

Current Concerns

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Why are nuclear weapons proliferated? The example of North Korea

by Jacques Sapir *



Jacques Sapir
(picture
wikipedia)

The recent North Korean nuclear test following repeated tests of medium-range missiles, possibly even long-range missiles, emphasises once again the incoherence of United Nations' position concerning the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Yet this

position, at least initially, was based on a logical assessment: Namely, that the countries as a whole, whether they were in possession of nuclear weapons or not, had a common interest in limiting the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons. However, this starting-point, underlying the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, can only be effective if the international rules are respected by the countries as a whole, and thus first of all by the most powerful ones. Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, particularly one country – the United States – has repeatedly ignored these rules: from Kosovo to Iraq. The undermining of the international legislation, implying this behaviour, has led to great uncertainty and also to the fact that international legislation is increasingly determined by the “right of the stronger”. Considering these circumstances, it is not surprising that certain countries are trying to acquire operational nuclear weapons.

This emphasises the connection, which many politicians, however, refuse to acknowledge, between the undermining of international law and the tendency to proliferate nuclear weapons. The latter is a serious problem, not least because the entry cost for military nuclear weapons is strongly declining. Certain techniques and technologies, not only in the nuclear sector, but also for missiles, have be-

“Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, particularly one country – the United States – has repeatedly ignored these rules: from Kosovo to Iraq. The undermining of the international legislation, implying this behaviour, has led to great uncertainty and also to the fact that international legislation is increasingly determined by the ‘right of the stronger’. Considering these circumstances, it is not surprising that certain countries are trying to acquire operational nuclear weapons.”

come more easily accessible. Nowadays, one can no longer assume that the procurement of nuclear weapon systems is beyond the capabilities of so-called “middle powers”. But this problem can only be solved if one goes straight to the heart of the matter, that is to the instability in international relations, which is a result of non-respect for the legal order.

The beginning of proliferation

The phenomenon of nuclear proliferation has intensified since the 1970s, and several countries not belonging to the “Club of the 5”, consisting of the Security Council members United States, Russia, Great Britain, France and China (in the same order in which they have acquired nuclear weapons) have acquired nuclear weapons.

The first two “proliferators” were India and Israel. In the case of India, it was originally a question of responding to China’s nuclear armament. For a number of years, India has been content with the explosion of a non-waponized nuclear device, that was not weaponized, in order to prove it’s nuclear “capacity”. This was in 1974. When faced with the threat represented by the Pakistani experiments, at least from the Indian point of view, India, 24 years later, on 11 and 13 May 1998, began again to make tests, this time of clearly military nature. At that time, India was not yet a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. These tests included the explosion of several bombs. On 11 May, three tests were made to test the A-bomb and the H-bomb. On 13 May, in two further tests minor bombs were fired: “India has thus proved that it is competent in the whole range of nuclear weapons, both in terms

of strength and miniaturisation.”¹ Currently India is said to have an arsenal of 30 to 150 military nuclear war heads at its disposal, as well as carrier missiles.

Since the end of the 1950s, Israel has embarked on the path of nuclear armament. First, with the help of France (1956–1961), then with the help of the United States and South Africa.² In 1979, a test was carried out in South Africa, which certainly was the result of cooperation between the two countries. Today, Israel has several hundred weapons (between 150 and 400) that can be delivered with missiles (*Jericho*), airplanes, or diesel-powered submarines equipped with cruise missiles. Within the political circles there is strict pledge of secrecy concerning the Israeli nuclear program, since French President *Hollande* still maintained in 2015, despite all obvious facts, that Israel had no nuclear weapons.³ The fact that Israel was relatively easily able to get a large nuclear arsenal has, of course, encouraged other countries to follow its example.

The proliferation latecomers

Countries following the example of Israel and India are Pakistan, South Africa and North Korea. Pakistan started its nuclear program with support of the Saudis after the tests in India. Pakistan began to talk about it in the late 1980s. The program included a series of tests carried out at the end of May 1998. Today, Pakistan has about 300 nuclear weapons and medium-range missiles targeting mainly India.⁴ Potentially Saudi Arabia “has been given the

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possibility" to acquire some warheads on request. It is clear that the Pakistani plan, from the Iranian point of view, has given naissance to a "Sunni" bomb.

South Africa developed its nuclear program in cooperation with Israel, as mentioned above. The government of *de Klerk* and later *Nelson Mandela* agreed that this program would be discontinued. The fissile material and the bombs that existed (3 to 5 bombs) were transported to the United States to be dismantled. At the moment, South Africa is the only country that has renounced the ownership of nuclear weapons after having them.

North Korea apparently has been pursuing a nuclear program since 1989. They officially withdrew from the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* in early 2003 and they carried out their first test in 2006. However, they remain far behind the capabilities of Israel, India, or Pakistan, as far as the number of weapons is concerned. It is estimated that there are only 10 to 15 weapons that could rise to 30 within the next three years. The North Korean program is clearly "defensive" in the strategic sense, essentially serving the Korean government to maintain the integrity of its territory.⁵ The political "intention" of this program has become apparent during the long-lasting negotiations which took place in the 1990s and 2000s. It is, therefore, quite astonishing that in this context, so much ado is made about this program, which is actually much more limited and much less operational than the programs of Israel, India and Pakistan.

Why proliferating nuclear weapons?

Other countries have the capability to access atomic weapons at any given time. This is obviously the case with Iran, still pretending to have nothing but a civilian program, but it would be able to convert it to military purposes within a few years. Brazil and Argentina are in the same situation as well.

The nuclear issue must therefore be addressed by simultaneously taking into account the technical and economic capacities of a country, as well as its understanding of the international situation and the impact of its program on the surrounding countries. It is clear that Pakistan has responded to the Indian test, which in turn was a response to the development of the program run by the Chinese. Likewise, Iran's intention to procure nuclear weapons can only be explained by the development of the Israeli and Pakistani programs as part of a race of deterrence between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

If the proliferation in the case of China and India could have been limited, it can

Nobel Peace Prize 2017 awarded to International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

cc. The international organisation ICAN, based in Geneva, receives this year's Nobel Peace Prize for its commitment against nuclear weapons. The chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, *Berit Reiss Andersen*, said, among other things, that ICAN had been awarded the prize "for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons". The Peace Prize announcement came in the midst of the tensions that were at present prevailing around North Korea.

ICAN launched an international campaign to support a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons under international law. On 7 July 2017, 122 of the UN member states acceded to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (cf. *Current Concerns* No 19). The treaty has been opened for signature since 20 September. As soon as the treaty has been ratified by 50 states, the ban on nuclear

weapons will enter into force and will be binding under international law for all the countries that are party to the treaty. With their signatures the signatory states send a moral appeal.

With its commitment, ICAN draws worldwide attention to the risks posed by the 27,000 existing nuclear weapons. Thus ICAN is re-launching a fundamental debate. It remains open how the nuclear-weapon states can be won for systematic disarmament, but it is again in the public focus.

ICAN *International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* is an international coalition of non-governmental organisations with currently more than 440 partner organisations in 98 countries worldwide. ICAN partner organisations represent a wide range of peace, humanitarian, environmental and human rights organisations (cf. www.icanw.org).

be clearly seen that the Israeli nuclear program has played a greater part in destabilizing and still does. From this point of view, a large part of the destabilization stems not so much from the program itself as from the will of the Israeli government and the other powers to keep quiet over this program. If a country has succeeded in procuring nuclear weapons and has confirmed and expressed that it has the nuclear bomb, as well as providing information on what its "deployment doctrine" is, then it can be controlled in a framework of international relations. However, this does not work at all with a "clandestine proliferator" who refuses to review its program.

The impact of the subversion of the international law by the USA

We must, therefore, refer to the consequences of the US policy from Kosovo to Iraq and its undermining of the international relations. In particular, the US intervention in Iraq, as it can clearly be seen in the delicate Iranian nuclear issue, has destroyed the legal basis of the large world-wide agreements, including the fundamental principles in the worldwide relations after the end of the Cold War in 1991.

The United Nations, whatsoever as insufficient as they may act, have remained a central instrument of conflict resolution. However, they have been permanently weakened by the US policy. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has lost a lot of credibility, due to the unbridled aggression against Iraq, which respected the obligations of the NPT, whereas other countries did not. This point is all the more important because the problem of nuclear proliferation was open for discussion at the time of

the end of the USSR in 1991. One could define this as one of the most important problems of the coming 21st century and therefore ask whether a "statute of proliferation" – which would have represented a binding but strategically open framework – would not have been a more morally legitimate and materially more efficient response than the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.⁶

The political elites of the West rejected this solution since they wanted to make the nuclear arms treaty a central instrument of the world order after 1991. From this point of view – as we now see from our relationship with Iran – the American attack on Iraq, despite the fact that this country had fulfilled all disarmament commitments, has massively weakened the nuclear arms treaty and has been left at the mercy of arbitrary international relations – a situation legitimately leading other countries to the prospect of obtaining opportunities for nuclear deterrence.

Let us recall at this point that the United States has unilaterally violated a series of agreements that guaranteed stability during the Cold War, in particular the ABM Treaty [the Treaty on the Restriction of Missile Defense Systems], whose importance for Russia can not be underestimated.⁷ On the other hand, their policy was at least accommodating to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan despite the information, by which it was possible to prove that this country had become the hinterland for the basis of Islamic terror and the destabilization of Central Asia. This approach was largely dictated by the will of the United States, at a time when they

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were seeking to penetrate the oil-rich regions of Central Asia.

