

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

The NATO campaign against freedom of expression

by *Thierry Meyssan, Damascus*



*Thierry Meyssan
(picture ma)*

This is a long story which extends over fifteen years. NATO first attempted to silence those citizens who were trying to discover the truth about the attacks of 11 September 2001. Then it turned on those who contested the official version of the “Arab Springs” and the war against Syria. One thing leading to another, it then attacked those who denounced the coup d’état in Ukraine. Now NATO is behind the accusations by a pseudo-NGO that the people who campaigned for Donald Trump are Russian agents.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 were followed by a permanent state of emergency and a series of wars. As I wrote at the time, the theory that they were directed by a group of jihadists from a cave in Afghanistan does not stand up to analysis. On the contrary, everything points to the conclusion that the attacks were organised by a faction of the military-industrial complex.

If this analysis is correct, the course of events could only lead to repression in the United States and the Allied states.

9/11 and the following 15 years – my history

Fifteen years later, the wound that I opened is still not shut – in fact the opposite is true, given the events that followed. The “Arab Springs” were added to the *Patriot Act* and the oil wars which followed. Not only does the majority of the US population no longer believe what the government has been telling it since 9/11, but by voting for *Donald Trump*, it has expressed its rejection of the post-9/11 system.

It so happens that I opened the debate on 9/11 to the world, that I was part of the last government of the *Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*, and that I report on the war against Syria from the ground. At first, the US administration thought that they could extinguish the blaze by accusing

me of writing contentious rubbish for money, hitting me where they thought it would hurt most, in other words, my wallet. And yet my ideas have never ceased to spread. In October 2004, when 100 US personalities signed a petition demanding the re-opening of the enquiry on the attacks of 9/11, Washington began to worry.¹ In 2005, in Brussels, I gathered more than 150 personalities from all over the world – including Syrian and Russian guests such as the ex-Chief of Staff for the Federation armies, General *Leonid Ivashov* – to denounce the neo-conservatives, and demonstrate that the problem was becoming global.²

“In 2007 the Bush-administration asked to have me physically eliminated”

While during the mandate of *Jacques Chirac*, the Elysée worried about my safety, in 2007 the *Bush*-administration asked newly-elected President *Nicolas Sarkozy* to have me physically eliminated. When I was warned by a friend, an officer of the Staff, that *Sarkozy*’s response had been positive, there was only one way out left to me – exile. My other friends – for thirteen years I had been the national secretary of the *Parti Radical de Gauche* – stared at me in disbelief, while the Press accused me of spiralling into paranoia. No-one came publicly to my help. I found refuge in Syria, and travelled the world outside of NATO territory, escaping numerous assassination or kidnap attempts. For the last fifteen years, I have been opening debates which have become generalised. I have always been attacked when I was alone, but when my ideas have been shared, thousands of people have been persecuted for having analysed and developed them.

US-memorandum to struggle against “conspiracy theories”

It was during this same period that *Cass Sunstein* (husband of US ambassador to the UNO, *Samantha Power*³) wrote a memorandum with *Adrian Vermeule* for the universities of Chicago and Harvard concerning the struggle against “conspiracy theories” – the name they gave to the movement I had initiated. In the name of the defence of “Liberty” confronted

by extremism, the authors defined a programme to annihilate this opposition: “We can easily imagine a series of possible responses:

1. The government could forbid conspiracy theories.
2. The government could impose a sort of tax, financial or other, on those who distribute such theories.
3. The government could engage in counter-discussion to discredit conspiracy theories.
4. The government could engage credible private parties in a counter-discussion.
5. The government could engage in informal communication with third parties and encourage them.”⁴

Creation of the “Strategic Communication Service”

The *Obama*-administration hesitated to publicly choose this path. But in April 2009, at the NATO summit in Strasbourg-Kehl, it proposed to create a “Strategic Communication Service”. It also fired *Anthony Jones* from the White House in 2009, because the famous lawyer had spoken bluntly on the subject⁵.

The project for NATO’s Strategic Communication Service slept in boxes until the Latvian government manifested itself. It was finally set up in Riga under the direction of *Janis Karklinš* – who was also an executive at the UNO World Summit on the Information Society and the Forum on the Governance of the Internet. Conceived by the British, it included participations from Germany, Estonia, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland and the United Kingdom. In the beginning, it limited itself to producing an increasing number of studies.

The Khodorkovsky family think tank “Institute of Modern Russia” in New York

Everything changed in 2014 when the *Khodorkovsky* family think tank, the *Institute of Modern Russia* in New York, published an analysis by journalists *Peter Pomerantsev* and *Michael Weiss*.⁶ According to their report, Russia had deployed a vast propaganda system abroad. However, rather than presenting them-

War on “fake news” part of a war on free speech

by Ron Paul, USA

A major threat to liberty is the assault on the right to discuss political issues, seek out alternative information sources, and promote dissenting ideas and causes such as non-interventionism in foreign and domestic affairs. If this ongoing assault on free speech succeeds, then all of our liberties are endangered.

[...]

Many free speech opponents support laws and regulations forbidding activist or educational organizations from distributing factual information regarding a candidate's positions for several months before an election.

The ban would apply to communications that do not endorse or oppose any candidate. These laws would result in the only sources of information on the candidate's views being the campaigns and the media.

Recently the *Federal Election Commission* (FEC) rejected a proposal to add language exempting books, movies, and streaming videos from its regulations. The majority of FEC commissioners apparently believe they should have the power, for example, to ban *Oliver Stone's* biography of *Edward Snowden*, since it was released two months before the election and features clips of *Hillary Clinton* and *Donald Trump* discussing *Snowden*.

The latest, and potentially most dangerous, threat to the First Amendment is the war on “fake news.” Those leading the war are using a few “viral” Internet hoaxes to justify increased government regulation – and even outright censorship – of Internet news sites. Some popular websites, such as Facebook, are not waiting for the government to force them to crack down on “fake news”.

Those calling for bans on “fake news” are not just trying to censor easily-disproved Internet hoaxes. They are working to create a government-sanctioned “gatekeeper” (to use *Hillary Clinton's* infamous phrase) with the power to censor any news or opinion displeasing to the political establishment. None of those wringing their hands over “fake news” have expressed any concern over the “fake news” stories that helped lead to the Iraq War. Those “fake news” stories led to the destabilizing of the Middle East, the rise of ISIS, and the deaths of millions.

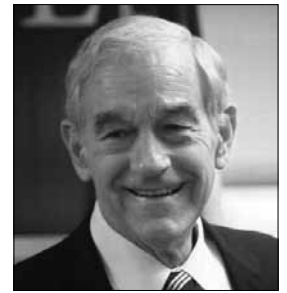
The war on “fake news” has taken a chilling turn with efforts to label news and opinion sites of alternative news sources as peddlers of Russian propaganda. The main targets are critics of US interventionist foreign policy, proponents of a gold standard, critics of the US government's skyrocketing debt, and even those working to end police militarization. All have been smeared

as anti-American agents of Russia.

Just last week, Congress passed legislation creating a special committee, composed of key federal agencies, to counter foreign interference in US elections. There have also been calls for congressional investigations into Russian influence on the elections. Can anyone doubt that the goal of this is to discredit and silence those who question the mainstream media's pro-welfare/warfare state propaganda?

The attempts to ban “fake news”; smear antiwar, anti-Federal Reserve, and other pro-liberty movements as Russian agents; and stop independent organizations from discussing a politician's record before an election are all parts of an ongoing war on the First Amendment. All Americans, no matter their political persuasion, have a stake in defeating these efforts to limit free speech.

Source: <http://www.ronpaulinstitute.org/archives/featured-articles/2016/december/11/war-on-fake-news-part-of-a-war-on-free-speech/>



Ron Paul (picture ma)

“The NATO campaign against ...”

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selves in a favourable light, as they had done during the Cold War, Moscow had allegedly decided to inundate the West with “conspiracy theories” in order to create general confusion. And the authors also specified that these “theories” no longer concerned just 9/11, but also the coverage of the war against Syria.

By seeking to reactivate the anti-Soviet feelings of the Cold War, this report marked a turning-point in values. Until then, the US ruling class had sought only to mask the crime of 11 September, by accusing a handful of insignificant “beards”. From now on, the aim was to accuse a foreign state of being responsible for the crimes committed by Washington in Syria.

The 77th Brigade of the British government

In September 2014, the British government created the 77th Brigade, a unit tasked with countering foreign propaganda. It was composed of 440 soldiers plus a thousand civilians from the Foreign

Office, including MI6, and the Co-operation and Stabilisation Unit. We do not know what their targets were. This brigade worked with the 361st Civil Affairs Brigade of the US Land Army (based in Germany and Italy). The military units were used to disturb Western Internet sites which were trying to establish the truth about 11 September as well as the war against Syria.

The unit “Information Warfare Initiative”: Attacks on RT and Sputnik

At the start of 2015, *Anne Applebaum* (wife of the Polish ex-Minister for Defence, *Radostaw Sikorski*), created within the *Washington Center for European Policy Analysis* a unit called the *Information Warfare Initiative*.⁷ It was originally intended to counter Russian information in Central and Eastern Europe. It entrusted Peter Pomerantsev (mentioned above) with this initiative, as well as *Edward Lucas*, one of the chief editors of *The Economist*.

Even though Pomerantsev was both the co-reporter for the *Institute of Modern Russia* and the assistant chief executive of

the *Information Warfare Initiative*, he no longer mentioned 9/11, and no longer considered the war against Syria to be central, but only as a recurring theme which enabled him to speculate about the actions of the Kremlin. He concentrated his attacks on the TV channel *Russia Today* and the Press agency *Sputnik*, two Russian public organisms.

Fondation Jean-Jaurès: Ban on speaking for “conspiracy theorists”

In February 2015, the *Fondation Jean-Jaurès*, think tank of the French Socialist Party and contact for the *National Endowment for Democracy* (NED), published in its turn a note “Conspiracy, state of play”.⁸ It ignored the developments concerning Russia, and picked up the debate where Cass Sunstein had left it. She recommended, purely and simply, to forbid the “conspiracy theorists” to express themselves. From his side, the Minister of Education organised workshops in schools to warn school-children against these “conspiracy theorists”.

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**Strategic Communications
Units of EU and Nato**

On 19 and 20 March 2015, the European Council asked the High Representative *Federica Mogherini* to prepare a plan of "strategic communication" to denounce the Russian disinformation campaigns concerning Ukraine. The Council mentioned neither 9/11 nor the war against Syria, and changed targets to concentrate exclusively on the events in Ukraine.

In April 2015, Ms Mogherini created within the *European External Action Service* (EEAS) a Strategic Communications Unit⁹. She was directed by an agent of the British MI6, *Giles Portman*. Twice a week, she distributed to a large number of European journalists arguments which were supposed to demonstrate Moscow's bad faith – arguments which went on to supply the European media with an abundance of fodder.

From its creation, NATO's *Centre of Strategic Communication* incorporated a service of the Atlantic Council, the *Digital Forensics Research Lab*. A Manual of Strategic Communication was drawn up by NATO. It was intended to co-ordinate and replace the old system in terms of Public Diplomacy, Public Relations (Public Affairs), Public Military Relations, Operations on Electronic Communication Systems (Information Operations) and Psychological Operations.

**The Resolution of the European
Parliament of 23 November 2016**

Inspired by NATO, on 23 November 2016, the Polish ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs and now European Deputy, *Anna Fotyga*, forced through the European Parliament a resolution about "Strategic Communication of the Union aimed at countering propaganda directed against her by third parties".¹⁰ Once again the target had been displaced – it was no longer a case of countering the dispute over 9/11 (now 15 years old), nor that of the war against Syria, but to create an amalgam between the contesting positions on the events in Ukraine, and Daesh. So we had come full circle – according to NATO, those who contested 9/11 were attempting to rehabilitate al-Qaeda, and those who were playing Russia's game were attempting to de-

stroy the West, like Daesh. And so what if NATO supports al-Qaeda in East Aleppo?

**The mysterious group "Propaganda or
Not?" and its backers**

Launched by a resounding article in the *Washington Post*, on 24 November 2016¹¹, a mysterious group entitled "Propaganda or Not?" established a list of 200 Internet sites – including *Voltaire.net.org* – who were allegedly tasked by the Kremlin with relaying Russian propaganda and intoxicating US public opinion to the point where they elected Donald Trump.

While "Propaganda or Not?" does not publish the names of its directors, it does indicate that it unites four organisations – *Polygraph*, *The Interpreter*, the *Center for European Policy Analysis* and the *Digital Forensic Research Lab*.

Polygraph is one of the sites of *Voice of America*, the US public radio and television organisation controlled by the *Broadcasting Board of Governors*.

The Interpreter is a magazine of the *Institute of Modern Russia*, now broadcast by *Voice of America*.

The *Center for European Policy Analysis* is a pseudopod of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) directed by *Zbigniew Brzezinski* and *Madeleine Albright*.

And finally, the *Digital Forensic Research Lab* is a programme of the *Atlantic Council*.

Enemy image Russia

In a document distributed by "Propaganda or Not?", this pseudo-NGO, born of associations financed by the Obama-administration, clearly names its enemy – Russia. It accuses Russia of having been the origin of the *9/11 Truth Movement* and the Internet sites supporting Syria and Crimea. On 2 December 2016, the United States Congress voted a law forbidding all military co-operation between Washington and Moscow. In the space of a few years, NATO has re-activated MacCarthyism. ●

Source: *Voltaire.net*, Damascus (Syria), 5 December 2016

(Translation *Pete Kimberley*)

¹ "100 Personalities Contest the Official Version on September 11", *Voltaire Network*, 26 October 2004.

