

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

The armed neutrality has preserved peace for Switzerland

by Thomas Kaiser

How to proceed after the Gripen vote? This is a question that all citizens in our country must face, even those who – despite all contradictions – believe in Europe's eternal peace. They regard Switzerland as embedded in a Europe of friends and therefore have the impression Switzerland could safely do without an operational air force.

It remains undisputed that peace is something we must constantly strive for. No later than after the horrors of the First World War, has war lost its aura of fame and glory, sweet death for one's homeland, noble manliness and camaraderie, and what else the euphemistic terms for the terrible slaughtering and miserable dying on the battlefields and beyond were called. Since then generations of men and women have seriously set their wits to work, how peace could be secured. International organizations such as the *League of Nations* and the *UN* were guided by the idea to resolve conflicts at the negotiating table and to ban war from the minds of the people – unfortunately only with more or less success. General disarmament negotiations as they are held annually at the level of the United Nations testify the will of

Neutrality, militia army and conscription are deeply rooted in the Swiss population

Findings of the new security study of ETH Zurich

Neutrality: The abolition of Swiss neutrality is out of the question. The principle and functions of neutrality are significantly stronger supported by the population this year. In addition, critical attitudes towards neutrality, as well as doubts in the credibility to succeed in armed neutrality are significantly less shared by the Swiss population compared to 2013.

Necessity of the army: the Swiss population's attitude towards the army is clearly more positive this year compared to 2013. The Swiss Army's necessity is significantly higher supported in the course of the year. The view that the army is a central institution is wide-

spread when compared annually in the long-term.

Militia army and conscription: Currently, the militia army mostly enjoys preference over a professional army by the population and only a minority is pledging the abolition of compulsory military service.

Source: *Sicherheit 2014*

Aussen-, Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitische Meinungsbildung im Trend (Opinion trends on foreign-, security- and defense-policy)

Ed.: Tibor Szvircsev Tresch and Andreas Wenger, Center for Security Studies, ETH-Zurich and Military Academy at ETH Zurich, 2014

the peoples to achieve peace and to live together without war. But the opinions how the high good of peace can be preserved and secured still diverge widely.

The great powers, in particular the United States, see the mechanism of peace-

keeping in the dominance of the stronger over the weaker. Who refuses to submit or to conform feels the iron fist under certain circumstances. There are many sad exam-

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Neutrality and sovereignty are of utmost importance “NATO is no option”

Interview with National Councillor Jakob Büchler, member of the security-political commission



Jakob Büchler
(picture thk)

Current Concerns: After the refusal of the Gripen how can we guarantee our security independently?

Jakob Büchler: The first thing what must definitively be fixed now is the army's budget. The 5 billions already

approved by the parliament for the *Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports (VBS)* must be available also in the future. There we must clearly defy the whole Federal Council and say: 5 bil-

ions must be available for the army. Now the money must not be cut because of the No to the *Gripen-Fund law*, this would be quite a wrong signal also for the army. We have not won the vote for different reasons, but what is quite clear, the 5 billions must be available to the army further on.

By the vote concerning the militia army it has become evident that two thirds of the population stand clearly behind the army. This was such a clear statement, and all the more it surprises that, nevertheless, the Gripen was rejected as an important component of the army.

This has different reasons. On the one hand the right of centre political groups have discussed to and fro for too long in parliament, whether the *Gripen* is the right aircraft or

one should rather buy another one. People have followed the debate, and this has certainly left an uncertainty. I think of those parliamentarians who were first against the Gripen and campaigned for it afterwards – this leaves many question marks with the population. Fact is that the acquisition of a new aircraft is always emotional. This became obvious with the *Mirage*, but also with the *F/A-18*. Neither was the argument that we have still another 32 *F/A-18*, not useful for the Gripen vote. Here, I think of the Canton of S.t Gallen which collected only 52 yes or of the Canton of Berne which has a big portion of rural population and laid a No in the ballot box. It was even more clear in West Switzerland. This

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ples in the recent past to show this fact. Equivalence in the dealing among states as it is demanded by the United Nations is still far away. However, failing to resolve conflicts peacefully always means a setback in the basic efforts to preserve peace.

No war for more than 150 years

For more than 150 years Switzerland succeeded to refrain from any armed conflict even if it meant greatest deprivations. This could and should be a model for other countries. Are the Swiss Confederates by nature a more peace-loving people compared to others and therefore succeeded in staying away from armed conflicts until today? No, says the historian. The Confederates were good fighters and won many battles as for example the battle of Morgarten in 1315 against the Habsburgs, the battle of Grandson against the Burgundians in 1476, or the battle of Schwaderloh 1499 in the Swabian War. Swiss mercenaries in the service of foreign powers spread fear and terror. Despite military

successes and also failures we must acknowledge admiringly that our Swiss ancestors – and this distinguishes them from other warring powers of the time – have drawn the right conclusions from the wars and the resulting human misery. Since the international recognition of their neutrality in 1815 Switzerland did not participate in any war outside the country. Even military attacks from the outside could be prevented until today.

Switzerland – a model of peace

What secured Switzerland's peace? Was it the assumption that a larger neighboring country would come to help Switzerland in case it was attacked? Was it the commitment to peace that convinced other countries to spare Switzerland and show mercy? A realist is aware that such an attitude does not impress any other state and that both considerations are not realistic. Switzerland has incurred respect in the concert of nations due to its defensibility and its consistent neutrality and peace policy. Nothing else has earned Switzerland this respect by the other nations. If we want to preserve

country as a neutral, sovereign and independent one, we must be capable of defending ourselves, everything else would be pure fantasy. In the country itself we need to close the ranks from the left to the right, to have a clear stance as to never allow a dependence on the NATO war alliance, as clearly formulated by Member of Parliament *Jakob Büchler*. Self-defense is the only independent and sovereign way. Everything else is beneath our state's dignity.

Last week the "Ständerat" (Council of States) approved a 771 million budget to procure new equipment thereby showing awareness of the responsibility that our army has for the country and its citizens.

Modern wars are no longer decided on the battlefield alone, but they especially affect the civilian population which is at the marauding soldiers' mercy without protection. In the Iraq war of 2003, prolonging its bloody actuality until our days, more than 90% of the victims were civilians. These are the realities. Whoever closes his eyes for whatever reason, will must take the responsibility for his inactivity. •

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has contributed to the fact that there was no Yes. After the clear Yes to the conscription I did assume in the following that there would also be a Yes for the Gripen. Unfortunately, this did not come true.

Where do you see an urgent need for action now for the army, after we do not have the aircraft? What could fill the gap?

With respect to the air force we must accept quite clearly the popular vote. However, the question of renewal of the air force comes up again to us, now one only pushes the boulder ahead which stand before us again in 10 years at the latest. Then, however, it is about the whole innovation of the air force. This will be a much bigger lump then. At the moment we must concentrate on a sensible advancement of the army. We must be able to equip the army in such a way that it is fit. In addition we must tackle the advancement of the army in such a way that the whole is also plausible to the population.

What are you thinking of in particular?

One aspect is, for example, the duration of the military refresher courses (WK). A lot of troop commanders question the reduction to 14 days, as this is also advocated by the Chief of the Army. Two weeks are just not enough time, the training suffers from it. If one has to deploy with heavy equipment this takes a lot of time until this material is fetched and transported to the

location of the WKs. After the course everything has to be returned again, cleaned and handed over properly. This takes a lot of time which is then lost for direct training. Of course commanders also say that it is possible, for example, with the air defence, but if heavy equipment is used, there is simply not enough time. At the moment one speaks about a pilot phase, in which one wants to test the 14-day WKs. I am curious about the result.

You have addressed the budget question. What acquisition requirement does our army have?

What we must absolutely avoid, are the not utilized credits, that is that every year the VBS can return money to the *Federal Department of Finance* which was actually approved. Of course the opponents of the army take it always immediately up and say that the army does not at all need that much, so one could also cut the budget. This leads again to discussions in parliament a procedure that is costly and joyless. We should avoid this in future. This must be considered quite clearly by the VBS. This year it will not be possible to use all the money sensibly. It can also not be simply a matter of spending money, but in future we should use the money for sensible acquisitions.

What do we most urgently need, so that the army can fulfil its constitutional mandate?

We need transport vehicles, we must strengthen our air defence. This has been

on the list for a long time. We must urgently carry out a renewal here. Neither have we renovated all real estate, as we should have long ago. There are different tasks and acquisitions which we would have to push forward, so that the financial means which are available can be also used sensibly. The acquisition of new vehicles is a costly process and takes its time, but we must tackle this, so that we have enough vehicles at our disposal in all situations.

Nevertheless, the independence of Switzerland and the possibility to defend the neutrality must also be an argument. Should one not have to introduce this aspect in the discussion more decisively?

This is quite clear: The neutrality is established in our constitution and of enormous importance. I also think, that Swiss people see this as well. The neutrality is of utmost importance. What I notice, nevertheless, is that a large part of the people sees or judges the dangers differently. I have tried over and over again to explain that we need the air-planes for crisis periods, for extraordinary situations, in a disturbed situation, not in nice weather. For this our 32 F/A-18 are scarcely sufficient. Also one said over and over again, the Cyberwar is a bigger danger, there we can use no airplanes. This is right of course, but in this field a lot has been done. With the future strategy, the advancement of the army which will not be so easy, one must openly demonstrate to the people where we want to go with the

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army and on which way we would like to walk. It is still most encouraging that the general conscription is non-controversial.

National Councillor Allemann said after the vote that Switzerland might position itself under the shield of NATO in case of a bigger crisis. Can this be an option for our country?

