence of everybody of rank and fame – especially the monarchist and colonial nomenclature of Brussels. King *Baudouin* delivered a patronizing speech in which he stressed the civilizational achievements, Belgium brought to their African wards during the long time of the colony. That was not entirely propaganda, but most of it. Kasavubu's discourse was similarly and

Kleptocracy

The term refers to a political regime which thrives on robbing its own nation systematically. Mobutu's dictatorship of more than 30 years is a prime example of this form of dictatorship. The mineral resources of the country were hawked at giveaway prices to other countries which in turn guaranteed the dictator's rule. The funds made available in this way were distributed to the private (foreign) accounts of the dictator's family and his camarilla and thus withdrawn from the regular money cycle. This money was lacking when it came to investments in the public interest and those who had generated it in the first place by their hard work were systematically deprived of it.



Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of Congo, signed the Declaration of Independence of the Congo in Leopoldville on 30 June 1960. To his right Gaston Eyskens, Belgian prime minister, who signed the declaration on behalf of Belgium, which had administered the Congo for over 70 years. (picture Keystone)

did not cause any offence. Things changed when the usher suddenly also allowed Patrice Eméry Lumumba to speak. Another speech and then even held by such a rebel who was regarded as communist, was not according to protocol. The King bleached, especially while hearing what Lumumba had to say in honour of this occasion. Widely regarded as a tribune of the plebs, he addressed his incandescent – in some parts improvised – speech not to the dignitaries, but to his downtrodden people. Since the national Congolese Radio reported the whole ceremony, he had a respective audience of which many did not forget his courageous words until today (see box). Lumumba called things as they were. He named the actors responsible for all the grief and injustice, done to his people under the Belgian colonisation since the times of King Baudouin's great uncle, Leopold II. Lumumba welcomed Belgium as a partner with whom the new republic from that day on could deal on equal footing and reciprocal respect, without being in danger to be specially treated. Congo's independence was not in any way a Belgian gift he called out to the guests and his audience at the radio all over the whole country, it was "only achieved by combat". Between the

lines Lumumba also made clear that there is a certain national self-consciousness in the new established nation by expressing: "You are allowed to participate in our wealth, but only on a level playing field, that we are going to negotiate as equal partners."

Just barely, they managed to prevent Baudouin from a sudden departure. Although feelings have cooled down until the formal dinner, many observers agreed in one thing: With this speech, which put a stop to Congo's exploitation, a courageous fighter had signed his own death warrant. Some conservative eyewitness who was prejudiced in the ideas of colonialism or the political structures of power and the numerous officials of the different secret services went home convinced: This Lumumba must be put away. Many of them took this not only politically, but literally and it was carried out promptly.

Self-determination – for five days

The enemies of an independent and economically autonomous Congo did not grant sufficient time to the government of Lumumba to realize its ideals. Already few days after the ceremonies first

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unrests/upheavals arose. The garrison at the nearby Thysville mutinied when the chief commander of the *Force Publique* (National Army), who was still in charge after the independence, informed the disappointed soldiers that in future Congolese soldiers would still not be allowed to become officers. The munity leaped over to Kinshasa the next day, where remaining Belgians were attacked. Lumumba, in a hurry, appointed his secretary Mobutu to be the new army's chief commander, who – in the rank of a major – smoothed down the riot in a short time.

On 11 July, not even two weeks after the independence ceremony, the former comrade in struggle of Lumumba, *Moïse Tshombe*, who was elected as regional president of the resource rich Katanga, proclaimed the independence of the Katanga region from the Congolese central government. This led to a veritable secession war which lasted until 1963. Soon Belgian troops withdrew as a result of a UN resolution and were replaced by. One month later, on 8 August of the same fatal year 1960, *Albert Kalonji*, also a former comrade of Lumumba, who because of the latter's refusal to involve him in his government, had now become his opponent, proclaimed on his behalf the independence of South Kasai which, like Katanga has large mineral resources, including silver, gold and diamonds. The crisis led to great tensions in the government that also damaged the fragile alliance between Kasavubu and Lumumba. On 5 September 1960, President Kasavubu deposed his Prime Minister Lumumba, who without further ado declared the President of State as deposed.

Coward murder

The apparent power vacuum became the hour of Mobutu. The head of the army in-

tervened, forced Kasavubu to remain the political head of state and placed a Council of Commissioners with its own informants over the government as a control organ, which took over the affairs of state until 31 December 1960. Lumumba sought his luck in one of the few remaining loyalists, his former deputy *Antoine Gizenga*, who in turn tried to install an alternative government in Stanleyville. But Lumumba was betrayed and arrested on his trip to Stanleyville. Mobutu let him hand over to Lumumba's archenemies in Katanga by his soldiers, knowing very well that his fate would be sealed there. There, near Elizabethville, the freedom fighter was shot dead along with two faithfuls after severe abuse by Katangese soldiers under Belgian command, on 17 January 1961. Today it is proven that the Belgian army and the American Intelligence service had pulled the strings in this coward political assassination. (Ludo de Witte "L'Assassinat de Lumumba" Paris 2000; ISBN 2-84586-006-4).