² "Axis for Peace", *Voltaire Network*.

³ "La face cachée de l'Administration Obama", par Thierry Meyssan, *Réseau Voltaire*, 10 novembre 2015.

⁴ "Conspiracy Theories", Cass R. Sunstein & Adrian Vermeule, *Harvard Law School*, January 15, 2008.

⁵ "11-Septembre : Obama congédie un de ses conseillers", *Réseau Voltaire*, 8 septembre 2009.

⁶ "The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money", Peter Pomerantsev & Michael Weiss, *The Interpreter/ Institute of Modern Russia*, 2014.

⁷ *Information Warfare Initiative*, official site.

⁸ "The State Against The Republic", by Thierry Meyssan, Translation Roger Lagassé, *Voltaire Network*, 13 March 2015.

⁹ "EU propaganda against Russia", Translation Roger Lagassé, *Voltaire Network*, 6 July 2016.

¹⁰ "European Parliament Resolution on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties", *Voltaire Network*, 23 November 2016.

¹¹ "Russian Propaganda Effort Helped Spread 'Fake News' During the Election, Experts Say", Craig Timberg, *The Washington Post*, November 24, 2016.

Document: Complaint by Voltaire Network International vs Prop or Not?

The complaint was handed to the Inspector General of the US-Department of State. Voltaire Network International, 2 December 2016. (PDF – 43.4 kb)

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“Aleppo and Mosul, two besieged cities”

by *Renaud Girard, French war correspondent, specialised in geopolitical issues, France*



*Renaud Girard
(picture ma)*

What are the similarities and differences between these two sieges? How do the important regional and international actors try to continue to pursue their strategic interests?

In the Orient the military current affairs are determined by the simultaneous siege of two large cities, Aleppo in Syria and Mosul in Iraq. The governments of Damascus and Baghdad have been allied for several years, within the so-called “Shiite axis” extending from Tehran to Beirut. Both try to recapture their second-largest cities – fallen into the hands of Sunni rebel militias – by military means. Both now besiege the eastern part of these metropolises. Where are the similarities and differences between these two sieges? How do the important regional and international actors try to consolidate their strategic interests?

In its re-conquest of the eastern quarters of Aleppo (since July 2012 in the hands of the rebellion), the Baathist-Syrian army has several allies: the Russian air force, the Lebanese Hizbullah and the “international” Shiite brigades (including the Afghan Hazara) supported by Officers of the special forces of the al-Quds division of the Iranian Pasdarans, the Kurdish Peshmergas of the profane movement of the crypto-communist party of the *Democratic Union PYD* (those who successfully acted as adversaries to the Islamic state during the siege of Kobané from September 2014 to January 2015).

In the re-conquest of the eastern quarters of Mosul, the Iraqi special forces of the Baghdad government are supported

by the air strikes of the Western bombers, the patriotic Shiite militia and the Kurdish Peshmergas of the autonomous government of Erbil (who control the northern front without claims for access to the city in the future). In Aleppo, the al-Nusra front (branch of al-Qaeda) constitutes the spearhead of the rebel militias, who consists of a patchwork, mostly of several Islamic groups. What happens inside these besieged cities? We do not have any first-hand information because it is far too dangerous for Western reporters to go there. In Mosul they risk being beheaded; in Aleppo they risk being abducted and only resigned against ransom payments.

A quite strange phenomenon is shown in the fight for Aleppo: Since 2013, the Western media have no longer enough confidence in the Syrian rebellion to send reporters there. Nevertheless, without any kind of filtering, they believe and disseminate the information spread by the rebels, who are, of course, very interested in presenting themselves as innocent lambs and blackening their opponents. This black and white (the author uses manichean instead of black and white, but normal English readers would not know what that is) painting has existed for five years and has never changed. In Aleppo one has to deal with a “tyrant” (*Bashar al-Assad*) who, so to speak as a pleasure, massacres his people. The siege of Aleppo is, of course, cruel, and the number of civilian casualties is estimated to be 300 for the past two weeks. This black-and-white image is by no means applied to the Iraqi army, who also tries to regain control over Mosul. There the attackers are the good and the rebels the evil. The figures of civilian casualties are similar: they have been estimated at Mosul to 600 since the beginning of the fighting. This is by no means ques-

tioned that the fanatical IS fighters are the “super evil”. Because, on the basis of their tactics of systematically using vehicles for suicide bombers – that is similar to the launching of ground-to-ground missiles – the IS generals sent hundreds of young people to their death after having brainwashed them.

In the siege of Aleppo, the Western press has put itself on the side of the resistance fighters; in Mosul on the side of the attackers. But this is no longer so crucial, since the influence of the international media on the geopolitical situation has lost much of its importance: Today, media influence on the great strategic decisions is no longer the same as in the times of the wars in the Balkans, in Iraq or in Libya.

When Aleppo and Mosul have been fallen, who will be the great strategic winners? There are Iran and Russia in the first and second rank. The Western strategists have underestimated massively the determination of these two Eastern forces. Tehran has strengthened the Shiite axis, while Moscow has strengthened its access to the Mediterranean. On the third rank are the Kurds, who after initial setbacks are victorious on all fronts. The US are not the total losers, as they declared IS to be their new main enemy. The big losers will be the Turks, whose neo-Ottoman policy is broken, as well as the Europeans, who have to bear the burden of the refugees largely alone.

At the Prague Summit in November 2002, President *Chirac* had tried to dissuade President *Bush* from invading Iraq. He had whispered to him, “George, you’re creating a Shiite axis in the Middle East: but where is your strategic interest?” He did not receive any answer ... •

Source: “*Le Figaro*” from 6.12.2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“The American view of things is presented to the world”

Interview by Sputniknews with Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer
(picture ef)

Willy Wimmer, former Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and former Secretary of State for the Federal Minister of Defense, is not surprised that the UN, as well as the Western leading media, are spreading “fake news”

about the development in Aleppo. These media have long accepted to support NATO’s war policy, he says.

Sputniknews: Mr. Wimmer, on Tuesday the UN published a report stating that in East Aleppo civilians were massacred, kidnapped and tortured by government forces. Where the information comes from is not clear, the report merely refers to “trustworthy sources”. How is such a report to be assessed?

Willy Wimmer: Unfortunately, we have to assume that reports of this kind are being written in the US or Anglo-Saxon interests for many years beginning with the OSCE over the Red Cross and up to the United Nations. We saw in the international organisations that the otherwise objective reports had to be presented to the American ambassador or chief delegate before publication, so that the American view of the world’s things could be presented.

On the background of this experience, one must assume that this is a continuous pattern. I also refer to the International Committee of the Red Cross because, in my opinion, the main financier of this important organisation is the United States and that European states contribute just one or two percent. If one really wanted to know what would happen in different parts of the world, the astonishing audience would have to assume that these reports are fair. The experience of the past 20 years shows, however, that this expectation is usually not justified.

What is the goal of the UN at this time?

The only states that are engaged in accordance with the international law in Syria are the legitimate Syrian government itself, the Russian Federation and Iran. However, in the context of developments over the last five years, they have not encountered any significant support from the United Nations. From the Yugoslav war we know that the United Nations have become the aggressive instrument of NATO. This is a common thread through

“This is the Western warfare we have had since 1999 and the war against Belgrade. The Western leading media are oriented to support offensively the war politics of NATO or the war powers United States, Great Britain and France. There is not the slightest doubt to be found in the pages (...)”

all of this undermining the necessary trust of the international community and the global population in such important institutions as the Red Cross, the OSCE and the United Nations. This is where war policy is pursued in American or Anglo-Saxon interest, and there are enough forces at the United Nations that are not afraid to play on this piano.

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov has already responded to the report and said that aid organisations on the ground cannot confirm the atrocities reported. In the Western media, however, the UN report is more widely disseminated. How do you interpret that?

This is the Western warfare we have had since 1999 and the war against Belgrade. The Western leading media are oriented to support offensively the war politics of NATO or the war powers United States, Great Britain and France. There is not the slightest doubt to be found in the pages – a doubt which would have previously existed – if such phenomena had been involved. We also see organisations, such as the *Observatory for Human Rights* acting from Great Britain, or the *white helmets*, which are traded internationally as an aid organisation, but which themselves are subject to the greatest doubt, what caprioles the West is now ready to accept. This, of course, destroys international trust, and our own populations do not believe our governments any more.

Albrecht Müller, editor of “NachDenk-Seiten”, has also shown in a detailed article how one-sided Western media reporting is. For example, “Spiegel online” published videos with alleged requests for help by people arrested in Aleppo, whose authenticity has not been clarified, while Russian observation cameras in real time showed the evacuation of civilians and insurgents. How can this imbalance be justified in the German media?

This is government policy, which is offensive NATO policy. We know that NATO’s communications director is the unfortunate *Jamie Shea*, who has been beaten the public into war day by day and has done

everything he can to maintain this readiness to stay in war. In such a situation, you cannot assume in the West that there is fair reporting. At least since the second Iraq war and the lies we have been told about Kuwait we must assume that the stories are essentially from American PR agencies.

When, for the first time in modern German history, the Federal Office attention is focused on the employment of so-called spin-doctors, and then one knows where the journey is heading to. Does anybody still believe these messages? Actually no, nobody; they themselves do not believe anything!

On Sputnik’s request, the leaders of the UN report did not want to name their sources; it was called for reasons of source protection. Should the UN not be obliged to present its sources in a transparent manner in the case of such serious accusations?

The United Nations must regain its old character in the context of international peace. As long as they need to be seen as an aid organisation for NATO, no one believes them anyway. Against this background, it is also more than inevitable that *Sputnik* and others, who want to know what the matter is, get such flimsy justifications.

At the EU summit in Brussels, Chancellor Merkel has openly accused Russia and Iran of crimes. Can she allow herself to do that presently?

Obviously, the lady can allow herself all. But one must only listen to the German public opinion in order to find out that this is entering at one ear and leaving at the other ear again without major impact. This also has to do with the fact that in Germany and other European states all know that it was the Americans, the British and the French, who have fuelled the development in Syria with special forces so that a five-year conflict has started. Where was the voice of the German chancellor when this happened – driven by our

The tasks of the new US-administration

by Myret Zaki, chief editor of the french-Swiss business journal "Bilan"



Myret Zaki (picture zvg)

In the run-up to the American presidential elections, countless statements mistakenly have expressed that Hillary Clinton's decency, dossier knowledge, and political experience would make it possible to win the election. On the other hand, it seemed clear to everyone that Donald Trump had no chance of winning because of his poor preparation for factual issues, his "masculine language", and his political inexperience.

These very schoolmasterly reflections have gone far beyond reality. Obviously, it was not about finding a functionary or a technocrat, nor a well-networked candidate with experience. It is certainly an advantage for a leader personality to know his dossiers well, to be respectful and exemplary; but these are in fact only optional qualities in relation to the urgent changes that voters really expect.

These very schoolmasterly reflections have gone far beyond reality. Obviously, it was not about finding a functionary or a technocrat, nor a well-networked candidate with experience. It is certainly an advantage for a leader personality to know his dossiers well, to be respectful and exemplary; but these are in fact only optional qualities in relation to the urgent changes that voters really expect.

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allies? Where did Ms *Merkel* call for the abolition of this shameful act? And one must also say that those who are responsible for violations of international law in this area, like *Tony Blair*, have in fact become European representatives for the Middle East. In other words, one makes the perversion systematic. And, of course, you have to ask, where did Mrs *Merkel* help to bring the British Prime Minister to the International Criminal Court in The Hague? This is the starting point of the development with which we are dealing now. And this is what many people see in Germany.

Source: <https://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20161216313802241-wimmer-aleppo-berichterstattung/> from 16.12.2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

On the other hand, what appears to be absolutely necessary, especially in the context of today's America, is to point out the most urgent problems of the country (war, immigration, fiscal slippages), and this rather with emphasis, and irrespective of whether all rules of decency are respected.

This means powerful and strong communication with charisma, accompanied by a genuine desire to bring about changes, to set oneself apart from the exhausted and no longer legitimated establishment, and to grasp the concerns of large sections of the population genuinely, which have been neglected too long. Above all, however, considering the urgency, this means to relinquish political correctness and PR language coming across as artificial. The real feat achieved by Trump is the fact that a right-wing billionaire without humanitarian or social vein could win the simple classes of society, because they had the impression that he understood them better than the nice, progressive Democrats, who fancy themselves and respect all sexes and minorities, and who talk in a courteous and aseptic language.

What does Barack Obama leave behind?

In reality, it is not so much an anti-Clinton sentiment, but an anti-Obama sentiment that has influenced this election significantly. The election result is a clear disapproval of the outgoing president, in the sense that the values and policies embodied by him, and due to which he led an intense pro-Clinton campaign, are no longer of interest to the majority of the voters. At the utmost, the self-satisfied elites of Manhattan or San Francisco are still interested in it. Today, neither as a democrat nor as a republican, one can still be under the illusion that Silicon Valley and Brooklyn represent America in any way.

In addition, the war policy of Nobel Peace Prize winner Barack Obama is stranded in a cul-de-sac. Certain war-mongers in this part of the world and elsewhere accused the Democrat for his military "retreat" in the rest of the world. In fact, he

is the president, under who even more assassinations by drones than in the Bush-era were carried out. He was the president, who was up to his throat enmeshed in the wars in the Middle East, and who shortly after the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq – at first covertly, then quite openly – supported jihadist groups (Islamic state, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya).

