

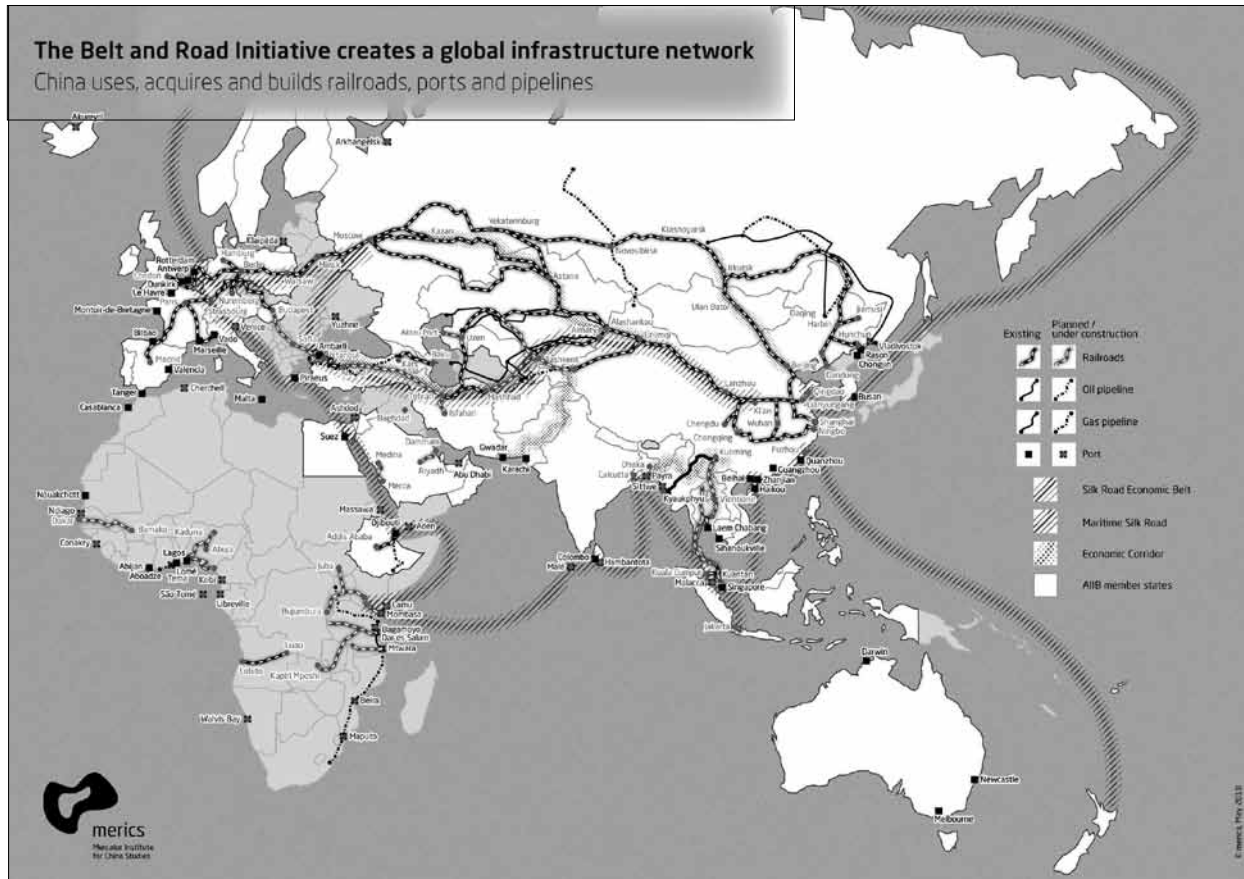
Current Concerns

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

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

“Silk Road 2018 – A new approach to trading” International Conference in Nuremberg on 25 July 2018

by Nils Opel, Nuremberg



The map shows the worldwide network of infrastructure projects (railway lines, oil and gas pipelines, ports, etc.) planned, under construction or already implemented with the New Silk Road project („The Belt and Road Initiative“) on land and on the oceans. (Graph <https://www.merics.org/de/bri-tracker/mapping-the-belt-and-road-initiative>)

On 25 July 2018, a one-day congress “Seidenstrasse 2018 Handeln auf neuen Wegen (Silk Road 2018 – Trading on New Routes)” took place at the Nuremberg Exhibition Centre. The event was organised by the “NürnbergMesse Group”, supported by the Bavarian State Ministry of Economic Affairs, Energy and Technology and the Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Bavaria.

Associates of the NürnbergMesse Group, one of the world’s largest exhibition companies, are the City of Nuremberg and the Free State of Bavaria, each accounting for just under 50%, as well as the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of Nuremberg (IHK) and the Chambers of Crafts in Central Franconia, accounting for around

0.03% each. With 51 representatives, the NürnbergMesse Group is active in 116 countries worldwide. It has 7 subsidiaries in the USA, China, India, Brazil, Italy and Austria.

Focus on Asia and South America

Its international trade fair programme in 2018 demonstrates the company’s international business focus on Asia and South America. 31 events in Nuremberg, 14 in India, 10 in Brazil, 8 in China, 2 in Thailand and just one in Italy, Russia and the USA.

The co-organiser, the Free State of Bavaria, maintains 28 foreign representations abroad. In July 2018, the third Bavarian representative office in China was opened in the central Chinese city of Chengdu; the previous ones are located in Shandong and

Shenzen. In 2017, the People’s Republic of China was the second most important Bavarian trading partner. According to the latest figures, China will become Bavaria’s most important trading partner in 2018, as Bavaria’s Minister of Economic Affairs, Franz Josef Pschierer, explained in his opening speech at the congress.

The city of Nuremberg and the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen have been twin towns since 1997. Since 2015, a weekly intermodal train with 54 containers has been commuting between Nuremberg and Chengdu. Good reasons to choose Nuremberg as the venue for the first public congress in Germany dealing with the “New

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Silk Road" project, with around 250 visitors.

This project is attracting much greater interest in Asia. In Hong Kong, for example, a conference has been held every year since three years, attracting 5,000 visitors most recently in June this year. The Chamber of Industry and Commerce of Nuremberg regularly participates in the Hong Kong conferences, representing all German Chambers of Industry and Commerce.

The project "New Silk Road"

The project "New Silk Road" was presented under the name "One Belt, One Road" in September 2013 by China's President Xi Jinping during his state visit to Kazakhstan (focus on the Belt) and a few months later in Jakarta (focus on the Road). "Belt" refers to the "land connection" between China and Europe. This includes the existing northern railway route via Kazakhstan/Russia and the southern route under construction via Central Asia/Turkey/Western Balkan. There are already destinations in 40 cities in 14 European countries. Since 2008, 8000 freight train journeys have taken place.

"Road" refers to the sea route from the China's east coast via the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea to southern Europe. The project is now called the "Belt-and-Road Initiative", or BRI for short. The Chinese government wants to establish an inter-continental infrastructure network between China and Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia and South East Asia. The region comprises 90 states where 70% of the world's population live. Economic areas are to be networked and further developed, and structurally weak regions are to be advanced economically. To date, 900 projects have been initiated with projected investments of 900 billion US dollars.

A road of cooperation ...

Since the *World Bank* and the *Asia Development Bank (ADB)* are unlikely to be able to cover these financial needs, according to *Jingqiu Mao*, Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Munich, the *Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)* was founded on China's initiative in 2015. In her opening speech at the congress, Ms Mao explained in detail the "Belt-and-Road Initiative". She pointed out that the initiative was not a strategic instrument servicing Chinese geopolitics. The "New Silk Road" is not a private road of a particular party, but a wide avenue that is built commonly and that should be beneficial to all involved. She explicitly advocated free trade and

globalisation, but also emphasised the benefits to the real economy: The "New Silk Road" is a road of cooperation that brings new blood to the economy. The development of the infrastructure should correspond to the actual demands.

... and the opening of China

In view of increasing protectionist tendencies in world trade and the turbulences in the economy, more extensive, higher-qualified and deeper cooperation is necessary. One should not fall back into the age of mutual isolation. The "New Silk Road" is a product of openness and cooperation in times of globalisation. China is a responsible participant and contributor to the existing international system. Ms Mao referred to the importance of the project both for Germany and for China at both ends of the Silk Road: "If both countries jointly can explore the possibilities of the new cooperation and of new areas of trade by the 'New Silk Road', this will certainly bring great economic benefits and concrete advantages for the peoples of both countries as well as for the countries along the Silk Road and the people living there".

A huge growth potential

Professor *Gabriel Felbermayr*, head of the *ifo Zentrum für Aussenwirtschaft* (external trade) at the *ifo Institute for Economic Research* in Munich, presented quite comprehensive economic data. Eurasia is a large continent with 4.8 billion consumers in 92 countries and 60% of the world's economic output, with economic oases on its margins that have economically converged. The disposable per capita income should be about 28,000 euros in Nuremberg in 2018 and 21,000 euros in Shanghai. But the Eurasian space in between is open for economic development. Eurasian trade (here: volume of trade in goods) between the EU and "Greater China" (China, Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan) amounted to 772 billion euros in 2017, which roughly corresponds to trade between the EU and the NAFTA countries (USA, Canada, Mexico). Growth potential over the next 10 years is forecast at 80% (EU and Greater China), three times as high as growth potential across the Atlantic.

Three quarters of the future global growth up to the first half of the century can be expected in Eurasia. The future will take place in Eurasia and not in the transatlantic economy. In the course of the last 1000 years, China and India each accounted for 25% of world production. In the middle of the 19th century, the sharp decline of China set in, with the simultaneous rise of the West, today's G-7 states (USA, Canada, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan).