So, in a few days the "independent" Republic of the Congo had become a huge building on feet of clay, whose corners were set on fire by arsonists on several places. A government consisting of a majority of inexperienced ministers was meant to master several wars of secession concurrently, to rebuild an economically ruined country from the ground and to strengthen the awareness that the state is not a dairy cow to be milked, but a joint venture of all Congolese. All this should be implemented without functioning institutions and in absence of a deployable army. Back then, every observer already knew that this accumulation of problems could not be accidental. It began to be apparent who would ultimately benefit from this mess. It was Mobutu who persevered pulling the strings until the hour for his rise to power had come.

Ongoing fomented unrest

Two and a half years later, on 14 January 1963, Tshombe had to admit his military defeat and went to Spain in exile. But only one and a half year later, he was recalled to Congo because of Mobutu's insinuation and placed into a central position: The former secessionist, who had fought against the central government under the applause of revanchist circles for three years, became prime minister of the Congo! Obviously, Mobutu wanted to benefit from his military experience in guerrilla warfare, probably also because of the relationships in the European mercenary market. This was necessary, because further secessions were already looming. Starting in January 1964, an uprising led by *Pierre Mulele*, a former comrade of Lumumba took place in Kwilu (western Congo) and in May 1964 a revolt of *Gaston Soumialot* in the east. Also a former companion of Lumumba took part in these hostilities, a certain *Laurent Désiré Kabila*. Over thirty years later, in 1997, Kabila with his ADLF-alliance and the battle-wise Tutsi troops of the former FPR led a Blitz campaign covering the whole Congo and chased Mobutu out of Kinshasa. But we do not want to anticipate, we are just in the middle of the so-called Congo turmoil in the early days of the young republic existing only on paper. Both revolts were defeated by the now powerful Congolese national army, enhanced with European mercenaries, under Mobutu. After these repeated upheavals, the country would have desperately needed some rest. But Kasavubu deposed Tshombe, stepped out of line at the UN, when the Americans stirred up to prevent the joining the People's Republic of China in the UN and tried to join the Non-Aligned Movement. This was interpreted as a warning sign for America. Mobutu now saw the hour for his long-pursued plan. He conspired with the crucial military leaders and undertook a coup d'état on 24 November 1965. It was so well prepared and meticulously carried out, so that the 35 year old reached the goal of his efforts, without a single drop of blood. The eulogies that triggered Mobutu's coup in the West point out that the "savior of the Congo from the threat of communism" acted with Western acceptance, if not even on western suggestion. The 30 year long period of dictatorship was neither criticised nor disturbed by the West. •

Source:

Ludo De Witte, *L'Assassinat de Lumumba*, Paris 2000; ISBN 2-84586-006-4Helmut Strizek, *Congo/Zaire-Rwanda-Burundi – stability by renewed military rule? Study on the "new order" in Central Africa*, Munich/Cologne/London (World Forum Publishing), 1998; ISBN 3-8039-0479-XJean-Jacques Arthur Malu Malu, *Le Congo Kinshasa*, Paris (Editions Karthala) 2002, ISBN 2-84586-233-4**"...our beloved country's future is now in the hands of its own people"**

Excerpts of Lumumba's speech at the celebrations on the Independence of Congo, Kinshasa, 30 June 1960:

"Although this independence of the Congo is being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in struggle, a persevering and inspired struggle carried on from day to day, a struggle, in which we were undaunted by privation or suffering and stunted neither strength nor blood.

It was filled with tears, fire and blood. We are deeply proud of our struggle, because it was just and noble and indispensable in putting an end to the humiliating bondage forced upon us. [...]

We have experienced forced labour in exchange for pay that did not allow us to

satisfy our hunger, to clothe ourselves, to have decent lodgings or to bring up our children as dearly loved ones. [...]

We have seen our lands seized in the name of ostensibly just laws, which gave recognition only to the right of might. [...]

All that, my brothers, brought us untold suffering.

But we, who were elected by the votes of your representatives, representatives of the people, to guide our native land, we, who have suffered in body and soul from the colonial oppression, we tell you that henceforth all that is finished with.

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed and our beloved country's future is now in the hands of its own people."

