

Current Concerns

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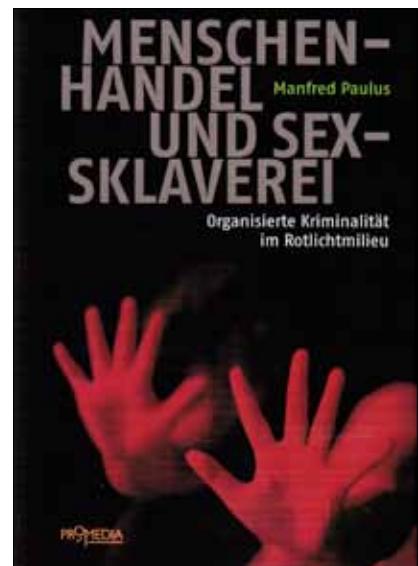
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Human Trafficking and Sex Slavery – Organised Crime in the Red Light District On the new book by Manfred Paulus

by Erika Vögeli

The rule of law, democracy, individual civil rights and liberties and respect for human dignity are undoubtedly among the most valuable achievements of European intellectual and legal history, and today, we enjoy them to an extent that hardly a generation has ever had before. Hence, a feeling of being more progressive and superior than countries in other regions of the world can sometimes be found in Western Europe. However, the recent book by Manfred Paulus, "Menschenhandel und Sexsklaverei – Organisierte Kriminalität im Rotlichtmilieu" (Human Trafficking and Sex Slavery – Organised Crime in the Red Light Milieu), counters this self-appraisal with a reality in which, in the midst of our constitutional states, people are turned into commodities, "the weakest and most helpless of a society being enslaved, used arbitrarily, deprived of their dignity, degraded and destroyed in an inhuman manner" (p. 7).

Manfred Paulus knows what he is talking about: 30 years of national and international investigative experience in the field of human trafficking and red-light crime, 25 years of prevention work on behalf of various organisations in Eastern and Southern Europe have led him into the darker parts of these areas and have sharpened his eye for the connections, for the mechanisms of dependency and for the ways of thinking and acting of the various parties involved. Furthermore, it has made him thoroughly familiar with the brutality of the red light milieu and the misery associated with it. All his lessons learned and insights have shown him one thing beyond doubt: The trend in some Western countries, which has led to so-called "more liberal" legislation under slogans such as "non-discrimination", "less repressive" sexual morals and a supposedly



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Manfred Paulus
(picture ma)

Manfred Paulus, retired First Chief Inspector, born in 1943, joined the police service in 1963 and headed the Department of Sexual Offences at the Ulm Criminal Investigation Department for many years. Accordingly, he has many years of experience

in the field of red light crime, trafficking in women and children and pedocriminality not only in Germany but internationally. Among other things, he conducted investigations in Thailand on trafficking in human beings, researched the causes and conditions of trafficking in women in Belarus on behalf of the European Union and followed the traces of the traffickers to the countries of origin of the trafficked women and children in Eastern Europe. Since 2000 he has taught at various police academies. Even in his retirement, he continues to be active as an author of

reference books, lecturer, speaker and internationally renowned expert on human trafficking and prostitution, not only in Germany but also in the recruitment countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. In the Republic of Moldova and in Belarus he conducts prevention measures and seminars on the subject of trafficking in women and supports the countries of origin in their efforts to provide information and prevention.

Books of the author:

- together with Adolf Gallwitz: *Grünkram. Die Kinder-Sex-Mafia in Deutschland* (Grünkram. The Child-Sex Mafia in Germany), Verlag Deutsche Polizeiliteratur 1998
- *Die Kinder-Sex-Mafia in Deutschland: Täterprofile, Pädophilenszene, Rechtslage* (The Child-Sex Mafia in Germany: Offender Profiles, Paedophile Scene, Legal Situation), 1999
- together with Adolf Gallwitz: *Kinderfreunde – Kindermörder: Authentische Kriminalfälle/Fallanalysen/Vorbeugung* (Child-Friends – Child-Murderers: Authentic Criminal Cases/Case Analysis/Revention), 2002
- together with Adolf Gallwitz: *Frauenhandel und Zwangsprostitution: Tatort Europa* (Trafficking in Women and Forced Prostitution: Crime Scene Europe), 2003
- together with Adolf Gallwitz: *Pädokriminalität weltweit: Sexueller Kindermisbrauch, Kinderhandel, Kinderprostitution und Kinderpornographie* (Pedocriminality Worldwide: Sexual Abuse of Children, Child Trafficking, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography), 2009
- *Im Schatten des Rotlichts. Verbrechen hinter glitzernden Fassaden. Auftragsmorde, Sexsklaverei, Zuhälterei, Waffen, Drogen* (In the Shadow of the Red Light. Crimes behind Glittering Facades. Contract Killings, Sex Slavery, Pimping, Guns, Drugs), 2016
- *Menschenhandel und Sexsklaverei entlang der Donau* (Human Trafficking and Sex Slavery along the Danube), 2018