In the course of the last 40 years, a trading volume has been achieved that would do justice to the size of China. The OECD estimates that by 2045 China's share of the world's aggregated output will have risen to 25 % (in 1990 it was 4 %!). Such a process has never happened before in economic history. The change has just taken place (in 2018 the EU, the USA and China will all be on a par with 20 %), and that is why US President *Donald Trump* sees China as his strategic adversary.

"The future will be Asian".

The future will be Asian, and North America will have to give up its leadership in the world economy. According to ADB estimates, the necessary investments in the BRI project will amount to 8 trillion US dollars (2010-2020). That is twice as much as the GDP of the Federal Republic of Germany. President Xi, however, only speaks of 1 trillion. So far 340 billion US dollars have been spent (2014-2017). Serbia, for example, received 4.9 billion US dollars, Greece 3.6 billion, Pakistan 60 billion. China's investments in the world are about as high as the investments from abroad in China (8-9 % of the flows of investments in the world, about 150 billion US dollars foreign direct investments per year).

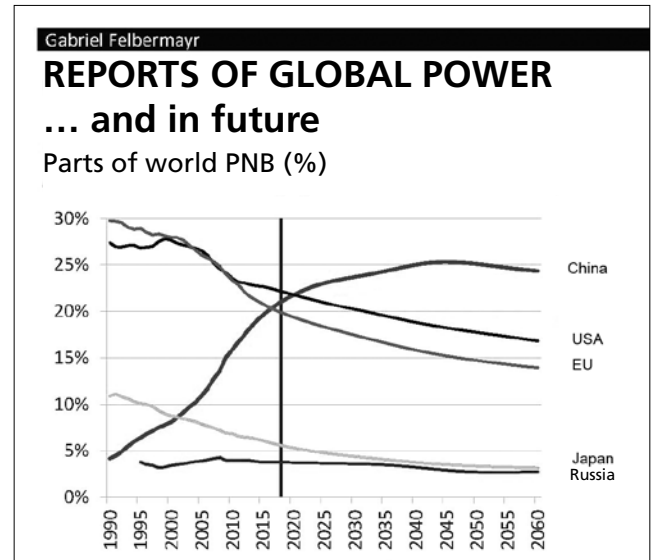
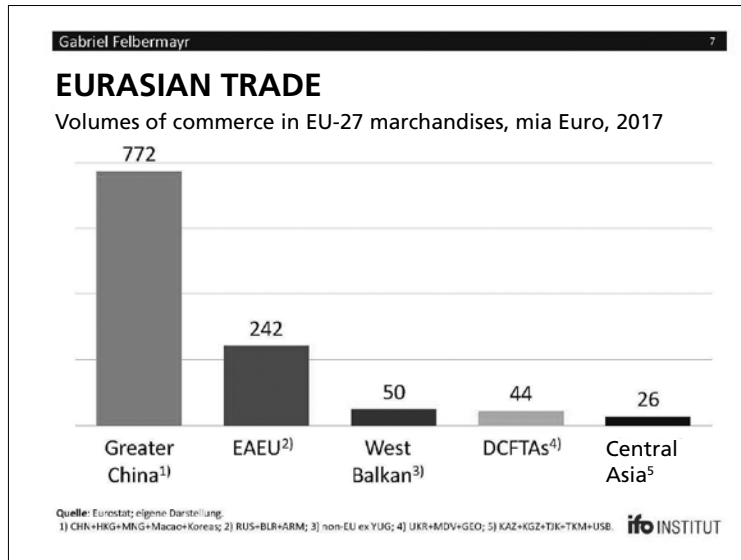
China is Germany's most important trading partner

The vehicle of investment and cooperation with Europe will be the AIIB, founded in 2015, which does not have China as a dominion. China has been Germany's most important trading partner since 2017 (the trade volume amounted to 187 billion euros in 2017), and the gap to other trading partners will become significantly larger. The transport costs will amount to 9-13 billion euros per year (5-7% of the trade volume). Each per cent reduction in transport costs will generate 3-4% additional trade. Savings over the Silk Road could generate an additional trade volume of 23 billion euros, related to EU-China even 200 billion euros. In the meantime transport costs are more important trade barriers than tariffs. But it will not be just about the trade between the urbanised areas, but also about the development of the Eurasian gap. It will also be about investing trade surplus profitably, not just in US Treasury bonds. "Out of American government bonds, into real investment!", that makes sense also for Germany. China's rise will be a fact, Europe will need a Eurasian strategy, it will have to accept realities, seek and reach compromises, and realise opportunities.

Central role of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank AIIB

Later in the congress, *Nikolai Putsch* introduced the AIIB. Mr Putsch,

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The two graphs illustrate not only China's great importance for EU trade, but also the shifts in economic performance expected in the coming decades (Graphs https://seidenstrasse.bayern/files/2018/08/20180725_Seidenstra%C3%9Fe_09-30A_Prof.-Gabriel-Felbermayr-1.pdf/Zeit-Fragen)

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as a director of the board of directors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), is responsible for developing the strategic direction and for looking after the controlling and steering functions (previously he worked for the IMF, among others). China has made the offer that all countries could participate in the BRI, and also an offer to develop a bank, which will be there for Asia, but also for other parts of the world. The AIIB is a legally independent institution, now with 86 member countries. Unlike the BRICS Development Bank, Germany does not see any parallel structures in the AIIB. The aim of the Federal Government will be the preservation of the international financial structure, including China. There shall be no watering down of the environmental and social standards set, for example, by the *World Bank*, the *Asian Development Bank* and the *African Development Bank*. Germany provides considerable resources for the representation of German and EU interests in the AIIB. There is a very open and international discussion in the bank. The business development is surprisingly strong. The AIIB has approved 25 projects worth 4.4 billion dollars in 2 years. (In contrast, the ADB has needed 3 years to get the first project going.) The Chinese share is quite low at 26% and will presumably continue to decline. The bank will not be a Chinese bank, as is spread in the American press. Indeed, it has been designed for Asia and is not a pure Silk Road bank. The bank is quite lean and currently has 450 employees (comparison ADB: 3000, World Bank: 15,000).

Details of the railway connection China-Europe

Uwe Leuschner is Senior Vice President Eurasia at *DB Cargo AG* and CEO of *DB Cargo Russia* and has held various management positions in the logistics industry in Russia and China since 1993. In the discussion panel he announced many details regarding the railway connection China-Europe: In 2008, the first "Chinese train" was run between Chongqing and Hamburg. This year about 5000 trains will roll between China and Europe. Growth in the intermodal container concept will be 30% per year. There will be block trains with 41 containers, which will be put together in Russia and Kazakhstan on broad gauge tracks to trains with up to 120 containers. In 2025, the Chinese want to move 3.5 million containers on this way. There will be a project (planned for about 2028/29), to let run *high-speed cargo trains* between China and Europe as far as to Berlin, every 20 minutes a train with 300 tons at 350–400km/h. Logistically, that will change a lot in the world. There is a pledge from the Chinese side for the financing of the required 6,000 kilometres of new standard gauge tracks. At the moment, the project is stuck, because the Russian government still insists on broad gauge tracks. In the last 20 years, China has created the world's largest railway system. In the last 10 years, a high-speed network of 22,000 kilometres has been created, and by 2025 it will be 35,000 kilometres.

High importance of the Eurasian gap

The Eurasian gap has the greatest potential for economic growth and investment in the future. The Chinese would have ideas for industrialisation, for ex-

ample projects on the European external border, such as the largest industrial park near Minsk in Belarus, built outside of China (area nearly 100 square kilometres), where infrastructure and investment are negotiated with governments in the Eurasian Union and are highly desired there. The Chinese would talk about it, and they had contracts signed with Russians and Kazakhs. It is very important to communicate with the Chinese on all levels. Talking to each other and cooperating will be the basis for future developments.

Concrete Silk Road projects

Corinne Abele and Dr Uwe Strohbach presented concrete Silk Road projects and strategies. Corinne Abele has been working for *Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI)* in Greater China since 1998. (GTAI is the economic development agency of the Federal Republic of Germany). The journalist, graduate economist and Eastern European historian has already been analysing China's economic process and industry developments for two decades. Dr Uwe Strohbach is regional manager for Central Asia and the South Caucasus at GTAI. Previously, among other things, he was project coordinator for Eastern European research at the Institute for Applied Economic Research in Berlin. Uwe Strohbach is currently working on Eurasian transport corridors and the expansion of transit routes between China and Europe.

For example, renewable energies

Corinne Abele presented developments in the field of renewable energies. China will have installed 770 GW in "New En-

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ergies" by 2020. In 2016, China already has overtaken the EU in terms of solar capacity. By 2020, 20% of primary energy consumption will not be of fossil origin. 25% of the electricity consumption is already non-fossil. By 2025, in the automotive sector 25 % of the energy will come from "New Energies" (80 % covered by Chinese brands).

China has the vision of a global power grid. China has invested 123 billion dollars in electricity grids between 2013 and 2018, many in the Silk Road area. For example, in Pakistan, 62 billion dollars are foreseen for projects in hydropower and electricity grids. China has also been active in Brazil for a long time. It is the country's largest energy producer and largest electricity grid operator. China is investing in ultra-high voltage direct current lines, a technology also mastered by *Siemens* and *ABB*. 35,000 kilometres of these lines are under construction and more are to follow. The volume is 250 billion dollars. Over the past 5 years, China has invested 475 billion dollars in the energy sector outside of China. China is now the world market leader in goods for environmental protection, mainly in the field of renewable energies.

