

# Current Concerns

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and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

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## “Let us not accept Russia’s turning to Asia”

by *Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, France*

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*In the run-up to the EU Council’s important meeting on 28 and 29 June, Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, historian and “secretary for life” of the “Académie française”, explained that Russia is now being tempted to think of itself primarily as an Asian power. This scenario would be a disaster for Europe, she says, and that it was now up to the 29 states to extend their hands to the head of the Kremlin to avoid this.*

The Singapore Summit, where *Donald Trump* and *Kim Jong Un* came face to face on 12 June, was a significant event even in itself, reconciling the most powerful state in the world with a pariah state that had been discredited and feared by all. But its meaning goes far beyond this political moment. On this day, the international order of 1945 dissolved and gave way to a new world.

### On 12 June 2018, the international order of 1945 dissolved

Since 1945, international life has focused on the so-called West, the US and Europe, with the US being an ally and protector of Europe. As long as communism lasted, the world was bipolar, with the West passing itself off as the true representative of freedom, as opposed to what President *Reagan* called the “evil empire”. With the dissolution of the USSR and of its domination of a part of Europe, a unipolar world emerged in 1991. The West presented itself as an unsurpassable model and point of attraction for any country that

wanted to take the path to freedom. Western values were considered the criteria for the political and moral progress of societies.

### Asia becomes the centre of international life

It is true that the unipolar world has been showing signs of weakness for some time. In November 2016, President Trump was elected, who had placed the American national interest, the motto “America first”, at the top of his election programme, and this worried Europe, since it was beginning to divide over the same question of national interest. These changes coincided with the spectacular rise of the Chinese and other Asian powers. A multilateral world took shape. The Singapore Summit confirmed this, just as it confirms that American policymakers are well aware of the great geopolitical change that will be placing Asia at the centre of international life from now on. After seven decades of coexistence with the United States – under the protection of NATO – a dis-

oriented Europe has to acknowledge that it must find a way to ensure its own security – alone or almost alone. Europe must also understand that in a multipolar world where Asia is so important, Europe, as a continent and as an institution, is no longer at the centre of the world order, but instead at risk of being marginalised. How to remain a major player in this changed world?

This question arises also for Russia, and Russia did not have to wait for the shock of Singapore to become aware of it. Even though in 1991, at the fall of communism, the Russian leaders still thought that their state would be welcomed by the triumphant West, like the prodigal son in the Holy Scriptures who returned to his Father’s house, they did not need long to realise they were mistaken.

### 2004 – Return to the Cold War

In the early 2000s, when the era of *Yeltsin* chaos was over, *Vladimir Putin* tried to put the beliefs of 1991 into practice and soon realised that these were an illusion. First, he passionately affirmed his country’s European identity, using its history and culture as an argument, and tried to integrate Russia into the European project. In 2003, he linked Russia with Europe in four joint areas of cooperation. Likewise, he wanted to facilitate cooperation with the NATO, a seemingly logical project, since there was no longer a Cold War. But from 2004 onwards, his hopes were disappointed. The NATO, which had been joined by Poland and the Baltic states, became for its new members an organisation of protection against Russia, in order to curb the possible rebirth

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*Hélène Carrère d’Encausse*, born on 6 July 1929, is a French historian specialising in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union. She was appointed to be a member of the “Académie française” in 1990 and has headed it as “Secrétaire perpétuel” since 1999. In the history of this prestigious institution, founded in 1634, *Hélène Carrère d’Encausse* is the first woman in this leading position. From 1994 to 1999, she was a member of the EU Parliament and Vice-President of the Commission on Foreign, Security and Defense Policy. In 2011, she received the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour in addition to many other honours. Over the course of the last 40 years she has written a large number of studies and biographies on Russian history. Her latest publication is titled “Le Général de Gaulle et la Russie” (Fayard, 2017).

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of the latter’s imperial ambitions. Russia discerned this new NATO view and interpreted the Alliance’s decision to build a missile defense shield as a return to the spirit of the Cold War.

### Gap between Europe/USA and Russia is widened

In addition, in 2004, the colour revolutions broke out in Georgia and the Ukraine and were presented as a model for a true post-communist transformation. It would be to Russia’s advantage to follow in their steps, in order to be accepted by the democratic world. For the Russians, who had voluntarily proclaimed the end of their empire and of communism, this call for a new revolution – which no one in Russia wanted – was perceived as a terrible insult and denial of the political course begun by *Gorbachev*. From that time, the gap between Europe/USA and Russia has steadily grown wider. From then on, Vladimir Putin – and for a while his successor *Medvedev* – has tried to equip Russia with new elements of power to strengthen it against the Euro-Americans.

### Russia turns back to Asia

Russia’s geography offered him these counterweights. The huge Russian state is located as well in Asia; it is geographically and to a lesser extent sociodemographically Eurasian as well as European. After a few years, Russia – which in 1991 and 2000 believed itself to be able to become entrenched in Europe, and to be recognised there as an important European state – turned back to Asia, developed new agreements there, settled disputes, joined most of the existing multilateral bodies, and even co-sponsored the *Shanghai Group* with China – a powerful alliance system whose role and importance we still do not properly assess. With its founding of the *Eurasian Economic Union*, Russia also developed an Asian project on its borders that might – perhaps in the future – become a political project called Greater Asia. This Asian option was initially mainly a way for Moscow to show the US and Europe that Russia does not depend on their recognition, that it has an alternative geopolitical option, that it can definitely find its place and thrive in the fast-growing part of the world. Today, however, with the huge international shift towards Asia becoming reality, it may no longer be about just a banal demonstration of its strength

for Russia, or even about an attempt at extortion; but it may instead be a genuine choice.

### To ignore Russia means to urge it towards Asia

On the eve of the Singapore Summit, President Trump suggested to his colleagues in Canada that they welcome Russia back into the G8, which had become G7. The silence with which this suggestion was received is quite surprising. It testifies to the indifference of the world’s most powerful heads of state, their carelessness of the landslide that was to take place in Singapore two days later. Because ignoring Russia in this way – may it not be imagined that Vladimir Putin followed this episode very carefully and has drawn some conclusions from it? – means consciously urging the Russian President further and further towards Asia, and perhaps finally deciding that Russia’s national interest lies in Eurasia. In Russia, demands to go this way are starting to get louder. And these voices are coming not only from convinced “nationalists”, but also from liberal and balanced political personalities. For example, how can we ignore the words of *Fyodor Lukyanov*, President of the Russian Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, who is already promoting the idea of cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union, or even the creation of a large Eurasian Free Trade Area, in which China would be involved?

### Europe as an outpost of Asia?

These different combinations (a Eurasian Russia, a Eurasian-Chinese area) would not only result in Europe being ignored, but, even more so, in designing a future in which the European continent would to some extent become an outpost of Asia. Moreover they design a China with growing power, whose new Silk Roads – a grandiose idea in the making – presage Chinese presence in the outside world, especially in Europe.

### Look for ways to start a genuine dialogue

Is it wise to encourage Russia to follow this path? Would it not be a pressing issue on the eve of an EU Council meeting which also has to decide on the lifting or continuation of the sanctions against Russia after 2014, to look for ways of starting a genuine dialogue, which would ultimately lead to reconciliation? Reconciliation would not mean to let ourselves in for just about everything light-heartedly, but to no

longer stubbornly refuse to think further and, more importantly, that we involve the emerging world, and also the well-understood interests of Europe in this world, in our deliberations. Is not that the lesson the American President is teaching us? Is there any doubt that Vladimir Putin, the recently re-elected leader of his country, with his genuine legitimacy and support from the Russians for a policy that restores Russia’s dignity to them, would not be open to any gesture, to any project, that would save Russia’s European character? Vladimir Putin is passionately attached to his country, its image, its identity and the Russian history – so can he indeed allow himself to go down in history as a president who denied Russia’s European character in order to turn it into an Asian country? Russia was swept away from Europe for three centuries by the Mongol invasion, and for three-quarters of a century by communism; after each of these breaks, it has found its way back to Europe. It is time for Europe to help Russia definitely establish itself here. •

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## USA and Germany after the NATO summit in Brussels

km. Reports and comments following the 29 NATO leaders' meeting in Brussels on 11 and 12 July 2018 focused on the behaviour of US President *Donald Trump*, and in particular on his comments on Germany. Not the NATO summit, but the behaviour of the US president was criticised and characterised as contradictory. The questions of what "logic" is behind the behaviour of the US president and what significance this strategy could have for the states of Europe and especially for Germany came up short here. Almost no question was asked about the logic of the US President's appointment calendar: first the NATO summit in Brussels, then the visit to the UK, and finally the summit with Russian President *Vladimir Putin*.

### Trump's logic

One can only understand Trump's behaviour if one considers the following:

1. Even before the election of Trump as US President, the German government, and especially the German Chancellor, indicated that Trump was being treated like a political outcast. After the election, Trump's predecessor, *Obama*, visited the Chancellor and passed the baton of the US bipartisan war faction to her. Her job was to continue their policy, if necessary, also against Trump.
2. Trump knew this from the beginning. Therefore early on he showed his in-

tentions to weaken Germany's role in Europe and to disrupt the German favourite project, the expansion of the European Union. His visit to France and the joint "celebration" with French President *Macron* on the US entry into the First World War on the French National Day in 2017 and his participation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the "Three Seas Initiative" of Central and Eastern Europe States at the beginning of July 2017 are further indications for this. The "Three Seas Initiative" builds on the Polish imperial concept of the "Intermarium", aiming at both, Russia and Germany, in the period between the First and Second World Wars. Further signs followed.

3. For Trump, the slogan "America first" means to prevent the impending economic, social and political collapse of the US by all means, and therefore to open up new markets for the US economy around the world and to weaken competitors, including European competitors. Trump wants to drive US trade, not to wage wars. However, it suits him well when other states, as for example Germany, worsen their trading opportunities by loud saber-rattling. Trade with states such as Russia or China for American advantage and at the expense of Europe and Germany are very likely to be not wrong to Trump. And if the saber-rattling

states also buy US military equipment in their military rearmament, then it should also be right.