This policy cannot be excused with the refugee flows and the jihadist assassinations that hit the West. As for the new Cold War with Putin's Russia, whose geopolitical tensions in Ukraine and Crimea are only the tip of the iceberg, this is perhaps the greatest threat to American hegemony in the world. Russia blocks US claims in the Middle East. China offers its support to Putin in the UN Security Council, and the influence of these two powers effects that other countries form a group around them that do not a bit or hardly take into account American interests (Iran, Syria, Egypt, Turkey, Philippines ... and several Latin American states).

The pacific and transatlantic free trade agreements are blocked. At a time, when US debt has reached \$ 20,000 billion, 44 million Americans have depended on soup kitchens since 2008, and the adjusted rate of unemployment – including the discouraging long-term unemployed – is 25% rather than the official 5%¹, the time has perhaps come that the US buries its forced intention to expand and finally turns towards the problems in its own country.

Let us not be deceived. The emergence of Donald Trump is by no means a guarantee that all foreign and domestic political problems of the US will be solved. However, the hope to end the cold war with Russia, to protect the American borders better and to jolt the political establishment has preliminarily been enough to transfer far-reaching powers to him. •

Source: *Bilan* from 9.11.2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

¹ cf. the revised statistics by shadow statistics: www.shadowstats.com

Ensure the Swiss model

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

Direct democracy and the citizens' political rights, federalism and municipal autonomy, everlasting armed neutrality and related to it the commitment to good offices and humanitarian aid – the cornerstones of the Swiss model are an example and hope for many people around the world. However, they do not remain all by themselves: each Swiss citizen carries the responsibility for maintaining the cornerstones of our state model. Some current issues pending in the Swiss Federal State are to be taken up here.

A currently pressing issue is the conflict between direct democracy and the contracts of Switzerland with the EU. There is not much to be said on this topic here, because there is already a large discussion in all Swiss and many foreign media. Only a basic consideration obtrudes itself.

Direct democracy and submission to foreign powers are like fire and water

The majority in the National Council and Council of States says it clearly: We are not ready to implement the article of the Constitution controlling mass immigration with an appropriate law. We are not willing to renegotiate the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP) with the EU, if necessary.

Perhaps it is actually not such a bad thing that the yea-men come out in the open. Thus, they force every citizen to ask the basic question concretely: What is the future I want for Switzerland? If the Parliament today refuses to execute the will of the people simply because one of the over 100 bilateral treaties with the EU is opposed to a new Swiss regulation – how will it be then, if Switzerland would join the EU more closely? If we were to agree to a framework agreement of institutional issues and to directly submit us under the case-law of the European Court of Justice – how much of our direct democratic state order would then be left? Even the EU Member States with representative democracy have been complaining for years that their national Parliaments and even more the Parliaments of the individual federal constituent states (for example in Germany or Austria) hardly have to advise and decide anything, because increasingly things are done in Brussels centrally ...

Farewell to direct democracy? Or tackle the thing in the cantons themselves, like the Ticino electorate showed us with the popular initiative “prima i nostri!”¹, in accordance with the Federal Constitution. Hopefully, the Ticino can resist against

federal Berne when it comes to ensuring of its new Constitution article. Other cantons are happy to join in.

With regard to the federal level: there is only one answer to the adverse to democracy and weak-breasted proposals on migration which the Federal Council intends to submit to the people to vote: For the last time, no!² Concerning the rejectionist attitude of the Parliament it is to state that we citizens remember every single name of “representatives”, representing rather the EU than us – the next elections will come for sure ... We will stop the coup against the sovereign!

The control of the administration undermines federalism and municipal autonomy

In the wake of globalisation and EU integration, our authorities in the Confederation and the cantons disobey more and more the reasonable democratically backed and thrift-promoting basic rules in the Federal State (sovereignty of the cantons, municipal autonomy, and subsidiarity principle).

We reported about the annihilation of constitutional school sovereignty of the cantons by the high-handed actions of the *Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education* (EDK) again and again. There are also mere administrative departments such as the *Federal Office of Public Health* (FOPH) or the *Federal Office for the Environment* (FOEN), running out of control for years with their human and financial effort and constantly adding new tasks “networked” (i.e. with the management teams of the EU or OECD) to generate an increasing number of well-paid jobs. For this purpose, they incite individual members of Parliament, (in the National Council and Council of States) to push through international agreements in the National Council and Council of States, to impose centralised regulations of the Federation or generous loans. Victims are – in addition to the taxpayers – the federal structure of Switzerland and the direct democratic decision-making rights of the citizens.

Example FOEN: New regional policy – centralist regime of the administration

The FOEN covers 492 jobs and has a budget of roughly 1.5 billion Swiss francs at the disposal for the year 2016.³

A proud budget for a mere Federal Office – if you consider, for example, that for some parliamentarians 5 billion a year are too much for the entire national defence! Among the money streams that flow through the FOEN belong approxi-

mately 3 billion Swiss francs, which were diverted from the “Investment aid fund in mountainous regions” (IHG) and redirected in the so-called “New Regional Policy” (NRP). The IHG was an economical and well-functioning facility tailored to the Swiss State understanding, which forgave loans for infrastructure projects in the mountain area. They were paid back to almost 100 percent and could be used again for new projects.

This proven facility was rebuilt 10 years ago to a regional development fund modelled on the EU. The objective of the EU regional policy is especially the dissolution of borders and nation States in favour of the expansion of the centralised EU State unit. “Both as regards to the goals and the objective and spatial usage criteria the new regional policy NRP corresponds to [...] the main guideline of the cohesion and structural policy of the European Union”, so the Federal Council in its message of 16 November 2005.⁴ An absurd comparison: Neither is Switzerland a multi-state construct that must support the internal cohesion to keep from falling apart nor has it a wealth gap as the EU at that time between Eastern and Western European States. The majority of the Parliament approved the Federal Act on regional policy and by that the EU concept which entered into force on 1 January 2008. This law is the basis for today’s lavish distribution of taxpayer’s money with no hope of a return, as in the EU.

This is the case, for example, for so-called “Regional Nature Parks” (RNPs), which are set up under the direction of the FOEN, with the aim of placing the territories of the involved communities under the control of a “professional” local control centre. This in turn ensures the implementation of the so-called “habit change” according to EU regional policy, i.e. the establishment of connected habitats of animals and plants at the expense of human habitats. In order agitate without being disturbed, the Federal Council resp. the FOEN produced a “Parks Ordinance” (ParkO). This stipulates a park charter with a 10-year suspension of the right of termination.⁵ With the signing of the charter, the participating municipalities “make their territory available for the park perimeter”.⁶ This means, they give up their communal autonomy and the citizens’ direct democratic decision-making rights for ten years.

As happened this autumn at the “Regional Nature Park of Schaffhausen”, the first cross-border Swiss nature park, which unfortunately will be able to come

"Ensure the Swiss model"

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into being despite the gripping counter-defence of a no-committee. The population was flattened with an immense propaganda machine, because finally the profitable jobs of the "professionals" in the office were at stake. Municipalities that in the last couple of years had voted twice against the adhesion in the communal assembly, were urged with financial lures to vote for a third time. This happened via lies (the nature park would bring no restrictions, the product label would be free of charge, etc.) and by threats (they would no more be able to sell their products without park-label). Unfortunately, only a few municipalities withstood this massive pressure.

In contrast, on 27 November 2016, 8 out of 17 Ticino and Grisons communes said no at the ballot box to the Parc Adula, a so-called "second national park" with a planned gigantic area of more than 1,200 square kilometres. Thus it has failed because 13 municipalities should have agreed at least. For a long time, Switzerland has a beautiful national park, a second – and above all such one! – we do not need. This is, by the way, the eighth park, which has been buried by the population.

We think that the majority of us Swiss citizens has kept a healthy sense of the es-

sential importance of our small-scale federal structures – in spite of all attempts to bend our country, its weatherproof facilities and the strong rights of the population into a bad direction. Precisely because we are accustomed to the fact that the state is a matter of the citizens, repeatedly many people cooperate despite adversities and oppose developments that do not fit to our country.

Considerations on the duties of neutral Switzerland

At the NATO headquarters in the USA (Norfolk, Virginia) a Swiss liaison officer is deployed, we get to know in the daily press. "There, the NATO states are planning the forces of the future. [...] The members are trying to figure out what NATO must and can do in 20 years." For example, how so-called "peacekeeping operations" will look like (*Ostschweiz am Sonntag* from 11.12.2016).

Yes, you did not misread: Switzerland is not only acting against the neutrality imperative with deployments of the Swiss army in NATO manoeuvres,⁷ but also participates in planning the NATO forces of the future – even though it is not a member of NATO! For the future planning of the Swiss national defence in turn cuts corners: the air force is slowly decreasing in age, and the number of members of the army has been reduced for years, because Switzerland is said to be unable to afford its equipment and training.

Taking care of the Swiss model – this also includes to return to the self-imposed duty of Switzerland in the world. As long as we have one foot in NATO, we are not credible as neutral mediators. The *Good Offices*, humanitarian aid and development aid via the ICRC and other organisations, disaster relief and the granting of asylum to politically persecuted people – these is the operating range of neutral Switzerland. This also includes the ability to defend one's own country. This does not go with army operations under the command of NATO, whether they are manoeuvres in Eastern Europe or plans at the NATO headquarters. With the withdrawal from "Partnership for Peace (PfP)", Switzerland regained its credibility as a neutral mediator and would still again have sufficient resources to be able to afford a well-equipped defence army. •

¹ cf. *Current Concerns*, No 23 from 22.10.2016

² Detailed information on the content will follow.

³ www.bafu.admin.ch/org/09606/index.html?lang=en#sprungmarke0_38

⁴ *05.080 Embassy Message on the New Regional Policy (NRP)* from 16 November 2005, p. 41

⁵ Ordinance on Parks of National Importance from 7 November 2007, Art. 26 (3)

⁶ *Regional Nature Park Schaffhausen*. Management plan for operation, p. 128

⁷ cf. "Swiss Army – Stop marching and return to the Constitutional order!" In: *Current Concerns*, No 8 from 19 April 2016

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Deliberate Demise of the Swiss Army

by Prof Dr Albert A. Stahel



Albert A. Stahel
(picture ma)

Until 1995, the Swiss army was a militia army, whose main mission was to defend Switzerland in the event of war. Equipment, armament, and organisation of this army were based on the concept of the mili-

tary national defence dated 6 June 1966. Thanks to the 400,000 conscripts mobilised in case of active service, to the many artificial obstacles, barriers and prepared booby mines a broad defence of the country against an attacker would have been possible in the event of a war. Attacking our country, he would have been confronted with a well prepared and equipped army, he probably wouldn't be able to overcome.

In 1995, the then Military Department was taken over by Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi. He allowed himself to be convinced by US friendly officials and regular officers, who were trained in the United States at Fort Leavenworth, that the Swiss militia army would be outdated and that it had to be replaced by action forces according to NATO standards. The newly shaped armed forces should be called army XXI following the reform project of the United States Army. To build such a fully operational NATO army the historically grown structures and relations between the army and the cantons were to be eliminated. In a kind of euphoria and dream-world «excess» material and weapons were to be liquidated, armouries and large formations resolved and the army shrunk to a target head count of 220,000 conscripts. In this euphoria Federal Councillor Ogi renamed his Department as a «Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (VBS)», which was commented by some defence attaché in Switzerland with a touch of mockery as “Volleyball, Bas-

ketball and Swimming”. By this reform project not only a sustained period of over 150 years military tradition of Switzerland was liquidated, also our country was deprived of its defence capabilities.

The army XXI could only be realized under the successor of Federal Councillor Ogi, Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid. Despite the changed international situation after September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, Federal Councillor Schmid insisted on realising the project army XXI in a kind of blind loyalty to the Federal Councillor Ogi. But very soon the structural weaknesses and the serious inadequacy of the Army XXI became evident to execute the defence mission. To eliminate the most important gaps and weaknesses Federal Councillor Schmid pushed the development step 08/11 through the parliament.

The Development Step 08/11 turned out after the resignation of Federal Councillor Schmid forced by the affair of the compromised Chief of the Army as a patchwork and thus as a fiasco. Now, all hope was focusing on his successor, Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer. He gave rise to hopes, that he would eliminate the mistakes made by his predecessor and stop the dismantling of the militia. But very soon, Federal Councillor Maurer came up with a new reform project, the Development of Armed Forces (WEA). Newly not only “abundant” heavy weapons such as tanks and armoured howitzers were to squander, but the army was to be reduced to a nominal headcount of 100,000 conscripts. The main mission of defence was to be taken by less than 30,000 conscripts. That such a target can't be achieved is even obvious to a layman. A beacon was set on Maurer's leadership of the VBS already when people rejected the procurement of the Gripen combat aircraft in a referendum in 2014. An army without an operational air force, is useless in defending a country. Despite criticism raised by militia officers, Federal Councillor Maurer stuck

undeviatingly to his “Development of the armed forces(WEA)”.

When Guy Parmelin was elected Federal Councillor and took over the VBS in 2016, again many simpletons hoped for a trend reversal and that the useless “Development of Armed Forces” project would be stopped. Far from it. Since the referendum against the WEA was prevented by sabotage by the Classe Politique, Federal Councillor Parmelin, who might have unfortunately little knowledge only of military issues, influenced by his principal adviser, the Ambassador Catrina, sticks unwaveringly to the WEA. Due to this situation, it must be reckoned that very soon Switzerland will not have an operational army any more and will therefore also be no longer capable to defence itself.