Putin's speech in Munich 10 years ago

The speech that Russian President *Putin* held in Munich in February 2007 within the framework of the European Security Conference deserves an accurate analysis. Ten years after it was held, it retains an astounding timeliness. Putin spoke about the nature of international relations. The fact that he did so, although he could have taken action and kept silent, proves at least a dangerous crisis in the international relations that began to emerge. A crisis that had to be taken seriously. In this sense, the speech was an important fundamental contribution to the debate and understanding of what should happen in the coming years.

So to speak, it is a programmatic text. On the other hand, Vladimir Putin is a politician who has certainly drawn the lessons from what happened between 1991 and 2005 with a high degree of binding force. There are two important points that stand out: the assessment that the unipolar world does not work and that the condemnation of the attempt to subordinate international law to Anglo-Saxon law. "I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's – and precisely in today's – world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilisation."⁸ (official version of the speech)

This passage shows that the Russian position contains two different but coherent elements. The first is the doubt

"As long as a country is afraid of one day becoming the goal of 'humanitarian colonialism' and the accompanying 'humanitarian war', it, with all means will rightly try to arm itself. In reality, the process of the further spread of nuclear weapons can only be curbed by restoring to its full force the principle of sovereignty as enshrined in the United Nations Charter of 1945."

about the capacity of a country (the United States is clearly meant here) to acquire the means to exercise hegemony in an efficient manner. This is a realistic argument. Even the most powerful and richest country cannot guarantee alone the stability of the world. The American project overstrains the American forces. This is a conclusion where can be set little against. Putin's speech is not "relativistic." It does simply establish that these values (the "moral and ethical basis") cannot be found on plain polarity because the exercise of political or economic power has not to be defined by values but by interests. This leads to the inevitable rejection of the thesis of the de-politicisation of international relations, which should be restricted to human rights and the "laws" of the economy, in the thinking of those who support this depoliticisation. If international relations are no "technology" (the simple application of the common norms), but politics (the regulation of different interests and potential conflicts), including the economic relations, any attempt to put up hegemony becomes immoral. Next in the speech, the second point follows which is formulated in the following passage:

"Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a politi-

cal settlement also becomes impossible. We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. And independent legal norms are, as a matter of fact, coming increasingly closer to one state's legal system. One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations."⁹ (official version of the speech)

Is a moral or ethical basis missing which would allow politics to be excluded from international relations, the latter can only be regulated on the basis of the principle of international law by the rule of unanimity and respect for national sovereignty. As soon as the relations are determined by politics (and not by technology or ethics), no one can impose his right on the others, and the common law is the only one possible. It is the right that respects the sovereignty of the other, the right of coordination and not a right of subordination.

In this sense, Putin is in the tradition of the great debates on international law and the possibilities of global constitutions. The Russian President reminds that where there are politics, interests and different ideas, there must also be sovereignty. Any attempt to hurt it turns out to be a tyranny and justifies the resistance. In consequence, the Russian President ascertains that the United States is trying to transform its internal right into an alternative international law.

Infertility: Are radioactive weapons the cause?

According to the Serbian TV station *Radio-Televizija Srbije*, Serbian doctors, scientists and military formed an initiative concerning the consequences of the NATO air raids on Yugoslavia in 1999 for the health of the Serbian population. They requested that the relevant authorities investigate.

"The number of autoimmune diseases has increased, and male infertility has increased a hundredfold," the station quotes Professor *Danica Grujicic*.

The station notes that in the Southern Serbia, radioactive contamination was discovered after the NATO air raids.

Radiologists, epidemiologists and toxicologists are to participate in the research. They are to investigate soil, water, air and food. Thereafter a coor-

inating body is to carry out an economic and legal study.

Once the results of the investigations have been published, Serbia will be able to file a suit against the 19 NATO members who participated in the operation against the former Yugoslavia.

From 24 March to 10 June 1999, the NATO carried out a military operation against the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia within the framework of the Kosovo war. The operation had no mandate from the UN Security Council.

Source: <https://de.sputniknews.com/panorama/20170930317666436-serbien-unfruchtbarkeit-nato-luftangriffe/> from 30.9.2017

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Alternative law" and "humanitarian colonialism": the reason for the proliferation of nuclear weapons?

This "alternative right" which is nothing more than the "right of the stronger", has led to a policy which can be called "humanitarian colonialism".¹⁰ Any country that does not respect the will of the United States thus could be counted to the "camp of the evil", that is, the object of this "humanitarian colonialism." But in reality "humanitarian colonialism" proves a contradiction in itself. It is incapable – as we saw in Kosovo¹¹ in Somalia¹² – and also in Iraq to create those institutions on which it is relying and which could have served as a pretext.

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The UN protectorate in Kosovo has led to a lasting ethnic cleansing¹³ and the US intervention in Iraq has plunged the country into a civil war that takes it further away every day from the possibility of even establishing a sham democracy there which is the real source of the "Islamic State" organization. Unfortunately, this is not all.

The "humanitarian war", as we saw it in Libya in 2011 as a logical consequence of the "right to intervention" and an unavoidable element of "humanitarian colonialism" also poses a twofold problem in international relations. On the one hand, it immediately entails a split within the nations between those where the defence protects them from any attempt of interference, and those where the defense is weak enough to potentially become the target of a "humanitarian war". Initially set in motion to uphold the idea of an "international community" of equal actors with common goals such as security, the "humanitarian war" has, on the contrary, become the idea of international relations as a clash of unequal actors with unshakeable conflicting interests.

On the other hand, every country that imagines to one day become the goal of such intervention is tempted by the idea to enhance the power of its defense. And the ultimate means to guarantee the integrity of a country is the possession of weapons

of mass destruction. Whichever the concerns are that may provoke Iran's nuclear hopes and the most realistic are less concerned with the use of the atomic bomb by the regime in Tehran than the imitation effect that these efforts might cause in countries like Egypt or Saudi Arabia. One has to admit that American aggression against Iraq has given realistic justification to these efforts in 2003. The same counts for North Korea.

As long as a country is afraid of one day becoming the goal of "humanitarian colonialism" and the accompanying "humanitarian war", it, with all means will rightly try to arm itself. In reality, the process of the further spread of nuclear weapons can only be curbed by restoring to its full force the principle of sovereignty as enshrined in the United Nations Charter of 1945.

Source: Sapir, Jacques. *Russeurope*. 4 September 2017, www.les-crisis.fr/coree-du-nord-pourquoi-la-prolifération-nucléaire-par-jacques-sapir
cf. also: *Traité sur la non-prolifération des armés nucléaires (TNP)*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

¹ Capette, Isabelle. "Les essais nucléaires indiens et pakistanais: un défi lancé au régime de non-prolifération nucléaire. Actualité et Droit International." <http://www.ridi.org/adi>, December 1998

² cf. Hersh, Seymour. *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal & American Foreign Policy*. Random House; 1st edition, 1991 and Karpin, Michael. *The Bomb in the Basement: How Israel Went Nuclear and What That Meant for the World*. New York 2006

³ Discussion with President Hollande of 14 July 2015 on *TF1* and *France24*

⁴ www.fondation-res-publica.org/Le-Pakistan-et-l-arme-nucleaire_a428.html

⁵ "Corée du Nord: Le difficile accès à la dissuasion", *Défense et sécurité internationale*, Paris, no 121, January-February 2016, p. 21

⁶ cf. Sapir, Jacques. *Feu le système soviétique?* Paris, La Découverte, 1992, pp. 177–180

⁷ The current installation of missile shields in Poland and in the Czech Republic, allegedly to protect these countries against an Iranian threat – an argument without any foundation – belongs to the same kind of conscious provocation.

⁸ cf. "La Lettre Sentinel", No 43/44, January-February 2007, p. 25

⁹ "La Lettre Sentinel", No 43/44, January-February 2007, pp. 25

¹⁰ Colonialism, the ideological basis of which is from the following publication: Bettati, Mario / Kouchner, Bernard. *Le Devoir d'ingérence: peut-on les laisser mourir?* [The duty of humanitarian intervention: can one let them die?] Paris 1987

¹¹ Human Rights Watch. *Under Orders – War Crimes in Kosovo*. Genève 2001. Report available at www.hrw.org/reports/2001/Kosovo

¹² A tragic example of this was the American intervention "Restore Hope" in Somalia 1992. This operation – designated by Bernard Kouchner as a "fantastic step forward in support of the right to intervention" – was not only able to build a stable political power in Somalia, but contributed to the destruction of the local agricultural structures by the humanitarian aid (snags next to which Kouchner filmed on a Somali beach). "It plunged ten thousand peasants into misery, which led them to move to Mogadishu and further cities, which led to an additional destabilization of the country. A few years later, the famous 'Islamic Tribunals' appeared."

¹³ Pekmez, Juan. *The Intervention by the International Community and the Rehabilitation of Kosovo*. Report of the project "The Rehabilitation of War-Torn Societies" coordinated by CASIN (Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations). Geneva, January 2001. cf. also Blumi, Isa. "One year of failure in Kosovo: chances missed and the unknown future", *Southeast European Politics*, vol. 1, No 1, October 2000, pp. 15–24.

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Russia and the Great Revolution, 1917-2017

by Prof Dr Dr h.c. Peter Bachmaier*



Peter Bachmaier
(picture uk)

On 7 November 2017, Russia commemorates the 100th anniversary of the bolshevist revolution which according to the Julian calendar had taken place on 25 October. Today Russian historians refer to the *Great Russian Revolution*, by

which term they define the period from 1917 with both February and October revolutions and the Civil war until the foundation of the USSR in December 1922. The extended period from the first revolution in 1905, the First world war until 1922 is also called “time of turmoil”, in analogy to the beginning of the 17th century when there was no Czar in Russia.