The important role of Central Asia

Uwe Strohbach focused on the regions of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) and Southern Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia). Central Asia has ten times the area of Germany with 72 million inhabitants. However, the GDP is only 6% of the German GDP. Germany's exports to Central Asia have been growing again since 2017, but there is still very great potential. The same applies to the South Caucasus with 17 million inhabitants, which is half the size of Germany. However, the GDP is only 1.8 % of the German GDP. The states there are hoping for a triad through BRI: modernisation, diversification and exports. Foreign trade between China and Central Asia has increased from 1 billion dollars (2002) to 60 billion dollars (2017) and is expected to amount to at least 100 billion dollars in 2020. Strohbach presented several of the many planned and already started projects (50 in Kazakhstan with 27 billion dollars of Chinese investments and 100 projects

in Uzbekistan with 23 billion dollars of Chinese investments). A few examples will be mentioned here:

- Astana-Almaty railway line, about 1,300 km long by 2021, and Taldykorgan-Öskemen railway line, 790 km long by 2017–2020 (Kazakhstan),
- Construction of a gas-chemical and polyolefin complex in Atyrau by 2021 (Kazakhstan),
- Forcing the route China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (test trains were successful),
- Motorway and railway from Dushanbe (Tajikistan) to Kashgar (China),
- Strand 4 of the Turkmenistan-China pipeline,
- Southern aviation hub Dangara,
- Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China railway line (Kashgar): 900 kilometres shortening of the East Asia-Central Asia-Europe line,
- Asian star: largest agro-industrial park in Central Asia (international centre for poultry farming and meat products in Kyrgyzstan).

Projects have already been initiated also within Europe

Not only in Central Asia and at the external borders of Europe, but also within the EU, projects have already been initiated. A Chinese company has leased half of the port of Piraeus in Greece for many years and wants to invest here on a large scale. For this purpose also, a freight train connection from the port of Piraeus to Belgrade in Serbia is planned. The Chinese wish to extend the route via Budapest and Vienna to Munich. According to Dr *Margot Schüller*, China expert at the *GIGA Institute for Asian Studies*, this project in Greece has already been "approved" by the EU Commission. It is a project of the 16+1 initiative. In this initiative, 16 Eastern and South Eastern European countries are negotiating with China about financing options for infrastructure projects. The project in Greece can be seen in connection with the southern route of the Silk Road mentioned in the beginning. Coming from Germany, this route will also lead via Belgrade via Turkey, Iran and the Central Asian countries Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to western China. The tunnel under the Bosphorus is currently being extended and expanded to make it suitable for long-distance freight trains. Parts of the route in Turkey and Iran have already been completed. Furthermore, there is already a northern connection be-

tween Iran and China, which is about to be opened for freight traffic.

Different from the Berlin-Baghdad-Railway

The southern route of the Silk Road is very similar to the Berlin-Baghdad railway line planned more than 100 years ago. This may be one reason for the recent sanctions against Turkey and Iran. But, back to Europe. How the EU will position itself regarding the BRI project is still unclear. But Dr *Skala-Kuhmann*, China expert at the *German Corporation for International Cooperation* (Deutschen Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ) said: "Even if Europe and even if Berlin do not express a clear strategy and unfortunately make no clear statements so far on 'Belt and Road', [...] much more is going on than we might think." •

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

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Intra-American power struggle – world peace in danger

Germany is still following in the wake of the US war alliance

by Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer
(picture ef)

Within a week, the dimension we are all facing, even if we are no Americans, became clear. The two landmarks were set by two people who should almost be called beacons of the defining war establishment in Washington.

There was former Senator *John McCain*, who, like a head of state and in sharp contrast to incumbent President *Donald Trump*, was led nationwide and spectacularly to lie in state in the rotunda of the US Capitol. His years of appearing at the notorious and annual conference in Munich had made it clear that hardly anyone in his Republican Party would be able to challenge his reputation as the

“archpriest of war.” He was not alone in this, as clarified by the spreading of the war alliance to the Democratic Party and thereby to their last top candidate *Hillary Clinton*.

For millions of Americans, Trump means a counterbalance to the war alliance

That was what millions of upright Americans perceive as that Washington which does not care about them, and which was believed to have to be counterbalanced by President *Donald Trump*, so as to save that America which they perceived as a free country. Unfortunately, the political Washington of our day hates this “political upstart” president so much that one has to wonder who would ever survive these threatening operations as a friendly or even a defensive-minded head of state? In the person of *John McCain*, a Republican pillar saint of the

war coalition has broken away, and no successor is in sight. Will the next war have to wait because of this?

Bob Woodward: “Fear in the White House”

No, neither anyone in Washington nor any of the Washington salvation troop’s worldwide supporters will have to wait. Even before that time, well-known American author *Bob Woodward* had made sure of this with his publication “Fear: Trump in the White House”. One would think that it cannot get worse in Washington. After the death of *John McCain*, anything went in Washington. Only one thing was apparently not possible: Waiting for the publication of the book about the monster in the White House, so that no time should be wasted.

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Is there still a solution for the Syrian Idlib without too many victims?

km. Current military actions and statements suggest that an attack by Syrian troops – together with armed forces from Russia and Iran – on the northern Syrian city of Idlib is imminent. At the meeting of the presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey in Tehran on 7 September 2018, there was a joint final declaration (see box) and also a joint criticism of the USA’s previous Syria policy, but the Turkish president did not agree to the planned attack on Idlib. The situation in Idlib is extremely complex. First, according to corresponding statements from East and West, there are many thousands of fighters in Idlib who are also assigned to terrorist groups on the Western side. Secondly, there are many civilians in the city and region who would most probably be affected by a military action. Many of them will want to flee the city and the region. Thirdly, the fighters in Idlib are trying to persuade NATO and above all the US to intervene militarily on their side – and even the forces in the NATO states, which do not want to admit their defeat in Syria, are pushing their forces to intervene massively. And now the German Ministry of Defense has also announced its readiness for war. If one believes reports from the Russian side, there is evidence that a chemical attack on Idlib is being staged and that the Syrian armed forces are to be held responsible so that exactly this intervention can take place

– which can plunge the world into a great war. Already beforehand, these Russian reports are called false reports by the West. The following text was written by the Russian news agency Sputnik:

At a meeting in Idlib, terrorist groups and “White Helmets” have approved scenarios for shooting the staged “incidents” with alleged use of toxins by Syrian troops. This was explained on Saturday by the official spokesman of the Russian Ministry of Defence, Major General *Igor Konashenkov*.

“According to the irrefutable information available to the Russian Ministry of Defence, the leaders of the groups Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (Jebhat al-Nusra) and Hizb At-Turkestan Al-Islami (Turkestan Islamic Party), with the participation of the local coordinators of the Syrian Civil Defence (White Helmets), met on 7 September in the town of Idlib in a terrorist command post located in the ‘Al-Vachda’ school area”, *Konashenkov* said.

“At the meeting, the scenarios for filming the ‘incidents’ with alleged use of poison by Syrian government troops against civilians in the cities of Jisr al-Shughur, Saraqib, Taftanaz and Sarmin were finally agreed and approved”, he stressed.

The preparation of provocations with C-weapons in Idlib should be completed by the evening of 8 September. A sig-

nal for the beginning of the provocation should be a special order from some “foreign friends of the Syrian revolution”, *Konashenkov* said.

At the end of August *Konashenkov* had declared that terrorists of Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham would prepare a provocation. This was to accuse Damascus of using chemical weapons against civilians in the Syrian province of Idlib, which could then serve as a pretext for an attack on government objects in Syria by the US and its allies. For this purpose, said *Konashenkov*, a US destroyer with 56 cruise missiles on board had arrived in the Persian Gulf and a type B-1B bomber had been transferred to the military base Al-Udeid in Qatar.

The White Helmets introduce themselves as protectors of the civilian population in Syria without a political agenda. However, the organisation is accused of distributing staged videos from Syria: Syrian journalists, for example, have shown several photos showing the “rescue forces” with weapons and in military uniforms. The Russian Foreign Ministry described the activity of the White Helmets as part of the smear campaign against the Syrian government. •

Source: <https://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20180908322253613-idlib-terroristen-weisshelme/> from 8.9.2018

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Joint Statement by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the President of the Russian Federation and the President of the Republic of Turkey

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran *H.E. Hassan Rouhani*, President of the Russian Federation *H.E. Vladimir Putin* and President of the Republic of Turkey *H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan* gathered in Tehran on 7 September 2018 for a *Tripartite Summit*.

The Presidents:

1. *Expressed* their satisfaction with the achievements of the Astana format since January 2017, in particular, the progress made in reducing violence across the Syrian Arab Republic and contributing to peace, security and stability in the country.
2. *Emphasized* their strong and continued commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as well as to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and highlighted that they should be respected by all. They reiterated that no actions, no matter by whom they were undertaken, should undermine these principles. They rejected all attempts to create new realities on the ground under the pretext of combating terrorism and expressed their determination to stand against separatist agendas aimed at undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria as well as the national security of neighboring countries.
3. *Discussed* the current situation on the ground, took stock of the developments regarding the Syrian Arab Republic following their last meeting in Ankara on 4 April 2018 and agreed to continue trilateral coordination in accordance with their agreements. In this regard, they took up the situation in Idlib de-escalation area and decided to address it in line with the above-mentioned principles and the spirit of cooperation that characterized the Astana format.
4. *Reaffirmed* their determination to continue cooperation in order to ultimately eliminate DAESH/ISIL, Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaeda or DAESH/ISIL, as they have been designated as terrorists by the UN Security Council. They underlined that, in the fight against terrorism, separation between the above-mentioned terrorist groups and the armed opposition groups that had joined or would join the ceasefire regime, would be of utmost importance including with respect to preventing civilian casualties.
5. *Reaffirmed* their conviction that there could be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and that it could only end through a negotiated political process. They reaffirmed their determination to continue active cooperation with a view to advancing the political process in consistence with the decisions of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi and the UN Security Council Resolution 2254.
6. *Reaffirmed* their resolve to continue joint efforts aimed at advancing the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process for reaching a political settlement and reiterated their commitment to help establish and launch the work of the Constitutional Committee. They expressed their satisfaction with the useful consultations between their senior officials and the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria.
7. *Emphasized* the need to support all efforts to help all Syrians restore their normal and peaceful life and to alleviate their sufferings. In this regard, they called upon the international community, particularly the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, to increase their assistance to Syria by providing additional humanitarian aid, facilitating humanitarian mine action, restoring basic infrastructure assets, including social and economic facilities, and preserving historical heritage.
8. *Reaffirmed* their determination to continue joint efforts aimed at protecting civilians and improving the humanitarian situation via facilitating rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all Syrians in need.
9. *Highlighted* the need to create conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their original places of residence in Syria. To this end, they emphasized the necessity of coordination among all relevant parties, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other specialized international agencies. They agreed to consider the idea of convening an international conference on Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).
10. *Welcomed* the progress of the work of the Working Group on the release of detainees/abductees and handover of the bodies as well as the identification of the missing persons, as undertaken with the participation of the UN and ICRC experts.
11. *Decided* to hold their next meeting in the Russian Federation upon the invitation of the President of the Russian Federation *H.E. Vladimir Putin*.
12. The Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey *expressed* their sincere gratitude to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran *H.E. Hassan Rouhani* for hosting the Tripartite Summit in Tehran.

