

# Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## NATO is endangering our security

by Gabriel Galice, Daniele Ganser and Hans von Sponeck

*Si vis pacem, cole iusticiam*  
[If you desire peace,  
cultivate justice]  
The motto of the ILO  
(International Labour  
Organisation)

NATO is massing troops and weapons on Russia's doorstep. It is important for us to express our concern about propaganda that distorts the real threats weighing on peace. This insidious propaganda produces imaginary enemies to justify the increase in military expenditure, the conquest of new territories or "market shares", the assumption of control over the energy supply, and the disintegration of democracy.

No, Russia is not the aggressor and in no way threatens the Baltic States, Poland, or Sweden. During the implosion of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, the US and its allies committed the strategic error of not re-establishing the international security architecture. The *Paris Charter* (1990), which promised peace for Europe, went unheeded.

In his book "The Grand Chessboard – American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives", *Zbigniew Brzezinski* in



Daniele Ganser



Hans von Sponeck  
(pictures ma)



Gabriel Galice

1997 raised the question of whether Russia should be integrated into NATO and the EU. Finally, he decided to give priority to tactical security rather than to strategic peace, knowing well that this would trigger Russian reactions. He called for the integration of Ukraine – one of the five "geopolitical pivots" in Eurasia – into NATO and the EU.

In 2010, *Charles A. Kupchan*, a professor at Georgetown University, proposed to integrate the Russians into NATO.<sup>1</sup> The promise made by the US to the Russians on the occasion of the German reunification, namely that NATO would not be extended further east, was "forgotten". That enabled the Western powers to continually

repulse, humiliate, and zero in on the various Russian leaders. Whatever we think of the Russian regime, in the eyes of the West the main mistake of *Vladimir Putin* (and of many other countries in the world) is that he is no longer submitting the western claim to hegemonise.

After the illegal war against Iraq, the numerical expansion of the NATO member countries and the enlargement of their range of action in all directions,

after all this, the fall of *Gaddafi* in Libya and the coup in Ukraine meant the crossing of the red line that provoked Russian and Chinese resistance. After all, they had already established the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* (SCO) after the first expansion of NATO. The operations in Libya and Ukraine, as well as the Western support of the "rebels" determined to overthrow the Syrian regime (from 2006 onwards, according to *Time Magazine* of 19 December 2006), led the Russians to support the autonomy of the Crimea and to get militarily involved in Syria.

Although it is widely known that the CIA oversaw the French presidential elections in 2012, and that the NSA is spying on companies, organisations, and individuals all over the world, it is now good form to attribute direct intervention in the American, French, and German elections to Russian leaders.

The European countries are intensifying their adjustment to US foreign policy, including the embargo against Russia. President *François Hollande* is reinforcing the reintegration of France into the military command of NATO, which *Nicolas Sarkozy* had initiated.

And what about the neutral countries? Sweden is reintroducing compulsory military service. At the same time, a report entitled "Cold War in the Far North" is being broadcast on Arte.<sup>2</sup> The Swedish General Staff once collaborated with NATO and the USA – without the knowledge of the government of *Olof Palme*, who was ready for a detente with Moscow ... and who was then assassinated. Does Swiss mem-

### Article 46 and 47 of the Charter of the United Nations

#### Article 46

Plans for the application of armed force shall be made by the Security Council with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee.

#### Article 47

- 1 There shall be established a Military Staff Committee to advise and assist the Security Council on all questions relating to the Security Council's military requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security, the employment and command of forces placed at its disposal, the regulation of armaments, and possible disarmament.
- 2 The Military Staff Committee shall consist of the Chiefs of Staff of the permanent members of the Security Council or their representatives.

Any Member of the United Nations not permanently represented on the Committee shall be invited by the Committee to be associated with it when the efficient discharge of the Committee's responsibilities requires the participation of that Member in its work.

- 3 The Military Staff Committee shall be responsible under the Security Council for the strategic direction of any armed forces placed at the disposal of the Security Council. Questions relating to the command of such forces shall be worked out subsequently.
- 4 The Military Staff Committee, with the authorization of the Security Council and after consultation with appropriate regional agencies, may establish regional sub-committees.

# On the role of the West in the Ukraine Crisis

by Dario Rivolta\*



Dario Rivolta  
(picture ma)

*The European sanctions on Russia would have expired on 31 January 2017. They were imposed at a time as one insinuated that the Russian side had a hostile attitude in the question of Ukraine.*

*These sanctions have been extended for six months at an early stage. Certainly, the reason for this was some fear that the new American President Donald Trump could lift them and urge Europe to do the same. Recently, the American President has stated that at the moment nothing in this direction would be undertaken, but everyone knows his desire to establish good relations with Moscow.*

As the NATO and Europe support the current Government in Kiev and accuse Russia, to be blamed for the current crisis, one has to remember in the name of truth how it all started.

## Ukraine crisis: How it all started

“Since Ukraine’s independence in 1991, the United States has supported Ukrainians as

\* Dario Rivolta is an international political news columnist and an international trade consultant. He is a political scientist with area of expertise in social psychology. From 2001 to 2008, he was a member of the Italian Parliament. He was vice-president of the Foreign Affairs Commission, representative of the Italian Parliament at the European Council as well as at the Assembly of the Western European Union. During this time, he was also responsible for the international relations of the party.

## “Nato is endangering ...”

continued from page 2

bership in the Nato Organisation *Partnership for Peace* (PfP) correspond to the neutrality of the country? Daniele Ganser quotes the former US Secretary of Defense William Perry: “The difference between NATO membership and participation in the NATO Initiative Partnership for Peace must be made thinner than a piece of paper.”<sup>3</sup> Swiss military aircraft fly over the Baltic Sea together with NATO aircraft.

No, NATO as an offensive alliance does not contribute to our security. Let us rely on the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), let us take up talks with Russia, and implement Articles 46 and 47 of the UN Charter, by means of which a general staff panel will

they build democratic skills and institutions, as they promote civic participation and good governance, all of which are pre-conditions for Ukraine to achieve its European aspirations. We have invested over \$5 billion dollars to assist Ukraine in these and other goals that will ensure a secure and prosperous and democratic Ukraine”, stated Viktoria Nuland, the American Assistant Secretary of State, entrusted with European and Asian Affairs, on 13 December 2013 at the International Conference on the Ukraine in the *National Press Club* in Washington. “I’m coming from Kiev (the third time in 5 weeks),” she added. To confirm once again that this American project is supposed to run up to the end, she also confirmed that the United States would not accept a work of 5 years to end from one moment to the next.<sup>1</sup> Some days before, on 24 November, during one of her previous trips, 100,000 kept the streets of Kiev occupied, protesting against the decision of President Yanukovich, not to participate in the meeting and to sign the Association Agreement, that had been organised by the European Union in Vilnius.

## Questionable association agreement with the EU

In fact, at this moment it would have been a big surprise, the Ukrainian Government would have done the opposite. It’s enough to recall the scope of the economic relations with Russia on the one hand and to the EU on the other hand. Moscow had already indicated that an economic union with EU would result in reintroducing custom controls with Russia and Belarus protecting their markets from the European products in a triangle trade. One should

be appointed to assist the Security Council.

*Gabriel Galice, President of the Geneva International Peace Research Institute GIPRI, Author of “Lettres helvètes 2010–2014”*

*Daniele Ganser, historian and peace researcher, author of “NATO’s Secret Armies; Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe” and “Illegal wars – How Nato countries undermine UN”*  
*Hans von Sponeck, former UN Assistant Secretary-General*

<sup>1</sup> [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2010-05-01/natos-final-frontier](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2010-05-01/natos-final-frontier)

<sup>2</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tv6ldWT2P8Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tv6ldWT2P8Q)

<sup>3</sup> Ganser, Daniele. *Illegale Kriege – Wie die Nato-Länder die Uno sabotieren*. (Illegal wars – How Nato countries undermine UN) Zurich, 2017, p. 28

(Translation by *Current Concerns*)

think also of the debt of Kiev and the gas supplies to Ukraine before cutting the connections with the biggest former trading partner. Until then, Kiev could have stayed neutral between NATO and the *Organization of the Treaty on Collective Security* (CSTO) under the hegemony of the Russian opponent.

## Yanukovich incurred the enmity of some Western Governments

Yanukovich’s decision has incurred him the enmity of some Western Governments, especially of the United States and Poland, and also the Ukrainians were disappointed, as they had imagined, that an association with the EU would let the general corruption disappear, like magic, and bring the richness of European households to their homes.

What interest the EU had in this association agreement, we will analyse later. At the moment it is enough to listen to Mrs Nuland. She answered to her Ambassador in Kiev, who spoke to her on the phone about a certain European restraint in this issue, literally: “... and you know fuck the EU.” (The conversation was intercepted by some officially not identified services. You can listen the conversation on the Internet. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk6SvNzRDL8>)

## US influence on the Ukraine since 2003

The fact that the United States were heavily involved, is proven by the programs of USAID and other American organizations, who worked more or less officially in Ukraine since 2003. Here are a few programs, as listed on the official website of USAID [US Agency for International Development]:

- May 2013 until December 2016: program to fight corruption. It is formally dealing with admission tests of students and teachers to the university.
- July 2004 until January 2018: program against slave trade. Formally dealing with training in public bodies and NGOs to fight the forced transit of migrants through the Ukraine.
- October 2008 until September 2016: program to strengthen the civil society. On the participation of citizens in the process of integration into the European Union, the monitoring of elections and the participation of young people in the struggle for civil rights and human rights.
- July 2013 until September 2017: program in conjunction with the Ukraini-

continued on page 3

**"On the role of the West ..."**

continued from page 2

an *Peace Corps*. Delivery of additional and special financial support to NGO engaged in the support of democracy and keeping track of the decisions of the Government.