No, by no means. To lie down with NATO in the same bed, is not possible at all. It is impossible simply for neutrality reasons. It is true that we have international-law contracts, but this concerns only the aerial-police duties and is valid only in peacetime. A NATO contract for crisis periods is absolutely impossible. This is completely excluded. Apart from the fact there is no help without counter-performance. We cannot say, NATO help, and then it comes. No, for that we would have to pay a lot more than our own aircraft would cost. NATO is no army, NATO is a military alliance and every member introduces itself with its arsenal. I have been in Lithuania. Three Baltic states have no army. They have NATO and had to buy themselves in. Nevertheless, this is inconceivable in Switzerland. For besides the budget for the VBS we would still have to buy ourselves in for crisis periods, this is absolutely absurd. NATO – no, this is no option, I do not give a thought to this.

Many thanks for this interview, Mr Buehler.

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)

Neutrality is a characteristic feature of the Swiss Confederation

by Wolfgang von Wartburg

Swiss neutrality is neither imposed from the outside nor a mere means to self-assertion. It is an expression, a characteristic feature of the Confederation itself. The primary task of the state is to handle justice and peace. Anything beyond that is problematic. If this principle is also turned outward, then this must result in renunciation of power politics and thus in renunciation of alliances with a power-political purpose.

The foreign policy of a state that basically wants to be nothing more than a state under the rule of law is that of neutrality. This does not exclude the possibility that for the maintenance or restoration of peace in the world the neutral state is doing what is in its power, as far as it will not be drawn into the vortex of power politics. The most important example for Switzerland is the accommodation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose members are exclusively Swiss. UN mandates for difficult negotiations which require impartiality are frequently assigned to the Swiss (...).

Only neutral parties can represent human rights without taking power-politics into consideration. Swiss neutrality is "eternal" in the same sense as the "Bünde" (confederates) are. The predictability of its foreign policy is Switzerland's best contribution to general peace. Neutrality is the alternative to collective security. In a col-

lective organization (UN, EU, NATO, Partnership for Peace) either nothing happens because no one is responsible, or it becomes the tool of the most powerful partner. Joining a collective security organization would definitely make Switzerland an accomplice to power politics, Switzerland would be jointly responsible for each step, however, without being able to change anything about the balance of power. The credibility of neutrality, however, would be annulled. The renunciation of power politics alone suits Switzerland and the voluntary restriction to a purely defensive army that – given the "malice of the times" – is necessary for self-assertion at all times.

Additional comment: Today some people consider a project aimed at converting the Swiss army into a professional army. A people's army alone suits the Swiss community, belonging to which is general duty. It must and can only be used if Switzerland itself is at risk. A professional army could be a power instrument of the federal government, which might even induce unwanted adventures.

from: Wolfgang von Wartburg: "Die europäische Dimension der Schweiz. Zur Geschichte der Schweiz und ihrer Stellung in Europa" (The European dimension of Switzerland. On the history of Switzerland and its position in Europe), 1996, pp. 125.

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Europe is eroding in the West, not in the East

by Prof Dr Klaus Hornung*



Klaus Hornung
(picture ma)

A couple of weeks ago the German Finance Minister *Wolfgang Schäuble* pictured the project of an EU-Europe progressively achieving statehood, with bright colours in the “*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*” (21 May) and contrasted this project with a rather dark, reactionary Russia. This way he takes up a narrative that plays a major role in the Western campaign against Russia. Gladly one also gives Russian authors a say, like *Victor Erofeyev* in the “*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*” of 26 May. This is supposed to look particularly authentic and convincing, and probably also has the purpose to turn off the reader’s thinking: “If a Russian himself says so, then it must be true, of course!” However, caution is required.

Just as the German finance minister Erofeyev has a try at a double portrait, as well: There the Russians who turn away

from the West again and turn back to their “archaic” roots, to history as enforcement of power; there *Vladimir Putin*, who is ultimately terminating the Europeanization of Russia. Against this dark background the Russian writer makes today’s “West” shine brighter and unchallenged: politically correct, thus perfectly democratic, tolerant, fully devoting itself to progress and modernity, which Russia would particularly need to become a full-fledged part of the modern world and not to remain an isolated empire threatening the world and looking towards China.

This double portrait by the Russian writer is too simple and full of – redundant – misunderstandings. Especially his eulogies on the contemporary “West” require correction from a self-critical European point of view. To their sustained damage the EU-Europeans have largely lost that historical consciousness and patriotism, which *Erofeyev* regards as obscurantist virtues, and have replaced them by the new doctrines of globalization and multiculturalism, merely serving the hegemony of the global financial powers, while letting social dissolution and crime rates increase and letting democracy degenerate

to a mere facade of the finance-capitalist oligarchy. This European West has long been on its way to a region of the world without history, as part of the *One World*, which the powers across the Atlantic have been striving for since World War II.

It is probably no coincidence that the dismay about the “dictatorship of relativism” (*Benedict XVI*) does not ring out in the West, however, it does among the Russians in particular, who no longer recognize “Europe” in the West and have their own thoughts about the West’s decline.

* Klaus Hornung, a member of the CDU, awarded with the German Federal Cross of Merit, was a professor of political science at the University of Stuttgart-Hohenheim until his retirement. His special focus was and is the analysis of and warning against totalitarian tendencies in politics and society. His research activities were included in the first edition of his standard work “Das totalitäre Zeitalter. Bilanz des 20. Jahrhunderts” (“The Totalitarian Era. Balance of the 20th century”) published in 1993, ISBN 978-3548332031. His latest book was published in 2012 and entitled “Vernunft im Zeitalter der Extreme. Die Konservative Position” (“Reason in the Age of Extremes. The conservative position”), ISBN 978-3941750852.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Call for action against war propaganda and war preparation

All Europeans wanting peace have reason for concern and protest: The conflict about Ukraine is the result of EU and NATO expansion. With the enforcement of the Association Agreement – and in particular its economic and military elements – the EU has substantially contributed to the creation of the Ukrainian conflict. Obviously, with their partial support for the anti-Russian and fascist forces in Ukraine, the US and the EU are trying to encircle Russia by military means. The stationing of NATO troops at the Russian border is further escalating the situation. We appeal to all participants in the conflict (the Kiev “government”, local actors, NATO, Russia, the EU) to abstain from using military means. All military operations need to be stopped immediately. The Ukraine conflict is in danger of escalating.

We are strongly rejecting a policy that thwarts a peaceful cooperation between NATO and Russia and instead threatens to bring about a confrontation in Europe. This kind of policy is harming Europe as a whole and could lead to a new – third – World War. We are warning Chancellor *Merkel* and other leading EU politicians against supporting this policy.

In this situation, many newspapers, radio and TV stations – on all sides – are helping to stir up the conflict. They put the blame for the conflict and the violent death of many Ukrainians on the Russian president *Vladimir Putin* – and only on him. Important details like the arson in the Odessa union building where more than 40 people were burned alive or suffocated are typically neglected or played down. The more we want to thank and encourage the journalists who investigate thoroughly, stick to the facts and resist their exploitation. We appeal to all media to listen to all sides of the conflict so that paths towards a peaceful solution of the conflict can be explored.

People in Ukraine must not be set against each other and be forced to lead a proxy war for the European Union and Russia. Meanwhile, many experienced western politicians have conceded that the EU’s “either – or” diktat was a mistake. Even former chancellors *Helmut Schmidt*, *Helmut Kohl* and *Gerhard Schröder*, who were previously involved in the NATO expansion towards the East, are breaking their silence, warning against a continuation of the politics of containment towards

Russia, against threatening Russia with stronger and stronger sanctions and from deploying even more military on the Russian borders. In the recent past, sanctions have always been precursors of wars. This is why we dismiss them determinedly.

Europe and the US have diverging interests in some fields. The NSA scandal has revealed this. So far, the blind following of western European governments has strengthened those forces in the US who still stubbornly pursue their own egoist goals also in Ukraine, in spite of the danger of new wars.

We appeal to all western governments to negotiate with all parties in the Ukrainian conflict, preferably under the roof of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Otherwise, there is a risk that the conflict might escalate more and more and the chance that Ukraine might become a bridge of cooperation between East and West is dwindling. We are indignant that the enemy stereotype “Russia” is invoked again and that peace-loving persons are insulted as “Russia-understand-

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Observing the people's right to self-determination

Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the III Moscow International Security Conference, Moscow, 23 May 2014

“Respect for the right of people to determine their fate independently, without external interference should be the basis of the efforts to contribute to the settlement of crisis situations. Equal partnership between different cultures and civilisations is a key condition for a fair and democratic world order, which, I believe, we all aspire to have.”

km. The constant demonization of Russian domestic and foreign policy over weeks, almost daily by Western media and politicians is very dangerous. It distorts reality and can lead to wrong decisions with fatal consequences. And yet the media would have an important role to play in informing objectively during an international conflict, as the one now, between the Russian government and the governments of the NATO countries, particularly the United States Government, to give the Russian side an adequate chance to speak: in order to dispel misunderstandings, to overcome prejudices, to defuse conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence. With this in mind, we document a speech by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, held on 23 May at a Security Conference of the Russian Defense Ministry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues,

The third International Security Conference organised by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation is a good opportunity to assess the events in the words and to shape strategic opinion about global development in its various aspects.

The agenda of the conference proposes to focus primarily on the prospects of settlement of conflicts in regions of the Near East, Middle East and South Asia as those creating serious risks for international security and stability. Unfortunately, this acutest problem has remained in shadow of the Ukrainian crisis in the last months. In other words, the European continent, which created two global military disasters in the past century, instead of demonstrating an example of peaceful development and broad cooperation to the entire world, draws the attention of the international community in terms of crisis settlement to itself again.