Decree of Putin about the jubilee

On 1 December 2016, *Vladimir Putin* declared at the Federal Assembly in the Kremlin: “We know well, which consequences the so-called ‘great perturbations’ may have.” He continued: “We need the lessons of history, most of all in order to achieve societal closure. ... We hold the significance of self-preservation, solidarity and unity in high regard ... We are a united people”, he concluded, “one people and we only have one Russia.”

On 8 December 2016, Putin issued a decree with guidelines about the anniversary celebrations. The *Russian Historical Society*, which had been re-established in 2012, was put in charge to organise them. The parliamentary president of the Duma, *Sergey Naryschkin*, himself the descendant of an old aristocratic family, serves as their chairman. The society called for an increase in history lessons at school and published a new history textbook. The list of events planned by the Russian historical society in 2017, i.e. conferences, exhibitions, films and monument inaugurations, shows 188 items.

One of the main events is the exhibition: 1917: “The code of revolution” in the *Museum of Modern Russian History* (the former Museum of the Revolution). Another exhibition is organised at the *State Literature Museum* about twelve authors, about half of whom were emigrants and/or opponents of bolshevism, whose oevres reflect the controversies of



Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Federal Assembly in the Kremlin on 1 December 2016.
(picture en.kremlin.ru)

the time: under the title “The Twelve” it deals with *Vladimir Mayakovsky*, *Ivan Bunin*, *Alexander Blok*, *Sinaida Gippius*, *Alexander Vertinsky*, *Demyan Bedny*, *Anatoly Lunacharsky*, *Aleksey Remizov*, *Maximilian Voloshin*, *Marina Tsvetaeva*, *Valery Bryusov* and *Maxim Gorky*. The exhibition was shown in Moscow until May 2017 and has been travelling through European capitals since, including Berlin.

The reconciliation of opponents

Russian minister of culture *Vladimir Medinsky* emphasised in a preparatory meeting in May 2015, that both the Whites and the Reds had been inspired by “holy patriotism” in the civil war which he regarded as a basis for unification – in his words “historical Russia” had been victorious in the conflict since it was reborn as the unified Soviet Union.

“The attempt to establish a just society on the face of the earth ... had shaped historical development decisively, not only in Russia”, but “had a huge influence on the progress of all nations on the planet.” “We must not divide our predecessors into righteous and unrighteous ones.” “Both Reds and Whites were inspired by what we now call patriotism.”

Foreign Secretary *Sergey Lavrov* argued in the journal *Russia in Global Affairs* that it was wrong to reduce the Russian Revolution to a mere coup d’état. Similar to the French Revolution, terror and societal achievements were to be weighed against each other.

Greater emphasis on the February Revolution and the Provisionary Government is a new twist in the story. The new narrative reads, that under the influence of

foreign powers, *Alexander Kerensky* and the liberal government had done nothing to prevent the disintegration of army, police and the state as a whole although they would have been able to, and so they had paved the way for the October revolution.

Strikingly, *Lenin* as the leader of the October revolution is hardly mentioned any more. Putin has blamed Lenin for drawing arbitrary borders within the Soviet territory, thereby placing a time-bomb under the united state. When the former Soviet republics declared their independence in 1991, this bomb exploded. On the same occasion Putin warned against new divisions in society and called for reconciliation.

The Red Project

The *Central Russian Television* has been broadcasting a series of documentations and talk shows since 1 July 2017 under the title “The Red Project”, but the historians find it hard to reach a consensus on how to judge the revolution. Emphasis is put on the continuity of Russian statehood. The concept of class struggle doesn’t play a role any more in history theories. The defining category in today’s political historiography is no longer the class but the state which needs strong leadership.

Politologist *Dmitri Kulikov*, who is in charge of the broadcast, declared: “To this very day we haven’t fully understood what really happened in these 70 years.” And he added: “The question today is, what is the next move and when will it happen.”

The “passionary energy”, as defined by philosopher *Lev Gumilyov*, may be em-

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bodied by such different figures as Prince *Vladimir of Kiev* who had baptised the people of the Rus in 988 and whose monument was erected immediately in front of the Kremlin in 2016, or *Pyotr Stolypin*, prime minister from 1906 until 1911, whose statue stands in front of the "White House", the seat of the Russian government.

The opening ceremony of the Olympic Winter games in Sochi on 7 February 2014 had already foreshadowed this new culture politics of the Kremlin. Almost all important figures were summoned there for the greatness of the Russian nation: from the suprematist painters to *Gagarin* the cosmonaut.

The history of Russia as a ballet

From the cultural programme at the Sotschi Winter games:

"Time explodes – the Russian revolution – the main event of the 20th century. A radical social upheaval which shatters the world. New forces, new topics, new colour, a new subversion in the arts from which the new world emerges, the avant-garde.

Time ahead, new time in a new land in the new era, in the realm of ideology, which pressures everything towards the absolute. Man becomes part of the machine... The horses made from steal overtake the living horses. Russia jumps ahead towards progress at all costs.

The frightening mechanic mill builds the machine, in which man is formally master of everything but in reality just a detail which glues the titanic construction together. New times are beginning... Tensions rise. The land moves ahead, but where to? What will the near future bring? Red colour, so much red colour, the colour of blood. Und suddenly a crisis shatters the world, something breaks, the movement of this gigantic red machine grinds to a halt. Something terrible is bound to happen: the spotlights are switched on with cold light.

Frightening sounds explode. An explosion at midnight. The most horrible time in the thousand-year-old history of Russia begins. The crucial hour when the fate of Russia is decided: to be or not to be."

History politics create the image of a Russia of heroes and winners. The opponents of the bolshevist revolution have been reconciled with today's Russia in many symbolic acts. Already in 1998, the remains of



The immortal regiment. Moscow, 9 May 2015. (picture wikipedia)

the last Czar *Nicholas II* were buried in a solemn ceremony in the historical burial place of the Czars in St. Petersburg. The new historical narrative views both Bolsheviks and their former enemies as defenders of Russian civilisation which has been under attack then as it is today.

The new Russian state doctrine

A new state ideology has been created in which the state once again plays the central role, with patriotic and military training at school, with national holidays – 9 May as the day of victory – 24 May as the day, dedicated to Saints Kyrill and Method, now celebrated as the day of Slavic culture – 4 November the day of national unity (the day when Moscow was recaptured from the Poles in 1612). It is all about the unity of the people, a national historiography, a leading role of Orthodoxy and also

Eurasianism. Putin quoted *Lev Gumilyov*, a leading proponent of the Eurasian theory.

With the foundation of the USSR in December 1922 and particularly with the first 5-year plan in 1928 the state had been re-established, it was industrialised, illiteracy abolished, scientific research centers founded and space conquered. From the beginning of the 5-year plans in 1928 the growth rate of Soviet economy increased by more than 10% every year in the 1930ies and 1940ies. The Soviet Union became a powerful industrialised state.

The most important symbol of memory is the "Great Patriotic War" today and the victory over *Hitler's* Germany on 9 May 1945. Starting with the 60th anniversary in 2005 the celebrations have been recom-

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Monument of Reconciliation. Sevastopol, 2017 (project). (picture ma)

"Russia and the Great ..."

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menced, with the Russian flag being flown in addition to the Red flag. The black and orange St. George ribbon was used, which dates back to the 18th century as a token of condolence.

In the year 2015 the government organised a historical reconstruction of how the revolution was commemorated in beleaguered Moscow on 7 November 1941. By this shift it became possible to integrate the theme of the revolution into the established official history saga of the victory over Hitler's Germany. The parade in 2015 at the 70th anniversary turned into the biggest military parade in the entire history of Russia.

For several years now a grassroots movement has emerged from the Russian province, the movement of the "immortal regiment", in which more and more people every year join to commemorate their fallen relatives by showing their pictures in a march. This year 850,000 people participated in this march in Moscow and 16 million in the whole of Russia.

The Russian idea

A crucial term in the definition of the "Russian idea", as the Orthodoxy refers to it, is "sobornost" [spiritual community of many jointly living people] which means ecumenicity in the sense of adherence to the ecumenical councils of the Orthodox churches, and is understood now as a sense of community in opposition to Western individualism leading to the dissolution of society. Another term is "pravda" which came to mean "truth" but stood for "justice" in the Old Russian language. "Russkaya pravda" was the legal codex of the old Russia. Communities such as the family and the state are true and just, and the common good is regarded superior to the individual well-being.

The Russian-Orthodox church experiences a revival at present and plays a big role. The state supports the church and builds churches and monasteries. Although the church is not affiliated with the state, it represents "the religion of the majority of the Russian people" and the only force from which any renewal of the people could proceed.

In 2005 the remains of *Ivan Ilyin*, a religious philosopher and important thinker of the Orthodoxy who had died in Zollikon near Zürich in 1954, were reburied at the cemetery of the Donskoij monastery

in a solemn celebration. Ilyin had been a proponent of the "Russian idea" and recently was accepted into the Pantheon of Russian state theorists. Since 2008 a plaque at the *Lomonosov Moscow State University* has been commemorating the fact that he used to teach there.

The imminent crisis

However, the construction of the new state is not completed yet, it passes through an important phase of its development at present. There has been no real reconciliation between the Reds and the Whites. The Soviet Union failed but so did the adaptation of Russia to the Western system.

The alienation of the new oligarchy from the people is growing. The majority of the people has positive memories of the Soviet Union and rejects liberalism. There is a real danger of another "colour revolution" and a resulting civil war with support from the West. Western elites still regard Russia as their main enemy and prepare for war.

In June 2017, the play "The short-hand text" by author and producer *Sergey Kurginyan* was premiered at the Moscow theatre "On the boards" which features the discussions of the Soviet leadership at the XV. Party conference in 1926 about crucial topics of the country. These topics were: How can capitalist elements in the economy be overcome, how can a foreign invasion be prevented, how can decadent fractions and lack of trust in the strength of the country be suppressed and the people longing to build a sovereign society with solidarity be satisfied?