Source: *Patrice Lumumba, The Truth about a Monstrous Crime of the Colonialists*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, pp. 44-47

“Understanding the sick person”

Towards a medicine of care

by Dr med Sabine Vuilleumier-Koch

After all his critical books on medicine in the recent years Giovanni Maio presents “book of encouragement” with his latest work. As a philosopher and physician with extensive clinical experience, it is a matter of great concern to him to give patients hope. Furthermore, he wants to encourage all those who care for people in outpatient and inpatient facilities day by day to focus on what is relevant and to encourage them to maintain their inner values and let them not be taken away by economisation and a one-sided technical-scientific medicine. For his presentation Maio chose an understandable language.

Giovanni Maio recognises that the greatest asset of medical professions is the inner commitment to serve suffering people. The current system of medicine increasingly degrades this intrinsic motivation. Maio wants to stop this degradation by raising the awareness of how valuable this inner commitment is. Based on encounters with patients, reports from medical students and experiences in public discussions he presents his reflections built on great accuracy and humaneness. In the first part of the book, he takes the reader to come quite close to the sick person and this way he enables him to sympathise with a “situation dropped out of normality”. The ability to sympa-



Giovanni Maio
(picture ma)

a strong alliance that under the predominance of these two paradigms, the entire medicine is changed fundamentally. These changes pass almost unnoticed because they change attitudes. Maybe even more than external procedures it rather concerns the awareness of medicine, its inner identity. Performing, measuring, checking, certifying –

“Today this orientation on the natural sciences receives an additional boost by coupling it with the economy, resulting in a far reaching orientation on economy. Economy and natural sciences are forming such

all that is required today, and astonishingly not only where processes actually are running like in the industry, but also in areas solely concerning people. Even the treatment of ill people is increasingly following the conceptual standards of an industrial production. This is the actual entrance gate for a transvaluation of the values of medicine. Therefore, it is important to reflect in depth on the difference between the production of objects and the treatment of people. Why is medicine no process of production? In how far is the industrial thinking imposed on medicine so insufficient and harmful?”

From: Giovanni Maio: *Den kranken Menschen verstehen. Für eine Medizin der Zuwendung* (Understanding the sick person. Towards a medicine of care). p.13. ISBN: 978-3-451-30687-7

(Translation Current Concerns)

this is – in addition to the indispensable medical expertise – a basic requirement for success in medical treatment. In the second part of the book, Maio develops ways of coping with illness that are helpful and valuable for both patients and clinicians.

Core qualifications of a physician

In our time, the treatment of the sick person follows the theoretical demands of industrial production more and more, which does not correspond in any way to the reality of a successful treatment. With regard to this erroneous comparison between medical treatment and industrial process, Giovanni Maio response is that medicine is not about following operation instructions, but: “The core qualification of a physician is the skillful handling of complexity, dealing with uncertainty, the professional management of uncertainties and on the basis of these qualifications finally the careful exploration of what is best for the particular patient.” Already in the first part of the book, Giovanni Maio introduces a concept whose meaning will be more apparent later: the concept of dialogue. In medicine, good decisions can’t emerge without dialogue.

“Culture of care”

Giovanni Maio chose four major challenges of medicine as examples for many others. The treatment of pain, cancer, dementia and “dealing with the dying” shall refer to what is the core of the medical task, namely “taking care of people who suf-

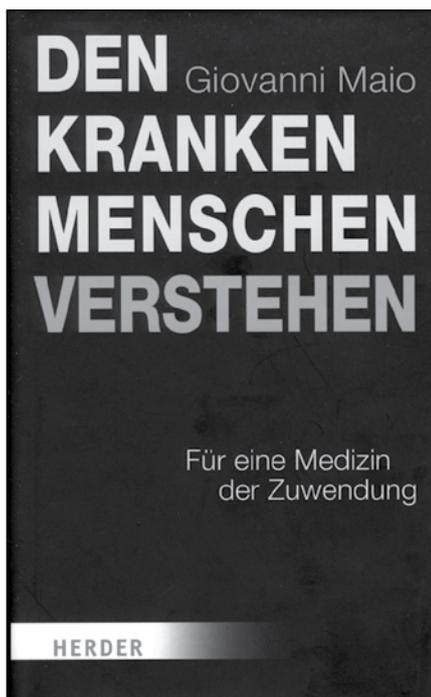
fer from symptoms and illnesses that cannot just be eradicated with an appropriate handling.” Especially these people run the risk of falling through the grid of a more economical approach to medicine. Maio develops approaches to people with these ailments that are encouraging and liberating both for the patient and for the helper. In a “culture of care” the own potential will be recognized and it can be learned how to cope with multiple symptoms in a life enabling way.

