

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,
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Why free trade is not always an advantage and why protectionism can also mean protection

by Karl Müller

One of the “Establishment’s” “narratives” is that science and reason are on their side and their critics have no real arguments. That the critics are blind to reality and strongly biased by their feelings, seducible by “populists”, by “conspiracy theorists,” and by brokers of “fake news” (especially the Russian government). In particular, criticism of globalisation and its “basic law of the four freedoms” (worldwide unrestricted trade in goods, services and capital, as well as cross-border freedom of movement) is viewed as backward and as completely absurd and inadequate in the light of the present world, at best to be regarded as stemming from the anxieties and moods of so-called “globalisation losers”.

The columns of the mainstream media are full of “witnesses” to this “narrative,” and especially “selected intellectuals” are heard or there are reports on their “oeuvre” – to prove that spirit and brilliancy are on the side of the “Establishment”. Relevant publishers, for example *Suhrkamp*, encourage young “philosophers” to publish books in which they conclude that only absolutely open boundaries and total freedom of movement correspond “to the liberal commitment to the freedom and equality of all men” (see the hymn of praise to one of these books in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 27 January).

The second phase of globalisation

Did not the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, *Ban Ki-moon*, say that we are now in the run-up to the second phase of globalisation, namely the “age of mobility”? (<https://www.unric.org/de/migration-presse/11270>), and that now “As we enter the most recent age of mobility, people will move across boundaries in ever larger numbers. In their quest for more opportunities and a better life, they have the potential to break down the great inequalities characterising our time [...]” [Translation *Current Concerns*]

This sounds very humanitarian, but it is a tragedy of our time that so many “intellectuals” believe fine words, for what-

ever reason, and enrich them intellectually – words that will not withstand the test of reality.

Where does reason stand?

It is also a false assertion that reason is on this side only. Just read one or several of the following books: *Hans-Peter Martin/Harald Schumann*: “The Global Trap: Globalization and the Assault on Prosperity and Democracy”, 1996; *Gerald Boxberger/Harald Klimenta*: “Die 10 Globalisierungslügen. Alternativen zur Allmacht des Marktes” (“The 10 Globalisation Lies. Alternatives to the Omnipotence of the Market”), 1998; *William Greider*: “Endstation Globalisierung. Neue Wege in eine Welt ohne Grenzen” (“End of the Line: Globalisation. New Ways into a World without Borders”), 1998; *Edward Luttwak*: “Turbo-Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy”, 1999; *John Gray*: “False Dawn: The Delusions of

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The first and the second phase of globalisation

km. Since 1987, the five German Institutes of Peace and Conflict Research have issued a joint report each year. In the *Peace Report* of 2016, the institutes are also discussing the causes of the worldwide migration movements and write in their press release:

“The fruits of globalisation are very unequally distributed. An unjust world trade regime can help to undermine the acceptance of political institutions. We do not need more free trade, but fair trade relations.”

The commentary of the editors of the report states:

“Globalisation has not only brought integration and growth, but with its neoliberal orientation it has also spread increased international division of labour and inequality, gross exploitation and destruction of habitats. World trade, with agreements such as the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), is decisively influencing economic and ecological conditions of existence: Numerous countries of the global South live by exporting their agricultural products and raw commodities. They can scarcely compete when the US and the EU lower duties on agricultural products in trade with each other. Developmental cooperation rightly champions the support of small farmsteads in order to reduce hunger. But without a more just world trade order, the interests of the Western export industry have priority over combating the causes of flight.”

What could also be meant by saying that the unlimited mobility of people has the potential to pull down the great

inequalities, *Karen Horn* has now also made clear in a guest commentary for the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” on 8 February. She speaks out for the unlimited border-crossing freedom of movement of persons, and very often uses very good sounding words. On this she goes into the assertion that well-developed social-states can exert a pulling influence on migrants, but objects: “[...] even where this slope is large enough to exert a pull, it does not yet follow on the other hand that the freedom of movement is to be sacrificed. Liberals have always expressed their preference for a containment of the socialstate.” [Translation *Current Concerns*]

Karen Horn teaches economic history of ideas at the Humboldt-University Berlin as well as at the universities of Siegen and Erfurt. As an economic journalist, she writes sporadic for the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” and for the “*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*”. She is the recipient of various awards, such as the *Friedrich-August-von Hayek Foundation’s* journalism prize. From 2011 to 2015, she was chairman of the board of *Friedrich A. von Hayek Gesellschaft e.V.* Of course, she is also a member of the *Mont Pèlerin Society* and of many more such clubs. Then it is said of her, that she appreciates especially the works of *Adam Smith*, *Friedrich August von Hayek* and *James M. Buchanan*. The latter is a US-American and has put up an economic theory of the state. He wanted to understand the relationship between the citizen and the state within the model of *Homo oeconomicus*.

"Why free trade is not ..."

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Global Capitalism", 1998; *Manfred Ritter/Klaus Zeitler*: "Armut durch Globalisierung. Wohlstand durch Regionalisierung", 2000; *Vivianne Forrester*: "Die Diktatur des Profits", 2001; *Tanja Brühl/Tobias Deibel/Brigitte Hamm/Hartwig Hummel/Jens Martens* (Ed.): "Die Privatisierung der Weltpolitik. Entstaatlichung und Kommerzialisierung im Globalisierungsprozess", 2001; *Michel Chossudovsky*: "The Globalisation of Poverty. Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms", 1997; *Joseph Stiglitz*: "Globalization and Its Discontents", 2002. In these books, authors of quite different political orientations conclude that globalisation is associated with many disadvantages and that it is not the result of rational considerations which are designed to serve the common interest, but that it is an expression of the interests of profit as well as of the policy of power and violence carried out by only a few. All these books are older than 10 years (and many more have been published since then) – so enough time has elapsed to take things seriously. But "Establishment's" agenda was (and still is) a different one.

England profited from protectionism and from free trade

What does a glance at the history books show? Britain owed its position as a world power to free trade, which it made use of when England was already militarily and economically dominant, but also to protectionism, when the country was still struggling with fierce competition. In 1651, for example, the English parliament passed the Navigation Act. The aim was to break the Netherlands' supremacy on the world's oceans and become the number one trading nation. In this act, the following is, for example, stated: "For the increase of the shipping and the encouragement of the navigation of this nation, which under the good providence and protection of God is so great a means of the welfare and safety of this Commonwealth: be it enacted by this present Parliament, and the authority thereof, that from and after the first day of December, one thousand six hundred fifty and one, and from thence forwards, no goods or commodities whatsoever of the growth, production or manufacture of Asia, Africa or America, or of any part thereof; or of any islands belonging to them, or which are described or laid down in the usual maps or cards of those places, as well of the English plantations as others, shall be imported or brought into this Commonwealth of England, or into Ireland, or any other lands, islands, plantations, or territories to this Com-

monwealth belonging, or in their possession, in any other ship or ships, vessel or vessels whatsoever, but only in such as do truly and without fraud belong only to the people of this Commonwealth, or the plantations thereof, as the proprietors or right owners thereof; and whereof the master and mariners are also for the most part of them of the people of this Commonwealth, under the penalty of the forfeiture and loss of all the goods that shall be imported contrary to this act; as also of the ship (with all her tackle, guns and apparel) in which the said goods or commodities shall be so brought in and imported." And so on and so forth.

The English were, however, for "free-trade" when it served their interests. It was the English who launched the free trade ideology with *David Ricardo*, an economist living and teaching in England – when their country was already economically preeminent and able to force their products upon others – as they did at their most vicious in the so-called opium war against China. Other colonial powers from Europe, Asia and America acted in the same way – they also waged wars in order to "open new markets" and "open doors".

Criticism of David Ricardo

Mathias Binswanger, Swiss professor of economics, pointed out the power aspect of free trade ideology in a contribution to the "NZZ am Sonntag", 15 January 2017: "The book published by the English economist David Ricardo in 1817 was called 'On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation'. In this book, he developed the theory of comparative advantage, which soon became the cornerstone of future foreign trade theories and is almost unanimously shared in economics: free trade is good, protectionism is bad. But is this really always true? Interestingly, the historical example of a free trade agreement between England and Portugal used by Ricardo in 1817 already shows that this is not the case. We are talking about the 'Methuen Treaty' of 1703 [...]. According to this agreement, the Portuguese were obliged to abolish the import ban imposed on English cloth in order to protect their own cloth industry, while the English reduced the tariff on Portuguese port wine in return. This agreement played an important role in the economic decline of the then world power Portugal. This is not exactly what one would consider as more prosperity for both trading partners." It goes on to say: "At the beginning of the 18th century, Portugal would have had every reason to defend itself against free trade. But the Portuguese had no choice but to sign the Methuen Treaty because they were dependent on the support of the English

fleet in military conflicts." [Translation *Current Concerns*]

The "specialisation trap"

David Ricardo's "theory" edits out essential parts of reality – it was a false theory ... and it became an ideology. In their book "Die 10 Globalisierungslügen", on pp. 27, *Gerald Boxberger* and *Harald Klimenta* explain why Ricardo's theory is "extremely problematic", in particular Ricardo's view that it is best for all countries to specialise in those fields in which they are the most productive in international comparison: "It is namely the real development of economies which have specialised that tells against the theoretical advantages of free trade, as mentioned by Ricardo. So for example, England was committed to the production of cloths in the 18th century, and was increasingly profiting from the industrial revolution, while no machinery was needed for the production of wine, so that Portugal did not undertake any efforts to advance technological innovations. England became an industrialised state, while Portugal was trapped in the "specialisation trap." [Translation *Current Concerns*] This was true for Portugal in those times, and it still applies to many countries of the Third World of yesterday and today ... and now the revolution is probably even eating its children, and the states which specialised in financial transactions (and dollar domination) and at the same time deindustrialised, are before the abyss.

Sovereignty of the citizens instead of a questionable "business model"

Up to date, "free trade" is still the "business model" of those who profit from it. But it has never been a matter for the peoples, never a matter for the citizens – even if, for example, a new kind of German "national pride" is to be established over being the "world champion of exports." There is nothing to be said against trading freely with goods and services, wherever this can be done sustainably, i.e. long-term, taking into account all the values of a citizenry, and serving the common good. But the decision about this belongs with the peoples, and they should make the corresponding agreements.