In the play the question of Russian identity is posed. "Scythians", the famous poem by *Alexander Blok* is quoted, the metaphysical antithesis of Russia and the West: Yes – we are Scythians, yes – we are Asians. This way an anti-Western stance of Russia and the inacceptability of capitalism to the Russian mentality is emphasised, which prefers collective systems of society to individualism.

A new rebirth is necessary. The president controls foreign policy and the armed forces, while the ministry of finances, the departments of trade and industries, the central bank (bank of Russia) are all dedicated to the spirit of the *Washington Consensus*, and private print and broadcasting media, theatres and the movie industry are liberal, too. Among the youths a spirit of nihilism is growing.

The *Stolypin Club*, founded by critics of economical liberalism in 2012, aims to

build an autonomous financial and economic system, independent from foreign powers. It promotes state sponsored investment programmes and developed an alternative strategy to rid Russia of the dependency on the dollar and strengthen the real economy. The common good should be at the centre of national economic efforts instead of profit margins. The German *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* (Reconstruction Credit Institute) from the post-war period is referred to as a positive example of how an economy may be invigorated successfully. *Sergey Glazyev*, advisor to president Putin on matters of the *Eurasian Economic Union*, also speaks approvingly of this institution and its role in developing a national infrastructure. The central bank should be governed by the state instead of being "independent", for the state to be in charge of its vital sovereign monetary system. The day of some crucial decisions will come very soon. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**Current Concerns**

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US – Preserve the country's unity

by Jim Jatras*



Jim Jatras
(picture ma)

Every living nation needs symbols. They tell us who we are as one people, in what we believe, and on what basis we organise our common life.

This fact seems to be very clear to the current leadership in Russia, particularly to President Vladimir Putin, in restoring and reunifying a country rent by three generations of Red and White enmity to achieve a national synthesis.

With regard to things spiritual, this meant first of all the world-historic reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church, between the Moscow Patriarchate and the New York-based Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. It also meant the rebuilding of the *Cathedral of Christ the Savior* dynamited by the communists 1931, not coincidentally the recent target for desecration by degenerates hailed by western “democracy” advocates.

Civic and military symbols matter as well. After 1991 there were those who wanted landmarks of the communist era to be ruthlessly expunged the way the Bolsheviks had themselves sought (in *Solzhenitsyn's* description) to rub off the age-old face of Russia and to replace it with a new, ersatz Soviet image. Instead, wisdom prevailed. The national anthem adopted in 2001 retains the Soviet melody but with new lyrics (written by *Sergey Mikhalkov*, who with *Gabriel El-Registan* had penned the original lyrics in 1944!) – *Lenin* and *Stalin* are out, *God* is in. The old capital is again Saint Petersburg, but the surrounding district still bears the name Leningrad. The red star marks Russia's military aircraft and vehicles, while the blue Saint Andrew's cross flies over the fleet. The red stars likewise are still atop the Kremlin towers while the Smolensk icon of Christ once again graces the Savior Gate. The red banner that was hoisted triumphantly on the “Reichstag” in 1945 is carried on Victory Day. The remains of exiled White commanders like *Anton Denikin* and *Vladimir Kappel* were repatriated and reburied at home with honor.

I may be wrong, but I would like to think that perhaps Russia took a lesson

from what until recently had been the American example. In his Second Inaugural Address in March 1865, as the “brothers’ war” was drawing to a close, *Abraham Lincoln* spoke of the need to “bind up the nation's wounds.” In striving to do so, nothing was more important than our honoring the heroes of both the Blue and the Gray, perhaps most poignantly demonstrated decades later in the veterans’ reunions at Gettysburg. “Unconditional Surrender” *Grant* and “Marse Bobby” *Lee*, “Uncle Billy” *Sherman* and “Stonewall” *Jackson*, naval legends *David* “Damn the torpedoes” *Farragut* and *Raphael* “Nelson of the Confederacy” *Semmes*, cavalymen “Fightin’ *Phil*” *Sheridan* and *J.E.B. Stuart*, and many, many others – these names belong to all of us. As Americans.

To say this is not to avoid the centrality of slavery in the southerners’ attempted secession or to address the constitutional question of whether they were legally entitled to do so. (Maybe California will have better luck heading for the exit. ¡Adios, amigos!) Nor does it sugarcloak white southerners’ perception of Reconstruction as a hostile, armed occupation or of the institution of *Jim Crow* racial segregation after federal troops were withdrawn and the *Democratic Party* assumed power. But the fact is that the mythos of North-South reconciliation in a reunited American nation was a foundation of our becoming an economic giant by the late 19th century, a world power at the beginning of the 20th (at the expense of the decrepit Spanish empire, with the celebrated military participation of former Confederates [southerners]), and a dominant power after two victorious world wars.

That America may soon be gone with the wind. The violence at Charlottesville, the pulling down of a Confederate memorial by a mob in Durham, the removal of four monuments from Baltimore (which has one of America's highest homicide rates) under the cowardly cloak of night, and calls for getting rid of many more are simultaneously the death throes of the old America built on one national concept and the birth pangs of a new, borderless, multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious, multisexual, ahistorical, fake “America” now aborning in violence and lawlessness.

He who says A must say B. When one accepts demonisation of part of our history and placing those who defend it beyond the pale of legitimate discourse, one should hardly be surprised when the arrogant fury of the victors is unleashed. That

takes two forms: the nihilist street thugs of “Antifa” and “Black Lives Matter,” and the authorities (both governmental and media, a/k/a the Swamp) who confer on them immunity for violent, criminal behavior. The former are the shock troops of the latter.

They've been at it for months, well before Charlottesville, across the country, with nary a peep from the party that supposedly has uniform control over the federal government. Our First Amendment rights as Americans end where a black-clad masked thug chooses to put his (or her or indeterminate “gender”) fist or club. To paraphrase U.S. Chief Justice *Roger Taney* in *Dred Scott*, loyalists of the old America have no rights which the partisans of the new one are bound to respect. Where's the Justice Department probe of civil rights violations by this organised, directed brutality? (Or maybe there will be one, including looking into *George Soros's* connection. If not, what's the point of having RICO? [*Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations*])

To be sure, the spectacle of genuine racists on display in Charlottesville provided the perfect pretext for these people, but they're not the cause. Far from forestalling the violent, revolutionary abolition of the historic America (definitively described by *Pat Buchanan*) by inciting some kind of white backlash – perhaps in the form of a race war as some of them despicably hope – the “Unite the Right” organisers at Charlottesville have accelerated the revolution. It's a revolution that dovetails with the anti-constitutional “RussiaGate” coup in progress against President *Trump*, who is the last hope for preserving the historic American nation. If he is removed (is he the only one, even in his own Administration, fighting back?) and the nice respectable anti-*Trump Republican party* is restored, they'll gladly join hands with their Democratic and media Swamp buddies in dragging what remains of America down.

If anyone is tempted to think that the new America will be more peaceful in world affairs, think again. It's no coincidence that the same forces that want to bring *Trump* down and also redefine our country's identity coincide almost entirely with those who want America aggressively to impose “our values” – meaning their values – on the globe. As I put it almost 20 years ago in *Chronicles Magazine*, in a somewhat different context, this fake “America” is the vanguard of *Rainbow Fascism*, at home and abroad.

* *Jim Jatras* is a former U.S. diplomat and foreign policy adviser to the Senate GOP leadership. He is the author of a major study, “How American Media Serves as a Transmission Belt for Wars of Choice.” [Gop stands for Grand Old Party and means the Republican party.]

Develop public service human-based

Example of resistance: no breakdown of SBB sales offices in the country

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

On 13 September 2017, the Council of States approved a motion which engaged the Federal Council to ensure that the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) suspended the planned closure of 52 third point of sale for temporal reasons until 2020.¹ The National Council already adopted the motion on 13 June. It is pleasing that both Chambers despite the rejection proposal of the Federal Council have clearly expressed for maintaining a good basic service also in rural areas.

In the next few years, the steadfastness of the Parliament will be important when it comes to the maintenance and development of the public service that should ensure access for all population groups. But our vigilance is desperately needed in many other areas, too. Because the Federal Council has big plans which go far beyond the full digitization of the Swiss Federal Railways and the post: With its “Digital Switzerland Strategy”² it wants to incorporate all areas of life under the control center of the Federal Administration: from the infrastructure installations, E-Health, E-Government and E-voting to a “total systemic coordinated approach” for education from kindergarten up to the universities.³ And – surprise? – Switzerland is to coordinate its digital strategy with the “strategy for a digital single market” of the EU by 2015.⁴ (cf. box)

Each of these planned “transformations” would stand for a today hardly conceivable upheaval of our whole social life and endanger the direct democratic Swiss model, based on human relationships and deeply-rooted values. We citizens are therefore obliged to inform us in different areas and make a stand on all political levels against the further restructuring of our structures. And fast: Because the “process of dialogue...” under the auspices of the DETEC⁵ between the Federal Administra-



Even young people are looking for personal consulting. (picture www.sbb.ch)

tion and “all relevant parties of business, science and society” [question: which parties are “relevant” in the direct democratic Switzerland and which are not?] “...lasts two years” [!].⁶

Using the example of the SBB ticket sales offices we can show up well how the “digital strategy” works – and without regard for interpersonal, democratic and law-based rules.