Anthropological preconditions

Maio as a doctor, is always taking a position based on binding anthropological basic requirements: “For man is not an egological being, but he is fundamentally aligned with the others and can’t do anything by himself, out of himself. And it is with the capacity to make another human being feel that he is not alone in his distress, that every person has the chance to give back what he received from others in many ways – and it is exactly this chance that medicine provides.” To cope with dementia which can’t be “rendered positive” by any means, requires to look at the whole human community: “So to challenge dementia can also be an opportunity for a new way to discover the concern for vulnerable people as a core cultural achievement of society.”

No to ethical resignation

Giovanni Maio takes a determined position to assisted suicide which is being increas-



Giovanni Maio. *Den kranken Menschen verstehen*. Verlag Herder GmbH, Freiburg im Breisgau 2015. ISBN 978-3-451-30687-7

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ingly propagated today: “Why do we ask primarily about freedom (of choice) in the case of an assisted suicide and not about the misery which has led to it?” Only to ask if somebody has well-considered his suicide or not is a reductionist approach to this essentially important subject and at the same time an ethical resignation.” People in need do not primarily wish their death but other conditions of their lives which however seem to be inaccessible to them. Only if the helper is willing to get involved into the sick person’s need, to listen very carefully, can he develop a way out together with the suffering patient.

“Ways of coping”

Every single passage of the chapter “Ways of Coping” entails precious advice for the encounter between helper and patient and the conduct in practice: “Learning to accept – the good life as the art of taking steps”, “Confidence – or why sueing for the essential is impossible”, “hope – what hope can mean for modern medicine” and “to understand the sick (person)”. Giovanni Maio here also questions much that made its way into hospitals and practices in the course of the last years dictated by economisation. The relationship of trust must not degenerate to become a contractual re-

“Whether a person suffers from chronic pain, whether he or she has cancer or a beginning dementia – always the person is challenged to learn how to deal with this phenomenon which allows to discover a new space of creation for himself or herself and not to feel at the mercy of the disease despite of the associated restrictions. In the course of industrialisation and economisation of medicine nothing less has got lost but the awareness for the necessity of lending assistance and care. By this (attitude) we convey our appreciation to the ill person, and this allows the patient to develop a feeling of wholesome self-esteem. This is the true ‘agent’ of a medicine of devotion.

For a medicine of devotion – in this way we have circumscribed the plea of this book. It is a case for something which has lost its self-evidence in our streamlined health system but which has to be re-evaluated once again as the core of medical, nursing and psycho-

therapeutic practice. At present modern medicine is structured as if it was about the treatment of strong healthy persons and not of ill persons who are dependent, needy and often falling in despair. Because modern medicine omits to express an interpersonal connectedness with the suffering person which can rescue him or her, give him or her a new security and stabilization, not only by continuing support but by mobilisation of the inner strengths of the ill persons themselves. Devotion stimulates strengths, it mobilizes and evokes unexpected potentials of coping. Therefore it is simply irresponsible to silently rationalize away exactly this potential. Because thereby medicine exhausts the breeding ground of its core identity – and this is bound to go wrong in the long run.”

*From: Giovanni Maio:
“Den kranken Menschen verstehen”.
p 206–208
ISBN: 978-3-451-30687-7*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

lationship. “It is the interpersonal relation which makes the encounter of a person in need and a qualified helper to be a sustainable relationship of confidence.” And: “If we succeed to create an encounter out of the physician-patient consultation in the proper sense of a true ‘encounter of togetherness’, a space for hope is opened.”

The reading of the book opens up new, pleasantly human perspectives with every sentence. The helping in the physician-patient relationship is inspired again and gives hope for a return of medicine to its true meaning. The book can be most warmly recommended. •

Teaching and educating – a school's task

by Dr Bernadette Fontana, special pedagogue and psychologist

In recent years, the task of teachers has been constantly redefined: they should withdraw from the learning process, be available to children only as coaches and learning guides, provide learning environments, complete observation sheets and prepare educational plans. In Curriculum 21, the role of the teacher is repeatedly described in a similar way. However, such a way of teaching is in contradiction to the findings of current research. The following article describes with the aid of examples from everyday school life, how important the connection between teaching and educating in everyday school life is.

I have been a teacher for many years now and I still believe that I have chosen the best possible job. What I like about it is the fact, that I can accompany young people on their way into life, namely in the most comprehensive sense. I cannot only show the children how to gain access to the world of knowledge, but I can also support and accompany them on the way to become a mature personality. So it is laid down in the "Volksschulgesetz" (law concerning primary and lower secondary education) of the Canton of Zurich:

"§2/4 Elementary school provides basic knowledge and skills; it leads to an understanding of how things are connected. It promotes the respect for one's fellow human beings and the environment and aims at ensuring that children develop into independent and socially-integrated people. School strives to awaken and preserve the joy in learning and the pleasure in achieving. It particularly promotes the readiness to assume responsibility and to perform, the ability to judge and to critically evaluate and the capacity for dialogue. Teaching takes into account the individual talents and preferences of children and creates the basis for their lifelong learning."