A "business model" such as the German market, in which about half of the value added is used for the export of goods and services, is highly problematic. This business model is (still) working at the expense of others, but it might soon work very much at the expense of the German citizens (when the target balances can no longer be offset). Let us be honest: the shouts and

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Germany threatened by currency war

by Sebastian Müller and Heiner Flassbeck*



Heiner Flassbeck Sebastian Müller
(picture Wikipedia) (picture ma)

Germany's principal reaction to the Trump-Interview by the "Bild"-Zeitung of 16 January 2017 was consternation. Is this alarm due to the fact that the new American president understands what is going wrong in international trade?

When Donald Trump was elected president, we at *Macroscope* already had a hunch that this would be the case. Right at the beginning of the new year, he threatened China with levying duties of 45% on Chinese imports. It was clear then where he was heading to. Shortly after Trump's China-announcement, on 13 January, Heiner Flassbeck wrote in his essay "Trump and China – a foretaste of Trump and Germany": "Germany should take a very close look at Trump's attitude to China, for Germany, being the G-20 country with the highest surplus of exports over imports (nearly 9% of GDP), has a lot to lose. For Germany the US is the trading partner with the largest deficit – about 60 billion euro per year. Of this, President Trump will become aware at the latest when his Treasury Secretary draws up his annual *Currency Report* to the Congress, and this denounces the biggest sinners in international trade, from the point of view of the United States."

* Sebastian Müller studied history, political science and German studies in Darmstadt. As a freelance author, he especially deals with the interactions of economics and society as well as economic history. In this context he has been operating – together with other authors – the blog *le Bohémien* since 2009. In October, his book "Der Anbruch des Neoliberalismus" (Dawning of Neoliberalism) was published by Promedia edition.

Heiner Flassbeck is an honorary professor at the University of Hamburg, he was Chief Economist of UNCTAD and Secretary of State in the German Federal Ministry of Finance. His focus of research is globalisation, the theory of economic development and the theory of monetary and currency. Publications among others: "The Market Economy of the 21st Century", 2010; "10 Mythen der Krise" (Ten Myths of the Crisis), 2012; together with Paul Davidson, James K. Galbraith, Richard Koo and Jayati Ghosh: "Economic Reform Now: The Global Manifesto to Rescue our Sinking Economies", 2013.

But Trump noticed it much faster than we had imagined. Only two days later, he had not only noted the great trade balance deficit with Germany, but – in a remarkable interview with the "Bild" and the "Times" – also announced the first consequences he would draw. The president (-elect) is now threatening Germany as well – similar to the Chinese – with being no longer willing to accept the high deficits in mutual trade. His central argument is, that trade is not a one-way street. In addition, he is threatening German car manufacturers, especially BMW, with punitive duties, should they build vehicles for the US market in Mexico. "They can build cars for the US, but they'll pay 35% taxes on any car that enters the US." (Donald Trump)

German mercantilism is illegal

What can we argue against the president of the world's greatest economic power once again asserting that trade cannot be a one-way street? Can we blame Trump for being serious about the reduction of the foreign trade deficit of about \$800 billion a year, which other presidents have also mentioned, however, without taking action against the surplus countries? The US President might even win his case if addressing a complaint to the *World Trade Organization* (WTO). Since his levying custom duties on German import products would be in line with the rules of the WTO: countries with high surpluses might be legally threatened so as to protect one's own markets and in an extreme case, they might even be sanctioned. Article XII of the GATT Agreement of 1947 shows that Germany's large foreign trade surpluses are illegal: "[...] any contracting party, in order to safeguard its external financial position and its balance of payments, may restrict the quantity or value of merchandise permitted to be imported [...]. Contracting parties undertake, in carrying out their do-

mestic policies, to pay due regard to the need for maintaining or restoring equilibrium in their balance of payments on a sound and lasting basis and to the desirability of avoiding an uneconomic employment of productive resources. They recognize that, in order to achieve these ends, it is desirable so far as possible to adopt measures which expand rather than contract international trade." (Article XII*: Restrictions to Safeguard the Balance of Payments 3a)

According to the agreement, Germany itself would therefore have to take its own measures to ensure trade adjustment. In doing so, it should primarily promote the import of foreign goods, as this would strengthen trade in general instead of slowing it down. Let it be understood that this is an excerpt from a contract that Germany has signed and whose strict adherence by other countries, amongst them the US, it is always insisting on.

In any case there is no reason for the reactions by the German government, neither by the largest part of the German press. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who called for the observance of international agreements after Trump's message to Germany, should see to being better informed before making big statements: "We assume that our American partner will continue to comply with international obligations and the WTO rules."

The fact that Germany has had not much discernment and wisdom so far, is probably due to the fact that a policy of wage dumping pursued behind the protective wall of a monetary union has not yet been seized upon and sanctioned by the WTO. But perhaps, all that has been missing up to now, is a claimant, as happens so often in legal life.

There is, however, one additional fact to consider, namely that the provisions of

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screams at plans of other countries to take protective measures against a trade that has ruined entire economic sectors, and even economies, is neither honest nor fair.

To the sovereignty of every country it is necessary that the citizens of that country establish a regulatory framework for their national economy. The Swiss economist Peter Ulrich has made this the basis of his economic ethics ("Integrative Wirtschaftsethik. Grund-

lage einer lebensdienlichen Ökonomie", 4. Auflage 2008; "Zivilisierte Marktwirtschaft. Eine wirtschafts-ethische Orientierung", 2010). ("Integrative Economic Ethics, the Basis of an Economy that Serves Life", 4th Edition, 2008; "A Civilised Market Economy. An Economic-Ethical Orientation", 2010) This right must be granted to every country – and if a country decides to protect its national economy by means of "protectionism", then that is its right, as long as it is not again a matter of striving for supremacy ... as in 17th century England. •

"Germany threatened by ..."

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the WTO anti-dumping agreement apply merely to the sale of goods or services below the cost of production, which is not the case in Germany. One should, however, not join in the Federal Ministry of Economy's lamentation that "the export-oriented German industry is increasingly affected by distortions of competition on the part of third countries and by unjustified anti-dumping measures". Those sitting in a glass house should not throw stones. For as the case may be, for an economy with an export share of almost 50% of its GDP, a currency crisis and a depreciation of the dollar would be a disaster.

Article XII of the GATT has not been utilised often, because almost always there were other, more elegant ways of putting countries with permanently high surpluses in their place. For instance in the 1980s, the Americans – by way of currency agreements – forced other countries to swallow and even actively support a depreciation of the US dollar. In the case of China's high current account surpluses, there was also a pressure towards currency revaluation. But China then decided to surrender to the Americans' political pressure by doing everything they could to make domestic wages rise sharply, so that they would lose their edge in the field of competitiveness.

The German defenders of free trade...

Seen from another perspective, media criticism of Trump's protectionism is not devoid of a double standard. Not only was the Obama administration already pursuing a similar policy against China by imposing an import tax of 35% on car tires from the Middle Kingdom in September 2009. The EU is also currently planning to raise its import tax on Chinese steel products at more than 10 times as much as it is at present, namely up to 265% instead of 20%, similar to certain products in the USA. The reasoning sounds downright "Trumpian": It is done for the rescue of the European steel industry and to combat "unfair competition". However, a trade war or a currency war generated by a policy of competitive devaluation can not be blamed on the Americans. More obviously it is an inevitable consequence of a questionable German foreign trade

strategy, as Flassbeck pointed out in the above-mentioned paper: "What is being forgotten in Germany and China only too willingly: Whoever makes a permanent surplus in foreign trade, actually damages the deficit countries, because with his products, he displaces those of the deficit countries, and so exports his unemployment to those countries. When there are large surpluses and deficits, the prosperity gains resulting from foreign trade are not evenly distributed. The surplus country wins and the deficit country loses at all events. This contradicts the idea of free trade and the hope that free trade will benefit all participants."

This is exactly how we must understand Trump's statement that he advocates free trade, but not at any price. The Republican obviously feels that it is unfair conditions which explain the German success. "I love free trade, but it must be a clever trade for me to call it fair."

... have not understood free trade

The German press and German policy are reacting with defiant self-praise and the usual unanimity to defend the untenable German position. *Jan Schmidbauer* of the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" argues almost typically for the German perspective: "The fact that German producers are much more widely represented in the US than US competition is here," says Schmidbauer, "is not due to unfair trading conditions, but to the high quality of our cars." Minister for Economic Affairs *Sigmar Gabriel*, who is responsible for international trade, immediately took the same line. His "genius" proposal for a lower deficit in the United States: "To that end the US need to build better cars."

His colleague *Wolfgang Schäuble* is no less smart and knows that the surpluses are based on the strength of the German economy. And, in order to carry things to the extremes, he adds that this strong economy is an important contribution to Europe and, as well as a contribution of the European Union's to the global economy.

However, in a fair international system of trade it is precisely not about the quality of the products, but about the quality of each product's being appropriately reflected in its price. But who ever, like Germany over the years, has been applying political pressure on the wage-earners to depress wages and for this utilizes the

protection of a "lower" euro (expression coined by Schäuble) – the Euro being "low" because Germany systematically weakens the other Euro group countries with its actual depreciation – violates the basic rules of fair trade. Fair trade can only exist, if in every country wages rise in proportion to the productivity plus the inflation target of that country, and if the differences in the inflation targets of the countries are compensated for by consequent devaluation or revaluation of the national currencies.

Europe as the "vehicle" for Germany

Finally, and this is really impressive, Trump also seems to understand (or guess) that the problem of German mercantilism does not just affect the United States. German wage dumping went on mainly at the expense of its European neighbours. These countries, for instance Italy, can only escape to positions of current account surplus by suffering high unemployment and many years of economic shrinkage and by importing less and less goods for this reason. When Trump speaks of "Europe as the vehicle of Germany," he focusses astonishingly accurately on this point, which turns Schäuble's position into an absolute joke. After the Obama administration had already prompted Germany several times, now there is an American president who removes the kid gloves and speaks in plain language:

"Look at Great Britain and look at the European Union; the EU is Germany. In essence, the European Union is a means to an end for Germany. That's why I found that Great Britain was so wise to leave. [...] If you ask me, there will be more countries that leave."