Such state of affairs cannot but concern us, yet more so that it is not a mere coincidence, but rather a predictable result of the development of events in Europe in the last twenty-five years. Our western partners did not use the truly historical opportunity to build the Big Europe without di-

viding lines, preferring the usual logic of movement towards the East of the geopolitical space, which is under their control. This, in fact, means a line of deterrence for Russia, even if it is in a mild form such as this.

This course was implemented despite insistent appeals of Russia to finally start practical work on the creation of a common space of peace, security and stability in the European Atlantic region according to the declarations adopted at summit level. Instead of promotion of the natural (for any life) task of harmonisation of integration processes in Europe and Eurasia, attempts were undertaken to throw states in the post-Soviet space into a strict dilemma: the West or the East, with us or against us. Such pressure was sufficient for the fragile internal political situation in Ukraine to provoke a large-scale crisis of national identity in this country.

If we all want to sincerely help the Ukrainian people to overcome this crisis, we need to decisively refuse from the so-called “zero result games”, from promotion of xenophobic, neo-Nazi moods, from the dangerous superiority complex, which *Helmut Schmidt* recently called a “delusion of grandeur”, when he characterised the EU policy towards Ukraine. If we wish to avoid repetition of such crises in the future, then we should learn the lesson from the events in Ukraine and start practical implementation of the principles of equal and undivided security in the European Atlantic region and the creation of a common economic and humanitarian space stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, as the President of the Russian Federation *Vladimir Putin* said, as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the schemes based on the protection of personal exclusiveness, use of double standards and the aspiration to find unilateral geopolitical outcomes from crisis situations are widely used not only in Europe, but also in other regions. This disrupts the effectiveness of the efforts to settle crises. Absolutely different approaches are used in similar situations. In fact, in some cases, forces receive

support, as it was in Libya, when our NATO colleagues actively supported opponents of the regime, but in other cases the same forces receive armed confrontation, they are announced terrorists, as it was in Mali, where the

same people, who overthrew *Muammar al-Gaddafi*, first confronted the French and then other international forces. As a result, parties to internal state conflicts become tempted to inspire an armed intervention for the achievement of their goals, which frequently have nothing to do with the fight for democracy and human rights.

Regime change operations in sovereign states, various “coloured revolutions”, which are initiated from outside, evidently are harmful to international stability. The attempts to impose personal recipes of internal transformations, which do not consider their traditions and national peculiarities, to other peoples, “export of democracy” destructively affect international relations and multiply trouble spots on the world map.

The acuteness of challenges to regional and international stability generated by different regional crises does not reduce. The state of affairs in Afghanistan remains tense. There is a threat that the situation will get worse in the area of security after

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“Call for action against ...”

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ers”. In order to keep and to deepen the peace, both sides have no choice but to understand each other. We are appealing to all people of good will in Germany and Europe, 100 years after the start of the First and 75 years after the start of the Second World War, to resist the risk of a new war which could only serve the interests of the arms industry and the designs for hegemony. We must not accept the war propaganda and the war preparations.

Konstantin Wecker, Eckart Spoo, Mohsen Massarrat, Laura von Wimmersperg, Tobias Pflüger

Source: <https://www.openpetition.de/petition/online/aufwurf-gegen-kriegspropaganda-und-kriegsvorbereitung>

(Translation Current Concerns)



Sergey Lavrov
(picture ma)

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international forces are removed. The Taliban announced the beginning of another "summer attack". We are concerned about the degradation of the situation in Northern provinces of Afghanistan, from which terrorist activities flow to neighbouring countries of Central Asia and countries, which are allies of the Russian Federation.

We believe that when a new NATO mission is planned, which required approval of the UNSC, all the factors affecting the situation in Afghanistan should be taken into account. Particular attention will be paid to the Afghan drug threat. As to the fate of the agreement on cooperation between Afghanistan and the United States in the area of security, we expect that the new President of Afghanistan will take a decision on this issue based on the interests of the Afghan people and region-wide stability.

The assistance to Afghanistan will continue also within the ambit of the SCO, where all its neighbours are members or observers, but Afghanistan is an observer in this organisation. The potential and practical experience of the CSTO will also be used.

As to the Middle East and North Africa, Russia continues to support the aspiration of people of this region to a better life to ensure the implementation of democratic reforms and to take the path of sustainable development. At the same time, the preference of evolutionary, non-violent transformation, based on a dialogue aimed at the achievement of nation-wide consent, is evident.

We are for collective actions in all cases. Those were collective actions, which allowed us to advance on Iran's Nuclear Programme and chemical disarmament of Syria.

We believe that there is no alternative to the peaceful solution of the Syrian crisis. The attempts to use the humanitarian crisis or other aspects of this conflict to justify an external interference by force are counterproductive. Such attempts are being undertaken. Yesterday, our western partners in the UNSC put for voting the draft resolution, which, with reference to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, proposed to bring this situation to Chapter VII of the UN Charter. There are no doubts that this would be the first step to justify external interference – this was clear from the comments made by co-authors of this resolution in the UNSC. Understanding all the danger of this, Russia and China imposed a veto on the entire resolution; it was not passed.

We appeal for the renewal of the Geneva negotiation process, the continuation of the inter-Syrian dialogue according to the

agreed agenda, the first item of which is an end to violence and the fight against terrorism. Let me remind that last year at the summit of the G8 in Lough Erne the leaders of eight states adopted a Statement, which contains an appeal to the government and the opposition to combine their efforts in combating terrorism without any conditions. This obligation undertaken by states of the G8 should be implemented in practice and we are seeking this. It is especially topical, taking into consideration the activity of terrorist groups acting in Syria, in the territory of Lebanon and other states.

When discussing issues of the transition period between the Syrian parties, they should search for compromises based on mutual consent rather than ultimatum requests to change the regime. An important moment: a truly representative nature of the delegation of opposition groups should be ensured at the negotiations.

Unfortunately, our western colleagues and some countries of the region of North Africa and Middle East do not agree that

it is time to renew the efforts of continuing negotiations and continue to make a stake at military solutions. I am convinced that this outcome has no prospects. For our part, we propose to use the positive experience of local cease-fires like the one when Homs was freed from militants, based on agreements between them and government forces. We are convinced that this practice can be successfully distributed to other regions. For this we need support of external players, and they must recognise that the regime, which they accuse of all the troubles, is widely supported by a significant part of the population. There is and can be no other way than to organise a dialogue with participation of *Bashar al-Assad's* government.

Concerns regarding the destabilisation of the situation in Libya are growing. It is evident that the situation in this country has reached deadlock, no "friend" of Libya can lead it out of the situation on its' own. The final breakdown of the country

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"Regime change operations in sovereign states, various 'coloured revolutions', which are initiated from outside, evidently are harmful to international stability. The attempts to impose personal recipes of internal transformations, which do not consider their traditions and national peculiarities, to other peoples, 'export of democracy' destructively affect international relations and multiply trouble spots on the world map."

Ukraine – everlasting neutrality is due

by Hon. Prof DI Dr Heinrich Wohlmeyer

I come from a family that met Russia the "deeply hurt bear in the Second World War" with trust and understanding, although the "Cold War" nearly rendered all solutions impossible. My uncle, the historian Dr *Heinrich Raab* (he was in Switzerland), and the politician Ing *Julius Raab* brought the idea of the everlasting neutrality into play. The result was the "Staatsvertrag" (state contract).

My deceased brother *Ioannes* smuggled the first letters concerning this matter out of Switzerland through the Allies' control.

I think that *Putin's* coming visit to Vienna which was highly welcome – flanked by discussions with Russia's encirclers – should be used to kick off the everlasting neutrality for the Ukraine modelled on the Swiss example. At the same time a reliable federal state's structure should be created which takes into account all ethnic groups' fears of heteronomy.

For that to happen the government in Kiev which came to power by a coup and with foreign help itself must speak with insurgents in the East of the Ukraine. To this day, however, they have refused to do so.

Moreover, the Russians must be granted their naval base at the Black Sea for all times.

I know that this contradicts the interests of the international arms industry (the so called "geo-politicians") – especially those in the US – but we must take the chance in order to avoid inef-fable suffering, especially on European ground.

What I have experienced currently at all diplomatic events, I took part in, was a one-sided warmongering connected with the call to arms and combined with the request to pay "protection-money" to the West which still holds up its hegemony while its financial difficulties are all too obvious. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Observing the people's right ..."

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would lead to the creation of another point of constant tensions and threats in the Sahara-Sahel region.

Presidential elections will take place in Egypt in a few days. We support the disposition of the Egyptian leaders in their constant implementation of the "roadmap" of the political process. We are interested that Egypt continues to play the stabilising role in the Middle East, and in the Arab and Islamic world, contributing to the reinforcement of regional security and stability, contributing heavily to the solu-

tion of problems of the Middle East peace process.

We are convinced that the need to adequately respond to the development of the situation in different countries of the region should not distract from the task of settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Now it is important to keep the chances open for the renewal of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. The experience of the last year has demonstrated that unilateral efforts are not sufficient here and we need to return to collective work for the purposes of achieving a comprehensive, fair and stable solution of the Palestinian problem on the available international legal basis, which is envisaged to ensure security, good-neighbourliness and decent future for the people of Palestine, Israel and all other countries of the region.

In a situation, when joint efforts are required in all the directions of the crisis settlement, it is hard to understand the logic of those who take decisions concerning the restriction of cooperation with Russia, when responding to common challenges and threats. Of course, we can take the path of scaling back our interaction, but this will hardly contribute to the fight against terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, overcoming consequences of natural and man-made disasters and the creation of barriers for extremism. Moreover, as *Christine Lagarde*, head of the International Monetary Fund, noted in her recent interview, and I quote: "the 'new cold' war between Russia and the West would not be good for financial stability, globalisation and free trade – everything which we deem necessary to have to improve living standards in the world".