Source: www.en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5337 from 7 September 2018

"Intra-American power-struggle – ..."

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President Trump has been under continuous fire for nearly two years, but with the publication of Bob Woodward's book, the President was to be given the political and presidential coup de grâce. This is something which we might consume with relish in our easy chairs in Europe as a spectacle of American self-destruction. But that is the last thing we can afford to do. Why so? Because the Washington establishment and its London socmen are on the verge of laying the groundwork for the next big war, in Syria and concerning the poisoning of the *Scripals*. We, who live in Europe, should admit this. Between all of us and the next war, which according to *Sigmar Gabriel* will sweep us all away, there is only President Donald Trump. As long as he does not start his presidential war, the proof to the contrary cannot be given, even though, in view of Washington's lust for war, our hope for peace is hanging by a thread.

Remembering Roosevelt's words – a characterisation of US politics

In order to assess that situation on the globe for which the United States has been responsible for decades, one only has to bear in mind the words which, according to the 2004 book on the "Pax Americana" by German author *Wolfgang Effenberger*, were put into the mouth of President *Roosevelt* at his quarantine speech on 5 October 1937 in Chicago. President Roosevelt then spoke of "the present reign of terror of international lawlessness. Innocent peoples," President Roosevelt continued, "are cruelly sacrificed on the altar of greed for power and a lust for power that knows no justice or human consideration."

One cannot help feeling that Roosevelt, with his speech on Europe and its neighbouring regions, in advance scoured his own country's actions since the criminal war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and what followed.

How precarious today's situation is for all of us

This, however, makes it clear how precarious today's situation is for all of us, who love our own lives as much as that of others. The system that created these wars must be mercilessly maintained, otherwise there would probably be a global wave of war crimes trials. In this, Syria is life-threatening for all of us, as it is becoming apparent that the situation in Syria is perceived as the "great halt signal" for the global intervention policy since 1999 by the members of the War alliance in Washington. Global political dislocations could follow hard on.

"Shareholder value" and the left-liberal establishment

Wars are not all that is in store for us if we look around Washington. The American presidential election campaign with *Bernie Sanders* as candidate has already shown one thing. Anything that is seen as a challenge for shareholder value and for the left-liberal political establishment in the alliance must be fought down at all costs. Seen in this way, also the meeting between the German Chancellor and US President *Obama* at the Berlin Evangelical Church Congress as well as a previous meeting make special sense. After the cross-party war alliance with the presidential candidate Hillary Clinton had not succeeded in preventing Donald Trump, at least the left-liberal establishment in NATO was to survive. This objective was pursued with a vengeance, and if you look at the situation in Germany, the positions of power will be defended with teeth and claws.

Germany's dark role

It is no longer a question of "seeking the peace and prosperity of the city". After the experiences made at the presidential elections in the USA, no further weakness will be shown concerning the social system. Years ago, the supporters of the "social market economy" were already insulted as communists. Those who demand the "democratic constitutional state" as the basis for human and civil rights are shown by means of provocateurs with reminiscences of the past that power will never again be given up. If necessary, the "Bundeswehr" will then be deployed against its own people, which case is provided for by some of the so splendid provisions from the epochal EU Lisbon Treaty.

The pockets of the henchmen of the newest system of injustice on German soil are lined with state dough and they are marched off against upright democrats in order to spread self-fabricated defamations in the overarching sense among the people. The brown-red swamp is used to achieve the desired results in Germany.

Neighbours are no longer respected in Europe

Manfred Weber's candidacy as EPP leader for President of the EU's governing body shows what political Berlin is capable of. No one is making a secret of the fact that one of the main causes of the British Brexit lies in political Berlin. With Chancellor *Angela Merkel*, the recipe for success of German post-war policies was abandoned, which consisted of respecting one's neighbours. The Merkel migration in Europe had a prominent advocate in *Manfred Weber*. With an EU president from Germany, do you want to serve Europe or a Berlin ruling system as the European appendix of the Washington War alliance? •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

How to deal with Chemnitz and Germany?

by Karl Müller

Is Chemnitz the writing on the wall? Is Fascism imminent in Germany (or at least in East Germany)? Or is the danger of Fascism being orchestrated? Or are we meant to be permanently distracted from the real problems? ...

Many more questions can be asked... and currently it makes more sense to ask questions than to give answers. Even officials like the Chancellor and the President of the [German] Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution have issued contradicting statements.

It is now two weeks since the homicide in Chemnitz; there have been two arrests; a third suspect is wanted. There have been demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. Many people have been mobilised. Every day numerous prominent people are commenting the issue; the topic is dominating the headlines. The situation is complex.

Chemnitz was not a singular event. In several cases there have been demonstrations and rallies when a person had been killed by persons with migration background, by asylum seekers – in East and in West Germany. Since summer 2015 the atmosphere all over Germany has been very tense. Now the claim is that the new protests had been controlled from the extreme right wing.

What people are missing

What many people are missing, however, is appropriate steps and contributions from politics and media to pacify the country and solve the real problems. The first public reactions after the events in Chemnitz have not improved the situations. The claim was that thousands of right-wing extremists from all over Germany had shown up in Chemnitz; Chemnitz and Saxony was a stronghold of German right-wing extremism; once again the Saxon police had failed etc. etc. The fact that one person was killed and two others injured almost ceased to be an issue. Public statements of empathy and concern for the victims and their relatives were rare.

Now there have been differentiations, which is a good thing.

But why has almost nobody raised the topic that in Germany a lot of things are not in order, especially since summer 2015. But this was just one more step on a much more general German pathway, a questionable development which has now lasted for nearly 30 years.

What has become of the state of law?

Many people have experienced that statements and deeds of responsible politi-

Ceterum censeo: Direct democracy can help pacify a country

km. Germany suffers from an alienation between a large part of its population and those politically responsible in parliament and government in a representative democracy. Even with some court decisions, the citizen wonders whether this is really right and "in the name of the people".

One of these is the legitimate impression that citizens have only limited direct impact on political decisions. Although Article 20, paragraph 2, sentence 2 of the German Constitution stipulates that the state authority of the people is also exerted by "votes", this fundamental democratic right has so far been denied to the Germans at the federal level. The reasons, which are mentioned for this up to today, cannot convince all of them. Some arguments could well be taken into account in the concrete shaping of direct democratic rights, for example the obligation of the media and official publications to allow both sides of a vote to have their say. Perhaps it would also make sense for party organisations to forego the initiative for a direct democratic decision.

Since 1848, when the federal state was founded, Switzerland has shown how direct democracy at the federal level can be achieved step by step and thus make a significant contribution to social peace. After all, every Swiss

knows that if he disagrees with a law and wants to prevent it (referendum) or if he wants to amend the constitution (popular initiative), he has the rights to do so.

Swiss direct democracy does not only guarantee its people their people's rights. It would also be a mistake to believe that these people's rights are directed against parliament and government. On the contrary, Switzerland's direct democracy has led to more contact and exchange between the people and politicians and has made it the duty of politicians not to ignore the people.

Initiatives for the introduction of legislative referenda and constitutional initiatives, and even legislative initiatives, have been in existence in Germany for many years.

In 2002, a corresponding proposal was even put to the vote in the German Bundestag and achieved a clear majority, but unfortunately not the necessary majority to amend the constitution. Since then, similar initiatives have been blocked by the parties that have the majority in the Bundestag. However, nothing has changed in the sense and necessity of direct democracy at the federal level. Especially today it could be an essential contribution to pacify Germany and help the country to progress.

cians, reports and commentaries of many media have little to do with their personal experiences. Some will have read books. Regarding the question of the state of law for example the book of the policewoman

Tania Kambouri "Deutschland im Blau-licht. Notruf einer Polizistin" (Germany in the emergency light. A police officer

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What Angela Merkel and Hans-Georg Maassen said literally

Federal Chancellor Dr *Angela Merkel* in a press conference on 29 August 2018:

"We have video footage showing that there was hounding, that there was rioting, that there was hate on the streets, and that has no place under our rule of law,"

Source: www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2018/08/2018-08-29-ge-walt-in-chemnitz.html

President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution *Hans-Georg Maassen* in an interview with "Bild" of 6 September 2018: "I share the scepticism towards media reports on right-wing extremists hunting down people in Chemnitz."

The Office for the Protection of the Constitution had no reliable information that such pursuits had taken place [...]. There is no evidence to suggest that the video of this alleged incident circulating online is authentic [...] According to my cautious assessment, there is good reason to believe that this is deliberate misinformation, possibly to distract the public from the murder in Chemnitz."