The Chancellor's reaction followed yesterday: "I think we Europeans must hold our destiny in our own hands." What she has obviously still not understood or does not want to understand is that "the Europeans" no longer exist. In the next few weeks after Trump's open criticism, there might be the one or another who will dare to pronounce some simple truths about the ugly causes of the euro crisis and about German dominance. •

Source: <https://makroskop.eu/2017/01/deutschland-droht-ein-waehrungskrieg/> from 18.1.2017

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Export surpluses: blessing or curse?

by Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

The German Federal Statistical Office has just announced a new monthly record concerning export. With 8.8% of GDP the German export surplus is nearly four times as high as China's. It is only

thanks to the German export surpluses that for the member states in Southern Europe the deficits are acceptable for the euro.

Whereas the German export economy has been pretending for some years that it carries Germany's prosperity through its surplus, SME-research (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) is disputing that because the German export surplus is foreign trade deficit of the partner countries who have to get into debt therefore. By that the debt spiral was born in Europe with high target account balances (clearing accounts) at ECB.

These liabilities of European member states toward Germany have grown so much now that they will never be able to be returned. So we have to estimate that they will be frozen or cancelled some day. That means nothing else than that our export industry is delivering to large extent to over-indebted member countries and that they will receive assets, but will never get any payment. We could as well give away our export goods to Greece, Italy, France or any else, which would make no difference. Permanent export surplus is a transfer of fortune hidden by fake money on account (Scheinguthaben) and subventions given to the states in deficit at the expense of the surpluses.

In 2015 Germany's foreign trade with the US amounted 113.73 billion euros. US trade deficit with Germany was 53 billion dollars. Compared to the US deficit with China (350 billion dollars) this

is still small. However, new President *Trump* attacked basically and with reason the foreign trade deficits of the USA. He wants to reduce the about 800 billion dollars of annual debt of the US – which is theoretically correct. Until now, there were attempts to compensate the deficit with Germany by means of costs for occupation, military purchases, the payment of fines by our corporations, and above all the sale of worthless bonds. So as it is in the case of the European debt states, in the case of the US we haven't got anything for our foreign trade surpluses, just hot air.

If the new President Trump now wants to reduce quickly the US trade deficit, China as the first foreign trade creditor of the USA will be prioritised. However, Germany might become a focus soon. This would mean a reduction or even a closure of the American market for all exports by means of tariffs, regulations, and as it is today, legal actions of the US (fines) against large German companies. In addition, six of the most important German export destinations are economically and politically unstable (Greece, Italy, France and others), which could also reduce our exports to these countries in the future.

Therefore, in the coming years the Mittelstandsinstitut (SME Institute Lower Saxony) doesn't expect any significant German export surpluses, this means a decline of exports and a declining – or no – export surplus. This would have some consequences:

1. The balance of foreign trade and of payments between the European countries would lead to a consolidation in the debt states and to a normalisation in the current surplus state.
2. If, however, there are no more German export surpluses available for compensation in Europe, the indebtedness of the euro states will be more difficult, as so far it has been financed by this export surpluses. The euro states will either have to economize or the ECB will have to inflate the money supply more unrestrainedly.

3. Decline in German exports also means decline in German economy, especially in big-sized economy, decline in growth, decrease in investments, in employment, in taxes and social contributions. The time of surplus could come to an end.

The past decades of one-sided foreign trade surpluses of Germany or China will no longer be permanent in the future. This situation will no longer be tolerated, and by the way, it is also inefficient (over-indebtedness). The principle of our Stability Law "balance of trade and payments" might be the normal and desirable situation in the future. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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500 years of reformation, or when the elites ignore the people

Speech given by Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer at the Albisgüetli-Conference on 20 January 2017 in Zurich



Ueli Maurer
(picture admin)

This year, the anniversary of the Reformation is celebrated. The Reformation began 500 years ago and continues, even today, to influence the western world. It is one of those events that have transformed the course of history in

crucial ways.

The Reformation has various incredibly exciting facets. Historians writing on the subject are filling entire libraries. But I am fascinated today mainly by the following questions: How did it come about? How could such a powerful institution as the Roman Catholic Church break apart after nearly 1500 years? Why did the people rebel against it? Did such a major historical event occur suddenly and surprisingly or did it slowly begin to emerge? And what are the lessons we can learn from it?

Therefore, this evening I would like to talk about the causes of the Reformation rather than about the consequences. By focusing on the bigger picture and tracing the broad lines, I suggest, we will arrive at exciting insights. Maybe you will then feel as I do: While many things may well seem alien to us, there are also many things that appear strangely familiar and topical to us...

I. How the Reformation came about – The Council of Constance as preliminary

First of all, let us look back not 500 but 600 years. We will then be in a somewhat better position to see the overall picture. At that time, from 1414 to 1418, the Council of Constance was held, where all the important Church leaders as well as many worldly sovereigns met for deliberation. In short, all persons of distinction came together at Lake Constance. As we would say today, the international elites gathered for a summit meeting.

Remarkable are the items on the agenda at Constance: One of the most important issues was the reform of the Church. In fact, that was a century before the Reformation!

The reason for this was *Jan Hus*, a preacher from Bohemia who in preceding years had attracted many followers and had caused a great deal of attention. As *Luther*, *Zwingli*, *Calvin*, and other reformers were to do later, he denounced the increasingly secular nature

“I am fascinated today mainly by the following questions: How did it come about? How could such a powerful institution as the Roman Catholic Church break apart after nearly 1500 years? Why did the people rebel against it? Did such a major historical event occur suddenly and surprisingly or did it slowly begin to emerge? And what are the lessons we can learn from it?[...] By focusing on the bigger picture and tracing the broad lines, I suggest, we will arrive at exciting insights. Maybe you will then feel as I do: While many things may well seem alien to us, there are also many things that appear strangely familiar and topical to us...”

of the Church. According to him an upper-class had emerged that was no longer concerned with religious belief but with power, money, and with their own careers. In his opinion, the leading circles should pay more attention to the people again rather than to their own well-being.

Turning the critics into heretics

Jan Hus was invited to Constance to offer his criticisms. The reformation of the church, however, was not even seriously discussed. Instead, Hus was pronounced a heretic and burnt at the stakes along with his writings.

Reforms were therefore not taking place, and all the shortcomings of the Church Hus had criticised remain unchanged, and got even worse with the passage of time. For those who denounced them were vilified as bad Christians and punished accordingly.

Things are getting worse

Of course, more and more people realised that things could not simply carry on as

they were. Nepotism and corruption were steadily on the increase. Ecclesiastical offices were sold to the highest bidder who would then recover the money by levies of taxes and contributions.

Large amounts of money were also flowing to Rome. To the north of the Alps people complained that they had to pay for the prodigality of church dignitaries and for the church bureaucracy in distant Italy. By the way, possible analogies to today's redistribution in Europe are merely accidental ...

Due to a surviving piece of writing we know how the Curia felt about this: Patronisingly, it depicted the discontented population as country hicks. They ought to be happy that they were doing so well; their economic well-being was due to the fertilising influence of Rome. They should display reverence and gratitude rather than criticise the prodigality of the Church (*Enea Silvio Piccolomini* – (later Pope Pius II) –, *De ritu, situ, moribus et conditione Germaniae*,

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Rather than trying to remedy the shortcomings they attack the critics. They do not wish to eliminate the grievances, but to stifle the uncomfortable critical voices. Thus, they miss the last opportunity to achieve improvements and sound solutions. This proves to be a serious misjudgement: They do not realise how widespread the resentment with the current situation now is. The leading circles encourage themselves that, in fact, everything is alright; that everything is as it must be and that they are dealing only with isolated malcontents and incendiaries trying to seduce parts of the supposedly stupid population.

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1450s). In other words, the people owed all this only to the blessings of prudent elites. Somehow I have the impression that today I hear similar arguments again ...

In the latter half of the fifteenth century, the printing press invented by *Gutenberg* gained currency. Critical opinions could thus be spread more quickly and easily. To this the Church responded quickly. In 1487, it decreed that without its permission writings could no longer be printed. Allegedly, this was only to prevent the proliferation of "errors" and "pernicious doctrines". Obviously, "fake news" was already then an issue ... Our conclusion: new media make elites nervous, regardless in which century ... This is quite understandable, since their power essentially depends on whether they can determine what has to be considered as right or wrong.

Threats are getting more and more absurd

The prodigality of the Church gave rise to an increasing need for money. Therefore, the profitable sale of indulgences became more and more important.

And this is how it worked: People were paying money for being remitted their punishment in the hereafter. The deadlier the sins they had committed, the higher was the price. The bargain was then documented by a letter of indulgence.

There were clergymen who specialised in the selling of indulgences and moved from town to town. They were frightening the people, threatening them with hell and offering them letters of indulgence against the payment of a fee.

One of them, *Johann Tetzel*, a former gambler and cheater, was so successful that he became famous and achieved star status, at least with the authorities that profited from the revenues. Tetzel had a sophisticated marketing and a catchy slogan: The so-called Tetzel chest, where people threw in the money, featured the picture of a ghastly devil, tormenting poor souls in the purgatory. Above it, there was an inscription that read: "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

This went so far that a robber could buy a letter of indulgence for all his future sins, only to mug the indulgence priest afterwards.

Overstepping the mark

Tetzel, the indulgence priest, at the time was serving on business on behalf of a prince heavily in debt. He was accompanied by employees of the international banking house *Fugger*, to which the prince was indebted. They were collect-

"Since critics are punished immediately, there is hardly anyone who summons the courage to open critique. And in the absence of a culture of criticism errors and grievances abound. Thus, a vicious circle is created.[...] The people at the top do not recognise the concerns that plague the people at the bottom. The elites literally live in a different world and speak a different language. [...] This disdainful attitude towards ordinary people is revealing. The ruling elites entrenched themselves increasingly in a world of their own, that has nothing to do with the daily lives of the great majority of the people, thereby mutually reinforcing one another in their beliefs. [...] This stark denial of reality on the part of the elites is the hallmark of their end-times."

ing the money that the people payed for their supposed salvation.