The best way to achieve this is to establish a close, complementary cooperation with parents and educators. This, too, is stated in the same paragraph of the elementary school law, and it is also one of the foundations of my work. In the second paragraph of § 2 we read:

"§ 2 [...]"

2 The elementary school complements the child's upbringing within the family. School boards, teachers, parents and, if

necessary, the relevant bodies of youth welfare services work together."[...]

So that is our mandate, assigned to the teachers by the voters in a plebiscite. I now would like to leave these quite dryly sounding legal foundations and switch into the classroom in order to demonstrate how I put this mandate into everyday practice.

It is almost eight o'clock. My class is not an ordinary class. My students have failed in regular schools and need more intensive care. Therefore, the class is smaller. But just with such children, it becomes obvious what it takes so that the above-mentioned educational mission may succeed.

Guidance – crutch for troubled children's psyches

There is *Sandra*. She is 11 years old and she quickly becomes excited and hectic. That was so in the regular school as well, as early as at the beginning of her school term. She could not concentrate, was chaotic and always immediately forgot everything. That is why she was examined already in the first class from the *KJPD (Children and Young People's Psychiatric Service)*, got the diagnosis ADHD and received drugs in order to improve her concentration. Sandra spent a few months in the day school of this service, then she came to us. She is able to think well and she well understands the subject matter. But she forgets and loses her things again and again and is not well organized. Therefore, it is clear that my task with Sandra cannot be to provide her with worksheets to be solved, so that she can organise her learning process. Here Sandra would lose herself. Instead she needs my structured guidance. This begins already in the morning when she comes into the classroom – usually in a stressed way. "Oh I left my pen at home!" "Homework?" "Oh, we had to do something? Well, I have got a little problem ...!" But when she has done her homework, she arrives beaming with delight and presents them to me. What can one deduce from this little sequence? Sandra is a girl, as there are many in our schools. The mother leaves her a lot of freedom, which Sandra makes use of, of course. That way she has already got in some difficulties, for example, by a risky way of using the mobile phone and the Internet. Sandra is accustomed to organise herself in one way or another, because at home too little guidance is provided to her. She now receives this missing support from me.

For me as a teacher, this means developing a committed relationship with Sandra and in supplementation to her home to guide her and show her how to assume responsibility in an age-appropriate way.

Sandra has now been with us for some time. She has become more relaxed and calmed down. She learned to arrive in time, to be ready at the beginning of the lesson and after the lesson to properly stow away her material. Before going home, she now mostly looks at the task panel, what is to be done, and goes through what she needs for that, packs it and brings it back again the next day – almost each time. Since Sandra is more capable of doing these things, she is much quieter, her nervousness occurs less frequently. Instead her warm, humorous and spontaneous nature is slowly appearing, which is valuable for her and for the class. For a long time already she has not needed any drugs.

Befriending with the requirements of life

Let us move on to *Diego*. He, too, is 11 years old. He comes from Latin America. Although he grew up here, his German is very poor, but so is his native language. However, he has a lovely smile. Therewith and with some show of hands he has tried and still tries to overcome his lack of language skills. Understandably, at the beginning of his schooltime he was not expected to achieve highly and he was assessed as little intelligent. When he came to us, lessons mainly focused on his learning to speak better German as quickly as possible. Lack of language skills is a hindrance not only in learning the subject matter. It often is a sign that the bridge to his fellow human beings is weak and not configured properly; for our language connects us to our fellow human beings. In Diego's case it quickly became clear that he was very little aware that life also provides requirements and can be straining sometimes. If he had to learn new words, for example, he read them once, beamed and said: "Done!" When we were cleaning our schoolyard, he leaned on his broom after a short time, wiped his forehead and said: "Oh dear! What a hard work!" Diego had no idea, what was "normal". If he had little homework, he usually did not do it and declared that he had been too tired. Or he solved the problem by making his brother do the computational tasks for him. If he succeeded immediately, because he had often practiced, he also comment-