"Human Trafficking and Sex Slavery ..."

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"more open" society, is an essential part of the problem. This development doesn't do anything to protect the victims of the sex business, rather the opposite.

Lies, fraud and brute force

According to Manfred Paulus, the alleged voluntariness of prostitution is a myth. All the examples and experiences he describes clearly show that nothing is voluntary. More than 90% of the women having to work in the red light milieu in Germany are foreigners, coming from Africa, South America, South-east Asia, but above all from South-east Europe. "They all have one thing in common: they come from poverty and many of them furthermore from broken and often catastrophic family circumstances. They all try to escape from an oppressive lack of prospects and from often precarious living situations and they want to have a little share in the prosperity and happiness of this world." (p. 43) This makes them susceptible to tempting offers. However, without violence, often combined with most brutal methods and deception, they probably would all return home as soon as possible, because what awaits them in Germany and elsewhere is nothing but hell. For example, *Ben*, who was sold to a child trafficker in Bangkok at the age of 12; she then was sold to a German sex tourist, who pretended to have a lucrative job for her in the catering trade in Germany; she finally was locked up in a shack where she had to "serve" rockers. Or *Ioana* from Romania – little did she know, that a pimp had forced her friend, who had been in Germany for some time, to recruit her with the idea that one could earn an enormous amount of money in Germany "as a cleaning lady". Instead of being able to give her son a better life working in such a job, she finally became a nursing case and died after having been beaten by her pimp. *Galina* from Belarus earned too little for her baby and her mother, so she followed the offer of a fellow countryman for a well-paid job as a geriatric nurse in Poland – but instead, she was sold to the German boss of a call-girl ring. Afterwards, she was imprisoned, enslaved and deported to Germany. *Zana* from Bulgaria was promised a great job as a waitress, where she could earn an incredible amount of money compared with Bulgarian standards. The 17-year-old *Maja*, living in poorest conditions in Bucharest, considered a neighbour's offer to work as a vegetable picker in Germany as the chance of a lifetime – she finally ended up in an apartment in Saarland, from where she was taken to a backyard brothel after being beaten and raped, and ordered: "You do everything the men want you to do."

Others became victims of a "loverboy": this is an increasingly common method, where girls are pretended to be loved by young men and promised a wonderful and golden future. Systematically removed from their previous network of relationships, they are less and less able to escape the gradually increasing violence. Finally, they end up where they are expected to be: in a brothel. As the example of a law student documents, German girls are not immune to this. (pp. 22)

Recruitment and smuggling is the technical term for these processes: recruitment by fraudulently pretending false perspectives, which then very quickly give way to a brutal reality, namely when, during the smuggling phase, women are intimidated by means of threats, violence, drugs and criminalisation and their self-esteem is broken in order to make them "useful" for the "work" that awaits them (Chapter 4).

The myth of voluntariness ...

It is brute, unspeakable force that prevails in this milieu – also "in plush brothels apparently beyond all doubt", in which, according to the responsible brothel operators "voluntarily working and self-determined prostitutes" are in reality brutally exploited and deprived of their human dignity.