These statements reflect not only the demise of the Swiss Army, but also a deliberate step in a catastrophe that will probably only happen to our descendants. The already started destabilisation of the strategic situation in Europe, the Middle East and East Asia can already now, just as the known writing on the wall of Babylon¹, divines the coming calamity. Almost disbelieving one must realize, that Federal Councillor Parmelin the fourth head of VBS in a series, put in position by the SVP (Swiss Popular Party), in order to adapt our defence to NATO standards by the help of Fourier and Ambassador Catrina, is taking this role. Verily, under Federal Councillor Ogi, homicide of the militia took place, driven by schawm sounds of those following in the Swiss Defence Department ideas coming from the United States. Under Federal Councillor Schmid, the rest of the army was confined and by Federal Councillor Maurer and his helpers, the remainder was finally buried. Now, a kind of boddy-stripping of the remains takes place under Federal Councillor Parmelin. •

¹ Daniel 5, 26, Mene, Mene, Thekel, Upharsin.

Refusal of the project National Park Adula

“The result shows that we can resist bureaucracy and centralism, if we work together”

Interview with Leo Tuor*



Leo Tuor
(picture ma)

After 16 years of preparatory work and more than 10 million of subsidies from public funds in 17 affected communes, people voted on the project National Park Adula from 24 to 27 November 2016. The affected population refused the project despite massive propaganda of the proponents. In the following interview Leo Tuor, member of the committee “na nein no Park Adula” explains this result.



Current Concerns: Why is the refusal of the project National Park Adula important?

Leo Tuor: We already have a national park in the Canton of Grisons. That is enough. Additionally we have three nature parks and now there is already talk of an international park in the Prättigau Valley which shall contain the Rätikon [a mountain range of the Central Eastern Alps located at the border between Vorarlberg, Liechtenstein and Graubünden] as far as Austria. Effectively we could make whole Switzerland a park, do away with the 289 labels and reintroduce the old trademark, this with the crossbow, which honours Swiss quality, reliability, etc.: a red crossbow for conventional quality, a green crossbow for real bio-quality, a yellow for not convincing quality where the label is only accepted by technical reasons concerning subsidies.

The refusal of the National Park Adula is important as a signal to Berne that it is not about a restriction of freedom we are afraid of but that we are fed up with regulations. Moreover we have figured out the Swiss park concept as miserable theatre.

And we disapprove of empty talk – this is about visions and planning of the future. Planned economy, merger and centralism don’t harmonise with the thinking of mountain people.

How could the small group of park opponents convince notwithstanding the financial supremacy and the enormous media presence of the park supporters?

The alternative Park Adula or apocalypse, this was a bit simple for the electors. Then: a national park is associated with nature, but the project pretended to promote the economy. Only in the lowlands it was propagated as nature park. Adula was never trustworthy, its people didn’t have charisma and didn’t take the population seriously. This was a battle of rebels against advocates. Advocates never go down well with the ordinary people. You can’t convince only with millions and blabbing, it always smelled like propaganda. The large majority was not corrupt.

What was the cooperation with the park opponents of the Canton of Ticino like?

We didn’t feel as residents of different cantons, but as mountain people/montanari, with the same identity. Language was a problem. We Romans admittedly do understand Italian but talking and reasoning is more difficult. Moreover mountain people and farmers are not so eloquent as the advocates, but we went down well with the population who is not so eloquent, too.

Even *Moses* had this problem with the language (Ex 4, 10) and nevertheless he

lead the defiant people through the desert of life.

The controversy round the Park Adula, where we saw, that our identity – namely the mountain – is the same, brought us closer to the Ticino people. We both love the mountains, but don’t idealise them too much, because they are also difficult, bring danger and can be relentless. The cooperation was unbureaucratic and uncomplicated. We had one single meeting on the Lukmanier Pass. There only a few Grisons people came because it was deer hunt and then you can’t do anything else with them.

Which lessons did you personally learn from the whole controversy?

I learned the lesson that you have to be trustworthy and honest and that the people stick together when it comes to their being: our basis of existence are the mountains and the language, they depend on each other. Without the mountains such pronounced dialects wouldn’t exist and the Rhaeto-Romanic would have become extinct long time ago. Not too long ago it was tried to enforce top-down an artificial unified language upon us Romans: the Romansh Grischun. This multi-million francs project miserably failed because it came from Chur and Zurich. This was an urban-rural problem, too, centralism versus federalism. We are wired differently from the town people. Switzerland is no mishmash. Therefore it is interesting. Another les-

* Leo Tuor, born in 1959, spent 14 summers as a shepherd at the Greina plain. 1989 – 2000 work on a six-volume edition of the Rhaeto-Romanic prince of poets and cultural historian Giacun Hasper Muoth. Leo Tuor lives together with his family in Vals. He writes novels, narratives, short texts/stories and essays, he was awarded with many prizes, for example: 2012 award of the UBS cultural foundation for his complete works, Prix du Conseil International de la Chasse CIC (South Africa) for «Settembrini»; 2009 Grisons literary prize; 2007 award of the Schiller foundation. (www.tuors.ch)

Germany in transition

by Karl Müller

On 9 December 2016, the Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache (German language association) has declared the word “post-factual” (postfaktisch) the Word of the Year. The justification explained that discussions in politics and society were increasingly centred on emotions instead of facts. In their rejection towards “those at the top”, bigger and bigger tiers of society were willing to ignore facts and even to accept obvious lies. This was why the word was reflecting a profound political change.

In its choice and its justification, the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache* has given a clear indication for the targeted polarisation in current Germany, that is, the attempt by “those at the top” to marginalize their critics and to represent themselves like their thinking and acting was oriented towards “facts” and on “reality” and thus rational. In contrast their critics were “emotional”, in the sense of irrational, “ignoring facts” and even “accepting lies”.

Is it about disempowering the citizens?

Obviously the idea is to “disempower” the citizens. And, if we add the fact that the

“The French Revolution has abolished all privileges of the first and the second estate and the ‘Grundgesetz’ of 1949 has confirmed this for the Federal Republic of Germany. Those in public offices or elected representatives are bound to law, servants to the people. This is the literal translation of the word ‘minister’, holding their office only temporarily – the time period being determined by the people.”

word “Brexit” was ranked second because the result of the referendum had been a “triumph of post-factual politics”, the goal of this word choice becomes more than clear. Lacking was only a third rank for the word “populist”. After all, for “those at the top”, the populists are those who seduce the dumb people to “post-factualism”, such that we now have referenda being deeply disliked by “those at the top”.

Precisely the circles who are favouring a “dictatorship of relativism” (Pope *Benedict XVI*) now intend to silence criticism of their positions and the mainstream media with the word “post-factual”, bringing to bear unproven conspiracy theories and all their means of power against the freedom of expression.

Millions of casualties of politicians’ and mainstream media lies

Another aspect is what could be read on the internet page www.nachdenkseiten.de (12 December 2016), in reference to the lies of our politicians and the mainstream media connected with them: “Fake news can be extremely dangerous and are responsible for millions of casualties. Particularly dangerous, however, have turned out to be the ‘Fake news’ being spread not only through social media but also over classical media.” The text lists three examples of many: The lie that in 1990 Iraqi soldiers had grabbed babies from incubators in Kuwait, the lie of a “horseshoe

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“The result shows that ...”

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son is that literature can be a sword. I am a literary man and have struggled with essays against this crazyness. Even in *Giacumbert Nau* (1988), my *Sturm und Drang* opus – a book that was for a long time indexed by the Grisons government – you can read:

“The desert grows – woe betide anyone who saves deserts!”

“Actually, Mr. President, what about you?”

You soon are seventy years old and still want to sell the land? You have speculated, overbuilt, devastated your valley and now you want to whitewash your conscience with a park in the valleys of the others?

You may have an illustrious suite. But consider, there are yet others in this world. They want to live in the mountains and not in a reservation. Must you, Mr. President, an old man, keep on and on forever? We don’t care about this future you want to brew up for us in league with the town people. They have destroyed their habitats – does this give them a right to ours? Our pastures shall become wastelands? Our forests become overgrown? And we shall be their Mahicans?

Not even the stars you will leave to me. And my animals, where shall I go with my animals?

Riff-raffs, crudité shredders. Make your parks in your cities. We don’t care about the future you want to prepare for us. Leave in peace my animals that didn’t do you any harm, who rest under the starry heavens. Go to the devil with your advices. Respect us who we are not here on holidays.”

What does the result mean for the identity of the mountain people?

The danger concerning the Swiss is that everybody is looking for himself, hatching something in his region without wanting to know from each other. In the Canton of Grisons we have a kind of mini-Switzerland with the three languages and many valleys. In the Rhaeto-Romanic part with our five written languages we have a kind of mini-Grisons. And yet the Rhaeto-Romans all are hatching for themselves in their regions. The whole structure in Switzerland is a Matrioschka with babushka, every time a bit smaller, the smallest is the Rhaeto-Romanic.

The result has shown that we can resist bureaucracy and centralism if we work together. Our committee did an optimal job with minimal costs, small expenditure of time and moderate infrastructure. It was

fascinating to work together with people from the left to the right without party bickering and ostentation of power.

The proponents of the park refused to see a relationship between the park and the large carnivores, what do you think about this?

This was implausible, too, because wolf and bear have to do something with nature and are totally protected in a national park. Even with a relaxing of the Berne Convention. When it was signed in 1977 we didn’t have any wolves here and therefore no problems, too. And in Grisons with so many parks the wolves have a great freedom, even to reproduce undisturbed.

It just can’t be possible that the proponents say, the national park protects nature and animals and at the same time they proclaim that there is no relationship between park and large carnivores. This is irrational and dishonest. The wolf is an important topic in the mountainous regions of Grisons and northern Ticino. Italy deals different with it, Italy is less law-abiding. Maybe we could learn something from our neighbours.

Thank you very much for the interview.

(Interview Rico Calcagnini)

"Germany in transition"

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plan" during the NATO war against Yugoslavia; US Secretary of State Colin Powell's lies on 5 February 2003 in the United Nations Security Council regarding alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Grotesque is the correct wording for all this. The irony is striking when one grabs the essence of all this. Yes, these processes need to be characterized clearly. But then it is not possible to unsettle people and to make them doubt what they see – and this exactly is the goal of the campaign: "We at the top' are doing things quite well, don't get deceived by the 'populists', better follow us." ... And we will use our means of power against all those who don't.

But what are the facts about "those at the top" in Germany?

What is the law?

There should not be any "those at the top". Not according to law, because according to its constitution, Germany is a democratic state. All power comes from the people and all citizens have equal rights. The French Revolution has abolished all privileges of the first and the second estate and the "Grundgesetz" (Basic Law) of 1949 has confirmed this for the Federal Republic of Germany. Those in public offices or elected representatives are bound to law, servants to the people. This is the literal translation of the word "minister", holding their office only temporarily – the time period being determined by the people.

Then there are citizens who have much more money than others, who are "prominent", who are setting the tone in the media etc. etc. But also these people are under nearly the same rules as the politicians holding public offices. The only exception is that they are legally not bound to the will of the people. But even regarding property, Article 14 of the "Grundgesetz" stipulates that "its usage [...] should also serve the general well-being".

It can be demonstrated for the current Germany that this small group is personally well linked, is meeting frequently, at festivities or rounds of talks – also internationally – where decisions, including those regarding political and economic questions, are discussed and decided beforehand.

Unconstitutional power structures

We have become used to this "fact" – unfortunately, because a structure of power and decisions emerged acting outside the law, outside division of powers and control of powers and outside the constitutional framework ... unconstitutional. And if more and more citizens are under the impression that those they have elected are more and more often committed to other

"It is interesting who in the past weeks praised Mrs. Merkel again, after in the years before she was already supported by a giant wave of mass medial adulation, especially from the German Springer press and the Bertelsmann media group. Therefore, one may ask what interests, which ideologies, and which powers are represented by these media groups. What is certain is that all these media have fully supported the war policy of the United States since the nineties – and therefore the word of the 'last defender of the free world' has also to be understood in a military sense; that it is about wars - also against Russia."

ideas and other interests than those of the voters, then this is not an "emotion" but a "fact". But digesting unpleasant facts may justifiably lead to emotions – we are but humans, after all.

How can we explain that central political decisions like the introduction of the Euro, the accumulation of power in the EU institutions, Bundeswehr missions abroad, or the chancellor's migration politics have been made against a majority of the citizens and that even these decisions excluding the people have been whitewashed as "leadership" – ignoring the fact that Germany has had a "leader" before?

Can the interests and goals of the circles, to which many of "the high and mighty" are committed more than to those of the majority of the people, be characterized in detail? We can investigate the decisions and try to find out who was benefiting and who not. And we can try to associate the decisions with ideologies.

Fringe group strategy

One example: After World War II, Herbert Marcuse, probably the most radical representative of the Freudo-Marxist "Frankfurter Schule" had postulated that under the circumstances of his time it would be next to impossible to activate the classical working class as revolutionary subject. The working class was too strongly manipulated by the authoritarian, anti-pleasure institution of family, by school and media and corrupted by consumption. But with openly "underprivileged" and "suppressed" fringe groups like women, non-heterosexual persons, drug "consumers", foreigners and so on there was a difference. These were able to unfold their revolutionary potential. Later, parts of the "left" were following the strategy of "emancipation" of fringe groups, hoping for radical changes in society by the emancipation processes. Today, in 2016, this ideology can look back on many successes, from the EU's "human rights" ideas to the Federal Chancellery.