The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, emphasised a few

days ago that he will consider Russian-Chinese interaction, which is based on respect for mutual interests and effective work for the benefit of peoples of our countries and the entire international community, as a model of interstate relations. The new polycentric system of international relations should be based on such a foundation in all its components, including multilateral cooperation for the reinforcement of regional stability.

The coordination of common principles of crisis settlement, which would not allow double standards, would play a positive role. We have been promoting this initiative for several years in the CSTO to develop such a list of principles of crisis management. I primarily mean confirmation of the main responsibility of the UN for supporting international peace and security, based on basic principles of international law, ensuring secure protection to civilian population, recognition of legal interests of all parties of the conflict, organisation of an inclusive nation-wide dialogue, as well as consideration of interests of all political, ethnic and religious groups.

Respect for the right of people to determine their fate independently, without external interference should be the basis of the efforts to contribute to the settlement of crisis situations. Equal partnership between different cultures and civilisations is a key condition for a fair and democratic world order, which, I believe, we all aspire to have.

Thank you for your kind attention. I wish participants of this conference successful and fruitful work. •

Source: http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/d2bb652bd0232e0344257ce40057b89d!OpenDocument

Czech and Slovak Heads of government against NATO troops in their countries

zf. After US President *Obama* had offered the stationing of US and NATO troops of other states in Eastern Europe in early June during his visit to Warsaw, the heads of Government of the Czech Republic and Slovakia rejected the offer. Slovak Prime Minister *Robert Fico* said he could not imagine on Slovak territory, "foreign troops or missile defense bases operated by foreign soldiers". This would evoke memories of the invasion of the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact in 1968. Also the Czech Prime Minister *Bohuslav Sobotka* rejected US or NATO troops in his country. He believes that such measures would not be on the agenda in the coming years: "The Czech Republic is not among the countries that call for a stronger presence of NATO forces in Europe and will not be so in the future."

Source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
from 6.6.2014

“If we want to understand the Islamic world in present and future we must understand al-Afghani”

Pankaj Mishra on Jamal al-Din al-Afghani – a liberal, moderate Muslim and a “great revolutionary” (US Ambassador Robert Finn, 2002) or the spiritual father of Osama bin Laden and the Salafists?

by Thomas Schaffner

Since 9/11 people of Muslim faith are having a hard time in our western world. Put under suspicion by the Bush administration (see, for example, *New York Magazine* of 25 August 2013, according to which, the New York police department established its own intelligence for the observation of the city Muslims after 9/11¹), becoming the bogeyman in computer games and coming close to really existing terrorist groups in the view of the public. The over one billion Muslims live in dozens of countries under partly precarious situations, not all of them self-inflicted. Keywords like the Arab Spring are present in the Western media, although in many places people already speak of the Arab winter. Even if the alleged clash of civilizations has been pushed into the background medially and US experts such as President Obama's former economic adviser Larry Summers² consider the confrontation with the Islamic world as secondary compared to the rise of Asia, the question arises how the West could develop a peaceful coexistence with the Muslim world. Kishore Mahbubani has repeatedly pointed out: *The 12% Westerners are not the world, the 88% non-Westerners have finally understood the West's double standards and are fed up with them, the disgust being irreversible. In his texts and books he shows why this is so. Another one who shows the background of today's misery in order to bring forth reconciliation by learning to understand the other side, is the laureate of the Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding, the Indian writer Pankaj Mishra who has already once been presented in Current Concerns. In his book he shows us Westerners, how Asia has experienced the 20th century, which humiliations by Western imperialism in its classical period it had had to suffer as well as during the era up to de-colonization. Mishra stressed it was not a question of “replac[ing] a Euro-centric or West-centric perspective with an equally problematic Asia-centric one” (Mishra, p. 8). Rather, his concern and probably also one of the main reasons for the jury to award the prize to a non-Europeans was to help by a poly-perspective approach avoid dangerous mistakes in the West.*

Describing the example of the native Iranian named Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Mishra shows how the Muslim world per-

ceived the West. The second article on Mishra's book following hereafter is dedicated to this absolutely dazzling personality, whom the American Robert Dreyfuss even referred to as a British agent in his book “*Devil's Game*”. The reader is taken along on a journey not only into the own Western, colonialist and imperialist past, but also on a tour d'horizon through an Islamic cosmos, which, across continents, was deeply humiliated and has been looking and is still looking for its own way into the 21st century.

This man and his writings were subject of discussion among Iranian emigrés in Paris in the 1960s who had found refuge in the French capital after the Anglo-US-supported 1953 coup against Mossadegh: Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, born in Northwest Persia in 1838. He himself would have liked to be seen as the Islamic Martin Luther, but the circumstances made it impossible to enter history as a great reformer of Islam. Instead, throughout the Muslim world he was praised, after all, as “a path-breaking anti-imperialist leader and thinker” (Mishra, p. 50) – and in Iran as “intellectual godfather of the Islamic revolution” (Mishra, p. 50). According to Pankaj Mishra, al-Afghani's influence “in its longevity almost matches Marx's.” (Mishra, p. 50)

But who knows al-Afghani here in the West? A man about whom it was said that anyone wishing to understand Islam and Muslims as well as our present and future must understand him, in particular.

**“The Western powers all have
only one desire, that of making our
land disappear up to our last trace”**

Even this first quote shows that al-Afghani's statements appear timeless, the words could have been said in our last decade, especially after 9/11. But they were spoken in the year 1892. At that time, al-Afghani had declared war on the entire West in a treatise addressed to the Ottoman Sultan: Since these Western powers would “all have only one desire, that of making our land disappear up to our last trace. And in this there is no distinction to make between Russia, England, Germany, or France, especially if they perceive our weakness and our impotence to resist their designs. If, on the contrary, we are united, if the Muslims are a single man, we can

then be of harm and of use and our voice will be heard.” (quoted by Mishra, p. 49)

Al-Afghani's curriculum vitae takes the Westerners on a global journey of its own: a journey through the Muslim world and its regions, which often only then occur in Western history books, if they are “discovered” and subjected by the West.

Development of an anti-imperialist strategy

Al-Afghani, grew up as a Shia in Persia, however, he soon got himself an Af-



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ghan provenance in order to be considered as a Sunni for his reform activities in the Islamic world. For a short period he was also considered a Freemason in Egypt. Anyway: His main concern was, as Mishra says, the development of an anti-imperialist strategy, for which he used his years in Bombay and Calcutta, under British rule. In 1866, he moved to Afghanistan, where he soon became Adviser to the Emir. The Afghans were fierce and successful adversaries of the British and their attacks on their country. What al-Afghani wrote in a historical work on Afghanistan (1878) about the natives seems to be true to this day; just remember the defeat of the Soviets and now of the Americans in Kabul: “Nobility of

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“If we want to understand ...”

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soul leads them to choose a death of honour above a life of baseness under foreign rule.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 54)

After the brutal suppression of the 1857 Indian revolt by the British, who especially made the Muslims responsible and massacred them, al-Afghani’s hatred against the “perfidious Albion” became boundless. He considered the progress of Western education and in the simultaneous decline of the Muslim world one of the main problems of Asia’s subjugation. Al-Afghani did not accept the Western idea of progress, which the British had brought to India, and put it in the field of historiography of the winner. Just like *Jawaharlal Nehru* who later called the railway “iron bands confining and imprisoning India”. (quoted in Mishra, p. 60) A metaphor which the German Nobel Prize Laureate for Literature, *Gerhart Hauptmann*, used in his masterpiece novel “*Bahnwärter Thiel*”, where the iron train that cuts through the Brandenburg forest, is placed like a cocoon around the protagonist and forces him down.

“Paranoid resisters of modernization ...”

Al-Afghani protested against this iron band. Wherever he moved, Mishra defines as a central theme in his life, “his fear and distrust of Western, particularly British, power and its native enablers in Muslim countries”. (Mishra, p. 60)

Even the most powerful Muslim empire of the time, the Ottoman Empire, which he visited in 1869, had become dependent on the West. Istanbul, the largest city in the then Muslim world and the political center for Arabs and Persians, had become a strong western oriented multicultural metropolis since the free trade agreement with the British in 1838. Even in the middle of the century the empire was rebuilt after the French model with the help of the so-called Tanzimat reforms (“regulations”). The Westernization and the accompanying destruction of one’s own tradition and culture resulted in a broad resistance, until in 1876 the Sultan devoted himself to Pan-Islamism as a bulwark against the West’s intrusion in their culture. Al-Afghani only lived in Istanbul for two years, then he was expelled since he had argued that the Shariah of Prophet Muhammad was not immutable, but open to revision by philosophers. “But the paranoid resisters of modernization in Turkey thought al-Afghani had come close to apostasy and deserved swift execution”, Mishra summarizes the conflict. (Mishra, p. 72)

Islamic world ready for a Martin Luther called al-Afghani?