- October 2009 until December 2016: program to enforce the political process in Ukraine.
- September 2011 until February 2017: emergency program to enlarge the capacities to finance the local communities.
- October 2011 until September 2016: program in the field of Justice. Primacy of law and of human rights.
- October 2011 until September 2016: program to promote development of the media so that information and messages can better be spread (to whom?).
- April 2013 until April 2018: program to promote a strategic vision of a stable, democratic, prosperous and Ukraine integrated in Europe.
- November 2013 until November 2018: program for a responsible, democratic and efficient parliament. Support for the work of parliamentarians.

**The headings are deceptive**

One could go on this infinitely as the USAID programs in Ukraine were and are still numerous. If you read the official program descriptions, you'd think it was simply to help, to support civil society and the progress of the country. But if you look at the type and timing of the interventions, one can easily imagine, that it is a covert way to win converts and to penetrate in all sectors of society, that could be useful in the right moment. At the same time it concerned a minimal consensus of the distribution of wages and promises.

**Critical voices also from the United States**

Under the critical observers are not only enemies of the United States. Taking into account, what a long-time parliamentarian and presidential candidate, who in March 2014 (as the coup d'état against Yanukovich already was successful) replied during the primary election of the Democratic Party on the question of what he would make in Ukraine, if elected to the US President. *Dennis Kucinich* said in an interview with *Fox News* – as follows: "What I'd do is not have USAID and the *National Endowment for Democracy* working with US taxpayers' money to knock off an elected government in Ukraine, which is what they did. [...] I wouldn't try to force the people of Ukraine into a deal with NATO against their interest or into a deal with the European Union, which is against their economic interest." Kucinich added that the

"What I'd do is not have USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy working with US taxpayers' money to knock off an elected government in Ukraine, which is what they did. [...] I wouldn't try to force the people of Ukraine into a deal with NATO against their interest or into a deal with the European Union, which is against their economic interest." (*Dennis Kucinich*)

CIA was actively involved in the actions of the American Government, which aimed to "stir up trouble in Ukraine ...".

**NATO East-enlargement in the interest of the military industrial complex**

Just as interesting is the opinion of *Lawrence Wilkerson*, he expressed in an interview with *TV MSNBC*. Wilkerson was well informed after his work as a University Professor and head of Cabinet of *Colin Powell*. In the aforementioned interview, he reminded that at the end of the cold war, *Bush senior* and *James Baker* calmed *Shevardnadze* and *Gorbachev* down, that NATO would not penetrate eastward. Georgia and Ukraine should have been already NATO members at the instigation of *Lockheed Martin* and other companies interested in selling weapons to Central and Eastern Europe. (Do not forget that it was only due to the opposition of some European countries, that *Bush junior* could not announce his plan of membership of these two countries in the Atlantic organization on the NATO annual general meeting in April 2008 in Bucharest.)

**Russian reaction to Western Ukraine policy was foreseeable**

In the course of the interview, Wilkerson has added: "Anyone who knows Russian history, anyone who knows the history of empire, anyone who knows about the raw politics of raw power, could have guessed that President Putin would move into Ukraine once we had formed a group there led by the NED [National Endowment for Democracy] and its affiliates that effectively pulled off a coup" Then he concluded with admirable intellectual honesty: "If I were Putin, I would have done exactly what *Putin* did, and anyone who says they couldn't predict this was either a fool or lying."

**Also US against EU**

In the course of her conversation with *Geoffrey Pyatt*, the American Ambassador in Kiev, Mrs Nuland has mentioned the names of those who should be members of the new Ukrainian government if one had to choose someone out of this "racket". (These are her own words!) As far as the attitude of the European countries is concerned, she has judged them as "incompetent interference", hence her in-

sulting parlance. In her opinion, there was some reason for her estimate because Germany and France were seeking a compromise instead of the removal of Yanukovich, a kind of "solution" with elections, something the Americans did not want.

In fact, the European countries and Great Britain wanted a radical change of government, but they were preparing a slow process to preserve the appearance.

**German influencing against all diplomatic practices**

It must be noted here that Germany has a party funding system running through foundations, and that all German parties have at least one reference structure of this type. The Social Democrats count on the *Friedrich Ebert Foundation*, the Christian Democrats on the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation*. This latter was the most active in Ukraine since 2011, after a treaty (with tied-up funding) was concluded with the *Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform* (UDAR), an opposition party led by the former professional boxer *Vitali Klitschko*. He was chosen by the Germans as future chief of the country.

But the Americans had other plans. Thus, "only" for the second time, he has become the mayor of Kiev, and president of the political favorite party of *Porochenko*.

The interference of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the affairs of Ukraine was openly hostile to the government at that time, that went so far that Klitschko was invited to the CDU party conference in December 2012 as an honorary guest, and that for him numerous encounters and meetings with journalists and political personalities were organised. On this occasion, he also met the then German Foreign Minister, *Guido Westerwelle*, as well as *Christoph Heusgen* the foreign policy adviser of *Merkel*. These encounters have been repeated several times until Westerwelle has even gone to Kiev to meet him at a time when the uprisings were already under way. During this period the German minister, like Mrs Nuland, has violated all diplomatic practices; before meeting the legitimate representatives of the existing government, he has gone to the Maidan to assure the demonstrators of his support.

continued on page 4

# Nikolai Starikov: The tragedy of Ukraine – a geopolitical diary

by Dr Barbara Hug



Nikolai Starikov is chairman of the *Great Fatherland Party of Russia*, writer, historian, and director of the state-owned Russian television channel *Perwy Channel*, Department St Petersburg.

The list of his publications is long. So far, just a few of them have been translated into German or English. *Georg Farafonov*, to whom we owe the German edition of “The Tragedy of Ukraine – a Geopolitical Diary”, intends to translate his entire publications into German. Still, there are publications translated into English: *Who set Hitler against Stalin* and *Rouble Nationalization – the Way to Russia’s Freedom*.

What is special about Starikov’s books? They are an uncompromising, analytically sharp reappraisal of current and historical events, the truth of which cannot be overlooked, because the facts are well researched. It looks like thorough archive work.

The so-called spontaneous uprisings, e.g. the “Arab Spring” 2011, might have been the occasion to focus on the events in Ukraine during the Euro-Maidan, late 2013 to April 2014. In the following we briefly present Starikov’s analysis.

Since 2000, Russia has changed the strategy of its foreign policy. The new foreign policy started with Ukraine. First signs were the successful fight against

terrorists in the Caucasus – Chechnya – and the rejection of the US aggression against Iraq. Russia was able to record a series of successes in foreign policy: the intervention in Syria, *Edgar Snowden* and Ukraine. At the diplomatic level Russia stepped out of the defensive position. Economic treaties were concluded with Ukraine. So it were the Ukrainian oligarchs who turned against an Euro-integration. The West could not offer anything. The striking argument was a low price of gas. Russia did not want to be faced with an Ukraine, where Brussels was to decide. The following chronology shows the events leading up to the overthrow of the Ukrainian government. However, in 2014 it was also clear: EU government did not aim at an enlargement of the EU by including Ukraine, but the territory was supposed to be a colony. However, a colony is never at eye level with the metropolis. It just has to provide resources. It is there to be robbed by US banks and corporations. Furthermore, through NATO the US aimed at bringing more military bases to the Russian border.

The scenario of coups has been unchanged for centuries, says the historian Starikov. It is the violent takeover of central points of the government. Letting up the emotions is unusual even for the latest events in Ukraine. Never before, radical fighters were ready to kill. However,

the state did not perform its duty. He did not punish the attempted overthrows. On the contrary, he closed his eyes in front of Nazi organizations, training camps for fighters, torch parades and parades of Bandera supporters. Like a script, the Maidan scenario could expand. The West poked the fire immensely. Ukraine was to be liquidated in its present form, Russia was to be expelled from the geopolitically significant peninsula of Crimea and the chaos in Russia was to be fueled with the help of Ukraine.

Starikov’s expositions go far beyond Ukraine. It is a textbook for anyone who is ready and able to read and who does not want to sink into the murky soup of controlled media. The reader is totally disillusioned by Starikov’s assessment of US policy:

“Every US president will make the same policy. He may be stopped by the American voters, but afterwards, always the same will come to power, the one who are waging war.” It is only a clear view that makes us strong and effective. In this sense thanks to Starikov. And the outlook: A strong Eurasian continent growing together could end this era of human history.

The book is available in book shops, or at Friederike Beck, Publisher Verlag Zentrale Friedenspolitik. Eschwege/Werra, [zentrale.friedenspolitik@gmx.de](mailto:zentrale.friedenspolitik@gmx.de). Starikov, Nikolai. *Die Tragödie der Ukraine – ein geopolitisches Tagebuch*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2015. Publisher Verlag Zentrale Friedenspolitik Eschwege/Werra, 200 pages, 17,80 Euro

## “On the role of the West ...”

continued from page 3

### Snipers on the Maidan – trained in Poland

The Germans were not the only ones who deliberately interfered in the internal affairs of Ukraine without being invited to do so. Even French Foreign Minister *Laurent Fabius* has officially invited the boxer to Paris, but because of the expansion of the uprisings this meeting has never been held and has been replaced by a telephone call. The Poles, on the other hand, have gone much further. They have not only supported the demonstrators (Foreign Minister *Sikorski* even went so far as to compare *Klitschko* with *Walesa*), but it also seems that they have also deployed agents provocateurs, which should mix among the people in public places. This was revealed by *Janusz Korwin-Mikke*, one of the candidates at the last presidential election in Poland: “The Maidan was also our operation. Snipers were trained in Poland, and their goal was to cause further unrest.” Thus he

indicated the connection with the shots on the policemen and the crowd, which had been given by individuals, who had never officially been identified, killing several people, and thus have sped up the events.

### Never before witnessed “spontaneous” demonstrations that well organised

An American journalist, who had stayed in Kiev during the uprisings for professional reasons, later told me he had never witnessed such well organised, “spontaneous” demonstrations before. One should ask how and by whom the numerous tents and the food that was distributed with care and on a regular basis to the demonstrators were paid.