Source: <https://www.bild.de/bild-plus/politik/inland/politik-inland/verfassungsschutz-chef-maassen-keine-information-ueber-hetzjagden57111216.jsRedirectFrom=conversionToLogin.bild.html>

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"How to deal with Chemnitz and ..."

continued from page 8

calls for SOS) or the book of the head of the German association of judges, *Jens Gnisa "Das Ende der Gerechtigkeit. Ein Richter schlägt Alarm"* (The end of justice. A judge sounds the alarm), or the recently appeared book by the former policeman *Stefan Schubert "Die Destabilisierung Deutschlands. Der Verlust der inneren und äusseren Sicherheit"* (The destabilisation of Germany. The loss of internal and external security). In important areas, Germany and German politics have moved away from what we have learned about a state of law at school, but also from a liberal democracy. Dealing with this is not so easy. Turning a blind eye to the issues is not a solution. But we should stick to the principles of not to respond to wrongdoings with wrongdoings, to stand up for the state of law, to remain liberal and democratic, to respect the law.

Further erosion of sovereignty ...

It is necessary to think about why politics and media tend to react inappropriately. Are these premature reactions, shots from the hip? Is it due to ideological delusions? Is it consistent ignorance towards facts? Or is it connected with political plans? It will depend; there may also be combinations. We can also read that the events in Chemnitz may serve to prepare for the usage of the Bundeswehr (and hence

Maassen affirms: No evidence of hounding

At a meeting with the Under Secretary of State *Stephan Mayer* (CSU) and other representatives of the Ministry on Saturday, *Maassen* affirmed his position.

Maassen argued that nobody could confirm the authenticity of the video, reports the "Bild am Sonntag". According to him, the Saxon police, the Federal police and his Office for the Protection of the Constitution have no evidence for such houndings.

According to the participants, the head of the German intelligence agency reiterated his doubts that a video published on the internet was proof of

the often claimed thesis that there had been "houndings" in Chemnitz.

Maassen justified his doubts, among other things, with the unclear origin of the video. There was no information about the organisation "Antifa Zeckenbiss" which had published the video with the reference to "manhunt".

Source: <https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/maassen-bliebt-da-bei-kein-beleg-fuer-hetzjagden-in-chemnitz-57146950.bild.html> from 9 September 2018

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

NATO) for missions inside Germany. This would not only lead to a further weakening of federal structures and options but also to a further weakening of national sovereignty.

But this is not the way to pacify Germany.

... instead of the right to one's home (Heimat)

Can the statement that all people, including the Germans, have a right for one's home only be made outside Germany?

Just like the following lines from the feuilleton of a big Swiss daily newspaper of 3 September 2018:

"The East Germans were surprised to learn that the West German elites were in-

deed not as liberal as they pretended to be. They looked into the ugly face of class warfare. Suddenly the critic, the dissident was labelled as the class enemy. If a realistic problem analysis is dismissed with the apodictic statement 'we'll make it', if in face of extensive changes a government is not offering any solutions, severe disputes like the recent ones in Chemnitz will arise. [...] Problems are lying deep and in order to prevent a radicalisation they need to become the object of the democratic discourse. The citizens feel that they are losing what is background, home, identity. They realise that processes are being set in motion and nobody has asked them if this is what they want."

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The global market must not destroy our food security and our rural agriculture

Initiative for Food Sovereignty: substantive arguments

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

On 23 September we will vote on the initiative for Food Sovereignty. It demands the Swiss agriculture policy to be directed towards diverse, small-scale farms and GMO-free agriculture. According to a survey a few weeks ago, some 75% of respondents wanted to vote in favour of the initiative or tended to do so. But the proponents must not rest in view of this welcome response.

Just in time – two weeks before the voting Sunday – the think tank *Avenir Suisse* comes along and claims, agriculture would cost the state and the consumers some 20 billion Swiss francs per annum (Daily press from 8 September 2018). To fully understand this campaign, one has to consider *Avenir Suisse* being the voice of large corporations. Their heads would prefer Switzerland to join the EU sooner rather than later. Those, however, who are in favour of preserving Swiss agriculture and the highest possible degree of food sovereignty, as the majority of the Swiss population does, won't be deterred from their own point of view.

We stick to factual information for voters and thus report on relevant contents and statements from a recent discussion on Radio SRF.¹

The Swiss population wants to preserve a rural, diverse agriculture with small-scale farms. But over the last 20 years, per day three farms have disappeared and six workplaces in agriculture have been lost, according to *Rudi Berli*, organic farmer and member of the initiative committee. The initiative aims at stopping the decline of farms and therefore at more federal protection for agriculture. In order to achieve that, there aren't any substantial law changes necessary, because Switzerland has a good legislative base in agriculture. Primarily the initiators are demanding from the federal government to implement these legal provisions. You will also find more detailed clarifications on the initiatives' demands in the following interview with *Rudi Berli*.

Strengthening Swiss farmers and a healthy sustainable production versus more competition

Rudi Berli: "The Federal Council's policies run in one direction only, namely opening borders and separating ecology and production. On the one hand production is supposed to be ecological and on the other hand it should be in line with greatest possible intensity. We want to eliminate this contradiction by strengthening the produc-

ers position, not with subsidies but rather on the market vis-à-vis our customers. The Federal Council ought to be working out a framework for producers already".

Duri Campell, farmer and member of the opposition committee, does want to keep in line with *Agriculture Policies 14–17*, as laid down by parliament: "The countries around us are producing cheaper and I don't want to promote the cross-border shopping tourism even more. The farmers are beginning to react to agriculture policies 14–17, they sell more directly from the farms, regionality is on the increase. [...] The consumers shall decide for themselves: Do I want a product originating from Switzerland? Or do I want a product that is cheaper and maybe not quite as good?"

Producers press for agreements with major distributors to be negotiated on equal terms

The initiative does not want a state planned economy nor does it want more money from the state, as the opponents are claiming, according to *Rudi Berli*. Much more the federal government has to work out frameworks, as already endorsed in today's regulations, to enable the producers to negotiate agreements on equal terms with the two dominant major distributors (*Migros* and *Coop*): "Then we would not only be receivers of remaining money but could generate decent prices. We also want to still exist in the future and we want to produce sustainably on diverse, family-based farms across the country."

"If we vote for the initiatives, we will have problems with the EU

Duri Campell: "If you only look at the text of the initiative, I should also vote yes. But we know, if we approve the initiatives [also the Fair-Food-Initiative], then we will have problems with the EU. [...] In the current discussion it would be very, very bad, if the farmers fan the fire. [...]".

Has it passed National Councillor *Campell* that negotiations on the institutional framework agreement is virtually no longer existent? The problems we have with the EU are certainly not because of the farmers, who – like a large part of the population – don't want an agriculture agreement with Brussels and there are a number of toads the sovereign doesn't want to swallow either.

"Without border control our agriculture would have disappeared ages ago"

The opponents' claims, the initiative for Food Sovereignty is supposedly violat-

ing the WTO or agreements with the EU and other states, are wrong. The initiative is not demanding anything revolutionary. *Rudi Berli*: "The initiative is demanding a predominantly self-sufficiency, meaning it has to be above 50 per cent, as is the case today. We don't want any further cut-backs on the degree of self-sufficiency. Without border control our agriculture would have disappeared ages ago, because we don't have the same cost environment as the EU does. Otherwise the world market, the globalised competition with its negative impact on humans, animals and environment, will destroy our food security and our rural agriculture."

Global Agricultural Report IAASTD: Farmers from all over the world want local self-sufficiency and border control instead of free trade

Sabine Gorgé: *SRF*: "The initiative is demanding of the federal government to make border controls, demand higher customs duties for conventionally produced foodstuff and protect the domestic products. The federal government should be able to prohibit the import of produce that doesn't meet the requirements of Swiss social and ecological standards. *Rudi Berli*, a kind of "Switzerland first?" *Rudi Berli*: "Exactly. That's what farmers all over the world are demanding. They want to participate in their local market first and supply their own market. This makes sense all over the world." This is in accordance with the findings and demands of the *Global Agricultural Report*.

More controls through this initiative?

Duri Campell: "Already now each Swiss farm is inspected one to four times a year. Just imagine, if the production control would come on top of that and our inspectors would go across the borders. [...] Controls until the cows come home..."

Rudi Berli: No, no, we already have a well-run, intelligent customs system that protects domestic produce, e.g. fruit and vegetables: When domestic production can supply the population, then customs duties go up and when we cannot produce enough, the borders open-up. This is exactly what the Federal Council wants to reduce with the free trade agreements, it says, we ought to become more competitive. This goes at the expense of self-sufficiency."

“No new state control instruments, but implementation of the existing regulations!”

Interview with Rudi Berli, organic farmer, member of the initiative committee for Food Sovereignty, co-director of the Uniterre farmers' union

Current Concerns: Mr Berli, the initiative calls for fair prices for agricultural products (paragraph 5b). How can the Confederation support farmers in negotiating better contracts with Migros and Coop?

Self-help in the private sector needs a state framework

Rudi Berli: The possibilities currently in force are set out in Articles 8 and 9 of the Agriculture Act (AgricA).¹ The purpose of this Act is to facilitate self-help on the market for producers. According to Art. 8 (1), producers may form self-help organisations in order to adapt supply to demand. The Confederation can support such agreements by making them generally binding, such as to date for the *SMP (Association of Swiss Milk Producers)*. This means that non-members are obliged to contribute to the financing of these self-help measures (Art. 9 para. 2).

Does “adjustment of supply” mean milk quotas, for example?

Not quite. The buyers would have to give the individual producers a purchase guarantee for a certain quantity at a certain price. Of course, everyone is free to produce more. But provoking and encouraging overproduction in order to push down prices should not be allowed.

What is the difference to the milk quotas of the past?

Milk quotas were a state-guided purchase guarantee. Those who produced too much were punished (fined). And the quotas were traded, and we were against that. We demand private control, but the framework, the binding declaration of the contracts must be given by the state.