Globalization and free trade

A second example: Globalization and free trade. The German politics and the Ger-

man industry striving for economic hegemony are doing all to achieve an ever bigger export surplus, to recruit "specialists" from all over the world and to globally implement the four freedoms of the EU domestic market: free trade with goods and services, free movement of capital, free movement of persons. One is proud to be "export world champion", takes a stand for TTIP and CETA and urges to convert Germany more and more into an "immigration country". The problems connected with this politics are not discussed. For example the effect of the enticement of specialists for their countries: these people would be needed for economic (re-) advancement of their countries. Or that a permanent export surplus means, for other countries, to be forced to live with trade deficits. The stability law of 1967, still effective, has set the goals of price stability, high employment, steady and appropriate economic growth and foreign economic equilibrium (magic square) for German politics. Article 109 of the "Grundgesetz" even constitutionally binds the budget economy of states and federation to the goal of an economic equilibrium.

The ECB is flooding money

None less problematic is the European Central Bank's monetary policy supported by German politics – against the will of the "Deutsche Bundesbank". For quite a while now the ECB has been flooding the money markets. The latest ECB decision to keep interests at the lowest level and to extend the buy-up of bonds beyond the previous deadline has brought applause mainly from one institution: the stock market. The market in speculative money is already heated irresponsibly. Warnings about this kind of monetary policy are becoming louder, but the policy is left unchanged. Who will pay for the next crash? Who will be taking responsibility for it?

In addition: Especially in Germany, many middle class people have accumulated savings in order to achieve a humble return with fixed interests. Stock trading is alien to most Germans. The ECB's zero

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"Germany in transition"

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interest policy is directed against these savers. Their return is close to zero and again the middle class has to take the rap for a dubious policy.

More and more people in the low-paid sector

The official figures regarding the situation of the German economy and the extent of unemployment are misleading. The fraction of people in the country threatened by poverty is not decreasing. On the contrary: the official figures are showing growing numbers year per year. Many working people still need state subsidies in addition to their wages. The number of people in the low-paid sector has grown and is to grow further. And it is not clear how these people will care for their retirement.

The role of Angela Merkel

After the elections in the USA, the "New York Times", most famous US mainstream newspaper, wrote that German Chancellor *Angela Merkel* was "the last defender of the free world." Outgoing US President *Obama* mainly came to Germany to politically court Mrs. Merkel and to enthronise her. Even the Swiss *NZZ am Sonntag*, on 20 November 2016, in a two-page comment decided Angela Merkel to be "the last of her kind", and specified: "In Europe, the populists are marching, in the USA *Trump* will reign soon, and Great Britain is focused on itself. Right in the middle Angela Merkel remains the last defender of the liberal Western world. After eleven years of chancellorship she nowadays seems to be more important than ever.

It is interesting who in the past weeks praised Mrs. Merkel again, after in the years before she was already supported by a giant wave of mass medial adulation, especially from the German Springer press and the Bertelsmann media group. Therefore, one may ask what interests, which ideologies, and which powers are represented by these media groups. What is certain is that all these media have fully supported the war policy of the United States since the nineties – and therefore the word of the "last defender of the free world" has also to be understood in a military sense; that it is about wars – also against Russia.

Again and again: stereotyping Russia as enemy

As the complaint about the "post-factual" citizenship guided by "populists" mentions in one breath the supposed forces in the background: They are supposed to sit in the Kremlin in Moscow. The Russian government is said to be the main enemy

of the "free world", even more dangerous than IS and terrorism. Therefore one must conclude: "defense of the free world" means in plain English "war against Russia". And if you look more closely and explore the positions towards Russia represented by those who are to be postmarked as "populists" you are in for a surprise: Nearly everybody among them does not want war against Russia, but cooperation and a feeling of togetherness for the benefit of both sides.

The search of those "on the top" for Trojan horses in Russian politics has increased in intensity and absurdity, and one remembers the times of *McCarthy* in the late forties and the fifties of the last century when communists and friends of communists were smelled in all critics of US politics. Now US think tanks, US intelligence agencies and US policy have ensured that this perspective is to be taken over in the entire "free world" – especially in Germany. On 14 November 2016, the US "Atlantic Council" issued a "study" entitled "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses" and published a new list of the Trojan horses piloted by Russia. On the German list ("Key pro-Russian actors in Germany"), alongside *Pegida* and the political magazine *Compact*, are the *Alternative für Deutschland*, the party *Die Linke*, the *Deutsch-Russisches-Forum*, the *Petersburger Dialog* and also the SPD Members such as *Matthias Platzeck*, *Gerhard Schröder* and *Sigmar Gabriel*, even on the list is CDU politician *Ronald Pofalla* – so even persons, who belong to "those at the top". Angela Merkel is not on the list.

The bow is overstretched

But the bow is overstretched. All clamour and shouting will no longer help. Keeping the number of the transition's "victims" as small as possible that is the purpose. Even in (non-German) European mainstream media, the critical voices increase. On 6 December 2016, the German edition of the Russian website *Sputniknews* – in German mainstream media such things are not mentioned so far – reported on an article in the Danish highest-distributed newspaper "Politiken", requesting to come to an end of "Russophobia". There can be no security in Europe as long as the West cuts back the interests of Russia. Literally, the article says: "There is one thing the world really does not need, and this is a

new 'Cold War'". There must be an end to the bad habit to stigmatise all those as "Putin's Trojans", who do not want to take part in the panic-stricken agitation against Moscow. In the Western media, "every Russophobe" would get a column, "if his article was only malicious enough." "But no one believes the comments on Russian aggression. The debates about Russia recall the assertion that the earth is a disc. Nobody makes the effort to look out of the box, in order to ascertain the causes of bad relations.

And it is to be read that the West has made many mistakes against Russia: the boast about the victory in the Cold War against the USSR, the extension of NATO contingent to the Russian borders, the declaration of Russia as a third class country, such as the attempt to involve the Ukraine and other countries close to Russia into NATO.

Germany ahead of the elections

In 2017, there are important regional elections in Germany as well as the elections to the German "Bundestag. In fact, Germany is faced with the choice to devote its policy, its economic life and its social life to the probably even armed "defense of the free world" in an outdated unipolar world order under German leadership ... or to the German constitution, to international law and the pursuit of cohabitation beneficial to all sides in a multipolar world.

It is one of the facts of today's world that there are many states and peoples in the world who are no longer willing to dance to the tune of foreign Western powers. The European Union, too, will not be viable in its current form.

The cultural attack of the past decades has caused too many victims and is now provoking more and more opposition.

But the "empire" remains defiant. Now Germany is to pull the coals out of the fire. Should it do so, it will burn its fingers.

One means of imperial power is polarization, stirring up the citizenship against each other or against "those at the top" in such a way that it comes to violence. This has to be prevented. This requires wise ways of transition. They are to be found also in Germany, when people face each other honestly and in equality, determined and clear to the point ... and humanely in their contacts. •

"In fact, Germany is faced with the choice to devote its policy, its economic life and its social life to the probably even armed 'defense of the free world' in an outdated unipolar world order under German leadership ... or to the German constitution, to international law and the pursuit of cohabitation beneficial to all sides in a multipolar world."

Letter to  the Editor

Family in GDR

You have raised a topic that is emotionally touching and worrying to me – the family in the German Democratic Republic, GDR. I was born in the GDR in the late 1950s and lived there until the end of this state.

With all respect for the reader, who last wrote a critical letter to the editor about family in the GDR, he left the GDR at the age of 9 years. In childhood one does not have a complete overview of the political and social situation. Additionally, you always had a critical view, in case for just that reason you had to justify the abandonment of the GDR. Contacts or visits can not replace the permanent life in the GDR environment and do not give a full picture.

My father had three brothers and sisters, who all went to the Bundesrepublik Deutschland, BRD after the war (most of my mother's relatives also went there). My parents were refugees from Silesia respectively Hinterpommern. My father deliberately decided to stay in the GDR. Due to the loss of his homeland and the experience of war he hated the Nazis and observed that many former high ranking Nazis could continue their life in the BRD. In GDR meanwhile this was not usual, lawyers and teachers, university teachers, etc, who had been in the Nazi Party, were dismissed. There was a radical fracture with the Nazi era and my father liked that. (Now some may scream – yes, but there were exceptions, especially in the military – but these were exceptions.)

Surely, in the GDR there were ideological guidelines and at school children were educated in the spirit of the state. But still many ideas weren't bad. For example we were almost overwhelmed by a consistent peace education, and already in the kindergarten and later at school we sang a lot of peace songs, again and again. I still did a premilitary training and had to visit a civil defense camp for 3 weeks during my studies. It always was a matter of defense, we were never instigated, certainly not in the aggressive sense, or even for a war of aggression. Anyone who says the opposite is lying. I am very grateful to the GDR up to this day. As students we visited twice a concentration camp and saw many antiwar films and read books on the antifascist resistance, etc. That was good so.

But in addition, there was something that did not exist in the West at least since 1968 – despite the Nazipast we were educated in the sense of a strong love for our homeland. This was exaggerated in

the GDR, for example through doping in sports. The GDR leadership wanted everyone to be proud of his country.

In the West there was no consistent anti-fascist attitude after 1945, much was kept under cover. That is why there was the strong eruptive 1968 movement in the West, which, in addition to many legitimate changes, unfortunately pushed beyond the target and neglected or even abolished many good and important values. That is the most important difference, I think.

Never in my life I was as happy as in the GDR. My childhood was very happy and still today I am grateful to my father giving me the opportunity to experience the GDR and not to grow up in the BRD. Of course the family was promoted – everyone who wanted got a place in a kindergarten. Mothers could also work and thus most of them wanted to. The most important thing: There wasn't any existential fear, no one got homeless, no one got hungry, nobody had to get unemployed. These were important prerequisites for the happiness of my childhood, because my parents did not know all these fears – our family lived completely carefree.

Unfortunately, I cannot confirm this for today. After the turnaround unemployment, meanwhile part-time work, came. You earned so little money that one just got lucky. The worst thing – today fear is growing that a war could break out again. The permanent Russia-baiting is intolerable. There are so many lies, therefore I read *Zeit-Fragen*.

To avoid misunderstandings – I can also see the critical aspects of the GDR, and it has probably vanished for good reasons. As we had many relatives in the West, I immediately experienced the difficult aspects of the GDR family policy. For example, my father only got three days off to attend the funeral of his sister. As she lived in Saarbrücken (West-Germany) and we on the Baltic Sea coast, which meant a long trip, only one day remained for the actual occasion. The mother of my father wrote to the GDR state secretary in order to visit her son. Later there were travel facilitations. Those were difficulties enough for the family. However, one must not forget that the young GDR still wanted unity.

It was *Konrad Adenauer*, who in any case clung to the ties to the West. If Germany had decided to stay neutral, we would not have been divided, and the

Russians had retreated. Unfortunately this did not happen.

As a child in the GDR you had a high appreciation, we had a very good education, people from Finland came to the GDR to take a look at this system (probably the good Finnish school system of today dates back to these visits). We had free education also at university, cheap good books, many good films (the fairy tale films from the GDR are still popular today), many sports and culture events, affordable for everyone. After the turnaround we had to realise at first an astonishing hostility concerning children in West Germany. By temporary employment contracts or unemployment, by existential fears one often prevents the fulfillment of a child's wish. In short, black-and-white thinking is not appropriate.

Conclusion: In the GDR many traditional values such as the family were respected and supported (including state-owned marriage loans, which did not have to be repaid at the birth of a child) – in the West traditional values were threatened by the system (high crime, threatening job loss, higher social pressure) by values such as unrestrained self-determination and individuality, little common sense and family spirit, much social insecurity, danger of wars, and massive immigration of the family (by the way, by the superfluous gender delusion).

People who have lived there, can judge GDR best. During the GDR period, I was often very critical concerning the state system of GDR, but today I'm often worried about unilateral and distorted presentations. The "coronation" was a claim in "Kulturzeit", which claimed that racism and antisemitism were rampant in the GDR. This was really outrageous and does not correspond to the facts at all. But that is another issue.

Perhaps this too: In the GDR, the one-sided representation of the events in the media disturbed me later or even that of the historical picture. But now I see that our actual current state hardly makes any difference. Earlier in the GDR, you additionally could inform yourself by "Western Medias", today on the Internet or from time to time via broadcasts after 11 pm too.

M. Wenk

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Language is more than just communicating

by Dr Eliane Perret, special education teacher and psychologist

In the discussion about early foreign language teaching, one important topic is often lost: What about the knowledge of German? Are our young people prepared for entering their professional life and for their rights and obligations as citizens of Switzerland – a country that gives them a great say by direct democracy?