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ed: "That's easy!" He did not realise that this ease resulted from practice. Diego has to help at home only very little and he spends a lot of time watching TV or playing games on the playstation, where the success will occur without much effort. One could also say that Diego is very spoiled. If he faces demands, he tries to avoid them or to pass them on to someone else. With him, my work as a teacher is somewhat different than with Sandra. Diego needs guidance in order to learn what a normal requirement for his age is. He can keep his lovely smile. But he should be able to experience the feeling that you are tired and proud after you have worked. Thus he will mature and be able to expand his horizons. Sometimes it happens that he suddenly comes up with intelligent ideas and slowly accomplishes tasks assigned to him with more tenacity. His knowledge of German, which he expands and also applies gradually, is a mirror of this. This way, Diego will gradually develop motivation, as it is described in the "Volksschulgesetz". He, too, is an example of a child, as there are many in

our schools. His example may show more clearly than others what it takes: guiding adults who set him standards, empathetically and age-appropriately, and reinforce his achievements by their feed-back.

From the compulsion to know to the ability to learn

My last example is about the development of judgment and critical competence as well as of the capacity for dialogue. Even that is listed in the "Volksschulgesetz". Let us take *Miranda*. She is a quiet girl. Already in kindergarten she attracted attention, because she did not speak with anyone. At home, however, she talked loudly and was often involved in quarrels with her sister. That was when she came to us. She had a diagnosis, too; the girl's behaviour, i.e. speaking only with certain people, is called "elective mutism". In a class she does not attract attention. She rather is in danger of perishing. However, tests and written exercises show that she follows the lessons precisely and understands the learning material. Of course, I also tried to involve her in the classroom and called her, for example, when I guessed from her eyes that she knew the answer. At the beginning she did not re-

spond. By contrast, she sometimes cried softly to herself. Often it was difficult to imagine what was going on inside her. Eventually it became clear that she was very ambitious. Presumably she therefore avoided mistakes, like the plague. But that explanation alone was not enough, many children (and adults) do not like mistakes. Miranda also wanted to show that she was able to do everything on her own; so by no means she granted the other the triumph that he caught her in a mistake or that she had to ask for his help. Therefore, her "speech actually was silver and silence was golden" as the saying is. So Miranda had to learn to confront herself with dialogue and also to develop a certain critical faculty. On this path she has already taken a big step. She is on her way of getting involved with her counterpart and to apply to the teachers and classmates. A learning process, in which the teacher as an educator must accompany her with humour and serenity.

I have described these children as examples for many others. The problems that they have, are perhaps a little more pronounced than those of children who have a normal school career. But in their case it just becomes obvious what it means to be a teacher, who sees himself as an educator. The idea is to guide the children carefully and to correct them when they miss a proper attitude towards learning or to initiate their social interaction. All the children in our classrooms have their own individual personality. This does not mean that every child has to find its own way for himself. Man is a social being, and has survived as a species because he has teamed up with and connected to others. So even the greatest achievements of mankind have become possible by cooperation and common action. In our elementary school we have a model for societal cohabitation. There children of all population groups meet, with different strengths and weaknesses, often with different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Letter to  the Editor**People will vote on Curriculum 21**

I am delighted that the initiative "Ja zu einer guten Thurgauer Volksschule ohne Lehrplan 21" ("Yes to a good Thurgau elementary school without curriculum 21") has been substantiated. With this, the orientation and goals of the elementary school curriculum are subjected to the democratic process in the third German-speaking Swiss Canton after Schwyz and Aargau, and no longer determined only by the government. During my collecting signatures, I have been experiencing many stimulating conversations.

Especially parents are grateful for the initiative. Many observe with concern that increasingly the guided learning rarely takes place in school classes. By self-organized learning arrangements in the so-called learning environments students are to develop their competences either alone or in groups often without a teacher based on various tasks. The parents claim that apparently many children were overstrained and therefore in need of help in the parental home. The imparting of the material, thorough practice and diligent work often went too short.

The atmosphere during signature collection showed that in general education cuts are criticized. The ongoing education reforms such as the mixed-age learning resulted in unrest in many classes. More

and more young people are no longer sufficiently prepared for the realities of working life, because they no longer master the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. It is not only the fear of apprentice trainers that the curriculum 21 will worsen this. Like me, many teachers also support the initiative for pedagogical reasons. Many of them feared professional disadvantages by signing the initiative. Some came under pressure on the part of superiors because they critically commented on education reforms – that, by the way, become unmovable by the curriculum 21.

Given the growing number of people's initiatives, the already long overdue public discussion about the basic thrust of the elementary school is taking place. In Zurich, the initiative has also been submitted, and signatures are being collected in the Cantons of Solothurn, Schaffhausen, Graubünden and Lucerne. In the Cantons of Berne and Zug initiatives are planned. The Canton Appenzell Innerrhoden will vote on a single initiative at the general assembly in spring 2016. The Parliament in the Canton Baselland submits the curriculum 21 directly to the people and in the Canton St. Gallen in the first place the abandonment of HarmoS will be voted on.