History of the Parliament’s decision to the SBB sales offices

Last year the Swiss voters voted on the referendum “Pro Service public”, which wanted to oblige the Confederation not to make profit in basic services, but to prioritise the good supply of the population throughout the country. On 5 June 2016, roughly two-thirds of voters rejected the initiative, not least because the Federal Council had declared: “Switzerland has a very good, reliable and affordable public service. The supply of all regions of the country is ensured. Keep it that way, the companies concerned need good conditions and entrepreneurial freedoms.”⁷

Shortly after the vote in September 2016, the executive floor of the SBB demonstrated how they intended to take advantage of their entrepreneurial freedom. They announced that they will close 52 so-called SBB third point of sale in the country in short-term (until 1st January 2018). These are shops and post offices in the vicinity of unattended stations where railway and bus tickets can be purchased. In the affected municipalities, cantons and the population this intention understanda-

bly met with protest. In addition to political initiatives in the Confederation and the cantons also a petition was launched and signed by 30,000 citizens within a short time.

Two National Council motions support the population’s needs

In order to support the affected population, National Councillor Jakob Büchler (CVP St. Gallen) filed a motion on 30 September 2016, immediately after SBB’s announcement, aiming to prevent the closing of ticket sales centres in the countryside.⁸

The motion required the Federal Council to prepare a draft bill to facilitate “a five-year moratorium for the continuation of third party SBB ticket sales centres”. This motion is unusual in that it was co-signed by 38 members of the National Council from all political fractions and from a large number of predominantly rural cantons.

In its statement on the initiative, dated 16 November 2016, the Federal Council declined to legally require SBB to delay their plans because it didn’t want to interfere with their operative activities. This could potentially incur costs for the Federal Government. It’s worth noting that both SBB and the postal service used to be federal services whose activities – while geared towards the common good – were decided on by the government and paid for by taxpayers’ money. Today, they are profit-oriented corporations under the operational management of a CEO and its administrative board. The SBB and postal

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No doubt the same terrible sense of foreboding, even worse, must have occurred to Russians in 1920, when they saw their country bloodily sacrificed on the altar of a crazed, internationalist ideology. Somehow, after paying an unimaginable price in war and repression, they emerged three quarters of a century later still remembering how (as the late General Aleksandr Lebed put it) “to feel like Russians again.”

If we fail to avoid the impending long night, will we Americans be so lucky?•

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"Develop public service ..."

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service shares are (still) in federal hands, but, as is well known, that can be changed.

On 21 March 2017, the Federal Council's statement prompted the National Council's Transport and Telecommunications Committee (TTC-N) to issue the afore mentioned second, contentwise more moderate motion that had been agreed to in the two councils in the meantime.

Public service has to remain dedicated to the common good

In the *Büchler motion's* justification, the proximity to the citizens established by a good public service becomes apparent: "Predominantly in rural regions, sales centres offer customers, especially the elderly ones, a much valued service regarding ticket sales and information." By closing the ticket sales centres, easy access is lost to a lot of rail customers.

The Federal Council counters this argument with numbers: At those 52 ticket sales centres concerned, only 1% of the entire ticket supply is sold and consequently, SBB commissions given to those third party sales centres cannot be covered with these revenues. On the other hand, today, almost 80% of tickets are requested through "self-service channels". That's why SBB's decision was deemed "understandable".

Both motions counter this argument by stating that the service has to remain operating in all regions of the country, as was promised by the Federal Council prior to the vote on the initiative "Pro-Service-public". The justification of the National Council Commission reads as follows: "East Switzerland is especially affected by SBB's decision to close ticket sales centres as it effectively cuts off bigger train stations with currently significant sales volume from serviced ticket sales. The saving of 5 million Swiss francs by closing 52 of the serviced SBB ticket sales centres is not specifically mentioned. Furthermore, costs related to the improvement of the sales centres in the cities and the investments tied to that aren't made transparent."⁹

"Digital Switzerland Strategy": Federal Council has another agenda

(Confederation Switzerland – Federal Office of Communication OFCOM, April 2016, extracts)

"The 'Digital Switzerland Strategy' is therefore a measure of the Federal Council within the legislative planning 2015 – 2019." (p. 3)

"The Federal Council is aware that the digital transformation of existing structures requires rethinking on all levels and challenges traditional forms of co-existence and economic activity." (p. 5)

"[...] requires regulatory coordination on a national, and where necessary international basis, in relation to access to data and digital content as well as data processing and security." (p. 10)

"Civil society and the private sector can conduct official transactions digital throughout Switzerland." (p. 14)

"Political rights can be exercised by electronic means [...] The objective of the Confederation and cantons is to introduce e-voting throughout Switzerland as a third complementary method of voting." (p. 15)

"Progressive digitisation is transforming the context in which teaching and learning takes place. The anytime, anywhere availability of knowledge is

leading to an adjustment of learning processes and changes in the roles of teachers and students." (p. 16)

"Since cyber risks are international in nature, Switzerland must also be involved in the relevant international and European structures and processes for collaboration in the field of network and information security." (p. 18)

"Switzerland exploits opportunities in relation to the virtual international economic area. In 2015, the EU adopted its strategy for a Digital Single Market. [...] The objective here is to conduct a dialogue with the EU and coordinate Switzerland's activities in order to ensure that the opportunities associated with the Digital Single Market are exploited in a way, which also benefits Switzerland and averts the risk of exclusion." (p. 21)

"The dialogue on 'Digital Switzerland' will be managed by DETEC. All relevant and interested stakeholders will be integrated into the dialogue process (multi-stakeholder approach). The highlight of the process is a national conference on selected aspects of the information society." (p. 25)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

In plain language this means that while the very good supply of SBB sales centres in the cities is being developed even further, sales centres in the countryside have been closing down for years. Now, around a quarter of the third party sales centres are meant to be closed. For the elderly people who prefer communicating with an actual person to talking to a ticket machine, SBB offers – according to the National Council's answer to Büchler's motion – seminars to familiarise the elderly with the ticket machines in collaboration with *Pro Senectute*.

Luckily, parliament extended the tight allocated deadline for another 3 years during which a solution that specifically caters to the customers needs has to be found. This solution cannot and may not exclusively consist of access to ticket machines and the internet. We, the people

– not only the elderly! – are not robots. Within our daily life, we inevitably depend on our relationships with other people, be it at a ticket counter. ●

¹ Motion 17.3258 of the Transport and Telecommunication Committee from 21 March 2017.

² Swiss Confederation. Federal Office of Communications OFCOM. "Digital Switzerland Strategy". April 2016

³ "Digital Switzerland Strategy", p. 16

⁴ "Digital Switzerland Strategy", p. 21

⁵ Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication, headed by Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard

⁶ "Digital Switzerland Strategy", pp. 23 and 25

⁷ Vote of 5 June 2016. Voting booklet, p. 10. Cf. *Current Concerns* No 9/10 from 4 May 2016

⁸ Motion 16.3866 filed by Jakob Büchler from 30 September 2016, CVP SG. The closing of SBB ticket sales points in the countryside

⁹ Motion 17.3258 by the National Council Commission for Transport and Telecommunications (KVF-N) from 21 March 2017.

Germany: The electorate induced a political quake

by Rainer Schopf

Germany has voted. After the lame campaign, in which the established parties omitted almost all controversial themes such as a weapon arsenal, the refugee crisis, saving the euro, the EU crisis etc. the German electorate induced a political quake at the polls. According to the election officials, the voter turnout increased to 76.2%, after being at 71.5% in 2013. However, the CDU/CSU (32.9%) and SPD (20.5%), in comparison to the last German parliamentary election in 2013, have taken massive losses of approximately 10% (CDU/CSU) and 5% (SPD) respectively. These results show a historical low since the first federal elections in 1949. The Left Party (9.2%) and the Green Party (8.9%) remain stable and the FDP achieves re-entrance to the Bundestag with 10.7% after failing to reach the hurdle of 5% in 2013. A clear election winner is the AfD Party, which won 12.6% and therefore enters the Bundestag and immediately becomes the third strongest faction as well. What are the implications of these results for the constellation of the next government?

Angela Merkel lost the previous coalition partner SPD. She no longer has any choice with the formation of the coalition. The only possibility is the Jamaica-alliance which includes CDU/CSU, the Green Party and FDP, if she wants to remain in power. Alliances with the AfD or the Left are out of the question for her. However, her leadership as chancellor is foreseeably limited. The Jamaica-alliance remains difficult because the Green and FDP parties are hopelessly embattled. The coalition negotiations will take months and during this time Germany will be without a capable acting government. This was reported by the commentators of the German media who collectively estimated that this governmental alliance will break apart within 1 to 2 years, due to internal tensions. On election night, Martin Schulz (SPD) had already declined the Chancellor the possibility of forming a large coalition to avoid that the AfD will become the strongest opposition party, he wants to lead his SPD faction into this position. The strongest opposition party holds special speaker rights and possesses impor-

tant committees in the Bundestag which the SPD wants to secure to itself before the AfD.