The fact that none of these events were spontaneous and that the fall of Yanukovich was part of a long-planned initiative by the US is well known today. The question remains why one – in Europe as well – participated in these events and took the risk of creating preconditions for a conflict that potentially could spread beyond local geographical borders. Anyone knowledgeable

about politics knows that Ukraine is of no strategic significance to European countries. At best, its historic roots lie within Russia and at worst, it’s an indispensable “buffer state” for European security.

### Why is Ukraine supposed to be a member state of the EU at all costs?

Although most Europeans feel sympathy for Ukrainians, nobody can really imagine why they should implicitly be members of the European Union. It’s a country of approximately 50 million inhabitants with very low incomes and an economy mostly focused on the Russian market, with local products that most certainly would not fare well in a shared market with other European countries. In light of huge economic and financial difficulties of Southern Europe – why the hell should one burden oneself with enormous state debt and an infrastructure hardly compatible with ours? Why create problems with Russia that, on the other hand, is promising as a market for our products and our know-how?

continued on page 5



## Movement in German-Russian relations?

*There is movement in the relations between Germany and Russia. Even the former German Secretary of State Willy Wimmer, who in recent years has commented with a clear emphasis on Germany's Russian policy, speaks in an interview with the website World Economy<sup>1</sup> of a "special kind of indication".*

km. Willy Wimmer responded to the Moscow visit of Bavarian Prime Minister and CSU Chairman *Horst Seehofer* and his meeting with the Russian President *Vladimir Putin*. Wimmer says, "This actually is the form of cooperation that is appreciated by most people in Germany. When it is made clear that we do not see our role narrowed into a NATO prison, that instead we are trying to maintain good relations with our neighbours, small and large. This picture of joint visiting – by Mrs *Merkel* in Washington on the one hand and by Mr *Seehofer* in Moscow on the other hand – has clarified that something is in motion in Germany, namely in some sense that the people in Germany consider it right. This double visit is perhaps the first sign of making use of the uncertainty about the further course of the United States here in Berlin, to give new signals of coping with the European situation, and to give appropriate indications of how we envisage our future. It is a special kind of indication, which deserves to have special attention drawn to it."

### Edmund Stoiber for communication with Russia

It is interesting that Willy Wimmer gave this interview on that day when former Bavarian Prime Minister *Edmund Stoiber* held the ceremonial address<sup>2</sup> at the *German-Russian Forum* in Berlin, which called for a rapprochement between Germany and Russia. At the beginning, *Stoiber* cites a statement by the former Bavarian Prime Minister and CSU chairman *Franz Josef Strauss* from the year 1974:

### "On the role of the West ..."

continued from page 4

#### Europe is being blackmailed

Poland and the Baltic countries want to protect themselves against Russia's presence at all costs, because they fear potentially aggressive ambitions. With American support, they were able to blackmail the rest of Europe and pushed for a "partnership", whose rejection sparked demonstrations by the population. In any case, it is clear to any honest observer equipped with common sense that not only the Russians are not interested, but more importantly, that they also cannot afford to attempt an attack on a country already a member of the European Union.

"It was always a good time for Europe when Germany and Russia had good relations, times were bitter for Europe, if this was not the case." He shares this opinion with a view to the events of the Second World War. After this war, both the Russians and Germans, had "given the historical response of 'Never again'". He adds, "as a lesson from history, this must never be forgotten."

### "Russia is a world power" – criticism directed at US President Obama

In his contemplation of the present, *Edmund Stoiber* puts forward a tone, other than one has been accustomed to by German politics in recent times. According to *Stoiber* Russia is "undoubtedly a world power." In almost every international challenge Russia is "part of the solution". "Without Russia, there would be no [...] ceasefire in Syria." Russia even played a central role in the "negotiations of a ceasefire in Syria, as opposed to the US and the EU". "The Iran agreement as well would not have come about without Russia."

*Stoiber* criticizes the attitude of former US President *Obama*. The statement that Russia was only a regional power, "greatly contributed to the growing alienation between the United States and Russia. It was one of the most insensitive and false statements by an American president."

### The sanctions harm both sides

For the former Prime Minister of Bavaria, it is a fact "that the sanctions against Russia harm both sides". Thus, he implicitly opposes the sanctions and adds: "There is no greater peace guarantee than mutual interests and close economic relations."

This is the core of his speech. Corresponding with the analysis of Willy Wimmer a remarkable formulation follows: "Against the background of the new protectionism on the other side of the Atlantic, we should not self-inflict artificial prohibitions of thought. A study by the *Ifo*

### German duplicity

Regarding Ukraine, Germans and others have always been duplicitous: On the one hand, they seek to exert economic and political hegemony over Eastern Europe, so naturally, they are in competition with Russia over this issue. On the other hand, Russia is a very important economic partner. Consequently, they try to please everybody. During all other international meetings, *Merkel* continuously emphasises the absolute necessity to keep up the sanctions, while vice chancellor *Sigmar Gabriel* and former foreign minister *Frank Walter Steinmeier* have participated in every conference in Russia and continue to confirm that cooperation between

*Institute* revealed significant growth gains for the EU and Russia through a comprehensive free trade agreement."

### Fritz Pleitgen from the "left-wing broadcaster" WDR – quite in agreement with Edmund Stoiber

It is also remarkable that *Edmund Stoiber* was the keynote speaker at an event honoured by *Fritz Pleitgen*, the former editor-in-chief of the WDR, during which the Honourable commented humorously: "Who would have thought that we would get so close! You, the right-wing head of Bavaria, and I of the 'left-wing broadcaster' WDR. We see that Russia is approaching. Russia ensures understanding."<sup>3</sup>

*Fritz Pleitgen* criticized the fact that German troops had been moved near the Russian frontier: "Would we be pleased if Russian troops would appear close to our cities?" He added: "I do not believe that *Helmut Kohl* had armed NATO vehicles with the German *Balkenkreuz* on the Russian border in mind when negotiating the German unity and the NATO membership of the united Republic of Germany with Mr *Gorbachev*. If we begin with moving our troops to emphasize our policy, then we will reach the *Ultimo* quickly."

He continued: "The European Union has been pursuing its sanction policy for three years. It's time to take a hard look at what has occurred. What has remained of the sanctions? Other than mistrust nothing could be described as a turn to the positive. If something does not work, one should leave it."

### Matthias Platzeck foresees improved German-Russian relations in 2017

The former SPD party chairman and Brandenburg's Prime Minister, *Matthias Platzeck* was optimistic about both speeches, the one by *Edmund Stoiber* and the other by *Fritz Pleitgen*, on the chairman of the *German-Russian Forum*. In

continued on page 6

the two countries remains indispensable and necessary.

Trapped between the Germans' game and the Baltic states' and Poland's hysteria, the other European countries lack a great statesman which in turn makes them susceptible to other powers' wills and interests. In the meantime, the economy suffers and arms dealers rub their hands and think about their future deals. •

<sup>1</sup> ([www.informationclearinghouse.info/article37599.htm](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article37599.htm)) "Victoria Nuland Admits: US Has Invested \$5 Billion In The Development of Ukrainian, 'Democratic Institutions'." 13.12.2013

## “We decide”

### The right to binding popular vote is to be incorporated into the Austrian Federal Constitution

The 40<sup>th</sup> plebiscite in the Second Republic (title: “We decide”) wants the inclusion of the referendum as an unrestricted right of the electorate in the Austrian Federal Constitution.

From 100,000 votes onwards, a mandatory plebiscite on legal propositions should be possible. In the future, the so-called noncommittal referendum can also lead to a binding plebiscite. Parliament must first decide within six months.

#### The initial situation

1. Many of our politicians are primarily committed to the interests of their parties (power reserve or empowerment).

2. This dilutes the democratic principle of Article 1 of the Federal Constitution (B-VG) (parliamentary respectively representative democracy).

3. The will of the people is not sufficiently represented. In the present situation, many of us feel defense- and powerless against a perfected Austrian political system, supported by a PR specialist, which seems only to be self-sufficient and

as a parallel world leads an independent existence away from actual interests of the population.

Powerlessness can lead to extremes, and this must be prevented by an increase of democracy!

It is not enough for a mature, honest, real democracy to vote for the parliament every five years (National Council elections). Even the proposals now made in the government on a “Volksbegehren neu” (“Referendum New”) are by no means sufficient.

#### What we need

Our democracy needs decisions both taken and abided by jointly through the people’s representatives (parliament) and our citizens.

Of course Parliament should not be made obsolete! However, we citizens should be given the opportunity to intervene in Parliament’s decisions if they do not correspond to the wishes of the majority of the citizens.

The possibility of preventing a parliamentary bill by means of a citizen’s vote is intended to prompt our people’s repre-

#### The original text of the plebiscite

The following sentences are to be added to Article 43 B-VG:

A referendum on a bill is also to be carried out if at least 100,000 eligible voters of the collectively enfranchised people demand it. Moreover, a plebiscite on a bill or another resolution to be taken by the National Council for the execution of a referendum shall be taken within six months, if required by 100,000 signatories of the plebiscite or other eligible voters.

The following sentence is to be added to Article 46 (3) B-VG:

This federal law also has to regulate the cases in which a popular vote on a bill has to be omitted because of danger in delay.

(Translation Current Concerns)

sentatives to make their decisions by including the citizens more than currently and therefore to provide them with sufficient information and involve them in the preparation.

continued on page 7

#### “Movement in German ...”

continued from page 5

an interview with the German edition of the Russian station *Sputnik* of 21 March 2017<sup>4</sup>, he expressed that he expects an improvement in German-Russian relations still in this year. The German Chancellor will also travel to Moscow in May and the new Federal President “clearly signalled that he would end this long drought of a German President visiting Moscow”.