The pedagogical potential of whole class teaching

The task for us teachers is how to form a community of this colorful group of children. A wonderful opportunity is offered by working out the subject matter together in the context of asking-developing whole class teaching. However, this method puts the highest demands on the teacher, too. He must supervise a group process, understand the individual children in their personality and get them involved adequately in the shared learning process. Here is cheeky *Michaela*, who blurts out immediately in response to questions or is offended, if she is not called up. There is silent

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Demir, not taking any risks and preferring not to answer because he does not want to make any mistake. Then *Ashwini* and *Helena* are sitting together, two friends, who prefer to be busy by themselves in class instead of focusing on a specific topic together with the others. *Massimo* is day-dreaming, thinking of his computer game that he was given yesterday. *Sandrine* is worried, she has bad marks. Among them there are Sandra, Diego and Miranda. They all need a tailor-made support by their teacher in order to be successful. This does not mean that each of them needs his own programme, and be engaged with on his own. By working out the subject matter together each pupil comes into play. The high-achiever may be drawing cards for the others. But he also learns to show consideration and to engage as an assistant teacher at most. Of course, he receives additional demanding tasks when working quickly and well. But he remains part of the classroom community. Low-achieving children benefit from the stimulating learning environment. They gain insight into thoughts that they would not have had themselves. They have the opportunity to understand the learning process repeatedly and thereby keep up with the class. Of course, they get extra help by the teacher or other children, but they remain part of the classroom community. All children and adolescents can develop their intellectual abilities and their personalities best if they can connect in a constructive manner with their fellows, in this case, with their teachers and classmates. This reflects the nature of man. Therefore everybody profits from such an atmosphere in class that is aiming at co-operation, and thus the emotional basis is given if the teacher then instructs the students for partner or group work or if they

are asked to tackle a new task independently. They can develop real teamwork and individual responsibility. Such teaching also matches recent scientific findings.

Reforms ignore findings about people's learning

Not only the study by *John Hattie*, also many other scientific findings show today that the learning success is considerably more successful in a personally guided and structured classroom teaching than in a classroom in which the students have to organise themselves with a weekly schedule and the teacher sees himself as a learning escort or coach who provides learning environments. The former kind of teaching has a long tradition in Switzerland and has also led to our good results in international comparison. During the past twenty years unfortunately, our school has been overrun by many reforms, which proclaimed this teaching principle and the role of the teacher as an educator as obsolete. But this argumentation is without scientific foundation and negates the current scientific discourse. Also, Curriculum 21 is based on outmoded concepts and is already outdated before it is being introduced. With it the educational principle of self-discovering learning with teachers who provide learning environments as coaches and escorts is to be introduced widely and as a priority. This also applies to foreign language teaching at primary school level, which is still expanded, although many studies have shown for some time that this teaching does not have any relevant positive effects on the language skills of children. By contrast, they lack profound knowledge of German, which is required for any apprenticeship or secondary school. Students, learning a foreign language in the upper classes, are comparatively not worse because they learn the languages faster and in a more concise manner. So again a fatal error-

ous development is underway. This is also true for the use of computers in the classroom. Again, a very comprehensive new study shows that the frequent use of computers in the classroom does not improve the achievements in the areas of reading, mathematics and science. Rather the opposite is the case. So you could save this money in order to enable teachers again to practice good teaching in the classroom (and then adding exercise options at the computer). This would build on the well-proven and would create a modern school system with teachers, who see themselves as educators and thus fulfill their profession prescribed by law. •

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

100 years “Christmas Eve”

by Hedwig Schär



(picture mt)

Every Christmas, my sister's godmother, resident in Wilderswil in the Bernese Oberland, sent a few figures of the Christmas Eve crib of the Huggler's sculpture in Brienz, in addition to the silverware gift. It started with Mary, Joseph and the Christ Child. Thereafter, the crib expanded year after year. The joy and excitement were always great. What figure would it be this year? A shepherd, a sacred king, a sheep family, a woman or a child who visited the Jesus Child? I still remember well the lovely camel of the Three Kings, while we unwrapped it. It had a red blanket on its back and a proud facial expression. All that was carved from wood.

For one hundred years the crib *Christmas Eve* has been produced and the figures still seem to be contemporary. In 1915 Hans Huggler-Wyss designed the first Christmas figures. He studied in Munich, where he developed the typical Huggler style, the flat cut which indicates the parts of the body. The figures remain unsanded after carving. Thus they receive the typical shape. This poses high requirement on the woodcarver, since each section must fit precisely. Til today, the figures are hand-carved according to Huggler's models. With great care the style has been passed down from generation to generation. The role models of his models were the Swiss character types of the Bernese Oberland, where the company has its seat. Over the years, new fig-

ures were created, always in the typical style. First, a new character is outlined, then a template is created and a model produced at the belt saw. Thereupon this figure is carved according to the draft.