Unable to read and write

In 2003, Switzerland, under the leadership of the *Federal Statistical Office* (FSO), participated in an international study by the European *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD).¹ In this framework, the basic competencies in the areas of reading and everyday mathematics² were collected. 5,200 persons between 16 and 65 years of age took part in the study. It was amazing when the results of the study became known in 2006: It was estimated that in Switzerland about 800,000 adults between 16 and 65 years of age have a lot of difficulty with reading and writing and they cannot understand and/or cannot write simple texts. Almost half of them were born in Switzerland and completed compulsory schooling. 71 per cent specify the respective country language as their main language. In addition, the study found that about 8 per cent (about 430,000 Swiss inhabitants) have big problems with solving simple arithmetic problems.³ If you think of the role that these skills play in your everyday life, you can imagine what this means for the fate of each individual concerned.⁴ Moreover, the question arises what this means for our national economy.⁵

The dual vocational training system is undermined

The problem of insufficient language skills becomes particularly apparent in apprenticeship, secondary schools and in universities and colleges.⁶ Teachers seldom complain that their apprentices are not able to speak English, but that they have – in addition to an often problematic attitude towards work – a lack of basic knowledge in German and mathematics. This is all the more important since about 60 per cent of all professions do not require a second national language or English⁷, while oral and written German language skills belong to the professional vocation of most professions and are prerequisites for further education. Already today, up to 30 per cent of all apprenticeships are terminated prematurely.⁸ To put it plainly, this means that our dual vocational system is gradually eroded – unless we do something about it. It would be ur-

gently necessary to examine the extent to which the permanent school reforms of the last decades have focused too little on grammar and orthography in German language teaching. These miserable conditions will not improve with Curriculum 21, but on the contrary will solidify.⁹

First clarify

For some time now, a foreign language debate has been taking place, which occupies a lot of space in the media. The question is, when which foreign language should be learned. The Federal Council even threatens to impose two foreign languages in primary school, thus breaking the cantonal educational sovereignty. First of all, however, it would be necessary to clarify why so many young people end their school years without sufficient knowledge of German and thus not only have bad cards for vocational training but also bad conditions for foreign language acquisition. At least that should be the result of the study mentioned. It should also be clarified why more and more small children are known to have developed so called language retardations and need speech-language therapeutic support already during a young age. Looking carefully for the reasons for this lack of linguistic rootedness is therefore a first prerequisite for a genuine improvement of this situation. Answers can be found in the many research results on language acquisition and the importance of mother tongue.

Mother tongue – key to education

In recent years, various studies have shown that a solid basis in the mother tongue (= first language or L1)¹⁰ is fundamental to the acquisition of additional languages. Everyone who is fit in his mother tongue and has a differentiated vocabulary is better off, because at school content is mostly linguistically conveyed and tasks are formulated in words. To meet the requirements, it needs solid knowledge of language.

We are not born with our mother tongue, but even at an early age, parents can make a decisive contribution to whether a child masters the language. For example, it plays an important role in the development of language, whether a child has a secure attachment to its caring persons.¹¹ In recent years, several studies have been investigating why one child already knows much more words at young age than others. An often quoted American study of 1995 concluded that children from wealthy and educated families had already heard 30 million words more at the age

of three years than their peers from poorer families. Some of the children already mastered 1,100 words, others 525 words.¹² Neither the social class seems to be decisive here nor is it a matter of covering the children with as many words as possible or of putting them in front of the TV for this purpose. Language is learned within a relationship, in social coexistence. What is important is whether a family is talking with pleasure, enough and differentiated. Thus, children do not only learn grammar, but they learn to think.¹³

Language acquisition – an impressive achievement

In order to show the impressiveness and complexity of this learning process, the most important stations are briefly presented here.¹⁴ A little child does not learn its language simply by copying his environment, but the language acquisition is a complex continuous process. Already in the first months of life, it receives basic information about the structure of its mother tongue by listening to the language of the mother (and the father). Thus, in an unconscious learning process without specific guidance, it captures the structures of the language. In the first year of life, a child acquires many prerequisites for vocabulary acquisition, for example the ability to filter out regularities from the heard sounds and to store them in its speech memory, to try out possible sounds by using the language tools and to build up relationships between words and the subject world. This is all the more astonishing as it is not yet capable of comparable tasks in other areas of thought at this age.

When saying its first words – usually it is “Mama”, “Papa” or “no” – around its first birthday – the surroundings react with great pleasure. It is now slowly increasing its vocabulary of communication and understanding (= productive and prescriptive vocabulary). In the third year of life when it speaks about 50 words, a veritable word treasure spurt begins. The child learns to speak several words every day and extends its vocabulary by up to ten words a day. At three years of age, its vocabulary of communication includes 800 to 1000 words. In the fourth year of life, focus is put on the further development of grammar. At about the age of four, the children have acquired most linguistic components they need. Even if they are able to speak without interruption and to master the sentence patterns of their mother tongue in principle between four and five years, the language development has not come to an end yet.

"Language is more ..."

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While this process has been carried out unconsciously so far, an increasingly conscious learning process is starting now. The language is becoming more differentiated and richer in all its facets. At the age of 16, a young person should have a basic vocabulary of around 60,000 words. This is an impressive achievement and means, for example, to learn about nine additional words every day!

Language – a bridge to the fellow human beings

However, language acquisition is not simply an intellectual achievement, but it is most decisively linked to the relationship to the fellow human beings. Our language connects us with our fellow human beings. We can express our thoughts, feelings and intentions linguistically and communicate them to others. It is important for a person's quality of life and way of life to speak the language and to be able to employ the language. Therefore language and language skills are important for the entire personality development and they depend on many psychological aspects. For this reason, the psychology, starting from a personal image of man, began to deal with these questions early on. In the first half of the last century, for example, the Viennese psychologist *Alfred Adler* pointed out the importance of language as a dialogical link between people: "*The development of man's language [...] requires this contact between human and human. It has emerged from this intimate bond and, moreover, it is also a new bond between the individual and others.*"¹⁵ It is not possible for a child to learn a language (even if it has the necessary biological requirements) without a language environment. It needs fellow human beings. In most cases the mother is the child's first "conversation partner". She takes up the dialogue with the child and keeps it up alone for the time being. She builds a bridge to the child and creates a first common world of experience together with the child. She needs empathy and intuition to do so and to interpret and respond to its behaviour. In this way, the child learns developing concepts and rules itself and thus creating the basis for its language acquisition. For the mother, it is not primarily about *teaching the language* to the child, but the positive emotional relationship with the child makes a *mutual understanding* possible. For the first time the child learns to differentiate social roles, for example as the father speaks in a different way to the child than the mother. Also, the child begins to become increasingly rooted in its cul-

ture and to identify with it by the language. It is only in the third and fourth year of life that the mother takes the role of a "teacher of language". She repeats, for example, the sentences of the child in the correct form without directly correcting it. Thus she offers the opportunity to transform the already existing sentence patterns into correct ones. It is the interpersonal relationship that makes the language acquisition possible, which can never be replaced by media.

The mother tongue – emotional home

The mother tongue is important for language acquisition and personal development of a person. It is more than simply a language because it is involved in the relationship to one or more people who should give the child an emotional home. Therefore, mastering the mother tongue in all its subtleties means more than simply to perceive it in its communicative function. It is part of the speaker's personal history. The mother tongue requires special care and should be mastered well and differentiated by every human being. It must have an outstanding significance in the education process of children. In our schools, however, for many children German is not the mother tongue. Today we have many children who speak a different language at home. We easily forget how multi-lingual Swiss schools are – more and more different cultures and nations meet in the classrooms. In the compulsory school (pre-school to secondary level), the share of foreign children was 24.4 per cent in the school year 2012/2013 according to the *Federal Statistical Office (FSO)*. The number of pupils without a Swiss passport is growing steadily, ten years ago it was still 21.7 per cent.¹⁶ This is only an average value, in many places we have school classes consisting of at least half or of almost exclusively foreign-speaking children. This includes children meanwhile having a Swiss passport, but whose mother tongue is not German.

In other words: Spoken and written German must play a central role in school and be endowed with corresponding lesson numbers.

Taking root in culture and language

In connection with early foreign language teaching, it is always pointed out how easily children learn new languages. This applies, however, only to small children, in whose families two different languages are spoken or those who have a family language other than German. But here also rules are applied. The language to be acquired must be tied to certain persons who use their language consistently. This takes a lot of consequence; only then a child will really have the chance to learn two languages without mixing them and

ultimately not being at home in any language.¹⁷

It must not be forgotten that in Switzerland many children learn their native dialect first. The dialects are an essential feature of Swiss culture and impressive in their regional varieties. High German differs from the dialect in vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar. In Switzerland, unlike other German-speaking countries, it is not a sign of lack of education or a low socio-economic status. The dialect brings Swiss children together with their numerous foreign comrades and helps them to feel at home in our country and in our culture and to integrate them. In various national referendums it was stated that the dialect would remain the primary language of instruction in the kindergarten, and that High German should not become the language of instruction.

Native language forms the basis of foreign language acquisition

As multiple studies have shown, solid knowledge of one's mother tongue would be essential to successful foreign language acquisition. *Mario Andreotti*, professor of Linguistics and author, recently noted on the subject: "*Those able to present arguments, to understand texts and to structure essays in their native language, are able to transfer that advantage to their use of foreign languages.*"¹⁸ This was in response to the claims made by Prof *Simone Pfenninger*, who was able to prove that the often used phrase "The earlier, the better!" is only true if a child moves to a new country or if it is raised bilingually by its parents and if the foreign language learning within its natural social environment isn't comparable to the one taught in school. Accordingly, in her study that was conducted independently from teaching material publishing houses, the successes of early language learning were relativised significantly. Regrettably, those responsible for publishing Pfenninger's study results buried them until now¹⁹. Unfortunately, it is not the first time within this language discussion that critical voices are mocked and less favourable results are ignored. As early as 1997, *Ernst Buschor* and his lobby decided to start with mandatory English lessons in the second grade of elementary school. The decision was made after a one-day-visit to the United States.²⁰ He overturned the course of language lessons had been in place for the Canton of Zurich, and prevented a joint approach by all cantons. The following attempt to introduce English into the schools drew poor results. *Various independent studies pointed to the false assumptions surrounding early foreign language learning in schools.*²¹

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About the value of reading

by Renate Diünki

cc. Why do we actually need a new reading book? Compile and publish a reading book while there are already so many others? What is it all about? Is it about further training of readiness? Is it about better distinguishing between true and false contents? Is it about ... media competency?

The new reading book that we are presenting now, "Mein liebstes Lesebuch. Geschichten, Rätsel und Verse für die zweite Klasse" (My favourite reading book. Stories, riddles and verses for the second grade) – addressed to teachers as well as to the family – sets its accents differently. It addresses the emotional attachment among each other and a close connection with nature. To create a reading book requires comprehensive knowledge on how to raise the motivation to read during the

first school years, which developmental-psychological steps are appropriate to which age, which methodological-didactic steps are useful, and much more. The authors of the new reading book as experienced pedagogues succeed in bringing together modern and traditional reading-book didactic approaches in a meaningful and competent way. Thus a reading book is available again that starts from where the child is and introduces it into our complex world without losing sight of suitability for children or today's social context.

Reading has a much more comprehensive value than the currently much-cited media-competency. It is not just about the ticking of right or wrong information out of texts (PISA). Reading means to address the whole person, to see his point of view within the family or the community.

It is about the education of young people. Thus, it is also seen in a broader sense: "The promotion of the general popular education and of republican civic education is a matter of the state" (Zurich Cantonal Constitution, Art. 62, ed. 1971). The primary and secondary school is "a place of general humanistic education [...]. True humanistic education, however, does not manifest itself exclusively in knowledge and ability; their characteristic feature lies in the harmony of a more sincere inner life and behaviour, always oriented towards the good of the whole and never needs to shun the light." (Curriculum for the primary and secondary school of the Canton of Zurich, purpose article, version 1971)

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Yet, in spite of those facts, early English and early French learning were introduced comprehensively and with tremendous financial efforts. This particular approach neglects the importance of one's native language as a foundation for learning a foreign language.

Political consequences – direct democracy and mother tongue

Switzerland's direct democracy is a political system that is widely admired in other countries because Swiss citizens get a greater say. However, it also requires a lot of them. They have to work through partially complex voting papers, read up on the arguments to the subject matter and be able to appropriately weigh the pros and cons to an issue. Therefore, elaborate language proficiency far exceeding application-based language proficiency (e.g. like those necessary for PISA tests) is required. The citizens also have to be able to see through linguistic manipulation attempts and propaganda techniques and to correctly evaluate empty figures of speech that are often used by lobbyists. Being rooted in one's own mother tongue is essential to this process of forming an opinion and to making it count on a voting ballot – especially when deciding on the role the German language is to play in our primary schools. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

¹ *International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey* (ALL)

² Reading of coherent texts, reading of schematics/diagrammes, general computational competences, and problem-solving skills

³ In 2003 and 2006, two surveys were conducted in Switzerland within the framework of the ALL (*International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey*) study in Switzerland. The publications of the results for Switzerland have been published by the Federal Statistical Office and are available on the portal. www.lesenlireleggere.ch/bfs_seite.cfm, downloaded on 20 December 2016

⁴ cf. Fuhrer, Kilian. *Der Falschschreiber. Mein Umgang mit dem Buchstabensalat*. 2011. ISBN 978-3-033-02742-8

⁵ cf. Büro für Arbeits- und sozialpolitische Studien BASS AG (Ed.). *Volkswirtschaftliche Kosten der Leseschwäche in der Schweiz. Eine Auswertung der Daten des Adult Literacy & Life Skills Survey (ALL)*. Bern 2007. www.buerobass.ch/pdf/2007/leseschwaeche_zusammenfassung_d.pdf, downloaded on 20 October 2016

⁶ cf. ETH beklagt tiefes Schulniveau. In: *20 Minuten* of 29 July 2012. www.20min.ch/schweiz/news/story/22971787, downloaded on 23 October 2016

⁷ cf. Donzé, René. Das sind die schwierigsten Berufslehren der Schweiz. In: *NZZ am Sonntag* of 5 April 2015. www.schuleschweiz.blogspot.ch/2015/04/berufslehren-im-vergleich.html, downloaded on 23 October 2016

⁸ idem

⁹ cf. "Keine taugliche Vorbereitung auf die Berufslernlehre mit dem Lehrplan 21". Leaflet of the interest community "Eine Schule für unsere Kinder". www.eineschulefuerunsereKinder.ch/data/documents/150707-Flyer2-mw-LP21-Berufsbildung_Flyer.pdf, downloaded on 20 October 2016

¹⁰ In the following, the term "mother tongue" is used because it includes the aspect of relationship. In addition to the mother, other early reference persons are, of course, included.