Confederation should support only democratic organisations: one producer – one voice

What else is already law today but not implemented by the Confederation?

According to Art. 9 AgricA, self-help organisations must already be “representative” today – a very important point – i.e. they must have a democratic basis. According to our initiative (paragraph 5a), this must be “farming organisations”, i.e. they may not be active in trade or processing. This is actually already spelled out in the existing law (AgricA Art. 9 para. 1b), but it is not implemented. For example, the *SMP (Association of Swiss Milk Producers)* is in reality not a farming organisation, but

Trade agreements may not be adhesion contracts. Example USA/EU

“According to the decision of the WTO arbitration court, the EU must pay annual fines in the tens of millions to the USA, because the cultivation of GMO plants is not permitted in the EU, and these measures are declared to be competition-distorting. This imposes a massive restriction on sovereignty. Such agreements are not trade agreements, but political adhesion agreements. In the name of “trade”, something is imposed that has nothing to do with trade. Two partners are involved in trade, and if one does not agree with the quality of the product, he can say: No, thank you!

Why should I be obliged to accept such junk goods?

Trade contracts with foreign countries have to be looked at carefully: What exactly is being negotiated? You cannot just call it “free trade”; that is dangerous. You have to be clear about which sectors of the economy are liberalised or deregulated, and under what conditions. Otherwise, there is a deficiency in the community’s democratic decision-making rights.”

Rudi Berli

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

a mixture of various interests and conflicts of interest. Processors, sellers and producers sit on the board of directors and in the management, and most of them are everything at the same time. It doesn’t work that way, they have no interest in setting up quantity control according to demand and thus enabling good added value. The dairy industry is a very important sector, affecting half of the Swiss farms.

We do not want a planned economy, but a democratisation. In our view, a representative organisation must function according to the principle of one producer – one voice, with individual members, not structures with entire associations that lead to conflicts of interest. The Confederation can also determine that it only supports organisations in which democratic conditions prevail.

Not a contradiction to international treaties, but maneuvering room upwards for the Federal Council

Paragraph 7 of the initiative makes the following demand: “In order to maintain and promote domestic production, the Confederation shall levy customs duties on the import of agricultural products and foodstuffs as well as regulate their import volume.” Isn’t this contrary to the regulations of the WTO or others of Switzerland’s international treaties?

No, not at all; this is also already mandatory today. The Federal Council sets threshold prices (AgricA Art. 20 para. 1). The threshold price is the target import price, which is made up of the world market price, the customs surcharge and other levies (Art. 20 Para. 2). This is a political instrument. The threshold price for animal feed, for ex-

ample, has been set so low by the Federal Council that in-house production is no longer worthwhile, with only a 10% Swissness surcharge on world market prices. This could be changed quite easily. It is like determining Swiss wages on the basis of average world wages plus a 10 per cent surcharge.

So Switzerland still has a relatively large degree of freedom today, despite the WTO and other agreements?

There are duty-free quotas for cereals in accordance with WTO.² The rest goes over the threshold prices.

Quality controls at the border should be intensified

In paragraph 8, the initiative calls for an increase in customs duties or even an import ban for products that do not comply with Swiss standards. Are the opponents of the initiative not partly right about the fact that it would be quite complicated to check the quality of products at the border?

A great deal is already being checked today, not just the quantities. Quality must also be declared, whether it is organic wheat from Argentina or soya from Brazil ...

Are products declared as organic also examined as to whether they really are organic?

Yes, in relation to GMOs (genetically modified organisms). A lot of GMO-free feedstuff is imported. Agroscope (Swiss Federal Centre for Agriculture, Food and the Environment) carries out spot checks on soya.

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European Union and Europe are two different things, EFTA is forward-looking

by Dr phil Winfried Pogorzelski

In Europe, a linguistic and thus political bad habit has developed: Everywhere journalists, politicians, professionals, most of the citizens themselves don't differentiate between "Europe" and the "European Union (EU)". However, every student correctly learns: Europe is a continent consisting of 46 sovereign states whose territories, whole or partly, belong to the continent of Europe. The EU is a political, economic alliance of just 28, soon only 27 European states. Its institutions and officials have far-reaching powers (economic, financial and military policy) which severely restrict the sovereignty of the member states. Only the members of the European Parliament, which does not even have the right to initiate legislation, are directly elected every five years by the citizens of the Union.

EU-critical statements are increasingly being dismissed as "anti-European". For example, SP National Councillor *Cédric Wermuth*, states in the "Aargauer Zeitung" of 27 August: "The development [which means more liberalism, nationalism, refugee hostility and the dismantling of the public service, W.P.] is a drama for pro-

Europeans. "But what exactly should a pro-European be? A Social Democrat of the type of Mr Wermuth or SP Switzerland? Anyone who does not share these views is simply "against Europe"? Certainly not! What kind of Europe do "Europeans" really want – or better – should they want?

A Europe of nation states, which are severely restricted in their sovereignty, of total free trade, of complete freedom of movement, of involvement in the NATO military alliance, which is dominated by the USA – apparently also not! Not even all EU states, their parties and their citizens agree on the current fundamental issues: the current developments in Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Austria and Italy emphatically underline this.

More differentiation is required: The careless incorporation of the term Europe by politicians of various stripes is factually wrong and is propagandistic. It obviously serves its own interests. This type of politicisation leaves behind what has made Europe a model of success and a worldwide model: the promotion of national sovereignty, democracy, the rule of law, pluralism, liberalism and peace.

An alternative that has worked well for decades, but of which hardly anyone speaks today, is the EFTA (founded in 1960). Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland have joined forces to form a free trade organisation, thus proving that there are other ways of doing things than the uncritical supporters of the undemocratic bureaucracy moloch, the EU, are constantly trying to make believe: These states are and will remain sovereign and democratic, Switzerland even direct democratic. They use free trade among themselves for their economic progress in order to secure prosperity and independence on behalf of their citizens.

In this way, they retain the individual freedom to conclude trade agreements or to give them up again. In this way they preserve and cultivate Europe's achievements, which cannot be overestimated. This is always better than just being a small part of a great power (with very limited opportunities for participation), for better or for worse, to be involved in the risky global poker of power, a great power that is increasingly unstable in itself and continues to be undemocratic and centralist. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"The global market must not destroy ..."
continued from page 10

Does the initiative lead to more expensive products for the consumers?

Some opponents fear higher prices in the shops, if the farmers receive better prices for their produce. The initiators, however, don't want the farmers being paid more by the consumers, but by the large distributors. Of course, Duri Campell is right when he says: "Good products do cost more, that's the way it should be. And we are very thankful to those who are consuming them. But I also understand families, who cannot afford that. We must give the consumers the choice to buy what's fine with them and what they can afford." Because also in Switzerland a number of pensioners or families have to economise with their money.

Rudi Berli holds against that: "It's not about higher prices [for the consumers], but about a larger proportion for the farmers. When in earlier days milk was sold in the shop for 1.50 Swiss francs, the farmer received close to 1 Swiss franc. Today he receives a mere 60 rappen [0.6 Swiss francs]. If you double the price for bread wheat, as we are wishing for, then we

would have a decent income and could keep-on running our farms."

Landscape conservation versus rural production?

With *Agriculture Policy 14–17*, says Duri Campell, the prices will adapt more or less to world market prices. It's true that farmers cannot compete, except with a few niche products. For this reason they are receiving from the federal government – according to Federal Councillor *Johann Schneider-Ammann* only provisionally – direct payments for species protection and landscape conservation. "What *Uniterre* wants to do", Duri Campell maintains, would be one step back to product subsidies. Maybe this would be fairer. But the overall services of agriculture like biodiversity and the agricultural cultivation would be lost again."

The initiators, however, are sure that a great majority of Swiss farmers want to be producers. Rudi Berli: "No one is speaking of product subsidies. [...] In direct marketing I'm producing cost-efficient for my customers and I get a decent income. The Swiss milk producers, however, don't even get enough from the bulk buyers these days to cover their costs, not to mention any earnings. We must put an end to that."

"We turn the structural change around"

To Duri Campell's claim, that with the change of direction away from *Agriculture Policies 14–17* the initiators were actually promoting the structural change they wanted to avoid, Rudi Berli replies: "We do promote structural change but in a different direction, we turn it around. We want to bring more people to the countryside, which is another existing legal obligation, meaning to de-centralise settlements in the country and to encourage sustainability. Therefore we need more people and more hearts in agriculture. We can't keep on asking for increasingly ecological products, without simultaneous economic sustainability, fair prices ... There is no ecology at no cost. But it certainly will not cost the consumer more, because if regional production is organised demand-oriented, it becomes less expensive. That's what we are proving every day on our farms." •

¹ Radio SRF, "Tagesgespräch (Daily talk)" from 3 September 2018, with Rudi Berli from the initiative committee for Food Sovereignty, co-director of the farmers union *Uniterre* and organic farmer and Duri Campell, BDP National Councillor (GR), farmer and member of an opposition rural committee. Moderation: Sabine Gorgé

Jean Ziegler: Paths of hope

by Dr Peter Küpfer



Published in 2017, the book by the sociologist from Geneva is very personal, full of commitment and in attack mode as usual, and despite alarming facts and figures cautiously optimistic.