His next stop was Egypt. A country which around 1840 had become one of the main exporters of cotton to France and the UK and rapidly became modernized: So it possessed telegraph and railway networks, and this even decades before Japan and China had them. Cairo became a financial and cultural center of the Arab world. *Ismail*, the Kediye, Ottoman viceroy in Egypt, transformed the town based on the model of Paris. In 1870 about 200,000 Europeans lived in the city, in 1869 the Suez Canal was opened. Ismail is reported to have boasted, “My country is no longer in Africa, it is in Europe” (quoted in Mishra, p. 75)

Highly indebted to European banks, which even promoted Ismail’s profligacy, the Kediye had to include even European ministers in his cabinet. Therefore there was growing unrest among the people and in the ascending middle class. High taxes and low-cost products from the industrialized countries of Europe destroyed the local economy. In this situation, al-Afghani began to stir up the impoverished crowd. He also lectured doctrines that sounded heretical to conservative Muslims: he was increasingly convinced that the Islamic world was ready for a reformation, with him, al-Afghani, in the role of Luther.

Against fanaticism and political tyranny in Asia

In a lecture in Alexandria at the end of 1879 he addressed, among others, the question of why the Asian peoples fell behind the West. He found out two fundamental evils: fanaticism and political tyranny. Only one thing could help the Muslims, namely “zeal”, and only those folks possessed it who “know that their honour is in their race, their power is only in their community [umma] and their glory is only in their fatherland.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 84) He suggested the creation of a national political party and a parliamentary system, which could dispense with foreigners. He also called for a national language, a national literature and legal improvement for women.

Due to calls for revolution and war call against foreigners, the British prior to their military invasion of Egypt increased the pressure on the Kediye, who in the summer of 1879 expelled al-Afghani from the country and finally deported him to India.

Al-Afghani’s U-turn: for Pan-Islamism and “Holy War”

Al-Afghani then set a new course in the fight against the West: From then on, he favored a nationalism that he no longer based on ethnic or secular foundations, but on religious ones. Moreover, he also

worked with terms such as “Pan-Islamism” and “Holy War”. This reflected the bitter experiences of Egypt, which despite modernization succumbed to British pressure and degenerated to a subordinate client state due to globalized economy.

When in 1882 al-Afghani ended his second visit to India, he pretended to be an orthodox Muslim and defender of Islam against the interference by the West. However, he had not become more religious, according to Mishra’s judgment. But he was convinced that attacks against religion undermined the moral basis of society and weakened the social coherence of a community. According to his opinion, this debilitation had plunged the Muslim world into crisis.

Al-Afghani now increasingly staked everything on the card of an armed struggle against the West. The victories of the legendary *Mahdi* in Sudan against the British confirmed him in this view. He stood up for the common struggle of Hindus and Muslims in India, almost as a united front in the fight against the British.

First, a strong Pan-Islamic ruler, then Islamic Reformation

In 1883, al-Afghani traveled to Paris, the Mecca for political malcontents of all lines of thought in the 19th century. Sponsored by a wealthy reformer from Tunisia, he published the first international journal for Muslims, calling for a pan-Islamism, a return to the old grandeur, power and prestige of Islam and the liberation of his people from foreign domination. This incurred the attention of the British and French intelligence. He now also began to dress differently, took off waving robes and turban, and was clad in a suit with stiff white collar and tie. Then there was also a debate with *Ernest Renan*, the first major public debate between a European and Muslim intellectual. Al-Afghani reiterated that Islam needed a Reformation, with himself as Luther. Until the time had come, the Muslim world community needed a strong ruler, such as the Mahdi or the Sultan in Istanbul.

Who controlled whom? Al-Afghani the British or the British al-Afghani?

Al-Afghani’s attempt to convince the British government in London of a joint struggle against Russia by proclaiming the jihad against the Russians, in case the British freed Egypt again, was rejected by the British elites – a hundred years later, the United States acted differently when they sought cooperation with the Jihadists in the fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Two statements of Mishra that meet with confirmation and contradiction: Regarding the cooperation of the US with

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the Muslim warriors, the then national security adviser to *Jimmy Carter*, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, confirmed that with much self-praise.³ However, with respect to the relationship between al-Afghani and the British, the American *Robert Dreyfuss* weighted the role of al-Afghani quite differently in his book “Devil’s Game”: According to him – and the work of Jewish American Dreyfuss is written out of a great concern for Israel today – the instrumentalization of fundamentalist Islam by the American foreign policy since the Second World War to the present day has always stood in the tradition of the British. He thinks that they had won al-Afghani for the formation of a right-wing Pan-Islamism, with which Russia was to be fought. In his books Dreyfuss refers to al-Afghani as an atheist and Freemason and thus implicitly as an agent in the service of the British Empire. Afghani’s scholar, *Mohammed Abduh*, had then founded the Muslim Brotherhood and supported the British against the Egyptian nationalists. So who had used whom? Who was really the wire-puller? And who was the directed one? Or were both sides “directing controlled ones” or the “directed controllers”? Probably both are right, Mishra and Dreyfuss, as often happens in history?

Correspondence between Mishra and Dreyfuss is then again found, however, in the assessment that al-Afghani should be classified as a spiritual ancestor of *Osama bin Laden*.

Set British and Russians at each other to liberate Asia?

In 1886, al-Afghani went to Persia, where he spent several months in the port city of

Bushehr and discussed Pan-Islamism with members of the Iranian intelligence. After a visit to the Shah, he was expelled from the country because the Shah considered him to be a potential troublemaker. After that, al-Afghani tried to make the Russian government in Moscow take action against the British influence in the Muslim world. Al-Afghani’s plan was to trigger off a Russian-British war that would lead to the liberation of India, but also to the elimination of any European presence in Muslim countries. However, the Tsar neither deigned to talk to him nor carry out his plan. With his Moscow interlude, however, al-Afghani had left such a big impression on the Shah that he arranged for al-Afghani to be invited again.

Russia prevents Iran’s sellout to Baron Reuter

Yet, how did Persia position itself at the time of the “Great Game” played by the great powers Britain and Russia? Until the 1880s Persia had developed relatively free of Western influences and infringements, the Shah was busy with outer re-touching, as two Japanese diplomats expressed in their scorching criticism on the occasion of a state visit. Russia and the United Kingdom eyed each other and their interests in the region with suspicion. In 1872, Russia prevented the Shah from granting the British Baron *Reuter*, founder of the news agency of the same name, a monopoly on the construction of mines, dams, factories, roads and railways. Mishra says, “Even the die-hard imperialist Lord *Curzon* later described the sale as the most completely surrender of the entire resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that has ever been dreamed of, much less accomplished in history.” (Mishra, p. 107)

Economic consultants, jackals, army: the Western three step procedure yesterday – and today?

In other Muslim areas Al-Afghani had repeatedly witnessed how countries became dependent of the west in a disastrous three step procedure, how financial dependency was generated and how fast harmless traders were followed by soldiers – a scheme which the American *John Perkins* describes quite similarly in his book, “The Economic Hitman” for the 20th century: In the tradition of the American brand of classical imperialism, dollar imperialism, they at first sent an “Economic Hit Man”, an “economic killer” or an economic adviser in a pinstripe suit, who talked the foreign government into large-scale contracts in order to get them into financial dependence. If the target would not comply and would instead seek an advantage in favor of their own population, step two would be applied; they then sent the jack-

als, intelligence officers with a license to kill. If this did not work either, the army was set in motion as step three. A process that Perkins – for whatever reason – reveals and proves with examples, a process which obviously is not an invention of the 20th century as Mishra describes in his book ...

“What shall cause thee to understand what the Bank is?”

Back to the Iran of the 19th century: there al-Afghani warned his countrymen of the sellout of their country: “Before you become the slaves of the foreigners like the natives of India, you must find a remedy”. (quoted in Mishra, p. 108) His view that the fundamentals of Islam would provide sufficient prerequisites to establish democracy and the rule of law, met with wide acceptance. However, not with the Shah, who expelled him from the country. When in 1891 the same Shah did in fact transfer the monopoly for the purchase, sale and export of tobacco to a British businessman, secret societies founded by al-Afghani in Tehran were in opposition. The mass protests of 1891 were well coordinated, among others due to the telegraph, which had been built by the British as a connecting line to India ...

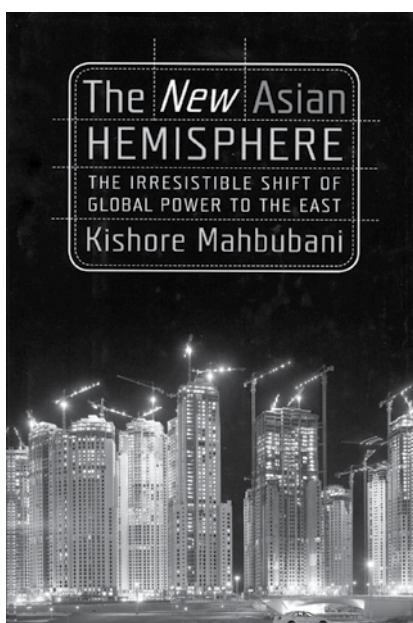
In letters to a Shiite cleric he called for resistance and explained at the same time: “What shall cause thee to understand what the Bank is? It means the complete handing over of the reins of government to the enemy of Islam, the enslaving of the people to that enemy, the surrendering (...) of all dominion and authority into the hands of the foreign foe.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 109) Today’s critics of the *World Bank* and the IMF would probably more than agree.

Mossadegh’s childhood experience – not to the West’s credit

Al-Afghani’s actions proved successful: In a fatwa issued by the Shiite leader whom he had instructed, the Shah was forced to cancel the tobacco concession to the British businessman. The following is of enormous historical significance: A nine-year-old boy acquired “his fateful distrust of foreign companies” just by way of these processes. It was *Mohammed Mossadegh*, who later became Prime Minister of Persia and was empowered by a CIA and MI6 coup in 1953. Such connecting lines make Mishra’s book a real treat and serve to understand our present better.