When Tetzel came near the town of Wittenberg, a friar named Martin Luther nailed a piece of writing to the church door. In his ninety-five theses he criticised the sale of indulgences. Initially, Luther did not intend a schism, and for a long time he was also quite reluctant to challenge the authority of the Pope. He was a devout friar, who could simply not overlook the prevailing conditions. But the reaction of the powerful and influential fuelled the conflict. Worldly and ecclesiastical princes, clergyman and the learned, branded Luther as a heretic. Eventually, he was excluded from the church by a writ of excommunication.

That was the beginning of the Reformation that was soon to extend to and transform large parts of Europe. By Zwingli in Zurich, *Vadian* in St. Gallen and Calvin in Geneva the Reformation received a unique character that corresponded to the distinctive character of our country.

Living in a bubble

I am fascinated by the reaction of the powerful: Rather than trying to remedy the shortcomings they attack the critics. They do not wish to eliminate the grievances, but to stifle the uncomfortable critical voices. Thus, they miss the last opportunity to achieve improvements and sound solutions.

This proves to be a serious misjudgment: They do not realise how widespread the resentment with the current situation now is. The leading circles encourage themselves that, in fact, everything is alright; that everything is as it must be and that they are dealing only with isolated malcontents and incendiaries trying to seduce parts of the supposedly stupid population.

The people at the top do not recognise the concerns that plague the people at the bottom. The elites literally live in a dif-

ferent world and speak a different language.

Clerical and secular Lords often came from the same noble families, connected and related to each other across Europe. In shifting alliances they were banded together and fighting each other. The people existed merely to raise the required taxes and to provide soldiers from time to time. 500 years ago, the Pope was pursuing grand politics and was building the magnificent St. Peter's Basilica. *Charles V*, King, and subsequently Emperor, was reigning over Spain and Germany. He was speaking French, but hardly any Spanish or German. Even if he had talked to his subjects, he would not have understood them. The same was true for the Church as well, where the language was Latin.

With the benefit of hindsight it is very clear, that nothing good could come from talking so evidently past the people. But what about today? "Federal Berne", too, has its own language. I often think that although linguistically it might be German, there is nevertheless no-one who can understand it ... Or if you read through an EU directive you can only shake your head and think of *Goethe*: "Here now I stand, poor fool, and see, I'm just as wise as formerly."

Plain German

Martin Luther and later Zwingli were preaching in German. The reformers went into print with pieces of writing, addressing the people in German. Both of them published new translations of the Bible, choosing a language that everyone understood. This was revolutionary.

As Luther commented: "One must not ask the letters in the Latin tongue, how one ought to speak German [...]; but one must ask the mother at home, the children in the lanes and alleys, and the common man on the marketplace, concerning this;

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"500 years of reformation ..."

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yea, and look at the moves of their mouths while they are talking, and translate accordingly. They understand you then, and mark that one talks German with them".¹

The reformers gave expression to what the people felt. They gave them a voice. Luther acted as a major linguistic innovator, who has largely fashioned our written language. His words were powerful, but they could also be witty, if necessary:

One of his prominent opponents, for instance, was called *Eck* and was a doctor in theology. Suggesting that the full stop after Dr. should be omitted in his title, Luther turned "Dr. Eck" into "Dreck" (meaning "dirt" in German) ...

II. What we can learn from it

If we are looking at the broad lines of the Reformation we can learn a great deal from it. We can see what happens, when the elites ignore the people. The process went through three phases:

1. *Selfish interests and power were becoming increasingly important*: In the early years, the elites were still committed to a worthy cause and lived up to their responsibilities, i.e., with respect to the church, pastoral work, charity, relief of the poor but also education, art and so forth. But then with the passage of time they were concerned solely with their own selfish interests, and the retention of power was increasingly becoming the focus of their interests.

Realising this, the people respond with criticism. There are warning signs, but there is still time to make the necessary adjustments. The problems could now be solved prudently and peacefully. To remain with the example of the Reformation: The critical sermons delivered by Jan Hus should have been taken as valuable alarm signals that something had gone wrong. The Council of Constance would have been a great opportunity to remedy the situation. But the elites were turning a blind eye to the warning signals.

2. *Denunciation of the critics*: Rather than reflecting if the objections might be true, criticism was prevented. The critics became heretics. Reforms were not achieved, because otherwise the criticism of the heretics would have to be upheld.

We can offer an example from Reformation Zurich for illustration. Ulrich Zwingli described how he experienced it: "The great and powerful of this world began to proscribe the teachings of Christ, and make them odious under the name of Luther"² ...

And all those who criticised the dominant view, Zwingli continues, were labelled in blanket terms as "Lutheran".

"In fact, it is precisely one of the main objectives of democracy to prevent such an escalation. As long as democracy works and popular decisions are implemented, it can never come to that point, because political decisions can be corrected in time. The danger arises, if the elites no longer accept the popular will. For one cannot constantly disregard the people, if they desire some change."

This is something we know also from our own time: Malcontents are being pushed into a corner and pigeonholed. At the period of the Reformation they were reviled as "Lutheran", today they are abused as populist, backward-looking, extremist, xenophobic, and so on.

Critics will thus be silenced, marginalised, and excluded from the community of the orthodox. Meanwhile, business is defiantly continued as usual. Deficiencies are either glossed over or kept secret.

But this, of course, only exacerbates the situation. Since critics are punished immediately, there is hardly anyone who summons the courage to open critique. And in the absence of a culture of criticism errors and grievances abound. Thus, a vicious circle is created.

3. *Denial of reality*: While the disappointment, discontent and frustration of the people are growing, the elites feel mainly contempt for the allegedly ungrateful and stupid folks. Let us take still another example from the Reformation period. When the Reformation began in Basle, a cleric wrote of the "sedition and tumult", proceeding from "the mean and useless people; no wealthy and honest citizen took part in it."³

This disdainful attitude towards ordinary people is revealing. The ruling elites entrenched themselves increasingly in a world of their own, that has nothing to do with the daily lives of the great majority of the people, thereby mutually reinforcing one another in their beliefs.

We can also choose examples from other periods, for instance, from the era of the French Revolution: *Marie-Antoinette*, wife of the French King, commissioned the building of an artificial farming village in the park of Versailles, where the nobility could simulate an idyllic country life. Rather than going to the real people, they were remaining among themselves, living in self-constructed ideal world, in a desired image.

What happened on the outside world was irrelevant and was completely ignored. When Marie-Antoinette was told that the starving people were demonstrating, because they had no bread, she supposedly said: "Let them eat cake". Her husband, King *Louis XVI*, escaped from

reality by hunting on an almost daily basis. When he returned from hunting on the day of the outbreak of the Revolution and the storming of the Bastille he wrote in his diary: "14 July: Nothing"⁴.

In sum, this stark denial of reality on the part of the elites is the hallmark of their end-times.

At this stage, the final break between the people and the elites often becomes inevitable. The latter desperately cling to power with all their remaining strength, until discontent has become so pervasive, that the people begin to revolt. At this point in time, however, it may already be too late for a smooth and non-violent re-orientation in politics.

In fact, it is precisely one of the main objectives of democracy to prevent such an escalation. As long as democracy works and popular decisions are implemented, it can never come to that point, because political decisions can be corrected in time. The danger arises, if the elites no longer accept the popular will. For one cannot constantly disregard the people, if they desire some change. John F. Kennedy got to the heart of the matter when he said: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." For this reason the elites carry an incredibly great responsibility.

Conclusion

We have singled out from the Reformation a process in three phases. It can be found not only at the Reformation; this was simply an illustrative example. One can discover this process throughout history. Sometimes it is a slow one, sometimes it goes very fast. Sometimes it will be interrupted, because the elites are prudent enough to listen to the people and to change course in good time.

You can verify this process on the basis of either small or big events. I can be found both in world history and in local history. Take the French Revolution or the American War of Independence, or take – because we are here in Zurich – the riots that became known as the "Stäfa Affair" (*Stäfner Handel*) in 1794) or the "Zurich-putsch" (in 1839).

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The “wrong” opinion before the election campaign

Censorship in Germany?

Since the decision of the British people to leave the EU and the election of Donald Trump as new US President against the establishment, a discussion about so-called “fake news” and “hate speeches” has flared up in Germany. Does Berlin now restrain the freedom of speech?

rl. The fact that a majority-based governmental coalition of the two largest parties, SPD and CDU/CSU, under the guise of preventing “stirring up of hatred” and “lying”, want to “legally” regulate the opinion forming of a growing opposition, is considered as a dangerous development not only by many lawyers in Germany. An expression of this trend is a “slip of tongue” of CDU/CSU parliamentary leader, Michael Grosse-Brömer: “There are a lot of people on the net who want to destabilise, who spread *wrong opinions*, [emphasis by the author] who want to manipulate, and politics must cope with this, especially before the election campaigns” (ZDF, report from Berlin, 18 December). By this he did not think of “politics” entering into a democratic exchange of arguments, no, he provides a media template in order to be able to take “legislative” action before the German election campaign in September 2017. At the end of December, the proposal of German Federal Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maiziere, to affiliate a media control authority to the chancellor’s office preferably before the elections, made alarm bells ring for a lot of people. Should a “Ministry of Truth” be established?