Considering these three points, the results of the NATO summit and the visit to the UK are indeed in line with the US president.

### Renewed "special relationship"

Trump explained to *Theresa May* that a free trade agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom would be dependent on a hard Brexit, thus clearly expressing his opposition to a close relationship with the EU. At the same time he recalled the idea of a "special relationship" between the United States and the United Kingdom, flattering an idea by the British Prime Minister she had presented to both houses of Congress on her visit to the United States shortly after the election of Donald Trump: The USA and Great Britain could – as once – rule the world together. The results of the NATO summit fit well with the concept of the US president. And, the – previously drafted by officials – final document was accepted without much debate. It is nothing else but the continuation and enhancement of the NATO saber rattling against Russia, fully in the spirit of the war faction.

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### Critical voices on the NATO summit

"In this news (from 12 July 2018 at 20:00 clock) no comment on how this chicken pile is willing to be blackmailed. Not a word about the US President's cheap trick of exaggeration – 4% of gross domestic product for armaments – which takes him to where he wants to get: to the confirmation of the commitment to 2%. Not a word about the fact that the threat to withdraw from NATO is absolute nonsense – the US need Germany for instance as a supply base for global operations and therefore have absolutely no interest in dissolving NATO or withdrawing from it. Not a word that Europe's security has not just been based on military spending and US security guarantees, but much more on understanding and peace, and that it could continue to rely on these factors.

Everything that we learned in the last century before 1990 with practiced policy of detente and the end of the block confrontation has got off our minds. Those responsible today are so primitive that in their thinking about security issues, there is only military and only confrontation and deterrence, not understanding and easing of tension. That is a real loss of cultural achievement. What

is more, these unbelievable media and their media professionals, here in this specific case the Tagesschau [daily German TV news programme, CC], fall for every shady trick and for every clearly recognisable extortion.

The peace policy element has disappeared from politics. This also becomes explicit in an interview with the German Defense Minister *von der Leyen*. No thought except military buildup. She is obviously happy with the pressure from her US President. She obviously regards the time of detente in Europe as an unfortunate period, which fortunately has been overcome. Through new military upgrading. By the way, the military's new lobbyists call it armament." [Translation of all quotes *Current Concerns*]

Source: *Nachdenkseiten* 13.7.2018, <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/wp-print.php?p=44938>

"If one looks at the classic gazettes of the Federal Republic today, one has to look for a long time for a report which would only to some extent deserve the predicate "neutral". Wherever you look, you come across prejudgement of the Kremlin. In summary, it can be said that

the Western press is as united as the oil industry, after they have met for price fixing."

Source: *KenFM* from 14.7.2018, <https://kenfm.de/das-ist-der-nato-gipfel/>

"What should we pay our tax money for? Mind you, on such a large scale that already exceeds the defense expenditure of other states by crazy sums? For wars that we are forced to fight for NATO or the EU in the interest of third parties, be it the Anglo-Saxons or the French? German participation in these military operations is only possible because our governments have been blind to the "constitutional eye" since the 1999 war against Yugoslavia. Now these expenditures are to be driven to gigantic heights. This is what makes a country like Germany, where the teachers at our schools get sent into unemployment for the summer break, because the state behaves like a common rascal. And what for? To finance a march against Russia, which nobody wants in Germany or Europe, except for some crazy Eastern Europeans."

Source: *Willy Wimmer* at *KenFM* on 12.7.2018, <https://kenfm.de/mehr-geld-fuer-kriege-die-wir-nicht-wollen/>

# Politicians and their personal stance

by Karl Müller

In a political discussion at an alternative peace conference on 22 June 2018 in Bad Aibling, Bavaria (<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=BzyxOf79MhI>) Willy Wimmer, the former Christian Democratic politician, undersecretary in the German Ministry of Defence and vice president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, made an interesting remark. As in many discussions, the question of Germany's sovereignty came up. He responded that Germany was now, after the Two-Plus-Four Agreement of September 1990, formally a sovereign state, something it had not been before. However, this was not the point. Until the 1990s the German politicians of the "Bonn Republic" had shown much more sovereignty than the governments of the "Berlin Republic" of the past 20 years. This was a question of the personal stance of the politicians involved, not of formal stipulations. Willy Wimmer has been criticised heavily for this. But wasn't he right?

## Attempts to institutionally anchor the provisions are not sufficient

After 1945 the persons responsible for Germany had the goal to prevent another lapse into dictatorship. Thus, they arranged for numerous constitutional provisions for the Federal Republic: The constitution containing an "eternity clause", calling for permanent respect for human dignity and human rights, for democracy, the federal state, the social state and a rule of law and to the division of powers or state constitutions formulating goals for education and even making social studies and religious education obligatory school subjects, which are mainly dedicated to these goals and the corresponding value systems.

But was this of any use? Nearly all constitutional provisions are still valid. But

are they also respected? Are these constitutional provisions sufficient if they no longer agree with the "zeitgeist"? And, mainly: What if there is less and less resistance against this "zeitgeist" and if mechanisms prevail which demand assimilation and submission under it?

After 1945 we thought we had learned from the experiences of the Weimar Republic. But have we really? The constitution of the Weimar Republic was also democratic in many ways. There were even referenda and attempts of citizens to bring the constitutional framework to life. But there were not enough of them; they were increasingly attacked, pushed aside and even lost their lives. The ambition to end the republic and to bring about a German dictatorship was too powerful internally and even subsidised from abroad.

## The example of 1968

And where are we today? The year 1968, "celebrated" by so many this year, demonstrated how even the best constitutional rules can be unhinged: Because the movement's protagonists had an absolute unscrupulous will for power, because there was powerful support (also from abroad) – but mainly because there were too few of those who were supporting with their personality, their reason, their lifeblood and commitment to make these constitutional provisions work. The "coup" of the '68 generation also was successful because the essence of the coup was misjudged: It was not about revolutionary slogans regarding the ideal state of a society but about so-called "criticism" which in fact meant deconstruction and destruction towards a seize of power. That so many let this happen was sufficient support for the leaders of the revolution of 1968.

## '68 generation

### for German war participation

Willy Wimmer has stated frequently that the Christian Democratic Chancellor *Helmut Kohl* would never have accepted the German participation in the NATO aggression of 1999 against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This is supported by available documents and statements from other contemporary witnesses including *Oskar Lafontaine*. While the CDU Chancellors *Ludwig Erhard* and *Helmut Kohl* carried a substantial part of the financial burden of earlier US wars – this indeed demonstrated a lack of German sovereignty but also an attempt to express "loyalty to the alliance" – they refused to send German soldiers into the Vietnam War or into the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq.

It took a Red-Green government to change this. The aging representatives of the '68 generation: *Joseph Fischer*, *Tom Königs*, *Daniel Cohn-Bendit* provided the ideological foundation for the NATO wars since 1999. It was the French leftist politician *Bernard Kouchner*, co-founder of the "*Médecins Sans Frontières*" and later for three years French Foreign Minister who phrased even before 1999 the concept of "humanitarian intervention": "The right for humanitarian intervention (*droit d'ingérence humanitaire*) will prevail. In case of doubt even over national sovereignty."

## Rhetorical and authoritarian violence ...

Only few were able to resist the rhetorical and authoritarian violence of the "anti-authoritarian" '68 generation. Their "long march through the institutions" was successful. They have set aside their bogus

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## "USA and Germany after ..."

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### Trapping Germany

In the 23 pages and 77-point document<sup>1</sup>, the first 10 points deal almost exclusively with Russia and paint a very sinister enemy image of Russian politics. The statement is a document of further NATO rearmament. As early as point 3 of the declaration the Heads of State and Government reaffirm their commitment from 2014 to increase their defense spending to 2% of GDP, while declaring that considerable progress had been made along the way. All NATO states together spend already today nearly \$ 1 trillion on armaments, which is 15 times more than Russia. Added to this is the decision to set

up two new NATO headquarters, one of them in Ulm, Germany. The headquarters in Ulm should be responsible for the faster transportation of NATO troops towards the Russian border, the other new headquarters in Norfolk in the US will be a cyber operations center. The Balkan country Macedonia should be admitted to NATO as soon as possible. The Presidents of Ukraine and Georgia were specially invited guests, and not only these two countries, but also Armenia, Moldova and Azerbaijan were envisaged as future countries with closer NATO ties. On the last day of the NATO meeting, the US president praised all this with emphasis. On the other hand, with his previous criticism of Germany, especially the German project North Stream 2 (a Russian

"prison") and the defense spending of Germany (billions for Russian gas rather than for US military equipment), he caused a scandal enabling him to have a free hand in dealing with NATO ... and above all in dealing with Germany. Germany should be trapped: if it does not arm further, it can be portrayed as a saboteur of NATO's efforts, but if it does arm even more than it already has, the wall that separates Russia and Germany will be even higher. If it sticks to North Stream 2, it can be portrayed as dependent on Russia, if it breaks off the project, it goes into dependence on US controlled energy supplies. •

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156624.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm?selectedLocale=en)

# President Putin, Russian federation – and president Trump, divided states of America

by Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer  
(picture ef)

Any attentive observer will have numerous thoughts pop up in his head when the two presidents are going to meet in the Finnish capital Helsinki on Monday July 16<sup>th</sup>. Firstly, regarding the two presidents themselves who will have the chance to talk together for the first time in a meeting dedicated exclusively to them. The symbolism of this event is stunning. Considering the Russian President *Putin*, who as far as political experience is concerned, may be regarded the senior of the two conversational partners – summits at this level are still associated with reminiscences of the Cold war. When heads of the two states had met back then they did so as the representatives of antagonistic blocks facing each other both armed up to their teeth. Today this is completely different. President Putin has essentially approached the NATO states with honest open-mindedness for years now. His problem was only that president *Yeltsin* had spoiled the entire West in the 1990ies. Russia's fortunes had been yanked out to them and Westerners got used to *Yeltsin's* cornucopian attitude. This, however, had changed completely under Putin and the West lost their track concerning Russia.