Taking into consideration the experience with *Egon Bahr’s* and *Willy Brandt’s* Eastern bloc policy, Matthias Platzeck advocates practicing the art of simply putting problems aside which are not solvable at the moment, “and to turn towards problem areas where one can do something together, develop cooperation, shape cooperation”.

#### “Europe must be careful not to stand alone”

Matthias Platzeck also mentions the strategic consideration, which Willy Wimmer mentioned already, and which Edmund Stoiber also supports: “There is also the geopolitical challenge that Europe must be very careful not to stand alone one day. There are isolationist tendencies in the US and the power house in Far East with China. And suddenly there we are. It should be our great interest to bring Rus-

sia closer to us. Not that we then lose Russia to China in 10, 20 years.”

At the end of the interview Matthias Platzeck once again emphasizes that Europe and the world are faced with enormous problems, and points out that “without or against Russia we will not be able to solve all these issues.” The problems cannot be delayed. In seriousness he adds, “We should not whitewash the world. The alienation between Germany and Russia is growing, the mutual knowledge of each other is decreasing. This bears a high-risk potential, because thereby all kinds of errors and false alarm can grow more quickly and danger of escalation grows with it. That is why I believe that there is very little time left.”

#### Alexander Rahr: Only the German elite has alienated itself from Russia

This corresponds to what the German expert on Russia, *Alexander Rahr*, expressed in a conversation with the *Sputnik* station on the same day. For many years, Alexander Rahr was the Russian expert of the influential German Foreign Relations (DGAP), also known as the *German Council on Foreign Relations*.

Rahr says, “the relationship between Germany and Russia is as bad as has not been seen in decades, even worse than during the Cold War.” And this, despite Europe having no other choice but “to

create a common Europe with Russia.” The problem of the German-Russian relations is “not Mrs Merkel,” and certainly not the majority of the German population which is neither anti-Russian nor Russia-phobic, “but a large part of the German elite that has alienated itself from Russia”. An increasing number of the European elites state that “above all the Western and Central Eastern European states, wish for a Europe without Russia”. Rahr is doubtful of whether such path, such new Cold War “will end as peacefully as the first.”

Therefore, it is all the more important and urgent that the movement of Willy Wimmer, Matthias Platzeck, Edmund Stoiber, Fritz Pleitgen, Alexander Rahr and others is given more support. •

<sup>1</sup> [www.world-economy.eu/pro-contra/details/article/k-frage-keine-winterstiefel-oder-zu-leise-stimme/](http://www.world-economy.eu/pro-contra/details/article/k-frage-keine-winterstiefel-oder-zu-leise-stimme/) from 20.3.2017

<sup>2</sup> [www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/portal/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Rede\\_Dr.-Edmund-Stoiber\\_Festveranstaltung-German-Russian-Forum-e.V.pdf](http://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/portal/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Rede_Dr.-Edmund-Stoiber_Festveranstaltung-German-Russian-Forum-e.V.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/portal/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Dankesrede\\_Fritz\\_Pleitgen\\_Dr.-Friedrich-Joseph-Haass-Preis\\_2017.pdf](http://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/portal/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Dankesrede_Fritz_Pleitgen_Dr.-Friedrich-Joseph-Haass-Preis_2017.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.sputniknews.com/politics/20170321314978814-russland-platzeck-tauwetter/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://en.sputniknews.com/politics/20170321314974213-ostpolitik-tot-rahr-europa-russland/ll>

# Back to field 1

## Federal Council reaching its limits in the negotiations with EU

RI. Switzerland's current negotiations about an "institutional framework agreement with the EU" resemble an unsolicited deep bow with unforeseeable consequences. Without compelling need, the last decision on the vital matters should be consigned to a foreign court of a undemocratic construct.

### EU is not democratic

It is official: the EU has no democratic structures. It never had, and it has not achieved this even after several decades. It is not democratic.

The EU is a supranational entity which deprives its democratic Member States of power and usurps more and more competences for itself. In the individual States of the EU now 80 percent of the laws are no longer decided by elected parliamentarians, but made in Brussels. A cold disempowerment of citizens.

### Heavily subsidised debating room

The European Parliament itself is a highly-subsidised debating room – with all the amenities it needs to silence a conscience,

but without any real power. The laws are worked out at a different location.

For decades, corruption scandals have been shaking the Brussels EU. Since years their finances have not been approved.

Only the public opinion has noticed less in recent years – thanks to better PR.

### Jurisdiction beyond democratic legitimation from the base

It is known that in the European Court of Justice lawyers from different EU States such as Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania, etc. decide about the internal affairs of other States in the EU, of which they do not know much about law and tradition. They administer justice according to the regulations and laws which originate from a huge bureaucratic machine.

The "institutional framework agreement with the EU" changes our State system and the self-determination of our country. The Brussels judges – who are appointed in whatever way – shall pass sentences without real knowledge of the country and people.

It is hardly understandable that some members of the Federal Council with their chief officials are pursuing the plan to join the undemocratic EU given the current developments because

- the EU is bing about to disintegrate (Brexit),
- fiscally, the EU is running on empty: Greece is immediately before bankruptcy. The public finances of Italy, Spain, Portugal and France will burst at the next interest rate increases,
- the ECB prints euro without end. Inflation which will expropriate the citizens is foreseeable,
- the EU's military policy is on the way to lose its "peace dividend". It is closely affiliated with NATO and takes part in operations in the Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan and other hot spots of the world's conflicts. Their goal seems to be to operate power politics and to achieve economic interests by force of arms.

continued on page 8

### "We decide"

continued from page 6

Undemocratic decision-making processes can thus be prevented.

### This is how it will be in the future

What is new?

1. The revolutionary in the popular movement "We decide": In the future, the electorate can force plebiscites.

If 100,000 voters demand it, a plebiscite must take place before a law comes into force. Exceptions should only be urgent cases if there is a threat to our country. This is currently not possible.

2. *The National Council must make a decision within six months by means of a referendum. A referendum on this decision will also be possible.*

If 100,000 voters demand it, every final parliamentary resolution must also be able to be subject to a plebiscite by way of a referendum. In order to ensure this, the Constitution also provides for a maximum period of six months for the parliamentary execution of referendums. Thus, in the future, referendums will no longer be non-committal ("toothless") and thus cannot be left untreated.

*At the moment Parliament has to deal with a referendum, but does not decide. So, at the moment, referendums are not binding.*

*Our goal: No law against the will of the citizens.*

The possibility to demand a referendum against parliamentary resolutions (right of appeal) would already be the *yellow card*, which discourages the parliament from holding something against the majority of the electorate.

For this reason, projects are to be discussed intensively with the interested population, at least from the governmental decision, but better still earlier. If this would not happen and Parliament would do something without having the consent of the citizens, the *red card* threatens by means of a veto against the parliamentary resolution by plebiscite.

Many very important details will have to be settled in *execution laws*. For this, see the already existing implementing laws of the countries, which are already familiar with the before mentioned corrective (e.g. Lower Austria, Burgenland or Vorarlberg).

### "Clock Tools"

With these new regulations, we Austrians have a *binding, truly democratic instrument* in our hands, which we can use, if necessary, to set a new course for the future or even for a political corrective.

This is of *crucial socio-political significance* for the future of our democracy. Why? Because, contrary to the political promises and plights, our country does not develop further in many fundamental areas.

*We citizens thus gain that influence that should be self-evident in each democracy.*

### Who is the initiator of the referendum?

The society ACHT ([www.acht-austria.com](http://www.acht-austria.com)). Independently. Non-party. Absolutely incorruptible.

We want power to really come from the people. In the sense of an honest, true democracy.

### Concluding remarks

1. Compulsory referendums are already envisaged in numerous constitutions, including in Austrian federal constitutions.

2. The current government has also acknowledged more citizens' participation in its program.

In concrete terms, it says: "The coalition is committed to the sensible addition of representative democracy through direct-democratic institutions".

We therefore demand nothing "impossible" or even "absurd", but to a certain extent only the fulfillment of the corresponding coalition agreement. •

Contact persons:

Mag. *Thomas Rathhammer*, chairman of the association ACHT

RA Dr *Karl-Heinz Plankel*, Vice-President and press officer of the association ACHT

Prof DI Dr *Heinz Wohlmeyer*, Cashier association ACHT

DDr *Karl Lengheimer*, Austrian constitutional expert

For further information please contact: RA Dr. Karl-Heinz Plankel, A-1010 Vienna, Bartensteingasse 16/11, Tel.: +43 1 4020925, [kanzlei.wien@anwaelte-dornbirn.at](mailto:kanzlei.wien@anwaelte-dornbirn.at)

For more information, visit [www.acht-austria.com](http://www.acht-austria.com) (Translation *Current Concerns*)

# Which foreign policy position for Switzerland?

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

Admittedly, it is not always easy for Switzerland as a small and preferably independent state and its representatives in politics and diplomacy, and even more so in the context of contractual negotiations, to cope with the predominance of the EU in everyday European affairs. It can also be quite difficult to maintain an upright attitude towards foreign politicians of all kinds, but, in the subject matter, to remain steadfast on the basis of the rule of law and neutrality policy. But it is possible, this is often documented, and corresponds to the self-chosen role of Switzerland.

If you want to appear on the media's frontpages, you will choose a different approach than the careful politician who is concerned with the matter. And everyone who has trained to tell foreign committees what they want to hear and to act accordingly is sometimes even in danger of sweeping uncomfortable national referenda – or the resulting constitutional articles – under the carpet.

Great excitement in various European countries: The Turkish Foreign Minister and other Turkish politicians of the government party want to appear abroad to convince their fellow citizens living there that they should vote in the upcoming referendum in the sense of the government. Many European politicians and media are criticizing the content of the planned Turkish constitutional reform because it would significantly strengthen the power of the head of state and weaken Parliament's ponderosity which would



“Only when Swiss government members and diplomats have a dialogue with foreign governments on an equal footing it will be possible to offer good offices in interstate conflicts.” (picture reuters)

be a threat from a democratic and constitutional perspective. From this position some politicians, also in Switzerland, vote for entry bans and bans on speaking. How is this to be assessed from the perspective of constitutional and public international law?