In his latest publication *Ziegler*, Swiss politologist and activist, summons the achievements of a whole life committed to human rights and dignity. Fittingly, the subtitle of his book is: “Wins and losses in joint battles”. In addition to many disturbing facts and figures Ziegler refers mainly to his own experiences. His journeys, interviews and insights which he gained while travelling the world as UN special envoy for the right to food (from 2000 to 2008), later as a member and acting vice president of the United Nations human rights council advisory committee (since 2008) are at the centre of the book. The courageous adversary of modern globalised capitalism reflects and judges his interactions and experiences in these two areas of his activities in a critical, sometimes self-critical manner, always pointing to the social-historical and political developments resulting in what the authors calls in his clear, often deliberately emotional language: a disgrace - gross injustices which characterise our economic life worldwide. In his acknowledgements in the foreword and epilogue, the author joins the long list of committed intellectuals and political activists. Many of them paid the ultimate price for their lifelong struggle for human rights and dignity. This includes *Sergio Vieira de Mello* from Argentina. The former High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations had been a friend of the author. In 2003 he was assassinated by a Jihadist bombing squad while visiting Baghdad together with 21 of his collaborators. Prior

to the murder Vieira de Mello had worked hard to improve the situation of the civilians in conquered Iraq, at a time when relations with the United States were at their lowest point. When he tried to help both sides just like *Henry Dunant* at the battlefield of Solferino he may well have spelled his own death sentence.

Disturbing figures

Ziegler argues that the Third World War has already been going on for some time and has claimed many lives, more than the toll of human lives of both the First and Second World Wars combined. Frontlines today were no longer running between countries and political alliances alone, Ziegler claims. In their essence wars waged today were economic wars of the rich against the poor. Oligarchs running perfect exploitation machines unrestrained by any ethical norms form a worldwide alliance, maximising their profits in a globalised market economy without caring about the victims of their raids. Whole empires and states have become dependent on oligarchs mainly by debts just like the Holy Roman Empire of Germany during the days of the Fugger dynasty. On the other side Ziegler sees the peoples mainly of poor countries all over the world, delivered to the oligarchs without protection. Modern predatory capitalism claims many victims - due to malnourishment, lack of water and medical care one child dies every seven seconds worldwide, Ziegler blames this on the consequences of unlimited economic warfare waged by an unscrupulous elite against the rest of humanity. A handful of super-rich people who would easily fit into one bus control more than half of all financial resources world-wide today. The remaining eight and a half billion people share the other half, which means that many of them struggle to make ends meet for themselves and their families for just another



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day. Worldwide 85 ultra-rich people own more than the 3,5 billion poorest inhabitants of our planet, Ziegler writes (p. 301).

The establishment of the UN

All this contradicts the principles and goals of the United Nations completely, as the author repeatedly points out. He traces their roots back to the most fateful year of the Second World War, 1941, when *Winston Churchill* and US President *Roosevelt* sketched their core sentences on board the American battleship *Augusta* off the stormy coast of Newfoundland. Those would later become the essence of the preamble to the *United Nations Charter* and its main organisations. Back then four principles had already been clearly defined which constitute the primary goals of the UN to this day. Considering the terror and meaninglessness of the suffering during the Second World War, as it is laid down in the UN Charter, the member states the number of which has grown to 193 in the meantime, vowed to combine their efforts to accomplish that in future

- the scourge of war, which twice in the first half of the 20th century had brought untold sorrow to mankind, would be outlawed for ever
- faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, would be reaffirmed all over the world regardless of class, nationality, race, beliefs, political or economic standing
- conditions would be established under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other

“No new state control ...”

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Import bans are also no invention of the initiators

Yes, we voted on that: No use of genetic engineering in agriculture. So GMO feedstuff will not be allowed in?

No. Imported animal feed must be GMO-free, apart from minor contamination. But finished products such as mozzarella from Italy may contain GMOs.

So the initiative's demand in paragraph 8 – the Confederation can ban the im-

port of agricultural products if they do not meet Swiss standards – is nothing new either.

Thank you very much, Mr Berli, for your explanations. •

(Interview: Marianne Wüthrich)

¹ Bundesgesetz über die Landwirtschaft (Landwirtschaftsgesetz, LwG) – Federal Act on Agriculture (Agriculture Act, LwG) of 29 April 1998 (as at 1 January 2018)

² LwG Art. 21 on tariff quotas points to the Customs Tariff Act of 9 October 1986.

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sources of international law (such as the right to self-determination of all nations) can be maintained social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom would be promoted world-wide

... and their impotence

Any observer of the saeculum, who reads newspapers and follows the news in radio or television will basically agree with Ziegler's damning judgement of the factual influence and the noble goals of the United Nations: their weakness is undeniable. The author confesses that he himself had overestimated the capabilities of the United Nations before he had started to work for them as a high official. Today the principle "might makes right" is prevalent worldwide, as the author emphasises, rather than the principles of peaceful conflict resolution. The author blames mainly the fact that the UN, especially due to the unchecked power of the Security Council, has never been anything else but a tool in the hands of the countries that won the Second World War. Their right to veto may thwart any peace keeping effort or condemnation of warmongers even if that would be perfectly in line with the principles of the UN, just like this right had been abused by both United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War to block each other's initiatives, thereby causing unspeakable suffering of the peoples living in their respective spheres of influence as they had been defined on Crimea in 1945. The author lists all armed interventions carried out by the two super powers over many decades, both ignoring the principles of the UN. On the Communist side these were most of all the Korean war, the Vietnam war, the interventions in Afghanistan, Chechnya and the support of various independence movements in Africa and South America. On the Western side these were countless armed interventions of the USA in their "backyard" of the Middle and South American "Banana republics" (a derogatory term which nevertheless has its justification), where any regime supporting the interests of all people rather than just those of US corporations would be "changed" and replaced by US backed authoritarian puppets. The aims of all those interventions were always the same: protecting or regaining privileges of American big corporations who ran factories there in connection with highly corrupt local financial elites (Chile under *Allende* is viewed as a prime example here by Ziegler).

Against the imperial idea

Ziegler mobilises facts, figures and developments to back up the main thesis of

his book: Thinking in categories of global dominance, creating huge power centres which stand against peaceful conflict resolution, the conviction that only empires can secure calm and quiet relations between people on earth, best of all one world empire – this prevails as the leading dogma in many political and even philosophical "think tanks" to this day. Main witness for this way of thinking is, according to Ziegler, *Henry Kissinger*, former political adviser to the US administration of *Richard Nixon*, later secretary of state. Kissinger viewed and propagated the USA as the ascending power on its way to become the ultimate global empire. Where Spain, the Netherlands, later Great Britain used to rule the world, with gold they had robbed and used to amass horribly effective war machines, the USA as the main profiteers of the Second World War and only remaining super power emerging from the Cold War had developed into the new empire with aspirations to world dominance. But the real empire, as the author keeps reiterating, are not only the political-military power blocks but the internationally connected financial empire which acts cynically and ruthlessly and forces its will on all states in an even more unforgiving way than previous power structures. Its agencies, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, hedge-fund consortia and big stock exchanges as well as the legions of governments worldwide who were turned into their economically dependent puppets and corruption-prone elites all function according to its laws. Many examples from recent history illustrate this thesis in Ziegler's book. Especially during his mission in Palestine, where he was never afraid to point out systematic negligence, boycott, active intimidation and suppression of the Palestinian population by the Israeli government he witnessed first-hand what he experienced as a range of repression measures (including targeted assassination) against those who insist on the ideas of the UN Charter and the respect of its human rights protection for all people on earth. Ziegler illustrates the devastating effects of what he refers to as the worldwide economic war of the rich against the poor with more facts and figures from countries in Africa and Latin America. All over the world people are systematically murdered or forced to flee, sometimes en masse, because big international corporations want to own their land in-order to expand their latifundia or mining facilities. So far about the "struggles lost", which Ziegler mentions in the subtitle of his new book.

What is the alternative?

Where are the counter-forces? Ziegler sees two main sources of hope against the grim

outlook, although the author is at times almost driven into despair himself. One is a strengthened and thoroughly reformed UN who takes its own principles seriously at last and has the necessary means to enforce those if need be. The UN must no longer be a tool in the hands of the victorious World-War II powers but need to evolve into a real institution with real powers which serves all member states on an equal footing, who strive for peace on this earth. Ziegler therefore places his hopes not only on corresponding reforms in the functioning of the Security Council (abolition of the de facto and de jure dictates of the victorious powers of the Second World War in the Security Council, increase in the number of members and genuine democratic decision-making in the Security Council according to the majority principle), but also on the fact that the UN must have a right and even a duty to ultimately armed humanitarian action "as the bearer of the universal common good" vis-à-vis governments that systematically violate the human rights of their citizens (p. 293). Kofi Annan entrusted his successor with these main proposals to reform the UN. Now everything depends on "... whether the international civil society may exert enough pressure in-order to force the states to adopt this reform as scheduled by Kofi Annan." (p. 293). There is a second beacon of hope for Ziegler, one which he trusts even more for the future: the emerging "planetary civil society", which demands respect for the human rights all over the world with ever increasing determination: "Countless social movements, trade unions, non-government organisations and individual activists" (p. 304) were demanding respect for the human rights worldwide today. "The new planetary civil society doesn't follow any party line or central committee. [...] The ruling worldorder is based on competition, dominance and exploitation. The driving force of civil society is the awareness of identity between all people. Their practice is shaped by solidarity, reciprocity and complementarity between individuals", Ziegler writes (p. 304). Ziegler refers to Kant and his basic axiom that all people worldwide continue to share the same capacity of reason to this day. This means that all of them long for peace and actually need to do so because otherwise they act against their own interests. This axiom requires an end to thinking in the categories of empire. "Let us remember Immanuel Kant. Any act of inhumanity against a fellow human being destroys humanity within me." (p. 304) Ziegler counts on the ability of the people to create more dignified conditions for themselves. He sees signs of hope in all places where people point out to their governments and self-appointed elites with determination, that people are not there to serve states and

“Political ideas come and go, the children stay.”

Visit to a Russian special school

by Maria Koch

In *Current Concerns* No. 20 we covered a visit to a large children's home in Peterhof, near St. Petersburg. We, a group of pedagogues, remedial teachers and social education workers, were also allowed to visit a public special school in Peterhof. We wanted to learn something about how disabled children are supported and educated in the Russian school system.