## “Words from Helsinki the world has been waiting for”

“Having in mind the media history and the profound conflicts in the United States itself, it was a very special message to the world when Russian President *Putin* spoke very warmly and amicably of ‘*Donald*’ at the conclusion of his meticulous opening statement, as he addressed President *Trump*. Europe got the measuring stick presented and held up. One will meet each other again and thus put everyone in the corner who did not understand the theorem of *Trump* up to the Uckermark [homeland of *Mer-*

*kel*]: diplomacy is everything, ignorance is nothing. One had the reasonable impression with President *Trump* that one encounters an American head of state there again, who is about to earn the name ‘*president*’ and not to be regarded merely as a doll, which is pushed back and forth by Neo-cons. Helsinki was Champions League.”

Willy Wimmer after the press conference of Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump on July 16, 2018 (excerpt)  
(Translation Current Concerns)

## Trumps problems to approach Putin with honest open-mindedness

President *Trump* faced problems, too, when he took steps to approach the representative of Russia with honest open-mindedness. Since his inauguration he had declared he wanted to give reconciliation between the two major states of the Northern hemisphere a chance. Neither for the Democratic or republican branches of the Washington based war-alliance, nor for their European allies, this had been acceptable. In Washington, cans full of any political dirt available had been thrown at president *Trump* in order to prevent him from meeting the Russian president *Putin*. Actually the very fact of president *Trump* being physically able to fly to Helsinki is astonishing, in view of certain phenomena in the recent history of US political practice.

The European satraps of US hegemony have difficulties with president *Trump's* openminded outreach towards his colleague from Moscow, too. They had consented to all US presidents from *Bill Clinton*, to *George W. “the destroyer” Bush*, to *Barak Obama* waging their own “presidential war”. The destruction of large parts of the world by these war presidents had been appreciated with apparent applause of cringing vassals from Europe without ever appealing to the international court in The Hague. One only needs to look at the statutes of the international court and compare them with the record of those above-mentioned US presidents to realize the dimension of European Kotau politics towards the American warmongers. Prime example is the still serving German chan-

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goals “peace” and “justice” and their “anti-capitalism”.

On the other hand, they have strived for “cultural hegemony”: In all established parties, in the media, in schools and universities, in our ideas about the relationship between the sexes, about marriage and family, about child raising and education etc. etc. ... even in the Christian Churches ...

Who was and is really benefiting from this?

## ... and surprising results

Results are also visible where we hardly suspect them. What does it mean if the current President of the German Federal Supreme Court, *Andreas Voßkuhle*, waives the constitutional criticism of the German Chancellor's migration politics coming from two former colleagues

at the Supreme Court in a TV discussion (Phoenix, 24 January 2016) with the statement that the idea of a state defining itself through its borders and a constitutive people was “a 19<sup>th</sup> century idea”. Is it true that the chairperson of the CDU, *Angela Merkel*, as *Vera Lengsfeld* explained recently (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgLyxnjJCtA>), has done everything in her power to destroy the CDU as it had existed for decades, since the war?

Or what are we to think if – as “*Die Welt*” reported on 30 August 2015 – the German *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) [Federal Administration for Migration and Refugees]* commissioned in early 2014, that is more than one year before the German Chancellor's migration political landmark decision, the production of a film that properly advertised for applying for asylum in Germany? In Albanian, Arabic, Russian,

Dari, Farsi, Pashtu and Serbian! Or why were there absolutely no consequences when a German Minister-President stated that the Chancellor's migration politics had turned Germany into an illegitimate state? There could be many more examples like these ...

## What can be a reference point in times of turmoil?

We are living in times of turmoil. All the more we need people expressing sincerity and candour, who can be a point of reference. Not through lecturing and know-all manners but as humans and co-citizens who are setting a visible example towards humanity, equality and political reason, after all the substance of the still existing constitutional foundation of our community, demonstrating the steadfast personal stance we all urgently need.

And how can we attain this steadfastness?

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cellor *Angela Merkel*, who had the baton of international warmongering handed to her by the outgoing president Obama in Berlin.

**European NATO states not interested in reconciliation?**

One glance at this practice makes it clear that neither his own country nor its partners in Western Europe embrace president Trump and the apparent perspective towards reconciliation which he opens. Would they prefer presidents who waged one war after another in old-style globalist military tradition, such political surrogate proofs of their masculinity as the ones which eventually lead to the first and second world wars?

Several questions should be addressed to the United States and after the NATO summit of 12 July 2018 in Brussels they have been put on the international agenda in a rather dramatic way.

The central one of those questions is plainly, in whose name is president Trump acting when he meets the Russian president Putin? How many united or divided states of America are there and how should the world interpret the first news about declarations made after their meeting? Even in the person of president Trump things are drifting apart. In Helsinki he wants to demonstrate his policy of openminded deal-making. That way he can achieve results, imaginably even bypass anti-Russians sanctions imposed by his own government to the detriment of his European partners. But even president Trump cannot by-pass one recent event – at the NATO summit in Brussels he fully endorsed the encircling strategy towards the Russian federation which had been implemented by all presidents from Clinton to Obama.

**Previous US objectives regarding Russia**

The aims of politics pursued from Washington regarding Russia have been rather plain for a long time. These include mainly

- 1) To deny the Russian Federation their equal seat at the table of European nations because that would diminish Anglo-Saxon dominance
- 2) To do whatever they could to challenge the authority of the Russian state over their own territory
- 3) To entertain such a level of continuous military confrontation at the borders of the Russian federation so that an outbreak of open hostilities might erupt any time
- 4) To separate the Russian Federation by an "Eastern limes" from their natural partners in the West and pursue a policy of disintegration of the Russian territory since the conference of Bratislava in May 2000
- 5) To give a card blanche to US American military commanders on European soil to prepare war against Russia.

**On the surface the "deal" and underneath continued war preparations?**

These aims which have been pursued by US politics for decades in plain sight and which have been reiterated once again at the NATO summit in Brussels just before the Helsinki meeting show clearly two roadmaps of the American policies. On the surface we have the politics of the "deal" with president Putin but at the same time a permanent preparation of war with the same partner who is supposed to make the deal at the presidential level.

These are not just two Americas entering the stage here. There are even more as the stunned observer realizes. The inner American discussions which eventually lead to the international agreement with Iran being abandoned already proved the

power of the US congress which seems to be dominated by warmongers. Has Trump even got a mandate for Helsinki?

Right now, the world watches in dismay how parts of the US political system attack each other by means of trials against Russian citizens. Sober analysis of the battleground between New York and Los Angeles points towards a possibility which is not entirely impossible: that during all these efforts to bring Russia down and smash it into many tiny Russias a process of American self-destruction might loom on the horizon. This applies both to the constitutional dimension as for the ethnic or civil war-like components.

**Will Washington turn into a political "black star"?**

How many states or power centres on the territory of today's United States of America will the world suffer and will "Washington" turn into a political "black star"? The election of president Trump was the attempt of Americans in their majority to tie the power of the state to the will of the people again within their political system. Those political forces who under the slogan of "globalisation" pursued the Americanisation of the globe – propagating even such extremes as the total liberalisation of drugs and the annihilation of peoples' cultural identities, will not just run for cover and let Trump do as he pleases. In a very detailed text which former chief strategist of the German foreign office Dr *Frank Elbe* released to the public he hinted at a certain political peer-group in the US who, as he alleges, use the power apparatus of the United States for their political return to the territory of the very state their ancestors had left more than a century ago. President Putin will have to bear that in mind when sitting down with his presidential colleague Trump. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# Trump and Germany's path to a regulatory power

by Henrik Paulitz\*



Henrik Paulitz  
(picture [www.akademie-bergstrasse.de](http://www.akademie-bergstrasse.de))

*cc. The following essay was published in November 2016, shortly after the election of Donald Trump as US President. Reading this article, it becomes clear that Trump's "policy towards Germany" also fits in a certain sense with the policy of the previous government, but under completely different circumstances, circumstances this analysis could not yet take into account (cf. the article on page 2). It also refers to other channels of influence enforcing, independently of official government declarations, political strategies via financially highly endowed organisations. Either way, all Germans are faced with the duty of examining what role they are meant to play – and whether they want to take on this role like turkeys voting for Christmas.*

As expected, the alleged "isolationism" of the new US President Donald Trump will not lead to fewer wars, but merely to a new allocation of tasks among the global war powers. Trump consistently follows developments having been driven forward for years: The Federal Republic of Germany is requested to spend in future much more money on armaments and to play a "leading" role as a military force in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. An extremely threatening scenario.

## Germany should "lead"

The United States, having emerged from former colonies, including those of the United Kingdom, are now often stylized as the "only world power", the "empire". What has been overlooked for many years is what has been said and written between the lines: The USA is "war-weary". The country has been exhausted by decades of arms expenditure and wars, and increasing parts of the population are impoverished and threatened with further decline. According to SIPRI, the country accounts for roughly 40 per cent of global spending on "defence". Due to numerous military interventions, the leading war power,

the USA, is being hated in many parts of the world.

Against this background, a new scenario of the elites has been emerging for many years: The USA primarily confines itself and focuses on the Asia/Pacific region, while Europeans have to enforce the interests of the elites in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East up to Central Asia by diplomatic and military means. Since, for example, Great Britain is also considered "tired of war", Germany in particular has been being asked for years to show "leadership" – a choice of words that set all alarm bells ringing.

## New power, new responsibility

In the run-up to the 2013 German federal elections, two influential think tanks published a paper entitled "New power. New responsibility". The *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)* (Science and Politics) and the *German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF)* wrote: "Germany's citizens enjoy a phase of security they have not experienced for a long time. The country is at peace with its neighbours in Europe [...]" But the world would still be "full of uncertainty and danger". For a globalised state like Germany, world security and German security were inseparably linked.