## The freedom of expression is valid

Well, it is the right of the media to publish their opinion on informing voting documents at home and abroad. This corresponds to the freedom of the press. Freedom of expression, however, does not only apply to the press, but to every

human being, whether or not we share his opinion. So also to foreign politicians who want to visit their compatriots in Switzerland and talk to them – whether we have sympathies for the government or not. Of course, the freedom of speech is also valid for the opponents of the government's bill.

In a mood of heated and excited debates, it is a good thing that the head of *The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs* (FDFA), Federal Councillor *Didier Burkhalter*, said in an interview in the first

continued on page 9

## “Freedom, Democracy and ...”

continued from page 7

### Are the Swiss tax billions not enough yet?

Should Switzerland be chained even closer to this project through its Federal Council?

- Is it not it enough that we already pay tax billions for the “EU cohesion fund”?
- Is it not enough that the will of the people is already disregarded in many ways in the EU's interest?
- Is it not it enough that we have insidiously assumed useless EU law for years?

### Switzerland is not depending on the EU

Contrary to the impression spread by the Federal Council, Switzerland is not dependent on the EU:

- We can operate our international research projects even cheaper than with the EU.

- Our hydropower plants do not need the power of the EU wind power or the EU solar panels.
- Economically, Switzerland is very diversified and must have no fear of French or German Government pressures.
- We can manage seriously our and our customers' funds, without spies from neighbouring countries who want to improve their national debt and are interested in our finances.

The negotiations with the EU must be negotiations between equal partners and not between a little schoolgirl and her taskmaster.

### Demands to the EU

This undemocratic structure can never constitute a reference for our country. The Swiss EU Coordinator *Pascale Baeriswyl* should make the following minimum requirements to the EU:

- The EU must become democratic.

- Their citizens must be put back in their rights.
- The businesses of the EU-Commission must be transparent.
- The EU must act militarily and politically neutral. A possible army must be used only for defense.
- The election of judges is carried out democratically.
- Law must apply and may not be abolished by individual politicians.

Should the EU fulfill these – very low – demands, then negotiations with Switzerland on a possible closer cooperation could make sense.

Otherwise, it is to wish that the EU leadership does not ruin the population economically or transform Europe into a military battlefield.

The Bernese negotiating delegation has reached a decision level which exceeds its competencies to speak on behalf of the citizens. So back to field 1!



## Freedom of expression, security and respect for the law

*Interview with Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter (excerpts)*

*Pietro Bugnon: The pro-Erdogan-campaign in Europe is heading for a diplomatic crisis. The Turkish prime minister didn't get a landing permission in the Netherlands. The European States feel uncomfortable in the face of the diplomatic offensive of the Turkish government. Just this moment I could speak with Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter about this. Up to now he had not commented on this dossier. I asked him if this verbal escalation had worried him.*

*Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter: I think in such a critical situation it is necessary to set a clear frame of principles and actions. We determined it already some days ago, namely the frame of freedom of expression but also this of security and respect for the law. Thereby we have to regulate several delicate dossiers affecting the interests of Switzerland concerning Turkey. The eventual meeting of the Turkish minister on Swiss territory with the Turkish community and the Turkish consuls of the region, then the problems related to the asylum law and to possible intelligence activities on Swiss ground. And we regulate all these dossiers according to our principles. Let us first take the question of the visit which eventually will take place tomorrow – it is not clear and confirmed up to now ...*

*You don't know if it will take place?*

It is not an official, but a private visit of the Turkish minister who wishes to meet the Turkish community and the Turkish consuls of Switzerland and Austria. If it would be an official visit we would make different dispositions. Now we deal first of all with questions of security. And it is up in the air if and where exactly this visit will take

place. For us in the first place it is a question of the freedom of expression. We believe that the adherence to the civil rights and the freedom of expression is important. By the way – this shall be clearly stated here – this is valid for other states, too, Turkey included [...]. Furthermore we point out that the security situation is analysed practically every hour and that it may be necessary in every moment to take action as soon as we think that the security conditions are not guaranteed. [...]

*No prohibition in Switzerland – but in Germany, in Austria, in the Netherlands. Switzerland in a way isolates herself. Don't you feel a little bit alone?*

Oh no, not at all, because we don't have the custom to shape our politics by all means like the others do. The Swiss foreign politics is very autonomous, very specific. So, during the time of the coup d'état last summer we decided on the one hand to take a clear position of condemnation of the coup d'état, on the other hand in its aftermath, which according to our assessment could become very difficult, to make sure that the relationship between Switzerland and Turkey stayed very intensive and based on a direct, free dialogue. This dialogue was meant to be so discreet that we could address even the most precarious points directly – from eye to eye – that means not under all circumstances attended of the media how it happens very often in Europe. This enabled us to cultivate contacts practically monthly on different levels and declare thereby our positions. [...]

*You support the freedom of expression but that means as well the risk of possible riots during tomorrow's visit of the Turk-*

*ish foreign minister. What would happen in this case?*

Listen, if there are risks of riots – I don't know what riots you speak about – but if you speak about security, this is another problem. But the freedom of expression must not be restricted. Of course if suddenly there occurs a security risk we will take measures, for example that the minister couldn't proceed to the designated location or that he couldn't do something he had planned. But then it would be for reasons of security, not for the reason of restrictions of the freedom of expression.

Last year we gave the Kurdish leaders the possibility to express themselves in Switzerland. If the Turkish leader now will also express himself, this is important for the different Turkish groups to be able to form their opinion. In this concrete case it is about a referendum which is very important for the future of this country. And I think that the Turks are old enough to form their own opinion based on the statements of both sides.

Let's say it again: Switzerland is not a country that forbids the expression of opinion but a country that can take security measures [...]. If the event or meeting which the Turks have organised, actually takes place tomorrow – what is not clear at all in the moment as already mentioned – it is in no way impossible that for security reasons we might not be able to let things slide as scheduled.

*Source: Radio Télévision Suisse RTS 1, Forum, 11 March 2017, Interview: Pietro Bugnon*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

### "Which foreign policy position ..."

continued from page 8

program of the radio station in the French speaking part of Switzerland, RTS (Radio Télévision Suisse), that the freedom of expression is unquestionable one of the most fundamental rights in the democratic constitutional state. In contrast to other European governments, he stood by the fact that, from this perspective, there was no reason to prevent the presence of the Turkish Foreign Minister *Mevlüt Cavusoglu* in Switzerland (see box with excerpts from the interview).

#### Handling with foreign governments in Swiss way

In fact the planned presence of the Turkish Foreign Minister in Zurich did not take place on 12 March. Apparently Federal Councillor Burkhalter in a personal meeting with his Turkish colleague has been able to achieve, that the minister decided to renounce his visit for now – without any unintended comments. On 23 March, Federal Councillor Burkhalter met For-

eign Minister Cavusoglu in Berne – without any prior notice and without media presence. Then Cavusoglu met some visitors at the Turkish embassy.

The prudent behaviour of the Swiss Federal Council is therefore an indispensable basis for Swiss neutrality policy. Only when Swiss government members and diplomats have a dialogue with foreign governments on an equal footing it will be possible to offer good offices in interstate conflicts. So Burkhalter could make an effort to achieve a rapprochement between the war parties in 2014 in Ukraine when Switzerland held the OSCE presidency. The people of Ukraine and other heavily disrupted and destroyed countries should be wished that Switzerland could use the institution of good offices more often.

According to Federal Councillor Burkhalter's opinion some Swiss media have had second thoughts about the democratic and constitutional foundations that apply not only to those whose opinions suit our book: "For our country freedom of speech is a valuable commodi-

ty – unlike many States in the European neighbourhood. Whoever wants to speak in front of a meeting has to abide by the laws, such as the racism standard, and he has to abide strictly by the security requirements of the authorities. Rightly we do not know any other conditions. It cannot be that we generally want to forbid the presence of foreign politicians, just because sometimes their attitudes do not fit us. Let us not forget that, on 1 August, our Federal Councils would also like to be present in front of Swiss citizens abroad, where they would certainly hold political speeches, possibly even promote a yes or no vote." ("St. Galler Tagblatt" from 18 March 2017)

#### Turkish referendum and abidance by the principles of the rule of law

From the democratic point of view, however, it should be noted that the Turkish population is, after all, allowed to vote on whether or not it wants a shift of power towards the president. The fact that fun-

continued on page 10

# Why many of the previous free trade agreements do not correspond to the conditions of the common good

by Ewald Wetekamp

## About peace ...

The state is a partnership of convenience. Internal and external security is its supreme goal. That is why the citizens of states with a democratic constitution have agreed on transferring the enforcement of their rights, including the application of armed force, to the state. This is therefore furnished with the monopoly of violence. Accordingly, the authority to maintain the law with force on the basis of justice and the law belongs to the state. Justice and the law are herewith not defined in a purely positivistic sense, but as a realisation of natural and human rights, which must find their expression in positive law and which can rightly be described as just. Law and justice belong to every person by nature, as an individual and as part of the community, and they guarantee every person's freedom. The internal and external security of the community is the condition of this freedom.

## ... to prosperity for all

As the state's monopoly of power is oriented towards the common good, it promotes the free development of every individual member of the community. Therefore the state's laws in the sphere of the economy must equally be understood in such a way that the state, as a representative of the community, which is based on the national will of its citizens, must also promote the common good and therefore prosperity for all in the territory concerned. Article 14

## "Which foreign policy position ..."

continued from page 9

damental reforms are submitted to voters is not common throughout Europe, let alone in the European Union. Its top politicians often speak loudly and concisely in order to demand compliance with "democratic basic values" in other countries – but woe if the citizens of individual EU member states dare to vote against the pre-determined direction of march from Brussels.