Access now to internet platforms

At the turn of the year, the debate in the German media subsided abruptly. The

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Of course, we can also choose present-day events such as Brexit or the US elections. And – who knows – maybe some of you will also discover parallels to our own country. •

Source: www.efjd.admin.ch, from 25 January 2017

- ¹ Durant, Will. “Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit”, Vol. 18, Lausanne/Geneva, no year given., p.65
- ² Zwingly, Huldrych, “Auslegung und Begründung der Schlussreden”, 14. Juli 1523; quoted from Oechsli, Wilhelm. *Quellenbuch zur Schweizer Geschichte*, Zurich 1918, p. 308)
- ³ Stolz, Johann. “Chronik 1520–1540”; quoted from Oechsli, Wilhelm. *Quellenbuch zur Schweizer Geschichte*, Zurich 1918, p. 330
- ⁴ Durant, Will. *Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit*, Vol. 32, Lausanne/Geneva no year given., S. 467

proposal to set up a censorship authority obviously went politically too far. Another way arose.

In this matter, internet platforms such as Facebook or Twitter are under particular political pressure to introduce a kind of self-censorship because they are increasingly becoming a decisive opinion-forming factor. They should prevent so-called “fake news” and “agitation” by removing admonished sites from the internet. Hurrying ahead, Facebook decided to let itself “voluntarily” be censored by a group called *Correctiv*. By this, Facebook itself deeply interferes with the freedom of expression. It is not known whether the corporation is taking up its own approach in China with that. The German Federal Ministry of the Interior announces that one should wait until March to see whether Facebook is effectively implementing its censorship.

George Soros as financier of a new censorship

Who are the censors who are to adjudicate on their fellow citizens’ statements? Who chooses them – and who pays them? The group named *Correctiv* and being charged by Facebook, is registered as incorporated. It mainly consists of journalists and is mainly financed from funds of a foundation from the circle of the formerly SPD-linked WAZ Media Group. Amongst others, also the controversial *Open Society Foundation* of US stock exchange speculator and multimillionaire George Soros lets flow money into the *Correctiv*’s coffers (see <https://correctiv.org>).

No doubt, such an approach is contrary to all legitimate democratic principles and should be abolished immediately. The German FDP politician Wolfgang Kubicki rightly urges to employ more judges and prosecutors to pursue the true criminally relevant offences. Initial official judicial judgments would quickly curb violations of law such as defamations or insults in the by now legal vacuum of the internet space.

Rule of law is requested

Even in Germany, statements that incite criminal offences or that personally offend or defame someone are restricted by laws and are justiciable. In order to enforce this right, there are laws, judges and courts. Everyone can fight back if his personal rights are violated. However, the law can only be enforced by means of the rule of law. This is not always easy, but necessary.

Opinion making by freedom of expression

On the other hand, the German legislature leaves great scope for expressions of opinion – for a good reason. Free formation of opinion is an important bedrock in a democracy. In turn it depends on freedom of information, freedom of the press, and finally freedom of expression. Various information and different opinions are a prerequisite in order to be able to form an own point of view and then to participate in the democratic decision-making process. Unimpeded formation of opinion is one of the fundamental characteristics of a democracy. In Germany this was, among other things, a bitter consequence of the experiences of the Third Reich.

“False” and “correct” opinions

The debate on “fake news” and “hate speeches” on the internet has proved to be an instrument for introducing a state censorship. Accordingly, there would then be legally determined “false” and “correct” political opinions. The “correct” opinion would be the one represented by the political establishment. “False” opinions would be those that deviate from this opinion like an exit from the euro or a restriction on immigration, for example. Obviously, even those had a false opinion who appreciated the Brexit and could not find anything worse in the election of Donald Trump than in an election of Hillary Clinton.

Free media as a prerequisite for democracy

The events in Germany bring to mind that trying to win public opinion for a position belongs to a vivid democracy, but also that there is always a danger that the freedom of expression will be restricted for reasons of power. The fact that the political debate can also degenerate in media campaigns and propaganda has been known for decades – not only since the last presidential elections in the USA.

In the past, rumors were spread through traders or in pubs, later it was through leaflets, the newspaper, radio, TV, which contributed to the shaping of public opinion. Today internet has been added. Again and again, the freedom to spread an opinion had to be re-enforced. The new media allow us to get more information, to use interesting opposing positions or other opinions faster and wider in order to form our own opinion. – But they also spread hoaxes. And that had been so before.

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News from Federal Berne

Alternative draft to the “Rasa-Initiative”: legislative process by consultation is in progress

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

The three-year deadline regulated in the Federal Constitution for the implementation of an autonomous management of immigration expired on 9 February 2017. Neither the Federal Council nor parliament has fulfilled the constitutional mandate.

As a reminder, for almost three years the Federal Council did not bring off negotiations with Brussels on the adjustment of the free movement agreement, which had been decided by the Swiss sovereign. In their winter session of 2016, the Swiss National Council and the Council of States approved a ‘light version of the right for nationals’, which was admittedly well received in Brussels, but did not in any way respect or enforce the people’s will. The next act is now the National Initiative “Let’s get out of the dead-end” (“Raus aus der Sackgasse”: Rasa-Initiative), which wants to delete the immigration article from the Constitution.¹ The initiators want to teach their independence-seeking fellow citizens in which direction they think the journey should go: Brussels on the way!

In order to somewhat mask the expected clear ‘No’ of the Swiss people to Rasa, and so to the violation of the constitution on the part of government and parliament, the Federal Council has plunged into activism and produced a direct counter-draft in two versions. This was sent in for consultation on 2 February. One of the two versions is to come to the vote together with the Rasa-initiative, unless they are clearly rejected by the consultation partners. This is much to be hoped.

By means of a consultation process, the Federal Council obtains statements of the cantonal governments, political parties, as well as umbrella organisations of towns, cities, mountain regions, and the business

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Critical thinking and co-determination as an antidote

A factual analysis of different opinions requires a solid general education and civic education. This certainly is an important field for the schools. Systematic knowledge acquisition, logical thinking and education in the humanistic sense are prerequisites and form a basis for critical independent thinking.

Also important are public personalities who honestly and in the sense of the common good represent their positions in a publicly comprehensible manner – and can

Erasmus+: Autonomous participation works better and is cheaper

One argument of the Rasa initiative is that Switzerland would be excluded from *Horizon 2020* and *Erasmus+* in case of a full implementation of immigration control.¹ As was already explained in *Current Concerns*, the temporary exclusion had a positive side-effect for Switzerland. For it turned out that we are doing better with the autonomous participation in these programmes.²

It was then announced in the daily press that on 7 September 2016 the Federal Council had decided to prolong the “transitional solution”, i.e. the autonomous organisation of EU mobility and cooperation projects for Swiss students by the *State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation* (SERI), until the end of 2017.³

In the meantime, Berne has secretly and quietly decided that the SERI will retain the current regulation as “Swiss implementation of Erasmus+” till the end of 2020. Obviously, the EU Commission wanted more money from Switzerland than it was willing to pay.⁴ However, if Switzerland itself remains in control of

the expenditure, the Federal Council will have enough money to cover not only “outgoing mobility” but also “incoming mobility”. What is enciphered here in the purest Newspeak means: Switzerland – as the only European country by the way – is paying not only for study stays of Swiss students in EU countries but also for those of foreign students in Switzerland.

And yet, the expenses will be lower than if they flow through the money pots of the EU Commission ... This just as a little thing to think about for all those Swiss who believe that with closer ties to the EU, we would be better off in certain ways than on our own as a sovereign state.

- 1 *Explanatory report*, p. 8
- 2 “Swiss Research and Education Centre and EU Bureaucracy”. In: *Current Concerns* No 26/27 from 5.12.2016
- 3 *Media release* from 7.9.2016. Federal Council extends the transitional solution for Erasmus+ till end of 2017
- 4 See “*Wiler Zeitung*” from 4.2.2017

community, as well as of other interested parties, before developing and then submitting its message to the National Council and the Council of States. Usually, the consultation procedure takes three to six months, so that the addressees have enough time to form their opinion and to formulate it.

Period of consultation from 2 February to 1 March 2017 – somewhat scant, is not it?

In the present case, according to the Federal Council the consultation begins on 1 February 2017, but the letter to the addressees of the consultation is dated from

also bear to sometimes stand alone with their opinions. With hollow phrases, obvious lies and empty promises, not only German politicians seem to drive their fellow citizens into the opposition. What is required are honesty and a sound grounding. Political training, such as is given in Switzerland by quarterly votes and periodic elections, is not to be underestimated. The resulting healthy skepticism, combined with a constructive basic attitude to political projects, leaves little scope for radical ideas, and, on the other hand, restricts governmental abuses against the private sphere. However, a sound education, which still aims at a mature citizen, also remains the basis here. •

2 February. Thus, the period from the receipt of the dossier² to the latest possible moment for the submission of a statement is not even four weeks. Let us spare the reader an explanation of how the Federal Council justifies this short deadline in its additional letter – the fact is that the addressees are allowed hardly enough time for a well-founded answer.

The Federal Council declares: the constitutional obligation has not yet been implemented

As the Federal Council rightly states in its “explanatory report”, the articles of the constitution adopted by the people comprised “... two mandates: firstly, the adjustment of the aliens act [...] and secondly, negotiations about the adaptation of treaties under international law which do not comply with these provisions.”³ The Federal Council openly admits that it has fulfilled neither of the sovereign’s mandates.

About the first mandate: Parliament has essentially only introduced a ‘light version of the right of priority for nationals’ into the aliens act, which is compatible with the *free movement agreement with the EU* (FZA). However, this regulation “generally waives setting maximum numbers and quo-

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tas for inhabitants of EU and EFTA member states, and thus does not completely replace Article 121a BV.⁴ This is just spin. In reality, Article 121a is not implemented at all.

On the second mandate: How weakly and submissively the Federal Council has behaved towards the EU-powers has already been explained in detail in *Current Concerns*.⁵ The Federal Council also confirms in the "explanatory report" the frequent but unsuccessful "consultation sessions" with Mr Juncker as well as in the "Mixed Commission" and concludes with the pessimistic remark: "After the UK vote for the withdrawal from the EU (Brexit), it has become clear that a successful negotiation with the EU on adaptation of the FZA is hardly possible in the foreseeable future."⁶ Unsurprisingly our subcontractors bring nothing else to pass!