¹¹ cf. Korntheuer, P.; Lissmann, I. & Lohaus, A. (2010). Bindungssicherheit und die Entwicklung von Sprache und Kognition. In: *Psychologie in Erziehung und Unterricht*, 57, 1, 1–20

¹² cf. Hart, B.; Risley, T.R. "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3." Spring 2003. www.isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1317532.files/09-10/Hart-Risley-2003.pdf, downloaded on 20 October 2016

¹³ cf. Streeck, Nina. Reden ist Gold. In: *NZZ am Sonntag* of 19 April 2015

¹⁴ The following statements are mainly based on: Geissmann, Hilda. Welche Bedeutung hat der frühe Wortschatz für den Spracherwerb? In: *SAL-Bulletin*. No.140, June 2011, pp.19

Schneider, Wolfgang; Ulman, Lindenberger (Ed.) *Entwicklungspsychologie*. Weinheim-Basel 2012. ISBN 978-3-621-27768-6

¹⁵ Adler, Alfred. *Wozu leben wir?* (1931). Frankfurt am Main 1976, p.42

¹⁶ Widmer, Michèle. Wo es die meisten fremdsprachigen Schüler gibt. In: "Tages-Anzeiger" of 26 May 2015. www.blog.tagesanzeiger.ch/datenblog/index.php/6789/wo-es-die-meisten-fremdsprachigen-schueler-gibt, downloaded on 30 October 2016

¹⁷ Schweizerische Hochschule für Logopädie. Mein Kind lernt mehr als eine Sprache. Kindlicher Spracherwerb. (flyer) www.shlr.ch/media/downloads_sal/broschüre%20mehrsprachig%202012%20web.pdf, downloaded on 30 October 2016

¹⁸ Andreotti, Mario. Frühenglisch ein schulischer Leerlauf. In: *St. Galler Tagblatt* of 21 September 2016

¹⁹ cf. Burri, Anja. Wenn Forschungsergebnisse den Politikern missfallen. In: *NZZ am Sonntag* of 18 September 2016

²⁰ cf. Liebe, Gisela. What are the reasons for English at an early stage in Switzerland? In: *Current Concerns* of 16 August 2016

²¹ The Zurich Board of Education commissioned an advisory report from Prof Dr Otto Stern from Zurich University of Teacher Education that was meant to preemptively counter critical arguments against the introduction of early English acquisition. The advisory report by Prof Stern was questioned by his expert colleagues for being an insider's advisory report "from the public sector for the public sector". Prof Dr Rudolf Wachter, comparative linguist at the University of Basel, wrote up a counter report refuting Stern's arguments.

Why a reading book?

Epilogue for family and school

by Rita Brügger, Renate Dünki, Ursi Felber*

Reading motivation ... already before school

A child from the neighbourhood is proud to go to school finally. *Julia* has hardly expected to attend the first grade and to be able to read a book by herself soon. She can already recite by heart or join in saying many poems and stories. She enjoys playing language games and lets her plush toys celebrate her birthday as the kitten Pitschi and its friends do in *Hans Fischer's* famous children's book ("Der Geburtstag"). *Julia* can laugh and marvel at the stories that the parents read aloud.

... and at school

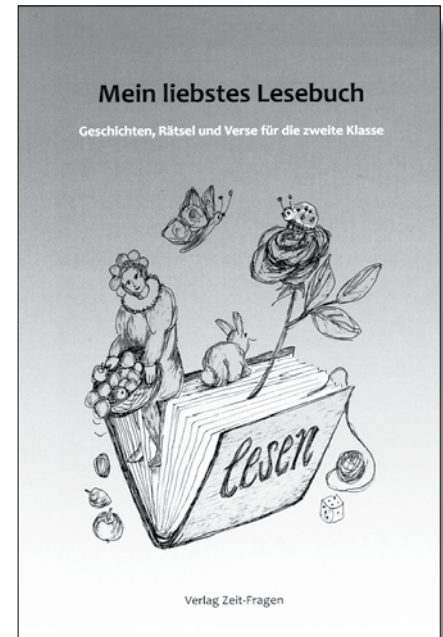
How can school help to take up this joy of language and strengthen it? It is tied to the fine-tuned relationship between adult and child and to its rich, endearing reading offer from the child's environment. Children need a reading offer that links up with their world of experience and expands it in a positive sense, which conveys a generally comprehensible, high-class language and enriches emotional life.

Such a reading experience is dependent on conversation and exchange about what is read. This conveys a sense of reading, without that a dedicated independent reading is not built up in later years. Conversation and exchange about

a text are challenging tasks. They can be solved at school only within the benevolent climate of a classroom community. They need attentive reading and listening, thinking and compassion and the courage to express themselves in the presence of others.

Also written language needs a counterpart! Talking about stories and experiences from the reading book, the children recover their own experiences. They learn to exchange ideas, feel sympathy and develop or deepen their own values. Thus, a reading text and the conversation can address each individual child and enrich its world of ideas. In doing so, they contribute to strengthen and to encourage each of the personalities in an interaction with the class community.

Reading together a text thus receives its deepened meaning in which it contributes to convey or to consolidate the values addressed in the class community. Such a reading offer is important: The reading book, with its carefully selected content, is intended to guide the children beyond the basic impressions in the family to the larger community in school, professional world or commune – as has been the task of the primary school since the beginning of our federal state and for which we send our children to the public school.



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* The text corresponds to the epilogue of the new reading book "Mein liebstes Lesebuch. Geschichten, Rätsel und Verse für die zweite Klasse", Zürich 2016, published by "Zeit-Fragen"

"Language is more ..."

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This comprehensive goal of education also corresponds with the formulations of today's cantonal law of primary and secondary school. They are emphasising the educational and upbringing task of the primary and secondary school. How can the school convey values of a peaceful coexistence in a democracy, if not in the classroom?

"The primary and secondary school educates to a behaviour which is based on Christian, humanitarian and democratic values. Doing so, it preserves freedom of belief and conscience [...]. The primary and secondary school encourages respect for others and for the environment, and strives for a holistic development of the children to independent and socially qualified people [...]. It promotes in particular, willingness to take responsibility, willingness to perform, capability of judgement and criticism, as well as dia-

logue capability." (Law of primary and secondary school, Canton of Zurich, § 2, 2005) The primary and secondary school educates children "to responsible human beings and citizens according to the principles of democracy, freedom, and social justice within the framework of a constitutional state." (Law of primary and secondary school, Canton of St. Gallen, Art. 3, 1983)

Teachers therefore have a great responsibility towards the children and parents, but also to society. At lower grades from the beginning of school, it is already their task to select texts that support and promote basic values of our democracy with empathy, affinity, respect, and sense of responsibility. Parents have a right to be able to rely on this educational tradition of the primary and secondary school for their children, and the obligation to demand it.

A reading book emerges

A working group of experienced primary teachers and teachers for children with

special needs has decided to consider these educational goals in their reading book. The work group has sighted fields of topics from existing reading books of different cantons, attuned them to today's world if necessary, or seized as a suggestion. The contents of the reading book focus on the value of coexistence in the family, school, and commune. The children receive a book, which can be a basis for common reading and the dialogue in the class or the family, which also provides enough reading material, and allows teachers and parents a choice. It is supposed to be a book for keeping and loving, away from texts that are forgotten in two or three weeks or have not ever been really understood.

In this spirit, we would like to wish you a lot of pleasure in the newly discovered respectively adapted or newly written treasures of this reading book for the first reading.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Being “fellow sufferer”

by Moritz Nestor, psychologist

Regarding the urgent social problems, education policy is doing well to occasionally reassess its preferences – a claim that has somewhat been reactivated for quite some time. For example, Erika Vögeli, in her editorial of 15 March 2010, rightly demanded a fundamental return to a pedagogical approach understanding the emerging human being as a personal being. In the same sense, psychology and psychotherapy would also do well to fundamentally return to the developing human person.

In some of our today's excellently qualified institutions for people who are mentally suffering, the therapist is available once a week for 10 minutes. Cost consciousness is supposed to guarantee the institution's quality. The mentally suffering person, already sinking into solitude, has to wait for ten minutes during six days, and then wait again.

But we need (again) therapeutic procedures which do not understand the psychologically suffering as a “case of something”, as a disturbed brain function or “partial performance disorder”, but as a mentally suffering fellow human being. We need (again) more therapists who do not want to be “technicians” for body or soul “parts”, but who understand the suffering of the soul as an expression of an entire personality suffering in its culture and its historical period. Being a psychologist, must mean again being able to considerately think, feel, and act.

A mother resists her child's psychiatrising

11-year-old Jenny came to me as “nervous fidgeter”. During the previous year at school she had done poorer and poorer, and in the preliminary clarifications was diagnosed concentration disorder with a low intellectual ability against the background of a POS in question. The mother was advised to consult a psychiatrist. “There she will only get pills. From that, she will not be more intelligent. I do not give up on my child,” she rebelled. Through the intervention of her adviser, Jenny came to me.

Jenny, at the heart of her personality, was deeply convinced that she was not able to memorise because she was “stupid”. She put aside tasks that she was not able to solve immediately, and found a thousand-and-one rationalisation as an excuse for it. She was emotionally not able to tolerate (real or imaginative) inability: The material was stupid, one would not need such stuff for life and similar more. She lacked courage, her self-esteem wa-

But we need (again) therapeutic procedures which do not understand the psychologically suffering as a “case of something”, as a disturbed brain function or “partial performance disorder”, but as a mentally suffering fellow human being. We need (again) more therapists who do not want to be “technicians” for body or soul “parts”, but who understand the suffering of the soul as an expression of an entire personality suffering in its culture and its historical period. Being a psychologist, must mean again being able to considerately think, feel, and act.

vered. On the other hand, she had developed a remarkable neurotic compensation for her supposed weakness. She could moan heartbreakingly and belittle herself as if she was 2 or 3, but not 11, until the mother, seized by compassion, took the task off her hands. But often the mother did not succeed either, because she too felt deeply stupid. When it was about the things of daily life, she took them off her daughter's hands, but in school matters she soon was at an end.

Her three children (Jenny was the second after Klaus, after her came Fabian) had spent four years in approved homes. The mother, heavily circulating around herself, had been completely overburdened with the educational task, and had not been able to give the children the human support which would have been important for the formation of a stable nucleus of the personality. Now the mother had become mentally more stable, and her children lived with her again. And for her it was out of question to give up on her child and to feed it with pills.

At first everything went well ...

In the first conversation, Jenny, a lively, keen girl, cheerfully and openly looking at you, giggled about on the still too big chair, and declared earnestly and without request: Her problem was that she was not able to memorise. She therefore needed therapy. When I want to know why it does not go well in school with learning, she explains in a highly differentiated, open and upright way what she was lacking: She was a bright child with quick thinking when she entered the first class of the elementary school. No trace of stupidity. She understood the subject well, as she followed the lessons attentively. She did the homework during the lessons, when the others were still thinking about some-

thing. Unintentionally, and without problems at first, she became accustomed to the learning style: Once taking a look and—knowing! But she had no perseverance and little courage.

At home, there were no tasks for Jenny that required perseverance and courage, for the mother did everything for the children and in that way saved them efforts. She wanted to be a “good” mother. She and her husband wanted to offer their children something for being socially equated: a house, electronics, at least once a month a visit to the “Europapark” etc. Already in the middle of the month, the paternal income often was decimated in a way, that one had to tighten one's belt. But then the next salary came soon.

...but when a little more was needed, a delusion took root and acted

Jenny's difficulties began when the amount of Jenny's homework increased, matters became more difficult and harder to memorise. Her lack of stamina, courage and confidence became obvious. It was her idea to be able to do everything at first sight. When she was reading, her mind had rushed to the end of a paragraph while she had not yet understood the meaning of the first sentence. Soon she gave up: I am stupid, my head does not have the same power to grab things like the others; I cannot learn anything by heart.

Sitting in front of me was a girl whose whole personality was characterised by the delusion that she was “stupid”. Her failures at school in the past years were sufficient “proof” for her parents, teachers, psychiatrists and also for herself. But: What a contradiction between Jenny's private logic “I am stupid” and her appearance in my parlour! In dialogue with me,

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"Being 'fellow sufferer'"

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she opened her soul and the psychodramatic background of her difficulties with great emotional and intellectual ease – a great intellectual achievement which I do not hold every 11-year-old capable of! It was obvious that this child was bright.

The first session had offered sufficient opportunities to gain a first insight into Jenny's style of learning and living. Starting from this unconscious mental axiom I wanted to solve her problem. This is why I thought I should surprise her somehow next time! She should be able to feel, sense and experience this contradiction, which was obvious to all outsiders, deeply inside herself: that she was thinking that she was stupid while being able to explain very brightly why she was stupid. I wanted to prevent her from falling into the same trap as so many whose "learned stupidity" merely was that they were unsure and unable to believe in themselves.

Concealing weaknesses – an obstructive but very human "ability"

This is why it was clear that I should avoid touching her tender spot, her feeling of stupidity. This emotional wound was to be protected. Hence, neither an analysis of her "problem" nor any kind of "special treatment" like easing the burden, special schooling etc. She needed to be strengthened from the inside by starting from the healthy parts of her soul, reinforcing them until she would overcome her weakness.

I knew: Jenny was expecting "therapy", some kind of "treatment" of her "stupidity". In the next session she would expect me to make her do her homework. After all, I had asked her to bring her books. And then this silly feeling of stupidity would return and she would fail to understand the text.