Perhaps the majority of Turkish voters – in view of wars launched from abroad and the resulting chaos and terror in their neighbour states – have other ideas how their state is to be led? It is the Turkish people to decide. Naturally, in doing so, the principles of the rule of law and the fundamental rights of individual people must be respected. This is, as already mentioned, more to be attained on an equal footing and in peace, than by unobjective verbal attacks.

(2) of the GG (Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany) stipulates this purpose when it says, "Property entails obligations. Its use shall also serve the public good." The legitimate entrepreneurial pursuit of profit, continuity, development and expansion is not being hindered or confined, but the orientation and attachment to the common good confers on every entrepreneurial striving as the very essence of the matter: the common good of the people connected together in a state community. Professor *Eberhard Hamer*, of the "Mittelstandsinstitut" (mid tier institute) *Hannover*, once expressed this in one of his lectures, when he defined the medium-sized company as a company of people, with people, for people. There is no finer way of describing entrepreneurial activity in its relation to the well-being of the individual and the community.

## A democratically unacceptable enforcement strategy

As far as the currently very popular defense of free trade agreements is concerned, a look at history will help as well as a description of the anti-democratic practices used in the attempt to enforce the free trade agreement TTIP; with CETA it was no different. These practices should be called anti-democratic because matters concerning the public were being negotiated behind closed doors. Even representatives of the people were not allowed to make copies of the provisional contract. The text was made available for study to German parliamentarians in a specially guarded separate room without recording facilities. Not even a cell phone was allowed, because it could have been used to photograph the text. Now what is it that has to be protected here and from whom? We are speaking about a contract of more than a thousand pages. What is the point? That which urgently needs to be made public is instead kept secret meticulously, negotiated behind closed doors, to the exclusion of the public. All this has nothing in common with a republic, with a *res publica*, with the cause of the general public, and it mocks democratic practices. And what is the reaction of our people's representatives? No one is protesting! No one is resisting! There is no report in the media committed to the public. No magazine enlightens the public. And this despite years of mass protests, internet petitions and collections of signatures, which have gone into the hundreds of thousands and which have been giving expression to their legitimate protest in the alternative media.

And then there is this word creation from the arsenal of the spin-doctor school: "Harmonisation of competition". Here two concepts which are generally associated with positive emotions are deliberately put to an inappropriate use. They do not belong together. *Karl-Albrecht Schachtschneider* has long criticised the fact that both the EU legislation and the free trade agreements deal with the terms free or fair competition without defining what they mean by this. In the case of TTIP, harmonisation of competition means nothing but a continuous shutdown of social and environmental standards. For what one does not need to grant, the other does not have to fulfill either, because that would be a "distortion of competition" – again a word creation like the one above. Yes, he should even be able to take legal action to enforce his right of non-compliance. Thus the concept of competition constructed by the corporations and the EU is elevated above national legislation and, on closer inspection, proves to be unconstitutional and just as contemptuous of democracy as the enforcement strategy described above. What is to remain is the corporated state, which is to function as a part of large corporations. We cannot want that.

## Food sovereignty – the first victim of free trade

In his book, "Mit der Ölwanne zur Weltmacht" ("With the Oil Weapon to World Power"), the economic journalist *F. William Engdahl* describes the introduction of free trade in Great Britain by London financiers and traders in the first half of the nineteenth century as the establishment of a new, powerful power instrument of the English financial elite. Theoretically, these circles, which belonged to the City of London, (not quite correctly) relied on the moral philosopher and national economist *Adam Smith*, who was interpreted as having postulated the voluntary subjugation of society to absolutely free trade and to the propagated automatism of market mechanisms.

The fact that in essence, this free trade had nothing to do with public welfare, social justice, or the sovereignty of the English state, was demonstrated by the first great victory of those advocates of free trade. In 1846, they repealed the corn laws which had, for a hundred years, assured the English and Irish peasants of the purchase of their harvests at fixed prices, thus ensuring the peasant's livelihood and the die-

continued on page 11

### "Why many of the previous free trade ..."

continued from page 10

tary sovereignty of England. This changed promptly when the corn laws were repealed. Now coolies in India and fellaheen in Egypt, who already lived under the economic pre-eminence of the London City and worked for starvation wages, became rivals of the English and Irish peasants. The tide of cheap agricultural products, which now began to flow in, drove the English and Irish peasants into ruin. Mass misery was the direct result of free trade, and it forced many into emigration. They became immigrants in other states.

### Forced wage dumping and intentional impoverishment

The ensuing "automatizations of the market mechanisms" led to the impoverishment of industrial workers, since their wages were tied to the price of a loaf, which was now in free fall and soon arrived at the lowest possible level. The fact that this development in England had the harshest consequences also for farmers and industrial workers in Germany and in the whole of Europe, and even for the US, is easy to understand, as England now flooded all these markets with cheap products. In this way, economic wars can be waged against emerging countries and these can be withheld from making their economies prosper, even in the name of such a well-sounding term as "free trade". At the same time germs of future social upheaval and mass protests were then and are now being implemented, as well as new problems such as refugee and emigration movements resulting in a migration of people of foreign cultures into European countries. These consequences were also intended and are still intended today, and they present the countries involved with challenges which are almost impossible to master.

### The nature of the free trade

At the end of the same chapter, Engdahl draws the following conclusion: "In short, the nature of free trade can be defined in such a way that it divides people into ever less extremely rich families and a rapidly growing number of ever poorer, mostly underprivileged people. ("With the Oil Weapon to World Power", 2002, pp. 14)

The cynicism of describing impoverishment and immiseration as a result, not of free trade but of over-population, cannot be surpassed, as a new chapter is opened here which is still being continued by interested parties.

Also the comments on this first chapter, in which Engdahl quotes the American economist *Henry C. Carey* as a contemporary critic of the British free trade policy, are definitely worth reading. Already in the early days, the watchful observer who

felt connected and committed to his fellows could clearly see who profited from free trade. We are struck by the recurrence of the phenomena and consequences of forced free trade agreements, which have been forever repeated till this day.

### Free trade as an economic war against "developing countries"

We can see how also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the free trade market mechanisms described by Engdahl follow the same agenda and have the same consequences as the repeal of the corn laws in the year 1846, if we dip into the book by *Friederike Beck* "Die geheime Migrationsagenda" ("The Secret Migration Agenda") and in particular into its chapter 4 "EPA: Wie Freihandelsabkommen der EU mit afrikanischen Staaten dort wirtschaftlichen Schaden anrichten" ("EPA: How free trade agreements between the EU and African states do damage there"). EPA is the abbreviation for *Economic Partnership Agreement*. But on closer examination, there can be no question of partnership and agreement, since the opening up of African markets for European products was not infrequently enforced by targeted economic war scenarios. African countries refusing to open their markets up to 83% for European goods, and not prepared to abolish tariffs and charges at the same time, were punished with exorbitant import duties on their goods upon entry into the European market. The result showed itself sooner or later: several African states gave up and signed this forced submission contract.

There are quite a few economists who think that these free trade agreements jeopardise the development of African economies as these are not able to compete with the products of highly industrialised economies in European markets and in the meanwhile also on their own. At the same time, these countries are unable to protect their own economies. For example, the export of surplus European chicken meat to African countries has tripled since 2009. Since the production costs of domestic farmers are higher, they are driven into bankruptcy. Protective measures by African states do not work. According to the agreement, they can only charge 35% import duty on poultry imports, but this is not enough. So the African farmers give up. And their collapse not only increases the country's dependence on imports, but also causes the fading out of the knowledge about animal breeding and agriculture, which was traditionally transmitted and further developed over generations. It is no longer available to that community.

The EU's fishing policy is turning out to be equally catastrophic for African countries. Big European ship owners have overfished the European fishing grounds

by more than three-quarters, and are now urging European countries to conclude contracts with African countries in order to allow them to fish in their grounds. Not only do the big ship owners not participate in the costs – 90% are covered by taxpayers – but they can even count on subsidies. European taxpayers pay, and the fishermen of Somalia and Senegal catch no more fish. Indeed, this is a well-known fact. *Angela Merkel's* Africa Commissioner *Günter Nooke* says: "A country should not use economic negotiations to destroy on the one hand, what its development ministry is trying to build up on the other hand." Are these the Western European values, which are so frequently invoked by a certain side? Definitely not.

### The food weapon – a popular free trade tool

*Jean Ziegler's* contribution to the documentary "We feed the world" and the film by *Hubert Sauper* "Darwin's nightmare", both available on DVD, depict in frightening pictures, figures and facts the interrelationships here described. Already at the time when Jean Ziegler compiled his documentation, Western industries supported their farmers with more than one billion dollars a day and also subsidized agricultural exports to developing countries, so that any food export to a developing country occurred at prices that drove every native farmer to ruin. The agenda behind this procedure is easily understood: The food weapon is used in order to create dependencies and force cheap raw material imports, to open up new markets and to recruit the cheapest possible labour, as well as to enforce other things like, for example, setting up landfill sites for so-called problem scrap, where local inhabitants reclaim raw materials under conditions which endanger their lives. And is this brutal enforcement by means of economic power to be perceived by the peoples suffering under it as Western values?

### The EFTA as an exemplary alternative

And yet there are alternatives to the market radical free trade agreements. In the EFTA, for example, we come to agreements in respectful coexistence on an equal footing and with the intention to create a win-win situation (to use a neo-economical term) for the stakeholders. From the outset, the EFTA was a counter-proposal to the market radical Anglo-American free market trade. To date, its members still negotiate agreements with other states, if these regard the orientation towards the common good, which was explained at the beginning of this

## ... because democracy is part of human dignity

by Karl Müller

For quite some time now democracy is subject to numerous attacks. The French and Dutch referenda regarding the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in 2005, the Greek referendum on the EU measures in 2015, the handling of election results like the recent US presidential election – there are political forces which did and do not want to accept all this and did and do everything in their power to overturn the will of the respective majority of citizens. Without scruple they are using all their means. On the other side we can observe that those who are still “in power” in many western states more and more see their position not as having power borrowed for the sake of the common good but as a quasi-absolutist power for the implementation of minority interests. The French journalist *Natacha Polony* has demonstrated this impressively (not only) for her country, speaking of a spreading soft-totalitarianism (cf. *Current Concerns* No 2, 24 January 2017).