Al-Afghani, meanwhile domiciled in London, tried not only to agitate against the Shah from there, but also to explain to the British that they bet on the wrong horse, “However bizarre it may seem, it is nevertheless a fact, that after each visit of

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the Shah to Europe, he has increased in tyranny over his people. Probably this may be more or less due to his reception (...) in Europe. The result is that the masses of Persia (...) attributed their increased suffering to European influences, and hence their dislike of Europeans became yet more intense, at the very moment when a rapprochement might easily have been effected.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 110) These are lines that do not originate from the 60s and 70s of the 20th century, even though they resemble them confoundingly.

Mister Reuters news monopoly and modern disinformation

In terms of media studies it is exciting to look at the following facts: Al-Afghani criticized the one-sided reporting from Persia, which characterized the protesters as religious fanatics, even though they wanted nothing but a law book and reforms and fought against an absolutist ruler – a process that actually should have pleased Great Britain which was so proud of its parliamentarianism. But who had the news monopoly? It was in the hands of a man’s company who via other companies possessed mining rights and banking licenses in Iran: A Mr Reuter and his same-named agency. Unfortunately Mishra omits a reference to the current situation of the news business, perhaps only because the example is eye-catching enough ... Or does critical media education in our schools still leave much to be desired? Do people take note of the studies, e.g. presented by Professor *Russ-Mohl* in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, saying that 80% of all today’s news only come from one source and are thus arbitrary?⁴ Or the statements of television directors, saying that we cannot trust what we see? And that the TV world was moving more and more away from reality? That the TV makers were on the way to misinform the audience purposefully? That the truth was the first casualty in conflict?^{5,6}

Islamic Luther, Freemason, friend or foe of the British?

Back to al-Afghani and his work in London, the center of the Empire he fought against: In his articles published by British newspapers and magazines, he also demanded the withdrawal of the British from India and Egypt, in order to reduce the hostile attitude of the Muslims. An astonishing fact that Mishra should have pointed to briefly: Even if the British committed undeniable atrocities in their colonies, in the homeland they preserved their freedom of expression even by someone they regarded as quite a dangerous agitator. At the behest of the Shah to silence

the critic, the British government pretended not to be able to do something against him. Mishra leaves open how far the British still hoped to take advantage of al-Afghani’s approach. However, sentences like the following show that despite all criticism he could still be kept up the sleeve as a bridge builder – or probably as an agent, as Robert Dreyfuss alleges in “Devil’s Game”? In an interview with the “*Pall Mall Gazette*” in December 1891, al-Afghani expressed that the Persians were the ones among Asians who were most open to reform, and he, al-Afghani, could act as a catalyst for change: “The true spirit of the Koran, is in perfect accordance with modern liberties. (...) A learned Muslim well acquainted with the liberal principles of Europe, can easily convey them to his people with the authority of the Koran, without the difficulties which surrounded Luther.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 111) Al-Afghani, a wanderer between the worlds? An Islamic Luther? At the same time Freemason? Enemy of the British or their agent?

Against Western imperialism, not against Christian values

In 1892, al-Afghani transferred to Istanbul, where the Sultan assigned him an annuity. He hoped to win him over as a propagandist of an Ottoman Caliphate, and he could also keep him under control in Istanbul. Based on a brutal power machine, fascinated by Japan’s development towards the Western great powers, the Sultan gathered intellectuals from India and Syria at his court, but also needed thinkers such as al-Afghani. He, in turn, gathered multinational followers around him and still championed the idea of Pan-Islamism and rejected not only the schism between Sunnis and Shiites, but also an imitation of the West while making at the same time the difference: He only rejected the Western imperialism, not the Christian values. The Quran was perfectly compatible with modern science, politics and economics, and constitutional reforms were necessary. Spied on and suspected of not being a real Muslim, he wanted to get a British passport in 1895, in order to flee. However, the British refused to help their old enemy.

When one of his students assassinated the Shah of Iran in 1896, al-Afghani was detained in Istanbul at insistence of the Persian government. He, who denied any involvement in the murder plot, was saved a year-long imprisonment or even delivery, since in 1897 the heavy smoker died of cancer.

Replace arbitrariness by law, and fanaticism by tolerance

His thoughts fell into oblivion for half a century until he was rediscovered by young politicized Muslims who wanted to relive his favorite verse from the Quran:

“God does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 117) or in al-Afghani’s own words shortly before his death: “I have striven, and still strive, for a reform movement in the rotten Orient, where I would like to arbitrariness by law for, tyranny by justice, and fanaticism by toleration”. (quoted in Mishra, pp. 116)

Consistent only in his anti-imperialism?

Al-Afghani is buried in a mausoleum on the grounds of Kabul University in Afghanistan. The restoration of the tomb in the first decade of the 21st century went hand in hand with the instrumentalization of the “revolutionary who inspired Muslims from Egypt to India” (US Ambassador *Robert Finn* in October 2002). The US wanted to see him as the liberal and moderate Muslim long-sought for after 9/11. Nothing worse than that, Mishra says. He was a man who had developed his ideas off the cuff and was consistent only in his anti-imperialism. He had recognized that the superiority of the West was to meet only by the Muslims’ appropriation of science, education and military strength. The fruits of his labor should be seen in the Arab Spring, today. He had laid the ground for Muslims to become actors in history, true to the already quoted above Quranic verse, that a people first has to change “their soul’s thoughts” before Allah would take care of them.

According to Mishra, Al-Afghani must be seen as a precursor to *Muhammad Iqbal* in India, *Sayyid Qutb* in Egypt and, properly read, Osama bin Laden in Saudi Arabia – an assessment that US Ambassador Robert Finn probably would not share or reject, or otherwise at least the US donation for al-Afghani’s Mausoleum should be withdrawn. After all, who combats a man as top terrorist and appreciates his spiritual father at the same time? Or can we observe Dreyfuss’ Devil’s Game here?

Salafists – as al-Afghani’s sons for a renewal on the Japanese model?

In many countries, al-Afghani is now regarded as the founder of modern political Islam. And this, together with *Mohammed Abduh*, his major scholar, and the students of the latter. Al-Afghani’s fundamental conviction that Islam prepares the ground for anti-Western solidarity, the Turkish cultural nationalist and poet *Ziya Gokalp* formulated as follows. “The minarets are our bajonets, the domes our helmets, the mosques our barracks and the faithful our army.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 120)

But Salafism is also part of al-Afghani’s mixed heritage. The movement is aimed at the orthodox ancestors of Islam

"If we want to understand ..."

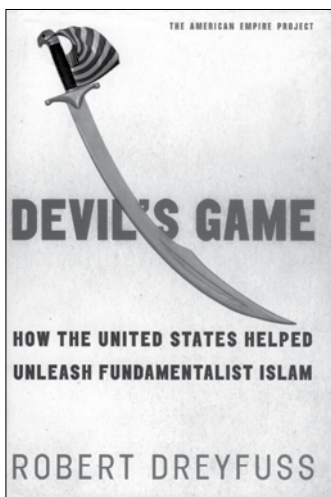
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(Salaf) and is again varied in itself. *Rashid Rida* as a leader figure of Salafism resorted to al-Afghani's conservative pan-Islamist ideas and inspired the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928, and other similar movements throughout Asia and Africa. The Salafists made use of Western means such as the press and political organization in their activities against the European powers and their local supporters. Islam was a motor of change for them, in social, economic and political terms. In 1930, Rida warned against following the path of Turkey and Egypt and suggested a renewal along the lines of Japan. Again, the remote effects of *Tshushima* send their regards!

Texts of Ayatollah Khomeini – original sound by al-Afghani?

The Salafists were persecuted in their countries of western-oriented despots. In Afghanistan, their approach in the person of *Ayman al-Zawahiri*, a co-conspirator in the assassination of Egyptian President *Anwar Sadat*, mixed with the approach of Wahhabi Islam, originating in Arabia and personified by Osama bin Laden. Since the Islamist refugees that gathered in Afghanistan took up al-Afghani's internationalist anti-imperialism and proclaimed a secular jihad, which was also and especially directed against the Western patrons of the various Islamic regimes, al-Afghani's honoring by the US ambassador, as described above, seems even more grotesque.

Even texts by *Ayatollah Khomeini*, quoted by Mishra, could originally be written by al-Afghani, when he says, "The colonialism has partitioned our homeland and has turned the Moslems into separate people (...) The only means that we possess to unite the Moslem nation, to liberate its land from the grip of the colonialists and to topple the agent governments of colo-



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onialism is to seek to establish our Islamic government." (quoted in Mishra, p. 122)

Away from the elites toward the people

However, unlike Khomeini and bin Laden, al-Afghani did not rely on violence, but on the rulers' complete change. The fact that he was not heard among this elite, made him bitter towards the end of his life. So he told a German journalist in Istanbul: "The entire oriental world is so entirely rotten and incapable of hearing the truth and following it that I should wish a flood or an earthquake to devour and bury it." (quoted in Mishra, p. 122) Late, too late, he recognized and regretted that he had seeded his ideas in "the salt and the sterile soul" (quoted in Mishra, p. 123) of the elites. "I would that I had sown all the seeds of my ideas in the receptive ground of the people's thoughts!" (quoted in Mishra, p. 23)

Thus, at the end of his life al-Afghani turned away from the idea that enlightened despots could bring about a change – as was also advocated by Western thinkers such as a *Friedrich Schiller*. But while Schiller detested the revolution after the blood excesses of the Jacobins in France and gave back his honorary citizenship, al-Afghani advocated quite radical revolutions, supported by the people, that should destroy both base and superstructure of oppression, as Mishra says in Marxist-sounding diction.

Did the foundations of despotism remain untouched?