Since this utmost emotional horror was imminent in the parlour, she hardly would let her mother go in the waiting room, clinging to her, whining miserably. She was demonstrating her "solution" in Hollywood style: humbling herself, wailing until mummy would relieve her from the horror and this darn feeling of stupidity, which she could not endure, would again be far away. mummy also had to bring her to my office although Jenny was very well able to find her way through traffic!

This is why I laughed friendly, saying: "So this is the clever young lady I have met. I say, you have surprised me, last time, with your quickness!" She had to laugh herself and gave me her hand, beaming. For a second she had dropped all toddler manners. "But why are you now clinging like a little baby, pretending you couldn't say boo?" Now Jenny re-

"A person suffering emotionally often develops a high sensitivity – possibly because of uncertainty, discouragement or feeling offended. This high sensitivity makes him explore very sensitively whether the person before him encounters him in an equal way and tries to understand him in his world – a world where no one is admitted to take a look into – maybe except for the one who stands before him."

membered and started clinging again (albeit with a laughing eye towards me) to her mother: "Mummy, mummy, stay with me". Her pointed lips were looking for her mother's lips. Her mother was pushing Jenny towards me only half-heartedly. Jenny was a champion in triggering feelings of compassion and her wish to be a "good mother", such that Jenny got what she wanted: protection from the monster called stupidity. Her mother's unsureness was Jenny's chance to avoid the horror.

Jenny comes along and has a corrective emotional experience

I was laughing at her with a mixture of indignation and humour: "Jenny, you bring me to tears. Stop playing the wailing girlie. Does not suit you. You are behaving like a silly. Come, let's do something reasonable. You will survive it." And Jenny came along! "And next time you will not need your mummy's hand to hold on in order to come here. You are big enough. See, in a few years you will marry and have children. Then you cannot pretend to be a little baby." – Her mother had told me that Jenny loved to help her little nephew. My white Hungarian Shepard dog, Emil, contributed by playfully luring Jenny into my parlour: saying "bye mummy" she jumped after Emil, forgetting over her enthusiasm about the vivid dog that she had intended to little herself in order to survive what was coming. But the stupidity spectre did not come. I was taking care of that.

"I have had an idea, Jenny: You are going to school every day, don't you?" – "Sure" – "How do you get there?" – "But that is clear" – "But I don't know it and I would like you to explain it to me such that I understand it. In the end I will tell you why I am asking." – She started off, uninhibitedly; I asked for clarifications when something was not quite clear to me, while making a detailed sketch of what she told me on a piece of paper. Not thinking of topics like learning, she went ahead effervescently. This was exactly what I wanted. In the end we had produced, out of her mind, a colourful plan

of her way to school with all the details. (All learnt "by heart"!)

"Look, now we have created a great map of your way to school. You have explained it all in detail. So precise that I have been able to sketch it even though I have never been there. Now please tell me: Why have you been able to explain all this so precisely?" – "Because I have it in my head. I have a picture of it there." – "Exactly, what you do every day, you can see it in your head, don't you?" – She is laughing: "Exactly" – "Well, and how did this picture get into your head?" – "Because I have walked there again and again and because I was alert. I need to arrive. It is necessary to watch and be alert." – "Then you have learnt the walk by heart!" This I say slowly and quietly, looking at her earnestly. She stops short, moved deeply. She has realised the contradiction with her heart and mind. "Have you ever done homework on 'I am learning my way to school by heart'?" – This absurd idea makes her laugh: "No." – "But you have learnt it by heart!" – She is looking at me with big eyes: "Yes. I have." – "Then you can learn by heart! I have seen it with my own eyes!" Oh would it be possible to describe the deep emotion moving this girl!

"How often have you walked there?" – "Very often." She is calculating. – "And how often do you look at what you have to learn for school?" – She stops short again, looking at me quietly for a long time, obviously in thoughts. I am waiting. And then, suddenly, the insight: "Once, but then I put it aside! But of course this is not enough!" – "Yes, Jenny, it is not. But now it is quite simple: What was your thought when learning by heart for school – and not on your way to school?" – I always thought I was silly and stopped practising!" – "Yes, exactly, and what is it now that it takes to learn by heart for school?" – "I should not stop until I am finished." "Yes, just remember our exercise today as soon as the castle ghost called 'stupidity' is back, calling for your attention."

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"Being 'fellow sufferer'"

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She is looking at me, taller by a head: "What time is it?" Time – both of us hadn't realised it – had passed in a flash! She gets up, beaming at me: "I did not know that therapy can be so nice!" – "You know, Jenny, you are not stupid. Your head is perfectly in order. You only think you were stupid. And when you think you were stupid, you just stop. And this idea that you were stupid, you have learnt it by heart, perfectly! You have used your intelligence for the wrong purpose." – Now we both are laughing.

"And on your way to school, you had no idea that you could be stupid. This is why it stuck to your head." – "Sure, otherwise I would never have arrived at school or at home," she blurts. Then she thinks again: "I can", she exults. – "Exactly, and we will practise this together so that you don't stop too early and lose your way anymore, but move on instead. Then you will have the same fun learning like just now." A happy girl returns home with an emotional experience that nobody can take from her.

Jenny goes her own way

After more than a year, Jenny became a student who knows how to learn. Unlike in earlier times she did her work independently. The former problem child had become a little young lady. Instead of complaining to be relieved of her problems by mummy she took the way into life. So one day she explained that now she was trying to find out if she could live without therapy.

Besides the first session there were many other experiences, but it was this first session that enabled an access which opened a new way to the girl.

Jenny's school education and the opportunity to choose a profession in the future were profoundly endangered. Their entire personality was weakened. This had an impact on all other spheres of life. If Jenny had been given drugs and if she had been abandoned to her fate, she would have failed at school, and a working life possibly would have remained closed to her. Even if she had downplayed her failure, she would have suffered from it all her life. And it could have been much worse. We don't know it for sure, but in everyday therapeutic work we see how many tragedies can arise from school failure when other unfavourable factors are added.

"Therefore, it is necessary to emphasise again and again: psychologists, educators and doctors should not tie children to the "chemical leash", just because the whole society does not know how to cope with these products of wrong theories of men and of education and instead aims to hand out our children over to free pharma market. Let us recall the basic substance of personal psychology and pedagogy in family and school: the child is supposed to acquire self-responsibility and humanity under versed guidance – and this means also that it learns how to overcome its behavioural disorders and to grow mentally. This is the core of the human person. This is the only purpose of helping and healing professions."

**Some remarks
on the therapeutic process**

It was the impact of personality, a psychic-mental process between her and me, that helped Jenny. An essential factor is the therapist's attitude. A person suffering emotionally often develops a high sensitivity – possibly because of uncertainty, discouragement or feeling offended. This high sensitivity makes him explore very sensitively whether the person before him encounters him in an equal way and tries to understand him in his world – a world where no one is admitted to take a look into – maybe except for the one who stands before him. Of course, this is not always as easy as in this example. Sometimes it needs a longer period of developing trust in the cooperation between the one seeking advice and the therapist.

Jenny overcame her weakness and she matured. No "part" of her was "repaired", no "competence" was developed, no metabolism was influenced, no "mental organ" was operated, no pill was administered.

At the beginning of this personality development there was a corrective emotional experience (Franz G. Alexander, 1951), which I had planned and brought about. However, I was just the obstetrician of her insights. Jenny experienced this corrective emotional experience actively. Her mental energy and my conviction that it was due to an emotional error that this bright child

did not learn helped her to overcome the feeling that she was stupid. If she had not fulfilled her part actively, my work would have remained ineffective.

Therefore, it is necessary to emphasise again and again: psychologists, educators and doctors should not tie children to the "chemical leash", just because the whole society does not know how to cope with these products of wrong theories of men and of education and instead aims to hand out our children over to free pharma market. Let us recall the basic substance of personal psychology and pedagogy in family and school: the child is supposed to acquire self-responsibility and humanity under versed guidance – and this means also that it learns how to overcome its behavioural disorders and to grow mentally. This is the core of the human person. This is the only purpose of helping and healing professions. As I said, it is not always possible as directly as with Jenny. A great help in this example was the attitude of the parents, who from the beginning had a positive attitude towards my efforts. Sometimes it takes longer to get closer to the core of the problem. However, it is possible and what it can mean for the life of a young person – for this, Jenny is an example. •

Contribution concerning education issues

by Dr phil Elisabeth Nussbaumer, psychologist and Sonja van Biezen, dipl psychologist FH

It had become quiet around the questions of child education, so Dieter Sprock in *Current Concerns* of 8 November 2016. The author continues that many parents turned the natural order upside down and let themselves be directed by their children how things had to be in life and which needs they wanted to have satisfied. It was extremely important for parents and educators to deal with the questions of education, especially in today's complex world in which our children grew up and where they were exposed to most diverse influences. It is certain that every growing child needs parents for his or her personal development, who can provide it with emotional support and orientation for the adolescence within the human community. Theories according to which the children should discover what is important to them and good in life on their own, easily lead to an inner instability and emptiness. In the following, some examples from everyday life shall illustrate what the introductory lines mean.

Children tell the adults what they have to do

Example 1

We are on an evening walk. On the pavement a girl of approximately 5 years approaches us. She is coming towards us quite fast on a small bike. We are still wondering who presumably is to make way now. Right in front of us, she abruptly stops and defiantly looks at us. My companion asks: "What now?" Brooding she says, "You may pass!" With her finger she points us how we are to go (onto the road and) around her. Not a second she reflects that she could let us – the adult – pass. Her mother who is carrying along the little sibling on her bicycle, is watching the event from a distance.

It is obvious, that no one taught this child how to behave. When this important lesson for life is lacking, we must assume that the child also lacks the experience and the certainty that the parents will give him guidance and support to solve the small and serious problems in life. The experience that the adult precedes and tells how to master a certain situation is indispensable for the healthy mental development of children and adolescents. Only this way they are able to make their own useful experiences on their way into life and thereby experience to be backed by their related persons. It is highly likely that the child described in the example has already learned through many experiences to produce its own solutions with its childish ignorance and not to rely on the

adults. We must also assume that this kind of "self-reliance" has developed in relation to parents or one parent, who themselves are victims of a widespread error about the child's development. Many parents think it is right to leave decisions or guidance in certain events to the child. Because, as already stated, all children and young people are dependent on the orientation and guidance through adults, such parents would be advised to meet their children as natural authorities because they have a lot of life experience, which a child cannot yet have.

Demand an appropriate focus directed to you as parents and teachers from your children. Do not hesitate to show your children how jointly to cope with the everyday, small and big problems.

Example 2

Shopping in the supermarket. A mother with a boy of approximately three years cannot be overlooked. He is screaming his head off. He kicks and hits the mother. The boy is beside himself and screams for about half an hour. The mother talks insistently and nervously to the boy, offering him a yoghurt, a glace and a chocolate as appeasement. Nothing works. The boy continues screaming. Passing her shopping cart she rather helplessly tells me: "He's tired."

Many mothers experience such situations daily. They are often afraid of such events and the fact that they are not in a position to soothe their child. Sometimes there is a sense of shame, which results in a distance in relationship to the child. However, the child might as well have already learned something wrong. For example, that it gets its will, if it only cries long enough or acts "dumb". Every child's behaviour is learned from the earliest childhood days. In the first few days and weeks, the crying of a baby can affect the mother strongly mentally and bring her into turmoil. Mothers hear false theories already in the puerperium, such as that all the needs of the baby must always be satisfied. These wrong theories lead to the fact that parents assume there ought to be always harmony between the needs of the children and the parents' demands. This attitude of the parents can promote behaviour of screaming or even refusing, when a child experiences that his protest is successful and thus he is always in a position to bind the attention of the mother and the father. It would be very helpful if the parents could interpret this crying correctly in order to give the cause a turnround. The parents have to take the lead in the relationship to the child so that it gets support and orien-

tion. In our example, it is important that the child does not experience the "power of screaming". In such an educational situation, some parents think about taking advantage of psychological counselling.

Children have learned to resolve a conflict without argument

Example 3

Five boys play lively together at a streamlet and with much pleasure in Halloween masks. They are approximately ten years old. Four of the five boys wear black capes and a cardboard mask. The mood among them is really friendly. When pedestrians pass, they take off their ugly masks in order not to frighten them. The fifth boy does not play along. On the contrary, he disrupts the happy hustle and bustle by spitting at the playing children from the bridge above. He takes care that no one can see him. Quietly, I asked him why he did this. He does not reply. Suddenly, one of the boys comes up from the river, positions himself in front of the spitting boy, and says quietly to him that he should simply stop spitting. The troublemaker shows no reaction. After that, the other boy repeats his demand very determined and seriously: "Stop the spitting!" He does not say it again, and turns his back on the addressed. Then he continues playing with his three comrades. The boy on the bridge who had not played along stopped spitting. Apparently, he takes serious what was said. He runs away and lets the others play peacefully.

Why did we put down this example? Well, it has impressed and pleased us. We often hear and read much of the violent interactions among children and adolescents. That there are indeed buoyant and serious young people who have experienced and internalised something else, is a pleasing fact. In his dealings with the mistake of the other boy, the described boy has been so serious and steady, which made us as psychologists thoughtful. Wherefrom might he have this quiet and mature determination? It is to be assumed that he has learned and experienced in the family how conflicts can be resolved calmly and without violence. It is of great importance that especially in our times, where violence and bullying often influence children's everyday life on playgrounds and at school, children receive orientation and guidance in non-violent behaviour in their parents' homes and at school. •