Success of the AfD

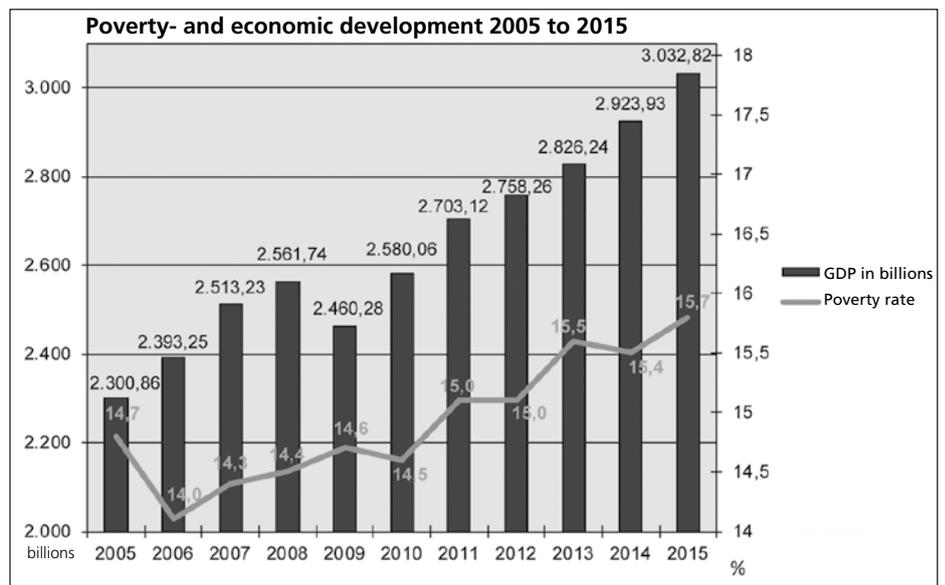
For the politically informed the success of the AfD is not a real surprise. The original politics of the AfD began with the top candidate *Bernd Lucke* who was against the saving of the euro and who could rely to the Federal Constitutional Court. After he stepped down, the new leaders *Alexander Gauland* and *Alice Weidel* (both AfD) concentrated their campaign with more emphasis on words like “German” and “Christian” which in Germany today have an extreme right-wing flavour although these words are also found in the name of the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP. Expressions like “national” or “conservative” are already considered to be a case for the constitution protection. The voters did not fall for the attempt to defame the AfD and with their AfD votes, they made a clear statement. The established parties

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How are the people in Germany doing?

Elisabeth Koch, Germany

“We are doing well in Germany,” says *Angela Merkel*. Only now, after the election, does the question arise in the media why so many people are so dissatisfied with the situation in Germany, and with their government. There were unmistakable protests during *Angela Merkel*’s election campaigns, not only in the Eastern part of Germany. And for many years already, a lot of people have been voicing their dissatisfaction. They have not been taken seriously. On the contrary, citizens expressing their disagreement are pathologised: *Ms Merkel* talks about “fears and worries”, as if she were a psychiatrist in search of a treatment method for unreasonable patients. *Rita Süßmuth*, CDU, for example, said in a Swiss radio station¹ that people “don’t understand” that the people who came to us as refugees were needed as workers. “We were not good enough in listening and explaining;” she says, referring to herself and her colleagues from the ivory tower, the better-knowing elite, while the citizens, on the other hand, are the ignorant masses to who everything has to be explained. Politicians promise to “pick us up” where we are, and to “take us with them”². These people have forgotten that they have to act on our behalf, that they must ask us what



Data source: Federal Statistical Office and the statistical Offices of the Länder, Bundesbank

we want, and how we see things. We, the citizens in the 21st century, no longer want to accept just about anything those in power present to us, or to even go so far as to consider this as the answer to everything. As enlightened people, we are very well able to observe, to get information, to recognise connections, and to draw conclusions.

“What has come over the East Germans?”

A pleasant exception was an interview in a Swiss newspaper with *Petra Köpping*, Saxon Minister of State (SPD). Being approached on the subject of protests in East

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Germany during the election appearances of Ms Merkel with the question: "What has come over the East Germans?" she explained: "Those who call, who whistle, who try to provoke are the minority. Most people are quiet, but they are not necessarily more satisfied with the situation they find themselves in."³ This may have been received with some astonishment, since television mostly shows only those who voice their indignation loudly and noticeably. Rarely are the prudent asked; the statements that are preferred are the offensive, the drastic ones, or those which may only have been clumsily formulated. Ms Köpping pointed out that many of the East Germans were defrauded of their lives' achievements; their professional qualifications were suddenly no longer valid, despite a good education, they lost their jobs and their reputation.

In fact, 75% of people in East Germany lost their jobs. Many people who had previously had a secure livelihood were impoverished, their professional performance suddenly counted for nothing. School education had been excellent in East Germany, especially in the fields of natural sciences and mathematics. But up to today, even former teachers with a post-doctoral degree have to earn their bread in employment below their education level. To date, according to Köpping, "people from 17 professional groups receive far too small a pension." "But the federal government does not care about these people," she complains. Let me give you an idea about this: The average old age pensions in Germany are 1176 euros a month, but in the east of Germany they amounted to 984 euros on average in 2015. This means that there are many who have an even smaller pension.⁴

Social problems also in West Germany

Also in parts of Western Germany, such as the Ruhr region and the Saarland, many

people have lost their secure and qualified jobs. The fact that the unemployment rate in Germany is nevertheless so low is probably due to the fact that more and more people have to earn their livings in unsecured employment and for low wages. Today we have reached a situation where almost half of all employment contracts are only concluded for a limited period.⁵ Even many teachers, who once had a secure government job, now often get laid off.⁶ It can easily be imagined what a feeling of insecurity this produces for the family fathers and mothers concerned, what this precariousness means to them: Will I still have my work next year, can I build a house, or set up an apartment, or will we have to move again?

Do we have to separate in order to find work in distant places, so as to secure survival at all? Many unemployed people have to accept several jobs, work in one-euro jobs, and yet they cannot make ends meet. Even old-age pensioners or other retirees often have to look for work so as to have enough to live on. These precarious working conditions lead to an oppressive poverty for far too many people. The poverty rate in Germany is rising with the GDP, as shown in the chart. This means that there is money being earned in Germany, but by whom? Obviously, there are many losers.

Who pays? The middle class!

It is now well known that the AfD was chosen in protest by many well educated people from the middle classes. Small and medium-sized enterprises, small craft businesses, small and medium-sized manufacturing companies generate the largest portion of money in Germany, they secure our prosperity, they employ workers, they form our youth. But they have to pay more and more taxes. Someone must, for example, pay for housing, food, and clothing for the millions of refugees. Who pays for these things? This is a question that has to be asked, since it is naive to believe that a "wel-

come culture" would throw Manna down from the heavens. The tax load that has to be raised for this purpose is essentially provided by the middle class. Also the transfers to distressed EU member states, such as Greece, Spain, etc., are covered by resources that the middle class has to generate. On top of this, it is being hard-pressed by cheaper products and cheaper labour from abroad. The EU imposes conditions on entrepreneurs to undertake increasing bureaucratic efforts. In addition, there are sanctions against Russia, which weaken notably the European economy. "We have come to the point, where a number of federal states such as Saxony, Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt are pushing for aid allotted to firms which are affected by Russia-sanctions," writes the *Handelsblatt*.

In view of proposed new sanctions, *Martin Wandleben*, head of the *Association of the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce*, demands, "that Europe should en bloc react against the US plans".⁷ So far, there is little to nothing to be heard of any compliance with this demand.

Farming under pressure

In the whole of this discussion, farmers are hardly present. And yet, they suffer not only under the weather, but above all under EU bureaucracy and the globalised agricultural market. Many are struggling against economic collapse. As shown by the decline in the number of farms, many have already lost this fight. But the effective agricultural area has hardly decreased in Germany since 1991. In other words, the farmers who have remained have had to enlarge their farms, and that in turn means that they are sitting on a mountain of debt incurred for the land and machinery they had to purchase. They need the machines, because the number of employees in agriculture has also declined, so that they have to do

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"Germany: The electorate induced ..."

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must change their course of action if they want to win back the voters who changed parties.

A word about the size of the Parliament. There was an expansion from 598 to 708 seats for 200 voting regions. This unfortunate situation is due to the complicated German voting rights with a mixture of majority vote (first vote) and proportional representation vote (second vote), which now gives us 111 additional overlapping and compensating mandates.

In the last legislative period a reform of the German voting rights already failed, because many parliamentarians hung on to their cushy positions. A reform in the future does not seem likely because not only four, but six parties must agree on a reduction. Each seat involves the cost of 1 million euros for an elected member of the Bundestag and his office.

Quo vadis?

The future government must take a position on controversial topics such as the EU crisis, the intervention of NATO on the Russian border, the Korea Crisis, the

illegal wars in the Near- and the Middle East and Africa. A political standstill until spring 2018 cannot be allowed. As early as 2015 *Rolf Hochhuth* pleaded in an open letter to the Chancellor and to the President of Germany, for the pull-out of NATO. Otherwise he fears the end of Germany, "finis Germaniae". The politics of as far as possible have ultimately failed. Germany desperately needs an honest and open discussion about the current controversial themes and the future of our democracy. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"How are the people in Germany?"

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much more of the work by themselves.⁸ So what will farmers think of the adjectival formula "Germany is doing better than it has done for a long while"?

Rising crime rates

The economic slump is certainly not the only reason for dissatisfaction. Other fields of politics and society are also in trouble, but discussion about them is being suppressed. First of all, of course, there is the refugee question. The great majority of people in Germany have nothing against foreigners; Germany has time and again successfully integrated immigrants, for example Poles, Italians, and Turks. Many of them now feel at home with us, and they contribute to our society and our state.

And of course we, the citizens of Germany, stand by the right of asylum: those in danger to life and limb should be allowed to come and let us help them. No German political party has ever questioned this. However, it is not acceptable to incite wars everywhere in the world, to destroy human beings' livelihood, and then to force them to flee to Europe. What are the German government, the established parties, the media, etc., doing about these scandalous wars? Is it not a fact that more or less all of them support these wars in violations of international law, for example in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria? In many parts of Africa, riots and battles are being kept simmering; corrupt politicians are supported for lending a hand. And all this, so that natural resources such as coltan, precious stones etc. can be exploited cheaply in these countries. For a nation continually overrun by wars cannot establish a state under the rule of law, a judiciary or a police, and so it is at the mercy of the marauders. The best example is the mangled and afflicted Congo. In other countries, such as Libya, a functioning government was disempowered; structures that guaranteed labour and bread, a functioning health system, education, and law and order were all destroyed. Libya is now a "failed state". It can no longer help solve the refugee crisis but is part of it.