Fabricated according to ancient models

The most suitable lime wood for carving comes from local forests. It is purchased as a whole trunk, sewn up into smaller parts and then air-dried on the site. This way it is stored approximately for three to five years and every now and then it is restacked, so that the drying takes place continuously. A fortnight prior to processing the wood is taken into the house for acclimatisation.

Eight models are produced in a one single operation with the hand-held milling machine. They are carved by wood cutters into these beautiful figurines. By this working method the wood is held in the carver's hand and not put in a bench vice.

Six sculptors, their length of service nicely spaced between 3–43 years and two apprentices are employed by the company.

All figures may be carved by every sculptor, but everyone has his special fields and favourites that he likes to carve. With 43 years of service, Hanspeter Stähli is the oldest. During this long period he has carved the impressive amount of 95 289 pieces. Human figures are his special field and his favourite is King Melchior. Hampi Shield has a three years' service

and his special field is the milling. His favourite is the shepherd with the sheep on his shoulder.

All woodcarvers also design regularly new figures, which are taken into the production. Thus, over the years more than 120 different figures for the Christmas Eve crib came into being. Joseph and Mary are available in six different versions: standing, kneeling, praying, or riding. One can also choose between two versions each of the three kings. This way every crib is unique. Generally, the figures should be selected strictly on the spot, since every figure as well as every facial expression differs because of the hand carving, although it is worked according to the same templates.

The apprentices' training takes four years. It includes human and animal figures and ornamentation. The apprentices do help with the production in the factory. One half of the hundred or so personal tools a woodcarver needs are given to him by the factory, the rest he has to acquire himself. A good light is needed at the woodcarver's workplace as well as space for the many tools and the template of the workpiece.

Most of the figures are still painted with wood stain after carving. This work is performed by Franziska Venrath. She is a designer. The mixing ratios of the colours are always the same and are manu-

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"100 years 'Christmas Eve'"

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ally recorded in a folder. There are nine basic colours. In addition to red, blue, yellow, black and white there are some brown shades. The composed colours are preserved in jam jars and reshuffled again according to the information from the folder only when needed. Apart from these requirements a good sense for colours is needed. The white colour has a varnish, because otherwise it would not cover the timber. Over the years, the colours were purchased from the same supplier with consistent quality. This company has gone bankrupt now, a new supplier had to be searched. The colours must gradually be checked now and the mixing ratios controlled, so that no loss can occur.

All carving and colour samples are clearly arranged and individually stored in cardboard boxes on a huge frame or in drawers. This way they are ready for production at any time.

All handicraft

The figures are always produced in a small series, since the milling machine

can make eight templates in a single operation. For the eight pieces the milling needs approximately two hours, the carving of a simple figure, 1.5 to 3 hours. Large pieces may take two to three days.

Painting takes 10 to 30 minutes. Since everything is handmade one can calculate that the figures have also a reasonable price. The sale takes place mainly in Switzerland, but cribs have also been sent to the whole world.

The retail store is located in Brienz, in the direct vicinity of the beautiful lake in the Bernese Oberland

The production, that is the milling machine, the carving and the painting studio are located approximately 300 meters away in the village. However, in the back room of the store there are two places for carving, where most of the time a wood carver and an apprentice work so that customers have the opportunity to watch the production.

The Huggler company produces several different cribs, the crib *Christmas Night* with approximately 14 cm in height is the oldest and most popular, since it has the ideal size for a living room. *Palestine* with

12 cm in height is somewhat smaller and the crib *Christmas* with 22 cm is slightly larger. The crib *Noel* is modest, its faces are not carved in detail and not painted. The crib *Candlelight* is more modern and the *Navidad* is well suited for churches with its 41 cm in size.

Mary, Joseph and the Christ Child may be purchased in a beautiful wooden box. Every year after Christmas, the crib is enlarged by one or a few characters.

The assortment of the Huggler's sculpture also includes Swiss costume characters, Alpine processions, animal figurines, ornaments and sacred sculptures.

At any rate, to take a trip to the Bernese Oberland on Lake Brienz and the store of the Huggler company is worth it or, at a pinch take a look at their website www.huggler-woodcarvings.ch.

The traditional Huggler company has existed since 1900. That it exists until today, is the result of high quality and solid work.

As one might suspect, the main market is not, foreign tourism, but Switzerland itself. That is because each figure tells about the love for the craft and the careful work. •