### Criticism of democracy ...

And what about the published opinion? Many mainstream media are supporting the game plan of the political elites. Especially direct democracy is insinuated – unfortunately also within Switzerland – being a risk for law and freedom, giving vague emotions too much weight and being a gateway for seducers of the people. Some even suggest that the citizens’ majority decisions could lead to a tyranny. However, it is remarkable what is lurking beneath the surface of such

“Why many of the previous free trade ...”  
continued from page 11

text, as a basic requirement that has to be taken into account by all parties. This practice makes it clear that favourable trade agreements and social welfare orientation do not have to exclude each other. Quite the contrary is true! But where is the school book or teaching material that mentions this? *Current Concerns* has often reported on the EFTA. The knowledge about the devastating effects of unfair free trade agreements is available to everyone in text and images. Education in these questions is an indispensable commitment stemming from compassion, responsibility and love of peace. Decisive for this are the conception of man and the resulting view of the economy which determine the contract partners’ goals: Is it to be “make money, make more money,” or social well-being according to the hard-fought European traditions? •

“Personal dignity means that man as a spiritual and ethical being is meant to control his life and influence his sphere in freedom and self-consciousness. [...] For the sake of his dignity, man has to be secured as comprehensive a development of his personality as possible. For the political and social realm this means: individuals should participate as much as possible in the collective decisions.”

claims: the strive for a “rule of elites” – not something new in history but generally with fatal consequences for states and peoples.

In *Current Concerns* No 7 of 22 March 2017 *Werner Wüthrich* cited from a speech of the former chancellor of the University of Zurich, *Zaccaria Giacometti*: “The people needs to be prepared for liberal democracy, needs to be politically mature. A people appear mature for real democracy if certain preconditions are fulfilled.” The rest of the article is listing Giacometti’s “preconditions”:

### ... and preconditions for democracy

“Idea of freedom: ‘First the idea of freedom needs to be alive in individuals and in the people and the constitutional natural law has to be effective, not necessarily legally but as ethical power.’

Political conviction: ‘There need to be liberal value concepts, but not as spontaneously born euphoric emotions or opportunistic intuitions but as deep political convictions which lastingly dominate the consciousness of a people and are carried by the driving forces of political life.’

Historical consciousness: ‘The people need to have a liberal tradition. Its liberal convictions have to root in such a tradition. But tradition is historical consciousness which makes liberal tradition a liberal historical consciousness. But democracy has a historical consciousness in the case that a liberal past is still exerting its influence such that the previous generation has handed down a treasure of liberal political ideas and experiences to the living generation. [...] The poet’s word is valid also here: Your father handed it down to you – acquire it to own it.’

Political education: ‘The living generation has to appropriate this inherited treasure of liberal political insights and liberal political experiences, even to fight for it by a corresponding political education, trial and probation as constituent or simple legislator of a real democracy.’”

Taking these statements from the 1950s today at face value we would have to admit: We are far from that – in every country. Then are the critics right after all?

Are people still (or already) ready for democracy?

### Working on the conditions instead of criticizing democracy

But this question is leading us in the wrong direction. The fact that, for a democracy to survive, preconditions are necessary can for democrats only mean that all needs to be done to create these preconditions – if they are missing.

But exactly the opposite is happening – starting from small children. What is happening today in families, in kindergartens, in schools and universities is not helping to make our children and youths mature citizens who can bring democracy to life. On the contrary!

Our invitation for democracy towards our adult citizens is not helping either. What we can read, hear or see in many of our media is hardly contributing to democratic life and thinking. Also our elites’ behaviour – while they like to speak about democracy – is pointing in a different direction.

### Why is democracy criticized?

So the question is if those who criticize democracy aren’t looking for something completely different – and why.

It depends, of course: If majority decisions are along their lines, they are highly welcome. This was obvious after the Dutch elections. The new SPD chancellor candidate even received 100% of the votes when he was elected as head of party. This result had never before been achieved. A day later, most commentaries were euphoric, not critical. It hadn’t been much different if *Hillary Clinton* had been elected, if the Greek had voted for the restrictions of their daily lives and the sovereignty of their country and if in 2005 a clear majority of the French and Dutch had voted for the EU Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

### Against a controlled democracy, change management and “Future workshop”

It can be said: a “controlled” democracy along the lines of a national and interna-

continued on page 13

## Respect the democratic rules!

### Media release of the Zurich committee “Lehrplan vors Volk!” from 15 March 2017

The Zurich initiative committee “Lehrplan vors Volk! (Referendum on Curriculum 21!)” notes with worry that the Education Department is organising a media conference on the introduction of Curriculum 21 on Friday, 17 March 2017, without indicating that the people of Zurich will decide in a vote about the authority for the decree of the curriculum. The committee once again calls on the Education Department to consider democratic practices.

It demonstrates a lack of understanding of democracy that the Education Department is working at full speed to prepare the definitive introduction of the disputed curriculum, although they know that the people have to decide in a vote

who will definitely introduce the curriculum.

Accordingly biased arranged an information event will be held on Friday, 17 March 2017. The corresponding invitation does not mention that it is still pending whether the people would like to introduce the new curriculum in the Canton of Zurich.

If the initiative “Lehrplan vors Volk!” is accepted, Curriculum 21 must be submitted to the cantonal council for approval. Its decision is subject to the optional referendum. If the date of the referendum on the initiative are scheduled only after the introduction of Curriculum 21 so this must – in case of acceptance of the initiative by

the people – subsequently be submitted to the cantonal parliament for approval and is subject to an optional referendum.

“This fact is deliberately ignored,” says *Anita Borer*, president of the initiative committee. “We are once again asking the Government Council to comply with democratic practices and await the outcome of the vote.”

The text of the referendum can be found at: [www.lehrplan-vors-volk.ch/die-initiative/](http://www.lehrplan-vors-volk.ch/die-initiative/)

For questions regarding the initiative committee “Lehrplan vors Volk!”:

Anita Borer, Cantonal Councillor SVP, Representative Initiative Committee, Tel: +41 79 665 44 27

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Letter to  the Editor

### Pisa crash – Curriculum 21 jeopardises direct democracy

Recently the media pedagogue *Thomas Merz* from the Teaching College of Thurgau (PHTG) promoted in various newspapers the media education, which is to be included in Curriculum 21 as a compulsory subject. Media pedagogue Thomas Merz fears that the society will enter a democratic deficit as more and more people can no longer distinguish between true and false in the case of hoaxes (“fake news”) in the media. A democracy – and even more a direct democracy – is dependent on the mercy that citizens are informed.

It is interesting that Merz assumes a broad basic knowledge, so that one can only recognize connections, quote: “It is often said today, we would have nothing more to know – we would find everything on the internet. Just the necessary distinction between true and false is an important reason why sustainable basic knowledge is of a crucial significance: I cannot distinguish profound information from com-

plete hoaxes if I do not have this reliable basic knowledge.”

The fundamental knowledge transfer is the central aim that teachers are striving to achieve in classroom teaching. If the media pedagogue now thinks that Curriculum 21 could meet these criteria, it shows how far the PH lecturers are already away from the school practice. In the colleges of education students are taught the exact opposite with regard to Curriculum 21 today: The “competence orientation” with the “self-controlled learning”, which the psychologist *Weinert* “designed” for the economic organisation OECD in 1999.

In the “self-controlled learning”, the individually learning pupils need at least twice as long as in the teacher’s classroom teaching. This means that at least 50% of the previous material is dropped with “Curriculum 21; learning aims such as the simple multiplication are moved or deleted in later “cycles”. As an excuse for this mas-

sive, secret education reduction, teachers and the public are so „informed“ that knowledge is no longer central because the pupils could “google” everything.

In addition, with the new compulsory material such as media education and IT and the controversial early foreign languages, there is still less time left to improve the lack of basic knowledge in reading and German. According to Pisa 2015, in the case of 20% of the 15-year-olds in Switzerland these are missing. Therefore they are hardly placeable in the labour market. If Curriculum 21 is to be introduced extensively, a further massive crash in Pisa could be expected, as is the case with other countries which have switched to the OECD competence orientation – such as the one-time leader Finland.

*Peter Arbersold, Zurich*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“... because democracy is part ...”

continued from page 12

tional Change Management or a national and international “Future Workshop” would be in accordance with the wishes of those criticizing democracy. They mainly criticize if they do not like the results and if we speak about truly free decisions of independent citizens interested in the common good.

Summary: We all should keep an eye on critics of democracy. Everybody is called to help preserving, renewing or creating the preconditions for a living and successful democracy.

#### Start discussing topics honestly and competently

This includes mainly starting to discuss the real topics honestly and competently. There are enough of them: How can we end global wars? How can we help those in existential need, be it due to violence, the global system of finance and economy be put back on a solid basis? How can more people follow a meaningful occupation? How can we provide families with the appreciation and support congruous with their importance for our living together? How can we succeed in educating our children to joyful, courageous persons able to cope with life? How can we improve connectedness between people? How can we all

obtain a solid ethical ground which can form our daily life? And there are many more ...

#### Human dignity and democracy

In a 1983 commentary to the German Constitution we can read: “Personal dignity means that man as a spiritual and ethical being is meant to control his life and influence his sphere in freedom and self-consciousness. [...] For the sake of his dignity, man has to be secured as comprehensive a development of his personality as possible. For the political and social realm this means: individuals should participate as much as possible in the collective decisions.” This is another reason why fighting for democracy is existential.