This is not the place to analyse Germany's participation in all these wars and in all this unrest. But it is immediately obvious, that the solution cannot be to invite all those who suffer from it to come to Europe. To stay with Germany, it would collapse under this burden. This is economically self-evident. But also the question how to integrate all these people would impose a great strain. It has by now become evident that only a small number of the refugees can be integrated into the la-

bour market. But every recognised refugee has a right to an apartment, together with his family. The housing shortage in Germany was already high before so many refugees came crowding in. Now there is a frenzied building boom. Many people see that refugees often get better housing than they could pay for themselves. They also know that someone has to work and to pay for this, namely we, the citizens. It goes without saying, that this creates anger.

Many people who come here have been told that here, money grows on trees. They are supported in a demanding attitude. Many citizens realise this, and they don't like it. Also the rising crime rates – although crimes are committed only by a minority of foreigners – from theft through robbery to rape, can no longer be concealed; people are experiencing this at close quarters, yes, they are often themselves victims. And if there is then patronising talk of "anxieties," which "we have to allay", it will be no surprise that this talk produces indignation. It must also be remembered that most of the refugees who come to us have no idea of our democracy and our state of law. Yet both must be supported by the inhabitants and citizens of a country, otherwise the cohesion is fragile and endangered. All this shows that world problems require solutions other than that all the disadvantaged come to Europe.

Children no longer learn enough

As some provincial parliamentary elections have shown this year, many people in this country are also dissatisfied with the fact that their children learn less and less. In North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg, the voters have already made the responsible state governments pay the penalty, even though the people in the West have already been getting habituated to absurd concepts for decades. In the East, education policy after the turnaround was a shock. The "Ossis", the Easteners often underestimated by the West, are used to observing closely and to thinking historically. They are well aware that – apart from the ideological influence – education in the GDR was better, more solid, especially in science and the mathematical subjects. You don't have to be a GDR nostalgic to realise this fact.

New patterns of family life?

The family is what is most important for most people in the new federal states. This was not different in communism. Waking up in their new freedom, they had to realise that strange patterns of family life are being propagated in the West, which they were also expected to approve. If they don't, they incur a risk of marginalisation, exclusion, slander. By the way, there are

also many people in the West who don't agree with this, but it is not done to talk about it. The gender ideology has been superimposed on us from above. Shall we talk about how we see it, even whether we want it at all? – No chance!

In addition, the families in the new federal states still have to see their young people move to the West, because there is too little work in the East. Even many family fathers work in the West the week over. Every weekend, they go back to their family, to Saxony, to Thuringia. 327,000 commuters moved from West to East in this way in 2016.¹⁰ This is not what they had imagined as a better life. Above all, however, East Germans generally realise much more clearly than West Germans that there are bans on speaking, that there are opinions prescribed and controlled, and that there are certain red lines you may not cross. One person once said to me, "In the GDR one knew what to say and what not to say. We also knew exactly who was behind this dictate. Everything was clear and transparent. Now, after the turnaround, the bans on speaking and the pitfalls are even more complex and complicated, more inscrutable. Everything is conducted more covertly, and you can barely get an idea of who is in control."

These are just a few of those topics that ought to be put straight on the table. There are surely a great deal more things with which citizens don't agree, and not everyone has the same problems. But what is necessary to everyone is an open discussion. And not only that: today citizens don't just want to be made to *feel* that they are taken seriously; they want to be *taken seriously* in plain fact. And that means: full political participation. There is no alternative to direct democracy. •

¹ SRF, *Echo der Zeit*, Interview with Rita Süsmuth, 26 September 2017

² e.g. *Manuela Schwesig*, SPD, in a talkshow on the election evening, 24 September 2017

³ "Luzerner Zeitung", 20 September 2017

⁴ www.focus.de/finanzen/altersvorsorge/rente/konstand/durchschnittsrente_aid_19622.html

⁵ cf. "Fast jeder zweite neue Arbeitsvertrag ist befristet" ("Almost every second new employment contract is fixed-term") in *Zeit online*, 12 September 2017

⁶ cf. magazin.sofatutor.com/lehrer/2016/11/03/infografik-arbeitslosigkeit-und-befristete-vertraege-bei-lehrkraeften/

⁷ "Deutsche Industrie fürchtet Russlandsanktionen" ("German industry fears sanctions against Russia"). *Spiegel online*, 4 August 2017

⁸ cf. "Basisdaten der deutschen Landwirtschaft". www.veggiday.de/landwirtschaft/deutschland/220-landwirtschaft-deutschland-statistik.html

⁹ "Dossier Landwirtschaft in Deutschland. Statista."

¹⁰ cf. www.manager-magazin.de/politik/deutschland/pendler-fahren-immer-weitere-streckena-1077768.html

Elections to the German Bundestag: symptoms of a split society

by Karl Müller

The elections to the German “Bundestag” and the mainstream of the subsequent public debates are reflecting a development reaching far beyond the question why CDU/CSU and SPD [the parties forming the current coalition government] have lost so many votes and the “Alternative für Deutschland” (AfD) has won nearly 13 per cent of the votes. The way the German parties are dealing with each other is not only motivated by power politics and far from a theatrical performance but also symptom of a split society. If this split is not cured, the German society and politics will not be able to solve the problems ahead.

The problem is not that there are various political parties and that new ones are founded frequently. This is part of democracy. The fact that the parties are canvassing for votes with various programs is also not to be criticised, on the contrary. Questionable, however, is the style in which the various parties are dealing with each other which is also shaping the style of discussions among citizens.

A drastic example is the other parties' accusation that the AfD was right-wing radical or even extremist. This is more than a propaganda stereotype in the struggle for political power. This kind of reproach is poisoning the political climate, preventing any honest dialogue – not just with the party members but also with the voters of this party which meanwhile are the second largest group of voters in eastern Germany, in Saxony even the largest. Or does anyone mean to tell these voters that, while they were no right-wing extremists, they had been unable to realize that the party they had voted for was?

The course is not set for dialogue

But in Germany the course is not set for dialogue and the politicians' phrases about national responsibility which now can be heard from representatives of various parties, mainly those of the Greens and the FDP “Liberals” who are now striving for government power, is hardly credible after all these years of self-centredness and disintegration.

The lack of ability and readiness for dialogue has deeper reasons: Excessive individualism, post-modern de-constructivism, arbitrariness in lifestyle and a return to a social Darwinist thinking and acting in society, economy and politics have weakened the cohesion and solidarity among the people. All this is not a law of nature but has been brought about on purpose! Where

everyone can no longer speak to everyone, when there is no longer any interest in others and their positions, no honest listening, no responsiveness, there is danger ahead.

Niklaus von Flüe urged for listening

This year, Switzerland is celebrating the 600th birthday of *Niklaus von Flüe*. One of his now famous words of advice for the Confederates striving for peace was to listen to each other and to be responsive. Obviously this did not come easy for some, even 600 years ago.

And it will be difficult without a common ground.

Ernst Fraenkel, a political scientist who had returned to Germany from emigration after World War II, was the founder of the “theory of pluralism” which was formative for Western post-war Germany. This theory states that there were various interests and interest groups, demanding that political decisions should be concerned about negotiating antagonising interests and finding the largest possible common ground. But Fraenkel assumed, and this is rarely mentioned today, that the ability to search for a common ground needs to be based on a basic ethical consensus, an ethical framework. For him natural law was this framework.

Where is the common ground?

How far away are we from this? And why are we so far away? Not only between nations but also among our own citizens.

The public at large knows little about it, but they still exist: people and groups looking for possibilities to formulate an ethic – an ethic that most serious responsible persons can agree on – even globally. “Are there objective moral values which can unite human beings and bring them peace and happiness? What are they? How are they discerned? How can they be put into action in the lives of persons and communities?” These are the initial questions in the 50-page final report of the International Theological Commission at the Vatican. It has titled this report “In Search of a Universal Ethic” and presented it in 2009.

The statements of both the Russian and the US-American presidents could be seen as less profound but possibly pointing in a similar direction: they both attempt to form some kind of a “nation in unity”. Both countries know what a split society means. The US are more and more suffering from this and it would do the Americans good if it was more than political propaganda this time. Since his first term in office, the Russian President

has been trying to resolve the “class warfare” of the 1990s. Both presidents are facing hostilities for their ideas.

Legal provisions are not sufficient

Legal provisions are important in international relations and within nations but they alone will not be able to solve the current problems. This is also demonstrated by the fact that, while both international and national law is being broken, the corrective instances do not take action or, more specifically, cannot take action.

The lack of preparedness and willingness to dialogue is reflected not only in relations within the citizenry but also in international relations. A quick look at global politics is sufficient. A few weeks ago a Swiss representative at the OSCE has reported that there was no dialogue between East and West within this Organisation which originally was meant to secure peace and understanding. There is only a confrontation of standpoints – without any approach. This report is symptomatic for a world that is losing its common ground.

It is unlikely that those who have been forwarding antagonisms and polarisation, also disregarding law would suddenly pause and think. They still hope that they will benefit from their method. But the victims of this development, the majority of citizens, can stop participating. This would be a lesson from the “Bundestag” elections – and from global events. Now we turn towards a dialogue of equal persons – national and also international. We stop our participation whenever dialogue is being refused or prevented. Another kind of civil disobedience.