Finally, it says literally, almost threateningly: "If Germany wants to preserve and protect its own way of life, it must therefore commit itself to a peaceful and rule-based world order; by all legitimate means available to Germany, including, where and when necessary, the military one". From Germany's "increased power" and its "increased influence" there follows "more responsibility. For decades, Germany was a consumer of security, guaranteed by NATO and especially by the USA. Today, allies and partners expect Germany to produce security itself; and not only for itself."

The "Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik" and the German Marshall Fund of the United States declare that Germany's prosperity as a trade and export nation is reliant on a liberal world order: "Germany [...] benefits more than almost any other country from globalisation. Its current strength is largely based [...] on its success as a trading and exporting nation. [...] Germany therefore needs demand from other markets and access to international trade routes and resources. But even more it needs [...] a liberal, norm-based world order with free, open states [...]. Germany's overriding strategic goal must therefore be to maintain, protect and further develop this world order."

Germany's so-called new responsibility as a global regulatory power is therefore to help establish a world order that serves "free trade", which also means, among other things, giving multinational corporations exclusive access to raw resources, markets and trade routes. If necessary, against the will of sovereign states and by military means.

## From North Africa via the Middle East to Central Asia

For Germany, concrete strategic goals must be formulated with a sense of proportion. "This also means that a pragmatic German security policy – especially when it comes to complex and long-term military operations – must primarily concentrate on the increasingly unstable European environment from North Africa via the Middle East to Central Asia; not least in order to relieve the American NATO allies in the course of their growing involvement in Asia," write the two think tanks.

What is particularly strange is that in the paper "New power. New responsibility" it is in total three times almost word-for-word requested that Germany will have to "lead" more often and more decisively in the future.<sup>1</sup>

## Coalition Agreement 2013

The extortionist logic of the project "New power. New responsibility" of 2013 did not remain without consequences. The coalition agreement forming the new German Federal Government of 16 December 2013 states: "The outstanding importance of foreign trade for the German economy, the increasing integration with foreign markets, [...] call for greater political commitment to international economic relations. [...] We are concerned about the increasing number of measures that limit or even prevent free trade. [...] Germany depends on imports of many important resources. [...]"

In the chapter "Responsibility in this World" of the coalition agreement, the German government offers itself – in line with expectations – as a "reliable partner in the world". "Germany is facing up to its international responsibility. We want to play an active role in shaping the global order," it says. "We are ready when our country is expected to contribute to resolving crises and conflicts. We stand for reliability and loyalty to the alliance. We want to be a good partner in shaping a just world order."

Germany would continue to reliably fulfil its "appropriate share of the burdens

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### "Trump and Germany's path ..."

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in the alliance. Together with our NATO partners [...]. The United Nations has a key role [...] in meeting global challenges."<sup>2</sup>

It was rightly and repeatedly stated that the coalition agreement thus meets the criteria set out in the paper "New Power. New Responsibility" to take up the foreign policy strategy.<sup>3</sup>

A sentence that is symptomatic of German foreign policy, "We stand ready when our country is expected to contribute to the resolution of crises and conflicts", is anything but an expression of an inherently aggressive state. On the contrary, it is an almost submissive statement from a state under considerable pressure. In addition, however, this coalition agreement repeatedly contains clear commitments to underscoring peaceableness, such as: "In our view, the means of diplomacy, peaceful conflict regulation and development cooperation are paramount."

### "International expectations on Germany"

The international influence also has a direct impact on the German military doctrine. The "White Paper" of the German "Bundeswehr" of 2016 was produced with the participation of the *Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House)*. The powerful London think tank, under the patronage of *Elizabeth II*, is supported by 75 banks, energy multinationals and other large corporations, among others. During the kick-off event for the 2016 White Paper Process on 17 February 2015, Chatham House Director *Robin Niblett*, in the presence of German Defence Minister *Ursula von der Leyen*, presented the "international expectations on Germany".

These days, non-state actors were always observing the benefits a country offered them, Niblett said, and continued threateningly: "Reinforced by the media, these actors can spread their power widely and thus hold politicians accountable in ways that were previously impossible."

The process of globalisation was leading to a far more powerful struggle for influence, with "winners and losers". In the USA as well as in Great Britain, national cohesion had been substantially destroyed by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Due to the restraint in these wars, Germany, by contrast, still had the capacity to mobilise broad agreement "if it decided to act".

Probably Niblett's statements have to be interpreted in this way: The United Kingdom and the United States have thoroughly disrupted their societies in decades of performing their function as powers of world order. Therefore, they can no long-

er organize sufficient approval for wars maintaining the world order in the interest of corporations. Against this background, Germany, among others, is now required to take up this function in parts of the world.

In his speech, the Chatham House Director openly called for an increase in German military spending. While facing a difficult economic situation British military spending was declining. Germany was already one of the "top ten" countries with the highest spending on "defence". But Germany should rank higher in this list, or at least hold its position, if countries such as China, India, Brazil and others would increase their arms spending. So it seems that China, India and Brazil are also being expected to increase the profits of the arms companies and possibly also, in addition to Germany, to increasingly perform a role as powers of world order in their respective regions. The increasing practice of military resource control in the South Atlantic by Brazil and China's military activities in the resource-rich South China Sea are current issues.

### Germany has "no choice"

According to Niblett, Germany was not only a "mid sized power", but a "great mid sized power". The country did not have the opportunity to choose, it was simply a fact, and Germany had to fulfil the obligations arising from this position and had to bear the associated costs. The German people had to know that they had no choice but to serve Europe and thus the world economy.

Germany had to be an advocate of open markets. In this regard, probably in reference to the transatlantic free trade agreements TTIP and CETA, the Chatham House Director demanded the enforcement of corresponding decisions despite the strong public opposition.

In this sense, Niblett emphasized positively Germany bearing the costs of Russia's sanctions – this was an example of the leadership "which one hoped to see of Germany". It also meant bearing the costs of European energy security, said Niblett, and not just the costs of car exporters. Energy security was the absolutely central element for Europe's future prosperity and security, with Germany playing a key role.

In military terms, Germany did not have to be involved in Asia. "But Germany was expected, and it should expect itself, to help create security in Europe".

### "Unavoidable to fulfil obligations"

He believes that Germany's leadership will succeed in bringing the "obligations of the country as a great power" to the sceptical public, provided it unanimously spreads the message "of the inevitability

of Germany's proportional obligations" to avert the dangers of today's interdependent world. According to Niblett, these obligations also include a "punitive commitment", for example in the form of sanctions.<sup>4</sup>

All this means that think tanks supported by large corporations require certain states, under threat of economic disadvantages, to significantly increase their arms expenditures and, as global powers, to use economic and military means to enforce and maintain a liberal world order in the interests of the corporations in various regions. The United States are supposed to commit themselves predominantly in the Pacific region, while Germany in Europe with its bordering regions (North Africa, Near East, Central Asia) has to take over more and more the function of the USA.

The will of the population does not matter; the state government must teach "the inevitability" of the respective "obligations" and implement appropriate measures against the democratic will of the majority. If countries like Germany fail to meet their obligations, they have to expect export opportunities and prosperity to be impaired. If states do not fulfil their intended role, other states have the duty of punishing them. The example of sanctions against Russia aimed at expanding oil production illustrates what is required of the world powers: The enforcement of resource control in the interest of banks and oil multinationals, also referred to as "energy security".

### Economic disadvantages in case of opposition

It is not the usual idea that states, let alone states like Germany, could be put under pressure or even blackmailed economically in order to bring them to military offensive actions in the world. Former German UN diplomat *Hans von Sponeck* described exactly that. He observed hardly any opposition in the United Nations Security Council against air attacks in Iraq, but rather a "fatal restraint" of states, even if they considered air attacks and the establishment of no-fly zones questionable under international law. In the two years of its membership in the Council in 1996/97, Germany also remained completely silent. This is done "purely for political reasons. Of course, out of the fear that concerns and opposition could [...] be politically and economically detrimental to the doubter," said von Sponeck. In the context of War Enabling Resolution 678 of November 1990 and Ceasefire and Sanction Resolution 687 of March 1991 against Iraq, "immense pressure" was exerted on the members of the Security Council. Yemen was after its no vote in the Secu-

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riety Council immediately cut off an assistance programme.<sup>5</sup>

**"Burden sharing."**

Contrary to the often sketched view – states are usually not eager to wage wars or to participate in wars. This can be seen from the use of terms such as "burden sharing" and the fact that major wars can apparently hardly be started or conducted for many years without "conferences and agreements on troop-supply". In the context of the war in Afghanistan, there is repeated talk of "fair burden-sharing". States that spend a lot of money on armaments and wage regular wars are therefore not necessarily intrinsically "aggressive governments", but possibly under considerable pressure to being imposed with "burdens".

**It gets dangerous with Trump**

Against this background, US President Donald Trump's announcements to reduce the US military commitment abroad and to expect more from Germany in par-

ticular are extremely dangerous. That the pressure on the Federal Republic of Germany could now increase further is also shown by the fact that immediately after the election it was mentioned in political talk shows that Germany would now be faced with corresponding requirements. Germany's foreign and security policy to date, which despite constant militarisation can still be described as relatively restrained,<sup>6</sup> could now come under even greater pressure than in recent years. The increasing militarisation must be criticised in the strongest terms. But that is not enough. It is at least equally important to make the system of "international expectations" for Germany, among others, a topic. How can it be that states are apparently forced, under threat of economic disadvantages, to punish other countries with brutal economic sanctions, to threaten them with wars and, in extreme cases, to wage wars against them? How can it be that so-called "think tanks" put pressure on states in this way? Peace will presumably only be possible if this blackmailing logic of war is explicitly made evident and it's a crucial question to end this.