Coffee and cake, fruit and pastries – we had a warm welcome in the headmistress's office in the morning. Mrs. Viktoria Gnezdilova and some of her colleagues took the time to inform us in detail about the school and to answer our questions. We learnt that this school is attended by 500 students. We were amazed: such a large school with children with learning disabilities and behavioural problems - how can this be possible?

In Switzerland and Germany, we are not used to special schools with so many pupils. Some of the children come from Children's Home No. 1¹, but most of them live at home – at addresses throughout the entire city - and come to school by school bus or by public transport. The pupils are taught in 32 classes. These are classified according to mild, moderate and severe disability.

Compulsory examinations and preparation for life

In terms of content, students learn the same subject matter as students from mainstream schools up to 5th/6th grade. In the subjects of mathematics and Russian, they even take part in the obligatory examinations which are taken by all regular Russian students. They are only granted half an hour of additional time. After school they are prepared for their

work. As we already knew from our visit to the home, the companies are prepared and even obliged to train special school pupils, and here too, we are told that they do it with pleasure because they have had good experiences with these pupils. The pupils usually do a simplified apprenticeship (certificate apprenticeship) in craft professions such as baker, caretaker, butcher, car mechanic, hairdresser, or they become salesmen and logisticians. This spectrum corresponds more or less to the one in which also our weaker pupils learn a profession, be it that they have been integrated into the mainstream school or that they have attended a small class or special school. In any case, great importance is attached to finding a follow-up solution for all pupils, so that they will learn to master their lives independently.

We were guided through the entire large school building. Many class doors were open to us, and we were able to observe class sequences, inspect sports lessons and see pupils at their manual training. The classrooms were equipped in a light, friendly and functional way, even including the latest technology such as computers and beamers. On the walls were student works and illustrative material for the curriculum. We attended mathematics and Russian lessons at various school levels. Always with us was Elena, our translator, who also translated the course of the lessons and the dialogues between teachers and pupils, so that we understood very clearly what was covered in terms of content. Everywhere the lessons took place calmly, in a good mood. The students were lively and of a great variety, like everywhere else, but they did pay attention.

Methodically-didactically reflected teaching

We were struck by the well-reflected didactic-methodical structure of how the subject material was taught. From the easier to the more difficult, from the simple to the more complex, from the descriptive to the more abstract, everything was well adapted to the pupils' abilities. Classroom instruction took place in all the lessons we watched, the pupils were learning together, the teachers – by the way all chic and elegantly dressed – were holding the classes, in close and caring relation to the pupils, calmly and consistently, always focused on the subject. We saw lessons with questions and development; the pupils tried to find solutions to a problem in guided sequences. In the practice phase they partly worked together in groups. The remedial educators among us were struck by the

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empires but the other way around. In other words - that institutions, states and governments ought to serve the people who trust in them, because they have the duty and responsibility to aim for their welfare. And this is true on local, regional, national and global levels. Ziegler counts on this beacon of hope and in principle one should agree. What else could we count on?

Ziegler continues to be an outspoken Marxist to this day. He endorses Marxism with fervour, but also with pride. He sees a continuous line running from the beginning of the UN via the Cold War, Cuba, the Vietnam war, the illegal interventions of the USA in their middle and Latin American backyards, the US civil rights movement, the youth revolt of the 1960ies, Sartre, the independence struggles of former colonies, the upheavals in Hungary and Czechoslovakia up to the collapse of the Communist empire and the new world order of global capitalism. His main enemy remains the “classical” one, regardless of his various disguises: It is the general Marxist Popanz of “capitalism”. Although Ziegler characterises the old Soviet Union as an empire in his book and does criticise their imperial strategies and subsequent mistakes and crimes now and then, there is a lack of critical analysis of the old Soviet elites and their lines of thought and what this means for the still Marxist author. While he is hoping for reason and an emerging “planetary civil society”, Ziegler's world view is still full of adversaries and enemies. Terms such

as “our enemies”, “our foes” are legion in his book. It is doubtful whether people longing for peace worldwide will ever succeed within this framework of categories. Certainly, he who wants to kill me cannot be my friend. I will mobilise my forces of defence against him. From the laws of logic follows that aggressive antagonism will beget more struggles (class struggles presented itself often as war, and not as pure self-defence in either intention, appearance or weaponry), the struggles create more suppression and from this anything but a planetary civil society will develop. The unspectacular path of Switzerland, to assist with active mediation in conflicts (Good services of Switzerland in international conflicts), may serve as an example for entities beyond Switzerland, including the United Nations. It is questionable whether their current reformation into an armed world police force for “humanitarian missions”, modelled after the wars in the former Yugoslavia or in Iraq, will succeed to bring peace in Syria. In situations of imminent or already virulent wars it is crucial to support whatever serves peace. This is how Henry Dunant started when he delivered first aid to soldiers of both sides of the frontline at the battlefield of Solferino. From this the Red Cross developed.

Ziegler, Jean: Der schmale Grat der Hoffnung. Meine gewonnenen und verlorenen Kämpfe und die, die wir gemeinsam gewinnen werden. München (C. Bertelsmann Verlag) 2017, 320 p., ISBN 978-3-570-10328-9 (Paths of Hope. Wins and losses in joint battles). Title of the original French edition: Chemins d'espérance: Ces combats gagnés, parfois perdus mais que nous remporterons ensemble. Paris (Ed. du Seuil) 2016

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relatively high level of this material for pupils with learning disabilities. For example, the second graders already spoke in mathematically correct technical language, using terms such as addition and subtraction, multiplication and division. On the wall there is a schematic representation of these operations with the corresponding technical terms. In class, the pupils work with the help of this representation.

Of course, we are not able to judge the status of the pupils of this school or even of the special schools “in Russia” after this visit, but this glimpse suggests that the level in mathematics and language (Russian) is indeed remarkable.

Interaction with each other and in the school building

As I have already mentioned, the pupils were attentive and kept on task. We did not notice any disciplinary problems in the classes apart from the fact that one or another boy talked to his neighbour or looked out of the window. And what did it look like in the corridors of a special school with 500 pupils? During the breaks the pupils moved around the house, individually or in groups, chatting, laughing, curious about the visitors. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. Some pupils wore school uniforms, completely or partly; others were dressed according to personal taste. We learnt that school uniforms are the norm in the first class, and voluntary from the second year on. Some pupils go on wearing them, some wear them only partly, others not at all. The school building is small for the many pupils; every room is made use of. Nevertheless, we neither noticed any scuffles, nor graffiti or vandalism, as we unfortunately often meet them in German comprehensive or hotspot schools.

From school life to world history

One room in the school building is dedicated only to history. The responsible teacher showed us the room and explained his concept of introducing pupils to history: Events concerning the development of the school and school life are presented on display boards and are related to events describing the history of the city, the region and the country. In this way, the children and young people are introduced to the history of their home, their region and their country. They feel attachment to their homes an insight into historical contexts and developments, from their personal surroundings to great history, and they take pride in achievements.

More pupils with special needs

We were generously served a sumptuous and delicious lunch in one of the class-



(picture mk)

rooms. Between soup and main course arose interesting and sometimes surprising conversations. We learnt that the number of pupils with special needs is increasing. When asked for the reason, Mrs. Gnezdilova listed some developments surprisingly similar to those in our countries:

More prematurely born children survive due to better medical possibilities. This is also the case with us. Babies born too early often suffer from a mental impairment or abnormal development.

According to the headmistress, there are more and more problems in the families, also because parents are less attentive. In addition, the tradition of the school has been interrupted: In the past there was more time to cover the ground of one matter thoroughly; today only parts of an issue are dealt with, then the class moves on to the next problem. This leads to increasing and more complicated learning difficulties. The causes of increasing learning difficulties generated in families and in school also resemble developments in our countries. It would be worth going into this matter more closely - a reason for a follow-up visit that we are already looking forward to.

More boys than girls

Moreover, we learnt that also in Russia more boys than girls attend a special school. This has also been blatantly visible in our country for years. In another context, we learnt that in Russia, like in Germany, girls generally learn better and achieve higher school-leaving qualifications than boys. Why so? And are the reasons in both countries comparable? And what can be done to promote boys more? Obviously, these questions are open and invite discussion.

As we walked through the school, we noticed that we hardly met any male teachers. The headmistress confirmed our impression: Even in Russia there are more female than male teachers. She also believes that more men in school would be

good for the pupils. We are familiar with this discussion, too.

We reached the inevitable question of inclusion while eating our dessert. We learnt that this issue is also intensely discussed in Russia. Mrs. Gnezdilova was of the opinion that it is problematic if a child attends a school where it is not able to follow. She said that inclusion had been tried in Moscow, and that the attempt had failed, that it had been abandoned. “Political ideas come and go, the children stay,” the headmistress concluded pragmatically.

We hope that she is right. A few months later we heard that inclusion is now being introduced compulsory in the Vladimir region. This question, too, calls on us to keep up the discussion.

Grounding in one’s own culture

After dinner we were invited to enjoy a play performed especially for us. It was an old Russian fairy tale with folk costumes and corresponding music. As visitors from Switzerland and Germany we realised, like in the children’s home before, that children and young people are introduced to life by fostering folklore and the culture of their homeland naturally and with pride. This is generally lacking in our countries, in Germany even more than in Switzerland. Music from the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere is preferred, or multicultural festivals are organised. There is nothing to be said against getting to know other cultures, but should adolescents not be rooted in their own culture first in order to explore the world from there? Another question worth being raised.

It was an intensive day, we were allowed interesting insights, we still have many questions. We are grateful for the great hospitality and openness that was shown to us and we hope very much for a continuation next spring.

¹ see CC No. 20, pp.6