The foundations of despotism were to destroy, not the individual agents to be expelled, or else nothing had been done: It is just that point that Mishra sees, and so he closes the chapter on al-Afghani and political Islam, precisely by what he regards as the problem of the Arab Spring: What, "if the foundations of despotism remain untouched?" (Mishra, p. 123) And Mishra, the laureate of the "Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding" pays homage to al-Afghani's life's work with the following concluding sentence, which we should let linger also in line with the Leipzig jury a bit longer, "A measure of the magnitude of al-Afghani's self-appointed task is that the problems he dealt with remain as alarmingly intransigent as ever, and their ramifications now extend not only to the Muslim countries he travelled through but also to the rest of the world." (Mishra, p. 123)

¹ "New York Magazine": *The NYPD Division of Un-American Activities*. By Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman. www.nymag.com/news/features/nypd-demographics-unit-2013-9/

- ² Kishore Mahbubani. *Die Rückkehr Asiens – das Ende der westlichen Dominanz*. Berlin 2008. ISBN 978-354907351-3. p. 16f
- ³ Interview with *Zbigniew Brzezinski* in "Le Nouvel Observateur" (France), 15 January 1998: *Brzezinski: Oui, la CIA est entrée en Afghanistan avant les Russes*.
- ⁴ Stephan Russ-Mohl. *Wer hat die Fäden in der Hand? Zur Machtbalance zwischen PR und Journalismus*. "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" No. 251 of 27.10.2000, p. 81
- ⁵ Bernd Dost (director). *Hat Kohl Madonna geküsst? Wie man mit Bildern manipulieren kann*. Deutschland 1996. ISBN 978-3-939356-06-6. In this book see, for example, the statements of *Fritz Pleitgen*, then managing director of WDR.
- ⁶ Gordana Mijuk, Klaus-Helge Donath. *Krieg der Lügen*. "NZZ am Sonntag" of 27 April 2014, p. 22f

Literature:

Pankaj Mishra. *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia*. Penguin 2013. ISBN-13: 978-0241954669.

John Perkins. *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man: The shocking story of how America really took over the world*. Ebury Press; January 2006 (new ed.) ISBN-13: 978-0091909109.

See also several films with and about *John Perkins*, e.g. ORF2, broadcast on 14 May 2010: "Im Dienste der Wirtschaftsmafia – ein Geheimagent packt aus" Original: Apology of an Economic Hit Man. Or other films on youtube: e.g. www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdPMSMTBf-Q

Robert Dreyfuss. *Devil's Game – How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*. Henry Holt and Co. (Metropolitan Books), American Empire Project Series. 2005, ISBN: 978-0805-081374.)

Current Concerns

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“The negative consequences of the PISA rankings”

Open letter to Andreas Schleicher, OECD, Paris

km. For more than 10 years now Pisa has stood for the most amazing experiment to reshape and to more or less synchronize the education system in Europe and beyond its borders according to the principles of a failed US education system. Economism, obsession with measurability and feasibility are three significant characteristics of the underlying ideologies. Uniform and formalized standards as well as competence orientation are two of the effects. Even Switzerland has not been spared these, which is demonstrated by the controversy about the planned Curriculum 21. It makes you sit up and pay attention, when the criticism is increasing worldwide with the effect that an open letter was written now, signaling a successful transatlantic cooperation this time. With the publication of the following text, this collaboration stands only at its beginning and shall be further expanded, as we can hear. The letter has already been signed by a few thousand personalities from science and school practice, more than 2,300 in Germany alone. This is highly remarkable.

Dear Dr Schleicher:

We write to you in your capacity as OECD's director of the “Programme of International Student Assessment” (PISA). Now in its 13th year, PISA is known around the world as an instrument to rank OECD and non-OECD countries (60+ at last count) according to a measure of academic achievement of 15 year old students in mathematics, science, and reading. Administered every three years, PISA results are anxiously awaited by governments, education ministers, and the editorial boards of newspapers, and are cited authoritatively in countless policy reports. They have begun to deeply influence educational practices in many countries. As a result of PISA, countries are overhauling their education systems in the hopes of improving their rankings. Lack of progress on PISA has led to declarations of crisis and “PISA shock” in many countries, followed by calls for resignations, and far-reaching reforms according to PISA precepts.

We are frankly concerned about the negative consequences of the PISA rankings. These are some of our concerns:

- while standardized testing has been used in many nations for decades (despite serious reservations about its validity and reliability), PISA has contributed to an escalation in such testing and a dramatically increased reliance on quantitative measures. For example, in the United States, PISA has been in-

voked as a major justification for the recent “Race to the Top” program, which has increased the use of standardized testing for student-, teacher-, and administrator evaluations, which rank and label students, as well as teachers and administrators according to the results of tests widely known to be imperfect (see, for example, Finland's unexplained decline from the top of the PISA table);

- in education policy, PISA, with its three-year assessment cycle, has caused a shift of attention to short-term fixes designed to help a country quickly climb the rankings, despite research showing that enduring changes in education practice take decades, not a few years to come to fruition. For example, we know that the status of teachers and the prestige of teaching as a profession has a strong influence on the quality of instruction, but that status varies strongly across cultures and is not easily influenced by short-term policy;
- by emphasizing a narrow range of measurable aspects of education, PISA takes attention away from the less measurable or immeasurable educational objectives like physical, moral, civic, and artistic development, thereby dangerously narrowing our collective imagination regarding what education is and ought to be about;
- as an *organization of economic development*, OECD is naturally biased in favor of the economic role of public schools. But preparing young men and women for gainful employment is not the only, and not even the main goal of public education, which has to prepare students for participation in democratic self-government, moral action, and a life of personal development, growth, and well-being;
- unlike United Nations (UN) organizations such as UNESCO or UNICEF that have clear and legitimate mandates to improve education and the lives of children around the world, OECD has no such mandate. Nor are there, at present, mechanisms of effective democratic participation in its education decision-making process;
- to carry out PISA and a host of follow-up services, OECD has embraced “public-private partnerships” and entered into alliances with multi-national for-profit companies, which stand to gain financially from any –real or perceived – deficits, unearthed by PISA. Some of these companies provide educational services to American schools and school districts on a massive, for-

profit basis, while also pursuing plans to develop for-profit elementary education in Africa, where OECD is now planning to introduce the PISA program;

- finally, and most importantly: the new PISA regime, with its continuous cycle of global testing, harms our children and impoverishes our classrooms, as it inevitably involves more and longer batteries of multiple-choice testing, more scripted “vendor”-made lessons, and less autonomy for our teachers. In this way PISA has further increased the already high stress-level in our schools, which endangers the well-being of our students and teachers.

These developments are in overt conflict with widely accepted principles of good educational and democratic practice:

- no reform of any consequence should be based on a single narrow measure of quality;
- no reform of any consequence should ignore the important role of non-educational factors, among which a nation's socio-economic inequality is paramount. In many countries, including the United States, inequality has dramatically increased over the past 15 years, explaining the widening educational gap between rich and poor which education reforms, no matter how sophisticated, are unlikely to redress;
- an organization like OECD, as any organization that deeply affects the life of our communities, should be open to democratic accountability by members of those communities.

We are writing not only to point out deficits and problems. We would also like to offer constructive ideas and suggestions that may help to alleviate the above mentioned concerns. While in no way complete, they illustrate how learning could be improved without the above mentioned negative effects:

- develop alternatives to league tables: explore more meaningful and less easily sensationalized ways of reporting assessment outcomes. For example, comparing developing countries, where 15-year olds are regularly drafted into child labor, with first world countries makes neither educational nor political sense and opens OECD up for charges of educational colonialism;
- make room for participation by the full range of relevant constituents and scholarship: to date, the groups with greatest influence on what and how international learning is assessed are psy-

“The negative consequences ...”

continued from page 13

chometricians, statisticians, and economists. They certainly deserve a seat at the table, but so do many other groups: parents, educators, administrators, community leaders, students, as well as scholars from disciplines like anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, linguistics, as well as the arts and humanities. What and how we assess the education of 15 year old students should be subject to discussions involving all these groups at local, national, and international levels;

- include national and international organizations in the formulation of assessment methods and standards whose mission goes beyond the economic aspect of public education and which are concerned with the health, human development, well-being and happiness of students and teachers. This would include the above mentioned United Nations organizations, as well as teacher, parent, and administrator associations, to name a few;

- publish the direct and indirect costs of administering PISA so that taxpayers in member countries can gauge alternative uses of the millions of dollars spent on these tests and determine if they want to continue their participation in it;
- welcome oversight by independent international monitoring teams which can observe the administration of PISA from the conception to the execution, so that questions about test format and statistical and scoring procedures can be weighed fairly against charges of bias or unfair comparisons;
- provide detailed accounts regarding the role of private, for-profit companies in the preparation, execution, and follow-up to the tri-annual PISA assessments to avoid the appearance or reality of conflicts of interest;
- slow down the testing juggernaut. To gain time to discuss the issues mentioned here at local, national, and international levels, consider skipping the next PISA cycle. This would give time to incorporate the collective learning that will result from the suggested deliberations in a new and improved assessment model.

We assume that OECD's PISA experts are motivated by a sincere desire to improve education. But we fail to understand how your organization has become the global arbiter of the means and ends of education around the world. OECD's narrow focus on standardized testing risks turning learning into drudgery and killing the joy of learning. As PISA has led many governments into an international competition for higher test scores, OECD has assumed the power to shape education policy around the world, with no debate about the necessity or limitations of OECD's goals. We are deeply concerned that measuring a great diversity of educational traditions and cultures using a single, narrow, biased yardstick could, in the end, do irreparable harm to our schools and our students.