Further background information and peace policy related recommendations can be found in the book: Paulitz, Henrik. *Anleitung zum Krieg* (Instructions for war), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2017

- <sup>1</sup> SWP/GMF: *Neue Macht. Neue Verantwortung*. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin. The German Marshall Fund of the United States. Washington. 2013. P. 3, 6, 9, 20, 38f. a. 42
- <sup>2</sup> Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD. Berlin, 16.12.2013, p. 12, 14, 117 and 119
- <sup>3</sup> vgl. z. B. Wagner, Jürgen. Deutschlands (neue) Grossmachtambitionen. Von der «Kultur der (militärischen) Zurückhaltung» zur «Kultur der Kriegsfähigkeit». Not dated: <http://imi-online.de/download/JW-Grossmacht.pdf> (30.07.2016)
- <sup>4</sup> Niblett, Robin (Royal Institute of International Affairs/Chatham House). Internationale Erwartungen an Deutschland (International expectations on Germany. *Lecture* Berlin, 17.2.2015
- <sup>5</sup> Sponeck, Hans von, *A Different Kind of War*, 2006
- <sup>6</sup> vgl. Bierling, Stephan. *Vormacht wider Willen. Deutsche Aussenpolitik von der Wiedervereinigung bis zur Gegenwart*, München 2014. S. 267 ff. – Buro, Andreas. Deutschlands Verantwortung für den Frieden. Zukunftsszenarien für Strategien. Vortrag, Frankfurt, 2.10.2015. Thesenpapier. Mitschrift von Henrik Paulitz.

Quelle: *Akademie Bergstrasse für Ressourcen-, Demokratie- und Friedensforschung, Analysen & Empfehlungen*, November 2016

- (Translation *Current Concerns*)

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# The dollar as a universal power

by René Zeyer



René Zeyer  
(picture ma

“Follow the money” – this advice is said to have been given to the Watergate reporters whose research led to the resignation of US President *Richard Nixon* by their most important informant.

In fact, this was an invention by the Hollywood film adaptation of this splendid journalistic achievement. Money is the most important fuel in the world economy today. More precisely, the US dollar is. But like any fuel, it is also explosive and dangerous.

Anyone who in former times protested against US imperialist hegemony was threatened with gunboats, leather jackets or, more abstractly, with the “big stick”. This is still the case today, but there is another instrument of domination, which plays an increasingly more important role, and has the advantage that it is not as martial as a military intervention. Amongst others, Swiss financial institutions had to painfully experience this in the tax dispute with the US. When they were confronted with allegations of having conspired with their US clients to evade taxes, the obvious first response was to seek clarification in court as to whether this charge was rightly or wrongly made. Even experienced bankers were not really aware of the existence of the *International Swaps and Derivatives Association (ISDA)*. This organisation publishes model contracts that regulate and automate the continual flow of dollars between banks. And these name an indictment in the US against a house of money as an immediate termination clause.

## Dominant in trade

For this reason, no single financial institution worldwide has yet dared to resort to legal action against allegations made by US authorities. In the constitutional state of the US this is of course available to any defendant. In the case of banks, however, going to court means immediate death, as this would cut off the money house concerned from the trade in dollars. And nothing works without dollars. Foreign exchange transactions with the US dollar on one side account for more than 80 per cent of all transactions worldwide. The euro, yen and franc trail far be-

hind. All trading in US dollars must run through a clearing house in the US, even if the trading partners have nothing at all to do with the US. In addition, the most important raw materials such as crude oil, gold or silver are invoiced in dollars. Absurd but true: If, for example, Russia delivers natural gas to Ukraine, the deal will be settled in dollars.

At the latest since, after the end of gold dollar convertibility in 1973, the US agreed with Saudi Arabia that oil billing would take place exclusively in the US currency, the greenback has been dominating the world’s most important commodity; hence we refer to the petro dollar. And not only conspiracy theorists appreciate the theory that the Iraqi dictator *Saddam Hussein* did not provoke his downfall by the invasion of Kuwait or poison gas attacks in his own country, and certainly not by the alleged production of weapons of mass destruction, but by the announcement that he would convert Iraq oil trade from dollars to euros.

Although there is no reliable data base on the dominance of the dollar in world trade as a whole, it is obvious that it is by far the most commonly used currency – also bilaterally outside the US. As an investment currency, for example, the US dollar dominates the balance sheets of the world’s most important central banks. In global currency allocation, the dollar accounts for over 60 per cent of foreign exchange reserves. For all US dollar transactions, the central banks depend on access to the Fedwire US clearing system, which is operated and controlled by the US Federal Reserve.

These are all technical processes that normally take place in a silent and automated manner, like in a machine room. Worldwide, forex trading has by far the largest volume in this context; we are talking about more than \$ 5 trillion daily (which is a number with twelve zeros).

It should be noted, however, that in all this, the US has the red button at its command; just press it once and the machinery comes to an immediate stop. With fatal effects on the entire economy of a country affected. Cuba is the country which has the longest experience with the prohibition to use US dollars. Ever since 1961, the use of the US currency has been forbidden in connection with this last island of socialism. Anyone who violates this ban must reckon with heavy fines, a painful expe-

rience not only known to the Swiss bank *Credit Suisse*, which paid a fine of \$ 526 million in the year 2009, for violating US sanctions against Cuba, Libya and Iran.

## Threat of sanctions

In the context of the resumption of sanctions against Iran, the use of dollars is being made more difficult for that country. In addition, the head of the Iranian central bank, *Valiollah Seif*, has even been added to the list of terrorist supporters. The US accuses the Iranian National Bank of facilitating payments in dollars to the Lebanese Shiite militia *Hizbullah*. According to US Secretary of State *Steven Mnuchin*, this is a terrorist organisation. The attempt to stop the use of the dollar for all forms of terrorist or criminal activity, such as drug trafficking, may be welcome, but US control of the world’s most important currency has further implications. Russian oligarchs subject to US sanctions, such as *Viktor Vekselberg*, also realise this.

As a kind of collateral damage, no financial institution, and no company in the world, dares to trade with a partner who is affected by US sanctions. Here, the ban on the use of US dollars has an additional viral effect, as it would theoretically be possible to replace it with euros, yen, francs or any other convertible currency. But since basically every internationally active company also trades in the US or in the dollar area, it will rightly fear indirect sanctions, even if its actions are completely legal within their own national legal framework. The European Union is currently facing this dilemma, as it intends to maintain the nuclear agreement with Iran but will be unable to protect European companies maintaining their trade relations with Iran from US reprisals.

As long as US military and – more importantly – monetary dominance remains, there will only be one world power. Given the state of the eurozone, the euro will be unable to establish itself as a second world currency alongside the US dollar. Nor will the yen, not to mention the ruble. Only the complete convertibility of the Chinese currency renminbi will create a bipolar world of money. Until then, there is no cure against the United States’ supremacy. •

Source: “Basler Zeitung” of 18 May 2018

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# Plain language required instead of diversion!

## Negotiations Switzerland – EU: Status before the summer break

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

*In its media release of 4 July 2018, the Federal Council once again tries to wriggle out of the situation: Hardly any information on the content of its negotiating dossier, many nebulous hints, pure warm air: it had “taken note of the technical progress in the institutional negotiations with the European Union (EU)”, and the negotiating delegation would “continue the discussions with the EU with a view to reaching an agreement on the institutional issues”. Although not even the members of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the National Council and the Council of States ever saw a draft of the ominous treaty, at present everything in the daily press is all about the accompanying measures to the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons as allegedly the last hurdle. And the icing on the cake is offered by the trade association *economiesuisse* with its survey of the management of larger companies. There the agreement is already majority capable today – no matter what it says?*

The whole confusion between politics, the media and various business associations seems to be aimed at creating some confusion in the citizens' minds. The EU-friendly *classe politique* hopes that the electorate will be bruised until the referendum (if the dossier manages to do so by then) by means

of continuous irrigation with unproven reports and heated debates on “red lines”.

In order to unravel the heads, here are some corrections:

### Accompanying measures: heated debate ...

In its press release of 4 July<sup>1</sup>, the Federal Council confirmed “the existing red lines” with regard to the accompanying measures to the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (checks on employment contracts and wages; eight-day registration period for foreign companies).

Gradually, however, the “red lines” are already fading to pink. The head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), *Ignazio Cassis* (FDP), who promised before his election to the Federal Council to press a “reset button”, i.e. to re-launch the framework agreement in the interests of Switzerland, can be dissuaded from a clear position time and again. Under pressure from Brussels? and/or foreign politicians of his own party? For *Paul Rechsteiner*, President of the Federation of Trade Unions (SGB) and SP National Councillor, the existing measures are currently “non negotiable”. Whether he and his comrades would, however, go so far as to let the framework agreement fail is very questionable, as EU accession has been part of the SP party programme for decades.

### ... past the central point – the disempowerment of the sovereign

Among EU leaders, this noise at best causes a weary shrug of the shoulders: What an absurd idea on the part of the Swiss that the EU could be prepared to include Swiss law in a framework agreement!

Even in the latest media release, the Federal Council does not disclose the basic principle of an institutional framework agreement with the EU. It is not a question of reaching agreement with Brussels on a few current specific issues such as the registration deadline for foreign service providers, new rules on the possession of arms or the payment of unemployment benefits to frontier workers.

Rather, the main content of a framework agreement would be Switzerland's fundamental duty to automatically adopt EU law, both present and future, of which we have no idea today. The voters would no longer have anything to say in many areas of legislation. The random examples give us an idea of how far-reaching the disempowerment of the sovereign would be.