Rasa-Initiative:**after the Federal Council's fancy**

With regard to the Rasa initiative – which really represents nothing more than the "rampage" of a bad loser – the Federal Council does not conceal the fact that it would welcome their acceptance, i.e. the removal of the "control of immigration" decided by the sovereign: "By repealing Articles 121a and 197 (11) BV by the people and the estates, the difference between the Federal Constitution and the FZA would be eliminated. At the same time, the order to control and limit immigration, which was given by the people and estates, would be omitted." That would like our "servants of the people", would it not? Even so, the Federal Council be-thinks the "democratic-political reasons", which are against the idea of rescinding a popular decision after such a short time.⁷ But it would be easier for the class politique in Berne to reach the desired closer embrace with the Brussels elite, if it were not forever to struggle with the electorate and its urge to decide for itself ... For this purpose the Federal Council has fabricated a counter-draft with two variants, which both would make it easier for them to "govern" untroubledly.

Alternative Draft Variant 1: Do Contracts with the EU prevail the Federal Constitution?

Ostensibly Article 121a would largely remain (paragraph 1-3: Switzerland shall control the immigration of foreign nationals autonomously by annual quantitative limits and quota, giving priority to Swiss citizens). Only paragraph 4 and 5 are supposed to be changed, also the transitional provision in article 197 point 11 would be deleted.

Wording version 1⁸:

Article 121a, 4 When controlling the immigration, treaties under international law which are of great importance for the position of Switzerland in Europe are observed.

Former wording in point 5 is deleted.

Article 197 point 11 FC, transitional provision concerning Article 121a (immigration control) is repealed

In plain language: The Federal Council wants to introduce a material (contentual) restriction of the right to a popular initiative under the counter and at the same time to relativise the existing constitutional provision FC 121a. The sovereign control of immigration by Switzerland shall be allowed only to the point were "international agreements [...] of momentousness oppose the position of Switzerland in Europe". In its explanations the Federal Council assigns to this ambiguous clause explicitly the Free Movement of People Act with the EU, that he, in an illegal way, sees in the same range as the ECHR, the UN conventions and the *Geneva Convention on refugees*.⁹ May be, this way it is less striking? Such a colourful mix of voluntarily agreed, terminable contracts (Freedom of Movement of Person Agreement [FMP] between Switzerland and the EU) with mandatory provisions of the international law (*Geneva Convention*) is prohibited from legal point of view. We as citizens, in turn reframe from agreeing to such a jamboree bag, in which our "representatives" in Berne can put depending on their mood, what seems to them just opportune to declare people's initiatives invalid and to derate constitutional law.

In 2014 the sovereign decided the opposite of Variant 1

Article 121a (paragraph 1-3: autonomous control of immigration, annual quantitative limits and quotas, priority to swiss citizens)

4 international agreements must not be concluded, which violate this article.

5 the legislative act regulates the details. Article 197 point 11 FC transitional provisions to Article 121a (immigration control)

1 international treaties, in contradiction to article 121a, are to be renegotiated and adopt within three years after its acceptance by the people and the cantons.

2 [...]

In 2014 the voters wanted to be able to regulate the barely manageable number of migrants who since the conclusion of the bilateral agreements I came from EU Member States into our country, by applying annual quantitative limits and quota,

for example, in particularly affected industries or regions. For this purpose precisely the FMP agreement would have to be renegotiated, which the Federal Council with Variant 1 of his alternative wants to uprate over the today's regime of article 121a. Because immigration from non-EU and EFTA countries is already under control of Switzerland, we need no new constitutional provision.

Rule by the Executive instead by people and parliament?

Concerning the provisions the Federal Council wants to withdraw from the Constitution: Paragraph 5 of article 121a he obviously sees no longer as needed inside Variant 1. It means, it doesn't need any implementation in a law, or otherwise said: the Federal Council would unmolested by the parliament, and without fear of facing a referendum, decide which contracts with foreign States are in his opinion «of great significance for the position of Switzerland in Europe». In this case the transitional provision in article 197 would therefore no longer be necessary: Nothing new must be negotiated, because the FMP and other contracts are so sacrosanct, and there is also no time limit of three years any more, which the Federal Council must comply with.

Now it becomes clear, what the alternative aims to: a further strengthening of EU-compatible rule of the Executive, combined with a weakening of direct democracy. As we have noted before: these two government models are different as fire and water.

An alternative draft variant 2: Shifting indefinitely

This variant is quickly explained. Article 121a FC should remain unchanged, but the provision with the three-year transitional period for the legal and contractual arrangements to become implemented would be withdrawn. That means Federal Council and Parliament would have time to fix the immigration or just not to regulate with no time limit: "The mission however remains to take further steps for the implementation of article 121a FC, if the situation should change in the future in the EU with regard to the FMP."¹⁰ As said: if and whenever the gentlemen in Berne want to apply it. The direct democracy is suffering, we as citizens are supposed to be left out.

Suggestion: Option 3 with an extension of the deadline and an unilateral safeguard clause

A possible variant, which could have a chance in a referendum, would be an extension of the deadline for implementa-

Gender – theory or re-education programme?

by Gerlinde Höschter, Graz*

Is it possible to be in favour of the emancipation of women and the recognition of homosexual forms of life and yet argue against the gender ideology?

The power of taboo

Criticism on the issue of gender is a taboo in many circles because no one wants to be exposed to the blame of discrimination. In this way, even well meaning people who do not mind equality, but feel patronised by means of language regulation or the gentle repression of political correctness, become silent. But gender theory is not needed to solve political or ethical problems: the claim of political emancipation necessarily results from the concept “citizen”, and ethical rejection of discrimination can be gained from the concept “human being”. The assumption that these concepts already include discriminations is evidence only of the genderists’ ignorance, who obviously want to deal with political theory and anthropology only so far as it is necessary to produce cheap enemy images.

If, however, genderism has no political and ethical surplus value, what is it for? Does it provide new insights or does it include a political re-education programme?

What is characteristic for gender ideology?

Core of this ideology is the assumption that both the biological sex and the social gender role is a product of social constructions. The classical constellation of man and woman – whether of heterosexual or homosexual orientation – is thus added to an almost endless diversity of sexes. *Facebook* distinguishes 58 genders, the genderists

claim that there are thousands. However, the forms cited are completely inconsistent in a systematic way, because once anatomical findings, and another time roles from the homosexual subcultures or even preferred sexual practices are used for discrimination. Certainly, it is helpful that the focus is also placed on ambiguities, since there are people for whom the attribution to the man-woman-scheme becomes a burden. However, starting from these examples, denying the existence of the male and the female in general and depicting as a mere effect of a repressive society, certainly means to throw the baby out with the bath water.

In a key text by *Judith Butler* “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity” it becomes obvious that it is not a matter of theory, that is, not recognising of which is the case, but rather a power strategy to transform reality. According to Butler the aim is subverting and postponing “the naturalised and reified notions of gender that support male hegemony and heterosexist power”. (p. 33/34) Thus genderism is a political subversion programme camouflaged as a theory or simpler: an ideology.

Human experiments with scalpel, hormones and training

The thesis of the social construction of sex was inspired by the human experiments of the American physician *John Money*.¹ He had turned *Bruce Reimer* (b. 1965), whose penis had been irreparably destroyed during circumcision, an object of a surgical, hormonal and psychological sex transformation. Bruce was to become *Brenda*. In his publications and public appearances,

he propagated the alleged success of his “therapy” and thereby nurtured the idea of any programmability of the sex. *Alice Schwarzer*, for example, invoked his experiments proving that gender was not given but made. The tragic fate of the boy became known far later. Right from the beginning – although the operation was carried out at the age of 22 months – he had refused to become the girl *Money* and the parents wanted to produce.² Finally, he fought for the name *David* and a male identity. Nevertheless, the experiment had a traumatic effect, and he committed suicide in 2004. *Money*’s reputation as sexologist and the idea of a social construction and restructuring of the sex remained unaffected by this tragedy.

Criticism of the ideology

Genderism must be free to question whether it does not simply ignore the realities in favour of its political objectives, which should be further illuminated:

The fact of a historical and cultural diversity of gender roles is misinterpreted as a radically contingent construction. It would be more appropriate to speak of interpretations in which, on the one hand, the unavailability of the fateful sex and, on the other hand, human freedom in the process of dealing with it becomes visible. However, every interpretation remains bound to what it interprets. We exist as gender and interpret gender in social contexts.

Gender is thus not created by means of language, but is interpreted only with-

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“News from Federal Berne”

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tion by a certain time, so Switzerland for example could engage, when Great Britain has taken a provision concerning immigration with the EU. But we can’t wait until the EU institutions offer a possibility to change the FMP agreement; Therefore, in the meantime, Switzerland must introduce an unilateral safeguard clause as it was already discussed and recommended even by EU politicians

Possible (still to be refined) wording:

FC article 121a, 1–4 unchanged

5 as long as the freedom of movement of people act is not finally agreed with the EU, Switzerland will introduce an unilateral safeguard clause with autonomous control of immigration, annual quantitative lim-

its and quotas and with priority to swiss citizens. The safeguard clause can be restricted to individual regions or industries.

6 A law regulates the details.

FC article 197 point. 11 transitional provision:

1 international treaties, contradicting articles 121a, are to be renegotiated within three or five years after the approval of the counterproposal variant 3 by people and the cantons and to adapt.