Sincerely,

Heinz-Dieter Meyer, Professor, State University of New York

Katie Zahedi, Principal, Linden Avenue Middle School, Red Hook, New York

Source: <http://bildung-wissen.eu/fachbeitraege/basistexte/open-letter-to-andreas-schleicher-oecd-paris.html>

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Parents engage for a sound elementary school

New Homepage connected – resistance to Curriculum 21 is growing in the cantons

rt. Parents from different cantons take a stance for a good elementary school. On a newly opened homepage, www.elternfuereinegutevolksschule.ch, they postulate clear goals for a Swiss high-quality elementary school, such as it used to be only a few years ago. They reject the ongoing as well as the further planned school reforms.

It is obvious that the parents are dissatisfied with the school development. However, not leaving it at that, they formulate a counter-position, which is based on the traditional and proven Swiss school. The focus is turned on lessons guided by a dedicated teacher in a consistent class (see, for example, *Hattie* study). They clearly characterize and reject dubious methods of teaching and learning, that have already failed in Anglo-Saxon countries and which are now to be introduced by Curriculum 21 (LP 21).

One can feel the parents' concern to provide their children and all others with a good and sound public school education and not to deliver them to take part in a large-scale experiment à la LP 21.

So, it can only be recommended to all parents, teachers and education policy makers to have a look at this good and clearly designed website.

Contact persons for the Parents Committee and the related letter to parents are *Claudia Meier* (LU) and *Marlies Klesse* (GR). Both are dedicated mothers and teachers, who have already successfully resisted the HarmoS Agreement in their cantons.

It is the aim of the Committee to bring together parents from the various cantons affected by Curriculum 21 and to strengthen their concern at the cantonal level. On the homepage you can find for example a clear overview of the activities in all cantons against LP 21: "So, in the cantons of Basel-Country, Aargau and St Gallen popular initiatives are already in the progress of arising, in several other cantons preparations are under way. In many cantonal par-

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'Eltern für eine gute Volksschule'. The main heading is 'Eltern für eine gute Volksschule' and 'Nein zum Lehrplan 21'. Below this is a navigation bar with links: 'Willkommen', 'Kontakt', 'Aktuelles aus den Kantonen', 'Links', 'Lesenswertes', and 'Rechtliches'. The main content area features a large 'Willkommen' heading and an illustration of a teacher and students in a classroom. To the right, there is a section titled 'Der Elternbrief als PDF' with a link to 'Eltern für eine gute Volksschule Nein zum Lehrplan 21'. Below the illustration, there is a section titled 'Was wir Eltern von der Volksschule erwarten' with a list of demands:

1. Wir wollen eine Schule, in der unsere Kinder das lernen, was sie bei der Arbeit brauchen.
2. Wir wollen eine Schule, die den Kindern die Grundlagen der Leseförderung vermittelt.
3. Wir wollen eine Schule, die den Kindern die Grundlagen der Rechenfertigkeit vermittelt.
4. Wir wollen eine Schule, die den Kindern die Grundlagen der Fremdsprachenlehre vermittelt.

At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled 'Wir freuen uns, wenn Sie den Elternbrief weiterverbreiten.' and 'Gerne können Sie gedruckte Elternbriefe bei uns beziehen.'

liaments motions have been submitted by MPs of different parties. By the way, the decision of the EDK* has not been unanimous, but the Director of Education of Basel-Country publicly rejected Curriculum 21." (cf. homepage www.elternfuereinegutevolksschule.ch). Visitors to the homepage learn how strong resistance already is throughout Switzerland by now. It will surely be possible to bring the elementary school back on the well-proven ground of a sound basic education.

Directly to be printed as a PDF is the letter to parents, where, in a short, concise

* The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

and simple way, the parents present their demands for what a good primary school consists of and where they clearly oppose the EDK's suggestion to enforce the LP21 with a few cosmetic amendments. This letter to parents intends to additionally support and inform all interested persons, who are not satisfied with today's school and who actively want to become active for a good Swiss elementary school. The parents' concerns are widely supported by many initial signers from various cantons.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Initial signers: *Claudia Meier*, mother, kindergarten teacher, 6208 Oberkirch LU; *Marlies Klesse*, handicrafts teacher, kindergarten teacher, mother, 7215 Fanas GR; *Julia Wolfer*, mother, housewife, kinesiologist, co-president the Greens SG, 9468 Sax SG; *Dr phil Hermann Suter*, historian/educator, 6404 Greppen LU; *Daniela Holzmann*, 8124 Maur ZH; *Andrea Foussemi*, 9445 Rebstein SG; *Ariane Roth*, 5225 Bözberg AG; *Viktor Rüegg*, lawyer, Chance 21, 6010 Kriens LU; *Ivo and Brigitte Muri*, 6210 Sursee LU; *Joe* (Chance 21) and

Helen Willi, farmers, 6145 Fischbach LU; *Heidi Butti*, 8267 Berlingen TG; *Stefanie Stuckert*, 9565 Bussnang TG; *Felix Huwiler*, 8595 Altnau TG; *Lisa Leisi*, EDU, 9615 Dietfurt SG; *Bruno Dudli*, 9245 Sonnenthal SG; *Alois Brem*, farmer, 8964 Rudolfstetten-Friedlisberg AG; *André Imbach*, key account manager, 6405 Immensee SZ; *Daniel Trappitsch*, natural health professional, 9470 Buchs SG; *Lis and Rico Calcagnini*, remedial teacher, social pedagogue, 7223 Buchen GR; *Irene Herzog-Feusi*, president of the "Bürgerforum Freienbach"

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as of 15 June 2014

Curriculum 21 – misuse of learning time

“Under the pretext of ‘harmonizing’ the Swiss cantons, a curriculum is to be imposed on Switzerland that would destroy our elementary school system. The so-called Curriculum 21 is not a Swiss invention, but a product of the Anglo-American world that does not conform with our European educational tradition.

After six years of utmost secrecy, the 550-page ‘Lehrplan 21’ (LP 21, Curriculum 21) was published in June 2013. It is impenetrable! So we, the parents, have an extremely slim chance of getting to know what our children are, in fact, going to learn and what they aren’t going to learn.

The content is ineffable as well: Our children will be drilled in more than 4,700 different skills, many of which are nonsensical or too easy, too difficult or ideological. After facing strong criticism from different sides, the curriculum is now being ‘revised’, slimmed down a little, restyled a little ... but the basically wrong approach is to be maintained.

The curriculum newly provides only three ‘cycles’. The learning objectives formerly distributed on 3-4 school years each, are condensed. Thus, the children move individually in this wide range, and for us parents it is difficult to get to know our child’s level of performance in comparison to the rest of the class. This way, individualized learning is introduced into the classrooms, i.e. there are no more annual goals for all children they are to achieve together. Each child is somewhere else, and it will control its own occupations largely by means of self-regulation. This will lead to the isolation of most of our children.

Starting from nursery education, children are to ‘discover’, to ‘reflect’, and to ‘assess’, unbelievably many things for themselves, without having the necessary knowledge-base given to them before. Teachers are to function as ‘learning companions’ or as ‘coaches’ and are primarily to provide a ‘learning environment’, i.e. to offer learning material. ‘Ideally [according to Curriculum 21!], specially constructed learning environments, aided by teachers or by teaching materials, provide diverse opportunities to learn certain competences or various facets of it.’ [Original LP 21, Introduction, p. 6]

In this way, everything that makes up the particular role of the teacher personality and its significance for the child and its learning process is lost. The children are left alone, unable to cope sensibly, and they are not challenged and supported in accordance with their development.”

from: www.elfernfuereinegutevolkschule.ch,
Letter to Parents, page 4

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

What we, the parents, expect from the elementary school

1. **We want a school in which our children learn what they need for life**
 - A solid foundation in writing, reading, arithmetic, realia and industrial skills
2. **We want personally committed and competent teachers who understand and carry out their responsibilities – no “assistants” or “coaches”.**
 - Main objective: all children meet the expected levels of their class
 - Direct-instructed class lessons instead of weekly schedules
 - A step-by-step structure of the lesson with exact instructions
 - No performance of therapy on our children
 - Much time to practice the important material instead of wasting time on pointless activities and guessworking
 - The children should be given homework which they can solve themselves to reinforce what they have learned – no week-plan homework
 - Instructions for maintaining notebooks carefully and clear, clean handwriting
 - Thorough, if possible daily, correction of all school work
3. **We want clear yearly goals and suitable school books**
 - The maintenance of the good Swiss educational level
 - A definition of what each child needs to have learned every year
 - School books which are written in a systematic and organized step-by-step way and which are appropriate for children’s minds
4. **We want a value-based school**
 - Through attending the school, the children should be made competent to take over their responsibilities in their families, at their jobs and in direct democracy
 - The contents of the materials should include value orientation

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Swiss tradition of education

“Why should we move away from our proven Swiss elementary school to which we owe the great success of the Swiss model, the good condition of our business location as well as the prosperity and happiness of our population? Giving up this tradition, equals destroying the substance of our country. The development of the child’s personality including the development of all its powers is at the center of our Swiss tradition of education. The objective is that later on our children can take on responsibility in their families, as well as at work and as a citizens.

Why should we abandon the basics of *Pestalozzi* (head, heart and hand) to cheap American training programs? We don’t want our children to be conditioned only on tests like, for example, *LOT*, *cockpit*, *Stellwerk*, *Pisa*, etc.

Keeping, like in the US, the majority on a shockingly low level and educating only a small elite in expensive private schools deeply contradicts our conception of elementary school, the democratic principle of equal opportunities.”

from: www.elfernfuereinegutevolkschule.ch,
Letter to Parents, Page 3

(Translation *Current Concerns*)