### EU Commission shows who is the boss

This is what the adoption of EU law looks like in practice: As early as the beginning

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### “Further integration would amount to a self-abandonment of the historically grown Swiss substance”<sup>1</sup>

*mw.* In their commentary on the “White Paper Switzerland” of the think tank *Avenir Suisse*<sup>2</sup>, *Konrad Hummler* and *Tito Tettamanti* correct some basic things in a refreshing way. The White Paper calls for an “unbiased discussion” on Switzerland's path from a “standstill in reform efforts” to “integration into the European and global market”. At the same time, accession to the EU as the favoured solution is “detabooed [...]”. (blurb)

Hummler and Tettamanti: “In short: the more integrated (into the EU) we are, the better off we would be, according to *Avenir Suisse*.” The two authors disagree because of their firm conviction in the historically grown nature of Switzerland.

#### “It does really exist, the Swiss substance, and it differs from the historically largely untested substance of the EU [...]”

“Freedom, the rule of law, direct democracy and federalism are indispensable qualities of our country and force sufficient sovereignty, even in a complex and interconnected world. It is not just about an intellectual exercise. On the contrary,

it does really exist, the Swiss substance, and it differs from the historically largely untested substance of the EU to such an extent that further integration inevitably would mean the self-abandonment of the typically Swiss. “We are a bottom-up country; the rest of Europe is of a more or less authoritarian nature.”

#### “Switzerland enables closeness to citizens, cost efficiency and cultural diversity.”

It is “a unique, subsidiary intended form of organisation, in which many tasks of social and economic policy can obviously be solved well. Switzerland has always enabled closeness to citizens, cost efficiency and cultural diversity.”

#### “In what kind of EU would or should we integrate?”

“To take only the best from the EU development is not serious. Rather, one has to ask: in what kind of EU would or should we integrate ourselves? Is it really so unwise to maintain a sufficient distance from Brussels? Realistically, we should give up the illusion that we are able to influence the developments somehow.

However, in view of the factual balance of power in the EU, it seems to be rather naive that loss of sovereignty could be compensated by opportunities for involvement.”

Hummler and Tettamanti recommend “also for the forthcoming outcome of negotiation, to forego restrictions on free thought in accordance with the White Paper, to balance carefully the objectively ascertainable advantages and disadvantages and to include possible unfavourable developments of the EU in the considerations.”

Konrad Hummler is former Chairman of the Board of Directors of the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, today partner of M1AG, a think tank for strategic issues; Tito Tettamanti is former member of the government of the Canton of Ticino, today a lawyer and entrepreneur.

<sup>1</sup> Hummler, Konrad; Tettamanti, Tito. “Die Schweiz und die EU: Substanz statt Performance”. Guest commentary in “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 3.7.2018

<sup>2</sup> “*Weissbuch Schweiz. Sechs Skizzen der Zukunft*”. *avenir suisse* 30.5.2018. editor: Peter Grünenfelder und Patrik Schellenbauer

**"Plain language required ..."**

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of June, the EU Commission declared that the accompanying measures and red lines of the Swiss did not fit into its system: "Here, in principle, *the EU would like Switzerland to say goodbye to them and orient itself towards the European protective measures that have recently been expanded.*"<sup>2</sup>

Another important piece of EU law that is to be imposed on Switzerland concerns state aid, which was recently the subject of *Current Concerns*.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the hardly comprehensible phrase structure in the Federal Council's media release of 7 June, the EU Commission, according to *SRF online*, does not lack clarity: It also wants to "*enshrine in the framework agreement the principle that state aid – certain subsidies – are prohibited*".<sup>4</sup>

All clear? From now on, Brussels will tell you which law applies in Switzerland. That would be the central content of a framework agreement!

**Adaptation or resistance?**

A number of Swiss politicians have already accepted this view without revealing it explicitly. So Federal Councillor Cassis, who wants to find "other ways" to protect against wage dumping, or *Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter*, National Councillor of the CVP, President of the Foreign Affairs Committees, with her remarkable statement on the accompanying measures: "Perhaps there is an opportunity, together with the EU, to achieve goals that are better for all of us."<sup>5</sup>

What do you call that? In the past, the Swiss have joined forces against foreign powers who let their muscles play. So, stop the internal political skirmishes! We citizens expect each and every one of our politicians and association leaders to make a clear statement for or against Switzerland's integration into the undemocratic EU system. And don't forget: Finally, we, the voters, will take the lead.

The Federal Council, on the other hand, is trying to keep the electorate out as long as possible. While it first spoke of a *consultation* after the summer break – which would involve obtaining, publishing and including the comments of the 26 cantons, the political parties, the associations and the interested citizens – it now suddenly only wants to talk to "the cantons" (i. e. the presidium of the "Conference of Cantonal Governments", CCG) and the social partners (heads of the trade unions and employers' associations) and "make a new assessment on the basis of the results of the various discussions after the summer". (*Press release of the Federal Council* of 4 July).

The electorate seems to have to wait until the *classe politique* has found a way to get the majority to say yes. That could be a big mistake for you, ladies and gentlemen!

**Federal Councilor Cassis and negotiators are chumming up with EU membership promoters**

*mw.* In April 2018 State Secretary *Roberto Balzaretto* promoted the (EU) framework agreement at the Swiss Society for foreign Affairs (SGA-ASPE). Out of touch with any reality, he advertised the Arbitral Tribunal, offered by *Juncker*. So, one should know, who is the SGA-ASPE?

In June 2018 the SGA-ASPE celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday with a speech on "Enthusiasm for Europe – in spite of Headwinds" by *Christoph Wehrli*. (For many years, *Christoph Wehrli* was the editor for Swiss matters at the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung").

At the celebration *Gret Haller* (former SP-National Councillor and passionate advocate for EU membership) handed over the chairmanship to *Christa Markwalder* (FDP National Councillor and president of the New European Union Movement

(nebs) which aims on Switzerland's membership to the EU). Also, the SGA aims to this (see also the inaugural editorial by *Christa Markwalder*, July 2018<sup>1</sup>). Also, *Ignazio Cassis* was invited to the celebration of the "EU promoter" SGA and gave an welcoming address (two months later than *Balzaretto*, who was nominated before from Cassis for State Secretary).

As far as I know, never ever before any Federal Councillor congratulated an EU-critical association. And this shall be the team, negotiating for our country in Brussels?

<sup>1</sup> Editorial. "Verhältnis Schweiz – EU: unde venis et quo vadis?" [where are you from and where will you go?] from *Christa Markwalder*, president of SGA, July 2018

**Court of arbitration instead of EU-Court? Untransparent Game**

Perspective of the Federal Council: "A consensus regarding the disposition of the dispute becomes apparent by an arbitral solution." (*Oress release of the Federal Council* of 4<sup>th</sup> July)

Perspective of the European Commission: *Juncker* had "brought into play an independent court of arbitration. Admittedly not all questions are resolved and the *European Court of Justice will play an influential role also concerning this solution.*" [*SRF*, of 7<sup>th</sup> June; emphasis added by *mw.*]

The 18<sup>th</sup> April the Secretary of State responsible for the negotiations with Brussels, *Roberto Balzaretto* gave a lecture at the *Swiss Society for Foreign Affairs SGA-ASPE* (see box page 11) with the subject "Switzerland – EU: What to do?" According to the press he painted a rosy picture of the court of arbitration which shall be served to the Swiss by the frame agreement: "The EU is ready to narrowly restrict the role of the European Court of Justice in the bilateral disposition of disputes as *Balzaretto* indicated. Not the judges in Luxembourg should decide but an independent court of arbitration. *Balzaretto*: 'In principle the court of arbitration should be able to solve disputes alone.'"<sup>6</sup>

This exposition is wrong in several aspects.

– *The Swiss population's positive picture of courts of arbitration is misused.*

Courts of arbitration have a positive meaning for us Swiss people out of our history. Since the first treaties of alliance of the old confederates arbitrators were an important institution. If two cantons were in conflict the others were obliged to "sit quiet" (that means not to interfere actively), to mediate as neutral arbitrators and to contribute to an objective solution and disposition of the dispute. This happened frequently

and worked out. Especially because the Old Swiss Confederacy was a relatively loose confederation, the establishing of the courts of arbitration contributed something essential to the cohesion.

– *A court of arbitration does only work with two equal partners*

By the way, even the EU member states aren't equal in relation to the Brussels institutions. Usual procedure: The European Commission smells an offence against EU-law, they admonish the state for a correction. If this doesn't happen, they go to law against the European Court of Justice. This decides finally about the legal interpretation of EU-law and in more or less all cases finds in favour of the Commission. A court of arbitration doesn't fit into this authoritarian and centralistic structure!

**"Direct sentences of a court of arbitration about EU-law are impossible"**

European Court of Justice president *Koen Lenaerts* to the arbitration court: "*As a judge I cannot say what the fate of such a mechanism would be.*" But one thing was sure: "*Direct sentences of a court of arbitration about EU-law are impossible.*"<sup>7</sup>

*Conclusion:* The whole story about a court of arbitration just serves to divert the Swiss from the obligatory takeover of present and future EU-law – the content and extent of which isn't known yet – and the judicial sovereignty of the European Court of Justice which is inevitably linked to this.

**Swiss economy doesn't need a frame agreement**

With the results of a survey on the bigger Swiss enterprises the trade association *economiesuisse* at it's media confer-

# Sweden— security guards at school

by Inger Enkvist



Inger Enkvist  
(picture ma)

*cc. Swedish professor Inger Enkvist regularly publishes in various media on the current situation at Swedish schools. The “Chronicle” in “Svenska Dagbladet” contains an example of the reasons why Sweden’s economy is increasingly encountering problems to find suitable personnel, despite large investments in schools and despite politicians competing publicly for the best school reform.*

The newspaper “Dagens samhälle” published an issue on the topic of schools on 12 April. The big news is that more and more schools need a security guard because of violence. The article lists schools from northern to southern Sweden, in which, as a measure, they started to close doors and to attach identification stamps to the clothes, and in which the

\* Inger Enkvist is Professor Emeritus of Spanish at the University of Lund in southern Sweden. She has published numerous books on Spanish literature and culture as well as on educational issues in Spanish and Swedish. In her work on Swedish school reforms she expresses clear criticism (De svenska skolreformerna 1962–1985 and personal data, 2016, ISBN 978-91-7844-954-5). For years she has been demanding a better quality of school teaching in Sweden. Enkvist explores how different countries shape their education system and what Sweden can learn from them.

playgrounds are walled in so that external persons cannot enter the school area. Because society does not attack the problems in the broader sense, schools must protect their organisation and their premises. This costs money in the form of alterations and staff.