PS: The current harsh conflict in Spain demonstrates the dangers imminent if no consensual solutions are being sought for complex issues with a long history and the parties turn to polarisation instead. It is an illusion to think that such developments are unthinkable in Germany. The combination of a complex real issues (which also exist in Germany), the inability or also the lack of willingness to reach a solution acceptable for all among the responsible persons and not least playing with fire can bring about conflicts within states and between citizens that can hardly be settled peacefully. •

* www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_ge.html; cf. also *Current Concerns* No 14/15 from 1 July 2017 (www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/numbers/2017-no-14151-july-2017/in-search-of-a-universal-ethic.html)

“iigfädlet”* – Eastern Switzerland’s textile history

Exhibitions and events until 29 October 2017

by Brigitte von Bergen

Eight museums in the cantons of St. Gallen and Appenzell Ausserrhoden are involved in the representation of regional textile history. For “Eastern Switzerland is undoubtedly one of the outstanding historical textile regions; not only in Switzerland, but in Europe”, says Dr *Matthias Weishaupt*, Landammann AR (Chief magistrate for the canton) at the vernissage of the exhibition in the Textilemuseum St. Gallen. In the country, materials were produced for the world market in homework or in factories, and they were traded in the centres. Even today, high-quality fabrics are embroidered here for an international clientele. Museum curator *Isabelle Chappuis* was delighted in her opening speech on the successful cooperation.

All eight exhibitions and their respective historical background are presented in a richly illustrated book (please note opening hours!). This includes the people’s life situations who lived and worked there. Questions are asked about who “threaded in, embroidered, wove, cut and made up” (Landammann Weishaupt).

“Manufacturers and manipulators. The textile industry in Eastern Switzerland” (Textilemuseum St. Gallen)

The concept of the exhibition consists of five sections: the manufacturers and manipulators, the workers, the designers, the inventors and the entrepreneurs. The patterns of embroidered fabrics that are exhibited are rich in embroidery, patterns and colours. Fabric patterns of St. Gallen embroidery on white cotton are collected in large sample books. In the showcases some magnificent dresses can be seen, embroidered with “Kettelistich” (chain stitch) or with the traditional St. Gallen embroidery or even with beautiful Guipure laces. Likewise tulle curtains with fine embroidery. The designers developed more and more sophisticated, richly embroidered fabrics for the haute couture and luxurious decoration fabrics for the living area. Although today mostly machines are used, there is still the Appenzell hand embroidery for the production of traditional costumes.

“Fergger wanted – Professions in the textile industry“ (Appenzell Ethnographic Museum in Stein)

In the 19th century, Appenzell AR changed from a purely rural and alpine region to the highly industrialised textile canton. This is reflected, for example, in the job advertisements, in the “Appenzeller Zeitung” from 1828 up to the crises years around the First World War. East-



Weaver boy about 1920/30 (picture © Heinrich Bauer, National Archives AR)



Sample books, Prestegg Museum Altstätten SG. (picture bvb)

ern Swiss textile companies are looking for men and women for factory or homework. Many of the advertised professions are hardly known anymore: What was the activity of the “Andreherin”, the “Fergger”, the “Fludersticker”, the “Verschneiderin”(tailor) or the “Seiden-spitzenstreicher”?

Child labor is also a topic, since this wasn’t as widespread in any other canton of Switzerland as in Ausserrhoden in the 19th century. The first Swiss factory law of 1877 prohibited the employment of children under the age of 14; however, the paragraphs were not applied to children employed in homework. All this had consequences of a social nature, since the work in the damp web-cellars was not only badly paid, but also harmful to health. The exhibition gives insight into the world of forgotten professions in weaving, embroi-

dery and finishing companies. To this day one can admire the typical “Weberhöckli” and “Sticklokale” (embroidery workshops) in the Appenzell region.

“Twisting, knitting, mercerising – factory work” (Museum Herisau)

Today’s textile companies from Ausserrhoden are presented here, too. The first factory called “Fabrique” in the Appenzell region was established in Herisau in 1737 – a textile printing company. The mechanisation, which began in 1780, paved the way for the existing factory. At that time thousands of hands were busy with bleaching, twisting, knitting, etc. Today, these companies focus on the finishing of cotton, on the one hand and on innovative fabrics for medicine, architecture, the au-

“Iigfädlet”* – Eastern Switzerland’s ...”

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tomotive industry and for production companies on the other hand.

“Textile House Views in Toggenburg” (Museum Ackerhus Ebnat-Kappel)

Toggenburg house architecture and textile history in Eastern Switzerland have been closely connected for 400 years. To this day, the wet web cellars, the “Sticklokal” “with big windows, the merchant’s house, the factory buildings, lodging houses and modern factory settlements, as well as the manufacturers’ villas, bear witnesses of Eastern Switzerland’s textile work.

“Homedress – of wall and robe” (“Zeughaus” (Armoury) Teufen)

In the city of Teufen it is about the processing of the fabrics. Here, the visitor can see the craftsmen working, directly transmitted from the studios and sewing rooms. The development of fabric objects and clothing, from underpants to sports shoes, can be witnessed by means of designs. At the end of the exhibition the finished products are presented in a fashion show.

“Borderland – Jacob Rohner and the time of embroidery in the Rhine Valley” (Prestegg Museum in Altstätten)

After the invention of the hand embroidery machine in the 1850s the Rhine Valley of St. Gallen flourished. Embroiderer families bought a hand embroidery machine on deposit, built a “Sticklokal” and worked as a whole family almost day and night. Towards the end of the 19th century the

* “threaded in” – Swiss German

Events in the individual museums in October 2017

- 10 Oct. Tuesday, 6.30 pm
Folklore Museum Stein, Appenzel: “Telling of everyday life and work” (lecture)
- 25 Oct. Wednesday, 7.00 pm Cinétreff Herisau: “Das Menschlein Matthias” (Dialect film)
- 27 Oct. Friday, 7:00 pm
Appenzell Customs Museum Urnäsch: “Textile factories in Urnäsch” (lecture)
- 29 Oct. Sunday, 2.00 – 4.00 pm
Zeughaus Teufen: “Kleider machen Leute machen Kleider III: Ergebnisse” (“Clothes make the man makes dresses III: Results”)(fashion show)
- 29 Oct. Sunday, 2 pm
Museum Ackerhus Ebnat-Kappel: Public guided tour
- 29 Oct. Sunday, 11 am
Museum Heiden: “Finissage with public guided tour”

Eastern Switzerland’s textile history**The Linen Age – The white gold 1200 to 1700**

Since the Middle Ages, linen fabrics have been produced in Eastern Switzerland as exclusive export goods. Linen is also known as “white gold”, because the trade in fabrics brings great wealth to traders. However, the income of the workers, craftsmen and farmers involved is modest and uncertain.

The flax plant, the raw material for linen, grows very well in the region around Lake Constance. The St. Gall-based companies produce high quality linen fabrics. Already in the 13th century, fabrics were traded internationally. A trading network was being created that extends from North Africa to Russia and Turkey.

Cotton – the beginning of the industrialisation from 1750 to 1850

From 1730 onwards, cotton from Africa replaced the more expensive linen. Almost 50 years later, industrialisation in England was accelerating and fundamentally changing the Swiss textile industry.

With the rise of cotton in Eastern Switzerland, mixed fabric with linen, known as “Barchent”, was first produced and later pure cotton fabric. Very fine cotton fabrics, so-called mouselines, were particularly popular with buyers.

The first mechanical spinning machines in Switzerland were installed in the St. Gall monastery around 1800. Hand spinners and weavers were increasingly being replaced by machines. The first factories were built. Around 1800, thanks to the textile industry, Switzerland was the country with the most machines on the European continent. At that time, the centre of the mechanical spinning mill in Switzerland was the canton of Zurich.

“Schiffli” embroider machine was being introduced and thus the trend towards factory production began. *Jacob Rohner* relied on this change. Soon he owned five factories. In the exhibition many noble embroidered fabrics and clothes from private property are to be seen. In 1988, the fourth generation of owners sold the traditional company to *Forster Willi AG*, now *Forster Rohner AG*. Rohner socks are still produced today in Balgach and are known all over Switzerland.

“Ladders – chances and social responsibility” (Museum Heiden)

The stocking factory, founded in 1930 in Heiden was a sign of a progressive development. It produced warm socks and hard-wearing stockings, until the nylon stockings conquered the market in the

The embroidery period – “The golden years” 1850 to 1914

From 1750 onwards, the cotton fabrics in Eastern Switzerland were decorated with embroidery. The embroidery was first crafted by hand and from 1850 onwards it was increasingly machine-made.

The success of embroidery was based on the tradition of dividing production into individual steps – spinning, weaving, embroidering and finishing.

Different, highly specialized companies or persons carried out the individual work. Thanks in particular to machine embroidery, St. Gallen was internationally successful until 1912. The technique of mechanical production of the “Broderie Anglaise” or the “Guipure” was invented here and made St. Gall world-famous. Embroidery was very popular in America and France.

The embroidery crisis from 1914 to 1950

The embroidery industry in Eastern Switzerland flourished around 1912. Two out of three employees lived on embroidery. Only ten years later, there was talk of a “massive depression”. By 1930, almost 17,000 embroidery machines were scrapped in Eastern Switzerland. The scrapping premiums were paid by the Swiss government in order to break the one-sided orientation of Eastern Switzerland towards textile fabric. Many people impoverished.

Eastern Switzerland 1945 to the present day

Today, the companies focus on high-priced niche products for haute couture, lingerie or innovative fabrics for medicine, architecture or the automotive industry.

Source: “Ostschweizer Rundschau” from 6 June 2017
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

1950s. New materials required new machines and high investments. Unfortunately, the company went bankrupt in 1993. In the exhibition, residents and former employees talk about this dramatic development and they describe the importance of the stocking factory for them.

“Textile work – passion or fate” (“Appenzeller Brauchtummuseum” in Urnäsch)

Urnäsch has never been dominated by the textile industry. Here, the main focus was on alpine dairy, agriculture and trade. The exhibition focuses on the time after 1950. People tell impressively about their daily work routine in video interviews. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)