2 repealed

Some EU Member States will join Britain and Switzerland and will even regulate their immigration acts – and maybe other areas –, Why not? A federation of peoples, which can be held together only with coercion and pressure, is not resistant

to tearing. Only acting with voluntarily allied, you can move mountains. •

¹ Cf. “Don’t sacrifice the Swiss state under the rule of law and democracy to the EU integration mania” in: *Current Concerns* No 1 from 14 Januar 2017

² *Current Consultations*. EJPD. Direct alternative on the National Initiative “Let’s get out of the dead-end” (“Raus aus der Sackgasse”: Rasa-Initiative) Cancellation on the reintroduction of the immigration quotas.” <https://www.admin.ch/ch/d/gg/pc/pdependent.html#EJPD>

³ *Explanatory Report* for the direct alternative of the Federal Council on the National Initiative “Let’s get out of the dead-end” (“Raus aus der Sackgasse”: Rasa-Initiative) Cancellation on the reintroduction of the immigration quotas.” from 1 February 2017 [below quoted as; *Explanatory Report*] p.9

⁴ *Explanatory Report*, p.10

⁵ Cf. “Don’t sacrifice the Swiss state under the rule of law and democracy to the EU integration mania” in: *Current Concerns* No 1 from 14 Januar 2017

⁶ *Explanatory Report*, p. 11

⁷ *Explanatory Report*, p. 13

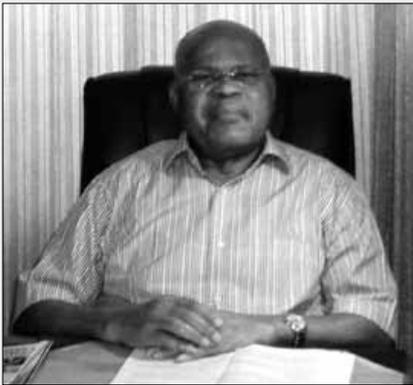
⁸ *Explanatory Report* p. 14/15

⁹ *Explanatory Report*, p. 15

¹⁰ *Explanatory Report*, p. 16

"The baobab has fallen!"

Obituary on the Congolese politician Etienne Tshisekedi



In Etienne-Tshisekedi the Congolese lose a symbolic figure of the unarmed struggle for a democratic Congo.

"The baobab tumbled down" – so or similar, well-known exponents of the democratic resistance described the sudden death of Etienne Tshisekedi, a death many face deeply affected. The Baobab, the African monkey-bread tree, is considered a particularly strong, resistant tree.

The former opposition politician of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaïre), founder of the *Union-Populaire pour la Démocratie et le Progrès social* (UDPS), for a long time the only opposition party alongside Mobutu's compulsory party *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR), surprisingly died on 1 February 2017 in Brussels of the consequences of a pulmonary embolism. Tshisekedi had recently been in Brussels for two years, also for health reasons. He had returned to Kinshasa to take a key role in an agreement between government and opposition in the turmoil surrounding Joseph Kabila's unconstitutional persistence in his further presidential mandate. At the end of January, he had to return to the Belgian capital for a health check-up, where he died two days before last Wednesday.

Lumumba's ally

Tshisekedi, born in the Kasai in 1934, was a Congolese politician from the very beginning. As the first Congolese graduate student in jurisprudence, Etienne Tshisekedi belonged to the patriotic young

intellectuals around Patrice Lumumba. After his coup, Mobutu made Tshisekedi, then Director of the State Civil Service College, ENDA (1961–1965), Minister of Interior, who was instrumental in formulating the Congolese constitution. It was also Tshisekedi, who in 1967 formulated the statutes of the mobutist movement "Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution" (MPR), a movement which at that time permitted the existence of an opposition party. It was only later that Mobutu made the movement a totalitarian unitary party and himself a dictator for life. Tshisekedi became increasingly marginalised by this "betrayal" of Mobutu, and was consequently removed by Mobutu from all responsible government operations. In 1980, when Mobutu's omnipotence and misrule became more evident, Tshisekedi with 13 courageous co-signers addressed an open letter to Mobutu in which he openly criticised the totalitarian features of his regime. This letter caused the emergence of the UDPS, even today the most respected oppositional party in the Congo.

Estranged from Mobutu

The letter is the first striking document of a critical movement against Mobutu's dictatorship that has since emerged in Zaïre. The movement showed with impressive figures how Mobutu systematically abused the confidence—originally acquired from the Congolese—for his striving for power and enrichment. The 13 signatories were immediately arrested and persecuted as state enemies. Some were subjected to Mobutu's arbitrary justice, ill-treatment, even torture, for a time even Tshisekedi himself. However, since the discontent about Mobutu among the people was not to dislodge, Tshisekedi enjoyed a certain room to move. In the final phase of Mobutu's staggering regime, Tshisekedi was repeatedly appointed as the prime minister next to Mobutu, but often only for a few weeks or even days. The two bloody Congo wars in the wake of Mobutu's dismissal, brought the country once again plague and devastation and the remote-controlled domination of Uganda

and Rwanda backed by the protection power USA. Tshisekedi stayed away from political intrigues. He also measured the two Kabila governments (*Laurent Désiré Kabila*, 1997–2001, and Joseph Kabila) against the principles of a genuine democratic state. Both Laurent Désiré's takeover and the elections – defying any legitimacy – of the Rwandan pawn Joseph Kabila, could not withstand these criteria, as not only Etienne Tshisekedi pointed out. Consistently, he did not accept the rule of Laurent Désiré Kabila as legitimate, or even that of his successor, Joseph Kabila. On the contrary: he considered himself as the legitimate president of the state by pointing out manipulated elections, since he had achieved the second best result in the presidential elections, also documented by official figures.

Incorruptible committed to democracy

Etienne Tshisekedi, however, did not win his prestige due to these facts, but in recognition of the fact that since the seventies the Congolese politician had always courageously stated, the Congolese were ready for democracy and would not deserve to be deprived by a camarilla from the fruits of their efforts. Thus the fear in the present nomenclature in Kinshasa is great that the death of "Papa Tshisekedi," as he was called by many supporters, could lead to further unrest in the vast, turmoil stricken empire.

However, the politicians and the population can only come to rest when a real peace based on understanding and reconciliation is finally achieved in the Congo: also in its resource-rich East, where government-sponsored and protected bandits have illegally exploited the natural treasures and treated the civilian population as a hostage. And when political leadership of the Congo would emerge from general, secret and internationally controlled democratic elections. Every day of waiting thereupon makes the Congolese tragedy even more intolerable.

Peter Küpfer

"Gender – theory or ..."

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in this language. Genderism is subject to naive or strategic logocentrism, which is why it is so obsessed with the control of language and the speaker. The reality of the speaker, however, is more and different from the reality he has just described. Analogously, there is a difference between the merely conceived gender and the thinking, sexual human being. In genderism both are equated naively, which leads to an alienation from one's own body and its condition.

Political effects

Ideologies have two born enemies: logic and reality principle. The example of David Reimers and the contradictions cited should suffice to show the gaps of the approach and to put it into the moth-box of scientific scurrilities. The opposite is true: gender mainstreaming carries this baseless concept into all spheres of social life and forms a fatal alliance with the neoliberal economic model. Both have an interest in the eradication and isolation of human beings. Family policy in this light means a policy to destruct the family: emancipation is equated with employment, hospitalisation and institutionalisation

of childhood is intended to compensate the work-life balance. The parental responsibility is called into question by early sexualisation and gender re-education in the institutions. The children are confronted with issues whose presentation and relevance do not correspond to their level of development. It is absurd if fifteen-year-olds plan a "brothel for all" during lessons.³

Family in the firing line

The family seems to be an important point of attack. Anthropologically, the family is

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The refugees are to be prepared to rebuild their country

by Roland Hureaux, essayist, France *



Roland Hureaux
(picture ma)

The French government's difficulties to motivate mayors and the population of the municipalities to receive migrants from the "jungle" of Calais are well-known – all the more so since no one knows how

to give them work. *Hollande* had promised *Angela Merkel* to take over 28,000 refugees who had landed in Germany, many of whom now live on French soil under more or less regular conditions.

We are talking about migrants from Syria, but also from Iraq and Afghanistan, who are entitled to refugee status. In principle, a refugee does not leave his country voluntarily. It can be assumed that he wants to return to his home country as soon as conditions allow.

Quickly create peace

In order to deal with the refugee problem, the war-stricken countries must first be brought back to peace.

Should it not be remembered that obviously this has not been the first goal of the Western leaders in recent weeks? Today, we know that American, French, and English military forces (and also from coun-

tries in the region) supported the jihadists of al-Nusra (al-Qaeda) in their resistance to the re-conquest of East Aleppo through the government forces. Since no one really wanted or even hoped that the jihadists would take over the power in Damascus, the matter must be clearly stated: the activities of Western decision-makers pursued – or are still pursuing – the goal of prolongating the war to get Russia in trouble, but also not to be forced to face a huge ideological failure.

Even if the reconquest of East Aleppo is an important step towards the re-establishment of control over Syria's entire territory by the legitimate state authority, many Jihadist pockets of resistance remain in the country, including Deir-es-Zor, where the intervention of the American army made it possible to Da'esh to recover lost terrain. Not preventing these nests from being cleared as soon as possible, as *Jean-Luc Melançon* recently put it, is the only means of speeding up the return to peace.

In Iraq, the roles are reversed as the Americans, who support Da'esh in Syria, are fighting them in Iraq. Nevertheless, they do not seem to be in a hurry to recapture Mosul. Maybe this will change with *Donald Trump*?

Suspending the sanctions

Just as important as the return of peace is the abolition of international sanctions against Syria – especially those of the European Union. They are useless: they are compelled to force the regime to back down, what they have not achieved. They are inhuman. As always, it is not the leadership but the population that suffers from the embargo: the sanctions concern not only essential necessities, especially foodstuffs, but also urgently needed pharmaceutical products, to sustain the children weakened by deprivation and the wounded victims of war. They have massively curbed the economy of Syria. Even more than the war itself – lately less affecting the most heavily populated regions (except

Aleppo) – the sanctions are the reason for the exodus of some one million Syrians to Europe. Normalisation in this country can only be achieved by the speedy lifting of sanctions. One can only hope that the relentless Brussels machinery, whose victims are the Syrian people, will be able to get into more flexibility and humanity ...

The abolition of the sanctions would allow air connections between Damascus and Europe. The numerous refugees, who are in Germany and elsewhere and who are today homesick for their country, will be happy to return as soon as cheap flights are organised again. This is especially true of the high school students from Damascus and the surrounding area, who have travelled to Europe in large numbers due to a collective and not carefully considered movement, are facing big difficulties and now would like to return to their families.