When it comes to the connection between school and violence, a distinction has to be made between two contexts. One of them is the one just described, namely external persons trespassing on the school, threatening and devastating it.

Violence also occurs, however, because in today’s schools an educational principle – called “integration” – is applied – which entails far-reaching consequences. Another consequence is, that the individual pupil’s right to attend a regular class is, in practice, higher than other pupils’ right to effective teaching. Step by step, special classes were abandoned and pupils with all kinds of problems were integrated into regular classes, regardless of the consequences.

On 9 April, the newspaper “Nacka-Värmdö-Posten” picks up the case of a lower school pupil, who uses several adults being occupied one after another only to prevent this pupil from attacking others. It has now been determined by the Working Environment Authority that two “retreat ways” are necessary for the adults working with the pupil and that objects that might be used to strike must not be near the pupil. It must be possible to call security guards. Who benefits from integrating this pupil? How can

the other pupils, parents and teachers trust a school that works like this? This is an extreme case, but there are other examples.

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Incidentally, on 13 April an article was published in the business section of the newspaper “Svenska Dagbladet” about the fact that now not only industrial companies are moving out of Sweden, but also service companies. Anna-Karin Hatt, deputy director of Almega [Sweden’s leading organisation for service companies], describes the situation as acute and says that qualified service companies are silently moving away. The reason is that no suitable employees can be found. How should pupils in Sweden, learning in a disorderly and violent environment, acquire qualified knowledge?

How can quality be maintained if the money saved for schools is used up to deal with violence and damage? Nowadays, Sweden is an example of a country with a well-financed education sector, which, however, does not guarantee the country’s access to well-trained employees. The “Svenska Dagbladet” article points out that global competition is tough. Global companies simply cannot survive in a country where there is no competent workforce. Can we agree on the need for radical changes? •

Source: “Utflytning i det tysta vittnar om en akut situation.” In: “Svenska Dagbladet”, electronic edition of 15. April 2018

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## “Plain language required ...”

continued from page 12

ence from 2 June heralds the start of the referendum campaigning before the treaty is available. Of the barely 1000 interviewed persons with executive board responsibility 80% expressed themselves “positively towards a frame agreement” – without having seen it. However, the number of supporters shrinks to 60%, if such an agreement can only be obtained at the price of a central court. If the questioning would become more concrete the acceptance could easily fall under 50%.

Thereby directress *Monika Rühl* during the conference effectively explained very precisely that and why the Swiss economy goes well even today: “Our enterprises are present at the global markets for many years and can hold their grounds successfully against the strong international competitors.” As reasons for this success she names the stable political, juridical and macroeconomic circumstances as well as the good commercial relations to the foreign markets, whereby the most important

sales market for Swiss products naturally is the EU domestic market.

Precisely, and with the EU Switzerland has since 1973 a specially tailored free trade agreement which is valid up to now. It is all over town that Switzerland goes so well especially because freedom and sovereignty of the country are in the first place for population and enterprises.

### More legal security? Jo chasch danke! (You can tell this to the marines)

For what a frame agreement with which our successful country submits itself to EU-law? *Monika Rühl*: “The value of the bilateral agreements for the enterprises lies above all in the access to the European domestic market being free of discrimination. Three out of four enterprises emphasise that legal security in relation to the EU is absolutely pivotal for the economy.” [emphasis *mw*]

As regards the illusion of legal security by a closer integration into the centralistic major power see *Current Concerns* of 29 June<sup>8</sup>.

Let me just say this: Legal security for the economy and for single persons de-

velops merely by legal relations on an equal footing. One would think we have enough experience with the EU up to now: if something does not fit the concept of the masteries in Brussels, they take drastic measures, despotic and in breach of the contract. •

<sup>1</sup> European policy: state of negotiations on institutional issues and how to proceed. *Press release of the Federal Council* of 4.7.2018

<sup>2</sup> Dispute over framework agreement. Agreement possible – but Switzerland must move. *srf.ch* of 7.6.2018. Author: Oliver Washington

<sup>3</sup> See “What does ‘EU adoption’ mean? Concrete examples.” *Current Concerns* No 14/2018 of 29.6.2018

<sup>4</sup> Dispute over framework agreement. Agreement possible – but Switzerland must move. *srf.ch* of 7.6.2018. Author: Oliver Washington

<sup>5</sup> “Accompanying measures – Cassis receives support of unexpected side.” *srf.ch* of 15.6.2018. Author: Priscilla Imboden

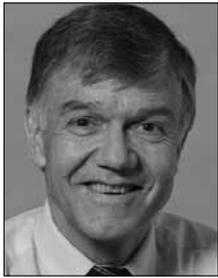
<sup>6</sup> “Fortschritte beim Schiedsgericht”. In *St. Galler Tagblatt* of 24.4.2018

<sup>7</sup> “Fortschritte beim Schiedsgericht”. In *St. Galler Tagblatt* of 24.4.2018

<sup>8</sup> “Institutional Framework Agreement Switzerland-EU – Strategy or confusion?” *Current Concerns* No 14 of 19.6.2018

# “Questions are the antechambers of knowledge”

by Carl Bossard



Carl Bossard  
(picture ma)

*Questions are the antechamber of understanding. Today, however, schoolchildren are often barely no longer allowed to ask their teacher. So, according a new paradigm – an interjection.*

The unexpected hears, who listens to paediatricians<sup>1</sup> or talks to school psychologists or social pedagogues: In their practice, they treat more and more children with psychosomatic problems such as abdominal pain and chronic headaches. Pupils increasingly suffer from school anxiety, and some show extraordinary behaviour. The young patients are increasingly suffering from complaints for which there is no somatic interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

## The children become lone warriors

Experts diagnose three causes: In addition to societal and social pressure and family emergencies, there are also school reasons. A female doctor reports: “I witnessed how children in the third grade should work independently on the arithmetical subject material. On Monday, the teacher presented a short introduction to the new arithmetic topic; then the children had to work on their dossier alone during the remaining week in arithmetic lessons and homework.” As a learning coach, the teacher distributes individual learning content. And it looks exactly the same in the subjects German and Science. Weekly schedules and worksheets have to get it straight.

## For questions up to twenty minutes queuing up

Everything should happen independently – and alone. Learning mutates from the collaborative process to individual activity. A class community hardly arises. Above all, middle-class and weaker students are overtaxed. They get under pressure and psychological pressure.

In addition, there is something else: In case problems or questions emerge during the planning work (“Planarbeit”) primarily classmates are to be consulted, the “experts”, as they are called. With them, the child in question should discuss the topic. If it wants to ask the teacher for advice, it must queue – if that is possible. It can take

up to twenty minutes to reach your turn, says the doctor. Who will be surprised about the exclamation: “I’ll just ask my parents at home!”

## Powerful educational narrative

Children have to learn independently today; they are their own learning managers. Self-oriented, self-organised learning (SOL) is the motto of the reforms. Behind this is the educational goal of self-regulation. The term has a high pedagogical acceptance and is currently the dominant form of instruction in many places. SOL became a kind of methodological redemption formula; a true belief in salvation has developed to the power of this practice. Could it be possible that in future one will speak of a pedagogical malpractice? It would not be the first time that later it will become suspect what primarily seemed like a magic word.

Until today there is no empirical evidence that this method would lead to a better quality of instruction. On the contrary, without high student activity by means of intensive teacher control, regular learning controls, and feedback, high learning effectiveness cannot be achieved. Therein, the renowned education researchers agree.

## Autonomy is a goal, not a requirement

Learning only works over the self; we only learn if we want to learn by ourselves. Also in this principle, the scientists agree. However, this wish is not always available at the beginning. Autonomy is not the prerequisite of instruction and education, autonomy is the goal.<sup>3</sup> Why? Emotional control and self-discipline are not fully developed in young people, as Zurich neuropsychologist Lutz Jäncke has repeatedly emphasised.

“The frontal cortex is still in the process of maturing”<sup>4</sup> – and with it the ability to concentrate. This has consequences. Children and teenagers are easily distracted. That is why, says Jäncke, the self-learning euphoria is problematic.

## To be a vital and humane vis-à-vis to the ego

Teaching and learning is an intersubjective event. It is a process between people. And what happens between people does not happen first from brain to brain, but from eye to eye, from ear to ear, from sense to meaning, physically and mentally. Children and adolescents need the stimulation; they have to be touched emo-

tionally. Then the famous spark leaps over; they let themselves be ignited by the subject matter.

Teachers therefore have to lead in personal contact. Like a choirmaster, like a conductor. “Pedagogic” springs from the Greek paid-agoiein, “lead children”. Lead, not just look after and accompany – and be a role model for them. And this pedagogical role model of the adults emphasises the university teacher Lutz Jäncke.

## Create “obliging conditions”

Jäncke adds: “Children must be able to turn to the teacher if they have a problem.” As a sequence in the German textbook from the series “Die Sprachstarken” demands: “Ask until you understand everything!” Understanding takes place in dialogue. Leading children to knowledge, ability and attitudes and making them to understanding – that is the aim of the school.

Education is therefore an interactive event – with the goal of autonomy of the person, maturity of the individual, and sovereignty of the individual. This autonomy is not given from the beginning, it develops gradually. Getting self-determinate is a demanding process. Autonomy is and remains the goal of good teaching – in an “atmosphere of trust and confidence, security, care, and benevolence”, as John Hattie sees it as fundamental and (learning) effective.