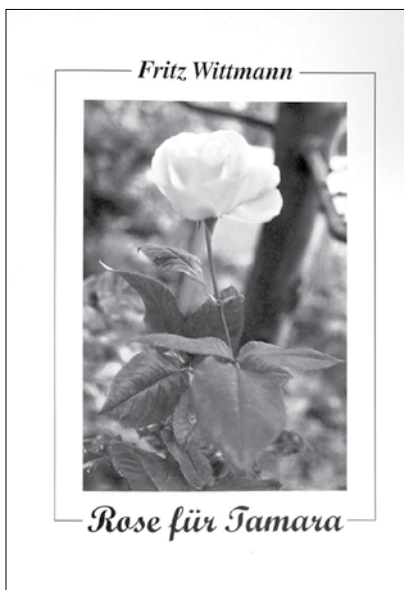
# “Rose for Tamara” – a “human contact with the enemy”

by Moritz Nestor



*Eternal flame in Vladimir. (picture Moritz Nestor)*

On 2 January 2001, the first edition of the unique book “Rose for Tamara” by Fritz Wittmann was presented under the patronage of the former Lord Mayor of Erlangen, Dr Dietmar Hahlweg, initiator of town twinning between Erlangen and Vladimir. Fritz Wittmann wrote this book in collaboration with Peter Steger, representative for town twinning of the city of Erlangen. The moving subtitle of the author Fritz Wittmann from Baiersdorf is: “Even in the winter season through the thickest cotton jacket you feel the cordiality in a Russian embrace.” One, who has experienced this, writes in this way.



ISBN 9783789606564

The book contains the memories of Fritz Wittmann and of other ten former German prisoners of war who, years after the war, lived in camps of the Russian city of Vladimir and in other camps of the USSR.

The city of Vladimir, situated east of Moscow behind the front, was converted into a camp and military hospital base in the summer of 1941 after the invasion of the “Wehrmacht”. When the German advance was stopped before Moscow in the winter, the first people of Erlangen were delivered to Vladimir as war prisoners.

In the preface to the second edition of the book of 2008, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town twinning between Erlangen and Vladimir, Erlangen First Mayor *Andreas Galster* writes: “Yes, there were many terrible experiences. But had not the German soldiers brought the terror into a country that did not want war? And did they not have to expect revenge and hatred? It was all the more surprising, with how much compassion and sympathy the prisoners of war were treated on the part of the population and, in part, even of the guardians and the commanders, but above all on the part of the hospital staff. This is exactly what the authors tell about in the anthology, which is characterized by Fritz Wittmann’s humane spirit and by his undiminished desire for reconciliation. In Vladimir, by the way, one was so taken with this work of peace, that it was already published in Russian translation in 2002, supplemented by memories of Russian contemporary witnesses.”

The author has received the first prize of the German-Russian Forum for civic engagement. It was supposed to be a “human contact with the enemy,” writes Fritz Wittmann. A project that he managed to do.

Above all, the book captivates the historian through a historiography “far from all stereotypes and images of the enemy, but also without any embellishment and historical misrepresentation.” A rarity of objectivity and relevance, paired with humanity and friendship between nations, far away from contractual historiography.

One gets quiet at reading, very quiet. A book that belongs to every political and historical lesson. And one wishes these “Wehrmacht” veterans, the last contemporary witnesses of the Second World War, to be more respected. They know what war in Russia was like, they have been in Stalingrad, and they know the Russian people from their own experience – as soldiers and as prisoners. In fact, so well as none of the elites in government responsibility, who have lost respect for the war and who are in the process of driving us into war again. •

## Current Concerns

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

*Publisher:* Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

*Editor:* Erika Vögeli

*Address:* Current Concerns,

P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich

*Phone:* +41 (0)44 350 65 50

*Fax:* +41 (0)44 350 65 51

*E-Mail:* CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

*Subscription details:*

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of  
SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-  
for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of  
SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-  
for all other countries.

*Account:* Postscheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters to the editor. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *Current Concerns*.

© 2013. All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

# What pedagogical passion can bring about

by Carl Bossard\*



Carl Bossard  
(picture ma)

Anyone who leafs through biographies and browses the works of writers can feel it again and again: the pedagogical passion. Searching for traces of a forgotten term.

Peter Bichsel tells how he immediately fell in love

with his first class teacher in his “Schulmeistereien”. The little chap liked her, the passionate person, and even years later he could describe her dress.<sup>1</sup> That, according to Bichsel, was the only explanation why he did not become a school failure. The same was true for many others, also for the great philosopher Sir Karl R. Popper. That is why he dedicated the autobiography to his teacher *Emma Goldberger*. He writes that he owes his whole thinking and actually everything to her and her pedagogical passion.

## About something held true for ever

One thing becomes immediately apparent with both teachers: the passionate pedagogical ethos for their profession and for the young people or – perhaps formulated a bit pathetically – the love for the duty. The two stories tell about the inner impetus moving these teachers to take their actions.

These are ancient pedagogical terms. The current language of education hardly knows them; they do not exist in the discourse about professional teacher competencies. But they are values without expiry date – old though, admittedly, but not obsolete regardless of their age. On the contrary. Recent studies on effectiveness research and neurobiology rehabilitate them.

## The underestimated influence of the teachers

The New Zealand education researcher *John Hattie* evaluated about 800 meta-studies for many years. They all revolve around the cardinal question, which are the most important factors for good instruction. The university lecturer allocates effect values to individual factors. Hattie’s study “Visible Learning” derives the explosive force from its unique scientific breadth: Hattie’s research work is based on more than 80,000 individual studies. His

results include the experience of 250 million pupils. Therefore, he can empirically prove what he demands normatively.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, there is an almost confusing clarity of the results that Hattie’s mega study has brought to light. The euphoria about self-responsible work or learning without a teacher (LwT) is to be questioned critically. What counts is the individual teacher, says John Hattie, the vital present teacher, the trustworthy teacher and his teaching. How do they prepare the subject matter? Do they reach the children and encourage them? How strictly does the teacher guide through the lesson, and how exactly does he give feedback? Is the teacher himself enthusiastic about what he teaches?

## The practical test

If this is too theoretical, ask the poets. Even with them this magic word appears again and again: inspire, inflame. He was “infectious [and] thrilling,” writes *Thomas Hürlimann*, writer from the city of Zug about his physics teacher Father *Kassian Etter* at the monastery school Einsiedeln, “in love with his subject and obsessed by it”. That is why he understood “even to inspire me for physical processes and formulas. He was an excellent teacher because he infected us with his passion.”<sup>3</sup> Hürlimann adds: P. Kassian led us young people “from *Plato*’s cave to the stars to the gods’.”

The secret of this success can probably also be explained neurologically – by the mirror neurons. The brain researcher and physician *Joachim Bauer* writes that the motivation systems of the human brain are activated primarily by “respect, interest, attention and sympathy of other people. The strongest motivational drug for man is the other human being.”<sup>4</sup>

## About the passion for the world

The passion for the pedagogical task results from the passion for the world and from a lively interest in the subject and the young people. *Hannah Arendt*, the clever political philosopher and publicist, was deeply convinced of this fact. The physics teacher P. Kassian lived and embodied this.

This passion shows the old idea of pedagogy: the teacher as a bridge builder to the world, the teacher as an expedition manager, a chauffeur into life. As it is one of the curiosities of modern media that the large amount of information does not necessarily promote understanding. On the contrary! It needs people to make us understand and bring us closer to the world.

## Educational ethos as a driving force

Emma Goldberger as well as P. Kassian would explain their teaching as being effective and suitable for the pupil, entirely without mirror-neural superstructure, but otherwise they would say quite the same as the scientist Joachim Bauer: decisive for their work were professional claim and charming authority, energy and empathy, passion and love, precisely: a perceptible passion for their profession and appreciative respect for the pupils.

## Bichsels and Camus’ passionate teachers

*Albert Camus*, Nobel Prize winner in Literature, draws such a teacher’s portrait in his autobiographical work “The First Man”. Camus tells about *Monsieur Bernard* that he was “constantly interesting for the simple reason that he passionately loved his profession”. In his class, the children felt “for the first time that they existed and that they were object of the highest respect: they were thought worthy to discover the world.” *Monsieur Bernard*’s method was “to not tolerate anything in conduct, and to make the lessons lively and amusing.”<sup>5</sup> This teaching was tight-relaxed, embedded in a supportive learning environment, guided by a teacher-centered pupil orientation.

Albert Camus adored his teacher; Peter Bichsel was in love with his teacher and Thomas Hürlimann was fascinated by his physics lecturer. Camus’ teacher, Bichsel’s teacher and Hürlimann’s Father had an effect on their pupils. And how! Everything depended on them and their teaching. The three portraits reveal how effective they were with their passion for the world and for the young people. Any school management would engage such teachers, and John Hattie would give all three of them maximum grades. Not to mention the children and teenagers.

Passion – an ancient term, yet timeless and therefore modern. •

<sup>1</sup> Bichsel, Peter. *Schulmeistereien*. Darmstadt 1985, p. 15

<sup>2</sup> Hattie, John A. C. *Visible Learning for teachers*, Routledge, London/New York 2012, ISBN 978-0-415-69015- rer. 2014

<sup>3</sup> “Die pädagogische Provinz”, in: Hürlimann, Thomas. *Der Sprung in den Papierkorb. Geschichten, Gedanken und Notizen am Rand*. Zurich 2008, p. 109f.

<sup>4</sup> Kowal-Summek, Ludger. *Neurowissenschaften und Musikpädagogik. Klärungsversuche und Praxisbezüge*. Cologne: Springer, 2016, p. 141

<sup>5</sup> in: Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. Reinbek b. Hamburg, 1997, p. 125, 128

source: [www.journal21.ch](http://www.journal21.ch) from 5.3.2017

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

\* Carl Bossard was director of the Canton School Alpenquai Lucerne and founding director of the Teachers’ training College Zug. Nowadays he accompanies and advises schools.