Prepare the return

War damage is considerable. Many cities and villages in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan need to be rebuilt. They need builders, architects, foremen, bricklayers. International loans will be needed during at least 10 years for construction activities. What are the Western governments waiting for until they provide vocational training to the refugees in Europe who are disoccupied? In France, an institution such as the "Agence Nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes" (AFPA) [National Agency for Adult Vocational Education] has a long experience in vocational training for construction and building trades. Hitherto, the European Union has been extremely inhumane by imposing brutal sanctions against the Syrian people, and its member states have armed the jihadists. Now it would be time to reflect and to show generosity, for example by considering an extensive Marshall plan for the Middle East and Afghanistan. This is the least what we owe to these populations. •

Source: www.LibertePolitique.com of 1.2.2017
(Translation *Current-Concerns*)

* Roland Hureaux, born in 1948, is a graduate of the two most prestigious universities in France: the ENS (State Scientific University) and the ENA (National School of Administration). He is a historian and has made a comprehensive university, administrative and political career. In the 1990s, he was president of the National Assembly and a member of various ministerial cabinets. Over the past 20 years, he has written about a dozen books and a variety of articles, essays and analysis on political and social issues from a sovereign and Gaullist perspective. His book, published in January 2017, is entitled "D'une crise à l'autre" (From one crisis to another).

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a community characterised by erotic love between man and woman and family relationships among the generations. Family is more than a mere biological reproduction sit. It is a transcendental symbol of human life including suffering and passion. Individuals exist only because there are families. Therefore familiarity is also a non-cancelable way of being – even for homosexuals and transsexuals: Even if I break with my parents – for good reasons – my existence

remains determined by the fate of childhood. The sex points out a deep dimension of relationship: it points at the counterpart and promises complement, it begets descendants and corresponds to the future. The thousands of social genders atomise the relational community of human beings into irritating gender particles without origin, without arrival, without future. Gender sociology recognises the family only as a social aggregate, as a temporary clump of vanities, who fulfill functions for each other, functions that could be taken over by other functionaries at any time. Thus the family

loses all resistance to the access of political and economic interests and the people lose a protected space – private rootedness. •

* Pseudonym. The correct name is known to the editor.

¹ Perthes et al. (Eds.): *Menschenversuche*. Frankfurt 2008. pp. 162.

² Zastrow, Volker. "Gender Mainstreaming" In: *"Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung"* from 7 September 2006

³ Weber, Chr.: "Was Sie noch nie über Sex wissen wollten". In: *"Süddeutsche Zeitung"* from 24 April 2014

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“There is no use in altitude training” – but no way!

The attack on altitude training was a barrel burst

by Heini Hofmann



Racehorses are also athletes (an benefit from the altitude training. Yes they have even initiated this. (picture from the Book “Mythos St. Moritz”)

We know it from collecting box institutions: sense of mission for the own ambitions can seduce to rewrite things in a way that serves – via tear-jerking and money bag – the donation box. In science sometimes analogical things happen. Such a case concerning the altitude training could have had fatal consequences for the Engadine, the European altitude training centre number one.

Scientific research today first of all is a question of money. Touting for research funds it happens – fortunately only occasionally – even in noble university circles that half-baked “scientific results” are trumpeted.

Making hypothesis to thesis

Research works with posing questions, that means it constructs a hypothesis to then examine if it is in fact as assumed or if it is maybe different. The result of this kind of research is then a thesis. In the past it was usual to go to the media and thereby to the public only with this thesis that means only with the verified scientific result in order not to cause confusion.

However, today it happens more and more that driven by the struggle for research funds, occasionally also to position oneself in the media (malicious gossip speaks about mediahype) one presses ahead already with the hypothesis. And what do most media people do? Of course a thesis out of the hypothesis; because they have to sell their stories crisply with

flesh on the bones. Result: The hypothesis being right or wrong is cemented via published opinion as public opinion.

This happened two years ago with the issue of altitude training, induced by a researcher of the University of Zurich who, even during the reviewing process, went full-throatedly public with a previously undisclosed study which was already qualified non valid by other researchers. Of all things he did this via the university information magazine and thereby unnecessarily caused a stir and uncertainty.

“Altitude training does not work”

This destructive statement about an up to then sacrosanct scientific consensus decorated as title an article in the Zurich University periodical *magazine* where it was described how the concerned scientist emphasised with “ringing laughter” that he had great fun dethroning one of the greatest dogmas of sport physiology, because “our study is simply much better than the others”. The academic cavalry attack was directed at the principle “live high – train low” with which top athletes improve their performance since more than ten years still by some percent.

Responding to Marathon European Champion *Victor Röthlin* who, like many other athletes, used to do his “Live high – train low” altitude training in the Engadine (living in Muottas Muragl, training in St. Moritz) and who said from his own experience: “three weeks after I come back from the mountains to the lowlands, I literally fly”, the scientist in question an-

swered, that he took the effects of altitude training being perceived by top athletes as positive for a placebo effect, therefore simply for imagination.

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Racehorses as a trigger

Interestingly, it was not two- but four-legged athletes who opened up the practice of altitude training. After the poor performance of the Swiss delegation at the Olympic Winter Games in Innsbruck in 1964 and with a worried look at the 1968 Olympic Summer Games in Mexico at 2,000 m above sea level, new training methods were required.

The inspiring idea came from St. Moritz; because in the 1920s an interesting observation had been made with racing horses (trotters and gallopers). For the international horse races in February on the frozen lake they came to St. Moritz already one month before for training. At the big spring races in different major European cities they made it to top places. Ergo: These were the first altitude trainings in preparation for competitions at lower altitudes!

The director of the research institute in Magglingen at that time, Professor *Gottfried Schönholzer*, addressed himself to this phenomenon; because what worked with the hippological training, he concluded, could also be used on human athletes. The future should prove him right.

Not the same for everyone!

“If competitions take place in the height,” says *Jon Peter Wehrlin*, specialist in altitude training at the Swiss Federal Institute of Sports in Magglingen, “altitude training for all participants makes sense. In order to achieve the best possible performance, the body has to acclimatise to the high altitude. Compared to ‘normal’ training, altitude training can provide a one to three percent increase in performance. And that’s exactly what in top-class sport decides between victory or defeat.”

Wehrlin, on the other hand, recommends altitude training as a preparation for a competition in the lowlands only for fully trained athletes, who have already reached a high level with the classic training methods, but with this were not able to achieve more progress. With this additional stimulus, they can improve their performance – individually and tailor-made.

“There is no use in...”

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Hence, according to his opinion, height would be a placebo that means an ineffective, indifferent substance, a “pseudo-medicament”, administered to patients (i.e. athletes) to answer imaginary needs. An audacious thesis which had had catastrophic consequences for the altitude training Eldorado Engadine. When faced with such a demystification the physician of the century *Paracelsus* probably would strike back very crude again like he did in those days: “cushion professors...requiem physicians... clowns (‘Gugelfritzen’)... who rumble in the books of the old like sows in the trough”.

Barrel burst instead of flare rocket

The denier of said altitude training even advised *Swiss Olympic* to better “hire more psychologists”. Since, “as long as the athletes believe that altitude training is profitable, they will continue to do it”, was his sarcastic motto. Well, he has achieved something, namely media attention, although his study was only one among fifty others (deviating!) For the journals of the yellow press this occasionally is what they are waiting for when university researchers are fighting each other. However, what goes around, comes around. In science this applies, too: The revolution consumes its own children. The alleged flare rocket ended as a barrel burst.

There was harsh criticism in the review process by other well-known researchers

Aim determines method

In spite of a storm in a teacup the following still applies: the original altitude training meant “live high – train high, LHTH”. It serves as preparation for altitude competitions. Besides there is the hypoxia training with “live low – train high, LLTH”. Here the anaerobic performance is improved.

The latest form of altitude training is “live high – train low, LHLL”. “This type of altitude training,” says *Jon Peter Wehrli*, head of the Sports physiology (endurance) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen, SFISM, “has proven to be more beneficial with elite endurance athletes in the preparation for competitions in the lowland than ‘live high – train high’” but also as more beneficial compared to training in the lowlands.

that the performance after the altitude stay was not measured at its best time, that the measurement accuracy for the determination of the hemoglobin mass leaves a lot to be desired, that was uncritically interpolated from artificial to natural level. The alleged blank test was not carried out “lege artis” with a high group and a control group, apart from the fact that “the ‘blinding’ during studies of altitude training was nonsense”. The bottom line is what has already been said before. Ultimately, the athletes themselves decide. For them the personal experience counts and this experience is good.

The damage remains done

An analogous case a few years ago comes to mind. It was about the raw milk caseation on the alp. At that time, it was a professor at the ETH Zurich who made such a fuss. It was said to be a threat to life. The majority of the media outbid one another with meeting the trouble halfways to that extend that the Federal Council thought it necessary to appoint a special commission. The latter held meetings, discussed, debated and came to the conclusion that “no immediate measures are necessary.”

To put it plainly, the whole academic kerfuffle was nothing but hot air. The saucy bits of such stories are that a correct position was never and nowhere delivered, note, neither in the case of altitude

training. The damage is done and nobody is responsible. For the sake of good order, it should be pointed out that these are always individual cases which, however, also affect the predominantly serious research.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Engadine

- Overnight lodging: Muottas Muragl (2456 m) or Bernina Hospiz (2309 m)
- Training: St. Moritz (1856 m) and Scuol (1275 m)

Region Davos

- Overnight lodging: Jakobshorn (2590 m), SLF Weissfluhjoch (2663 m)
- Training: Davos (1540 m) and Klosters (1120 m)

Region Appenzell

- Overnight lodging: Säntis (2501 m)
- Training: Schwägalp (1320 m), Urnäsch (841 m) or Herisau (745 m)

Region Central Switzerland

- Overnight lodging: Gütsch ob Andermatt (2344 m)
- Training: Andermatt (1445 m)

Region Valais

- Overnight lodging: Gemmi-Pass, Berghotel Wildstrubel (2346 m)
- Training: Leukerbad (1411 m)



Cycling along Lake St. Moritz – nature arena with a unique mountain landscape. (picture from the Book *Hofmann, Heini*. “Mythos St. Moritz. Sauerwasser-Gebirgssonnen-Höhenklima 2014.” ISBN 978-3-907067-44-4)