For this reason, teachers in their class have to create “obliging conditions” for all children, to quote the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas. And that includes questions to the teacher. They relieve and clarify – and are the antechamber of knowledge. •

<sup>1</sup> see. lecture series “Schule & Pädiatrie” (“School & Pediatrics”) of the Association of Paediatricians of Eastern Switzerland, [www.kispisg.ch](http://www.kispisg.ch)

<sup>2</sup> Burri, Anja. Kranke Kinderseelen (Sick Children’s Souls), in: NZZ, 29 October 2017, pp. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Reichenbach, Roland. *Philosophie der Bildung und Erziehung* (Philosophy of Education). Stuttgart 2007, Edition W. Kohlhammer, p. 107

<sup>4</sup> Jäncke, Lutz. “Vom Hirn zum Lernen” (“From brain to learning”). Lecture at the University of Zurich in the context of “50 Jahre Klett und Balmer Verlag (50 years Klett and Balmer edition)” on 8 November 2017; also see *ibid: Ist das Gehirn vernünftig? Erkenntnisse eines Neuropsychologen* (Is our brain reasonable? Findings of a neuro-psychologist). Berne 2015, Edition Hans Huber, p. 239

Source: <https://www.journal21.ch/dann-frage-ich-halt-die-eltern> from 2 July 2018

(Translation Current Concerns)

## The Gotthard stagecoach

### The most beautiful vehicle in Switzerland

by Heini Hofmann

*When the last Gotthard postilion climbed off the box, a great and dynamic era of transalpine postal connections came to an end. Today, this adventure from long ago can be experienced the touristic way in a true to original, eight-seater Landau Coupé drawn by five horses (three leaders and two wheelers).*

After more than half a century in operation, the horse-drawn Gotthard stage was ceased on 1 June 1882 since there was a competition with the railway tunnel. In 1909, it experienced another comeback for tourists, to which in 1922 the "Postauto" put an end again. But thanks to private initiative there is a historical travel post again since 1988, which offers nostalgic trips from Andermatt via Hospiz to Airolo in the summer months.

#### A nostalgic revival

Today it appears as if it would be from another star, the yellow stage coach, waiting for passengers at Andermatt station with five harnessed, impatient steeds. As 150 years ago, passers-by and tourists wave to the passengers like crowned heads. After a first stop for an apero halt in the middle of Andermatt, where poet prince *Goethe* had already descended (who raved about the Urseren valley that it was the "dearest and most interesting" of all areas he knows), the trip leads to Hospental, where the mountain route begins. Up in Mätteli, there is a rest for the horses and refreshment for the passengers. They change after each such stop between coupé compartment under the coach box, middle cabin, and rear high seat.

Over and again the great amazement of the other road users: Cars shift to crawling gear, and motorcyclists climb off their petrol horses to take pictures of the oat-horses. Wherever possible, however, the team changes to the old pass road like at Brüggloch, where they already cross the border to the canton of Ticino at a trot. Lunch is served at the Gotthard Hospice, where the guests enjoy a multi-course meal in the old "Sust" and the steeds outside enjoy a one-course oat meal from their head bag. Afterwards, in the *Gotthard Museum* revives the time of ages ago, and all participants receive a stamped nostalgia ticket as a souvenir.

#### Via Tremola to Merenda

Then downhill again, over the narrow, cobbled serpentines of the Tremola, through the sky curve that also *Rudolf Koller* immortalised in his famous



"High up inside a yellow stagecoach ..." (picture Gotthardpost)

Gotthardpost painting. Today, however, disc brakes that the rebuilt carriage is equipped with, make the difficult task easier for the postilion and the horses. Via Motto Bartola the team reaches the station Airolo in the Leventina, where passengers, postilion, conductor, and escort team (always discreetly in the background with a minibus and farriery) bid farewell with a Merenda, a Ticino afternoon snack.

While horses and carriage with transporter and trailer drive back on the road, home to the stables of the historic travel post in a former military building outside of Andermatt, the passengers enriched by a tremendous experience travel back by train and dream of those times when the Gotthard Post was still reality.

#### The first beginnings

It was the construction of the road through the Schöllenen, the Tremola, and other narrow ways in the Leventina alone that made it possible to travel by horse-drawn carriages on the St Gotthard Pass, one of the most important north-south connections over the European high mountains. From 1830, the pass was cautiously frequented by two-seater coaches. The bottleneck now still was the limited capacity of the messenger ships between Lucerne and Flüelen (Axenstrasse still non-existent). The cumbersome rowing boats equipped with sails could only accommodate five passengers, travelled only twice a week and took twelve hours to cross from Lucerne to Flüelen. This changed when steamships began operating on Lake Lucerne

in 1837, reducing the journey time to less than three hours.

Passenger numbers and postal freight now increased continuously so that from 1842 a five-horse eight-seater stagecoach ran daily in both directions between Chiasso and Flüelen. In winter, the pass was also kept open and the mountain route was done with sledge convoys then. One hundred "Ruttner" (roadmen) and one hundred sledge menials found work on each side of the Hospiz. In 1847, the completion of the Melide causeway made the cumbersome trajectory ferries between Melide and Bissone redundant. As the Federal Constitution of 1848 abolished internal customs duties and cantonal currencies, the entire Gotthard route from Basel to Chiasso for the first time was under unified overall leadership since 1849.

#### Prosperity and end

In the middle of the century, 1850, the Swiss Post extended the Gotthard line to the railway station of Camerlata south of Como, then the final destination of the railway line from Milan to Switzerland. This gave the Gotthard Postal Course the surname "Milan". Now the newly built, federal stagecoaches were called into action for the first time. The journey from Basel via the Gotthard to Milan still took about 50 hours. A combined return ticket cost 68,60 Swiss Francs, which was equivalent to the wage of a stagecoach driver for three months. As increasingly more pleasure-travellers crowded over the

**"The Gotthard stagecoach"**

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Gotthard, an additional "master course" was established in 1864, and for impatient businessmen a nocturnal "express course".

Passenger numbers rose steadily, from around 14,000 in 1849 (following the introduction of the new Federal Constitution) to just over 25,000 in 1861. Ten years later, there were already 42,000 stagecoach passengers. According to Rudolf Koller's cult painting, the maximum number of passengers was 72,000 in 1875. After that things went downhill: in 1880 there were still around 61,500, and in the last full year of operation, 1881 only

58,500. From commissioning the Gotthard Railway both, passengers and mail items were transported through the railway tunnel between Göschenen and Airolo expeditiously. On 1 June 1882 fate has decided: The horse stagecoach was closed – the end of a great era!

**Spectacular events**

Many great but also many tragic events remain in the annals of the hippo-mobile alpine traversing with the Gotthard post. The most exciting extra trip was probably that of the Russian tsarina when she and her entourage crossed Switzerland from Rorschach to Magadino via the Gotthard Pass on their journey to Nice in Octo-

ber 1856. The retinue consisted of no less than seven coaches and six, two four-in-hand and two forerunners, whose task it was to order horses, meals and overnight stays. No less than 52 horses were needed at each changing station. The tsarina seemed impressed by the service offered, since she gave a gold watch with chain to the conductor in charge.

Less fortunate was the Camerlata-Flüelen night ride of 22 November 1862, when a band of robbers stole the post van, money, and watches. When they tried to sell it off in Ghiffa on Lake Maggiore, the bandits could be arrested. Even worse was the attack of 13 October 1864 also on a night ride on Monte Ceneri, an area that was long considered unsafe. The conductor was tied up, the postillion shot at. He later succumbed to his injuries. The travellers had to debouch their watches, jewellery and purses. Subsequently, the head of the robber band could be arrested in Milan.

Nevertheless, also the nature exacted its toll. In November 1874, an avalanche in the Tremola buried the Gotthard post sledge convoy, which consisted of 10 horse drawn sleighs and 23 travellers. The conductor could only be rescued dead. In January 1879, another avalanche in the Tremola curves hit 8 of the 11 horse-drawn sleighs on the post course. This time all travellers were lucky, not so 2 horses that perished under the snow masses.

**A temporary bread basket**

The passage of the stagecoach always was the main event of the day. Post horn signal and horse bells, the trampling of the hooves, rumbling of the wheels, groaning of the axles and screeching of the brakes, mixed with the yelp of dogs, attracted people to the windows or to the village square, where there were news to learn and strangers in sophisticated robes to marvel at.

The Gotthard stagecoach (the last original horse post wagon can still be seen at the National Museum in Zurich) was also a bread basket for countless families, directly for employees and vehicle owners and indirectly for those in road maintenance and winter road clearance services. When suddenly the postal traffic over the pass was stopped, this vital source of income dried up for the population just as abruptly. Entire families and many young people were forced to emigrate to America. Those who were driving through the railway tunnel now did not notice though...

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**Postilion and conductor**

*HH.* Although the postilions were the real heroes of the event, they ranked below the conductors. They were simple charioteers who were exchanged at the horse mail stations (relays) together with the (horse-drawn) stagecoaches. That happened no less than twelve times on the route between Flüelen and Camerlata. A postilion did not necessarily have to be able to read and write, but he had to blow the post horn. He had to master service signals such as departure and arrival of the mail, number of wagons or sledges and horses (for crossing and preparing the changes), but of course also some pieces of entertainment.

The primarily responsible and better-off in the hierarchy was the conductor

who covered the entire route. As supervisor, he was responsible for the adherence of the timetable, changing horses and for transporting the mail. From 1852, he was also responsible for the surveillance of the telegraph line along the postal route. And, of course, he was the travellers' ombudsman. Equally important were the postal horse owners in Andermatt and Airolo, who worked as contractors for Swiss Post. They provided the necessary number of horses including the postilion at the stages. In the best times there were up to a hundred horses in the stable between Flüelen and Gotthard Hospiz alone!

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

*Cosy cruising – with 5 horsepower – in the "nicest vehicle in Switzerland".  
(picture Gotthardpost)*