Manfred Paulus leaves no doubt: Reasoning that prostitution is "voluntary", a "trade" like any other, serves the operators of this business of slaveholders. It abandons the victims, the women and children, and leaves them to a violent milieu and, not least, prepares the ground for organised crime, which is widely to be found in this area. For organised crime, trafficking in human beings has an incomparable "advantage" compared to the drugs or arms trade, as Manfred Paulus bitterly remarks: "A kilogram of heroin or a Kalashnikov can only be sold once, then you have to reinvest. 'Human goods', on the other hand, can be exploited for many years or even decades – and they are constantly renewable." (p. 121)

... favourite argument of the milieu

Wherever prostitution has been declared a "voluntary service" and an "ordinary

profession", which one would like to distinguish from forced prostitution and sex slavery, the problem of trafficking in women and children has dramatically increased. Contrary to the argumentation of the proponents it has nothing contributed to protect the affected women, girls and children. On the contrary it is – Manfred Paulus can also demonstrate this from his rich experience – the favourite argumentation of the milieu and organised crime. It provides them with the necessary leeway to pursue their business as unhindered and undisturbed as possible.

This, according to Manfred Paulus, raises questions: "How is it possible that German legislation [and not only this one] and the red light milieus, at least in part controlled and dominated by criminals, and their interest groups are so close in their argumentation and assessment of the situation?" (p. 24) He considers different aspects: Economic interests in view of the fact that the business with sex which has grown into a market worth billions, has "unquestionably become an asset in the framework of the German gross domestic product (GDP)." It is also a well-known practice of the milieu operators to use prostitutes specifically to approach influential, powerful men in order to involve them, to create dependencies. The fear of embarrassing revelations then does its part to maintain or even promote the realm of shadows in the area of human trafficking and sex slavery. For example through a complying legislation.

Lobby work by the organised crime

The profiteers of the billion-dollar business are engaged also in other forms of lobbying: In addition to very successful non-governmental organisations for the protection of women and children, Manfred Paulus also describes some strange "aid agencies" – often generously funded by government agencies, the European Union and even some diaconies. What they have in common is the "voluntary" doctrine, which includes talk of "sex work is work", a "common profession" etc. The fact is that they give the women seeking help little or nothing to get out of prostitution. Instead, they offer tips and tricks for "work", offers for re-entry, further training and professionalisation – in prostitution of course.

In 2015 *Amnesty International* declared that it would in future advocate the legalisation of prostitution, as its restriction discriminates against people who cannot meet a human need "in the traditional way". Manfred Paulus uses this example to show how targeted the milieu is in order to bring about appropriate legislation. Join and "pester mercilessly from within" was the lobbyist's call, because: "Getting Am-

"The voluntarism claimed by the milieu bosses, disseminated by the prostitution lobby and underlying German legislation, is a myth. Much would be achieved if it were to be admitted that this basic assumption of voluntary action is wrong in the context of the realities of the situation. It greatly favours and promotes the trade in the 'commodities woman and child' and sex slavery. It would achieve even more if it were recognised that this basic assumption of voluntary action legalises and continues to tolerate the illegal and criminal." (p. 9)

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nesty on our side will give our goal a huge boost." (pp. 180)

Mental and social damage

The author also raises the question of the individual and social damage of this whole development. For example in a "journey through the numerous punter forums on the Internet", where one encounters "an often inhuman, deeply humiliating and offensive language". "Every attempt to see even a hint of normality in the 'profession' of prostitution is brutally destroyed and ruined." (p. 163) And he raises the question about the effect of such inhuman descriptions on society, the question about the image of women conveyed by them and the harmfulness of such ideas to society. After his explanations it is not surprising that an American study finds "68% of women in prostitution develop a stress disorder which is comparable in its intensity to that of war veterans and victims of torture". (p. 164)

Already his look at the history of prostitution (Chapter 2) makes one thing especially clear: little has changed for the women or children concerned over the centuries or even millennia. One may take the self-evident and open use of violence centuries ago as worse – but coercion and brutal violence, humiliation, hopelessness and being at the mercy of others have a destructive effect on the lives of those affected, today as then.

Even the domina – eagerly presented as model of a free, self-confident woman – refers the idea of the "self-determined", "voluntary" prostitute into the realm of the unreal: "When a woman takes money for sexual acts, it is always a servant activity", a former dominatrix explains, and there are three reasons to do so and thus to enter prostitution: poverty, emotional problems or poverty and emotional problems." (p. 165)

Difficulties of police and justice

The author also draws on rich experience to describe the difficulties of policing and justice and not least the threats to democracy and the rule of law that result from this social development. The myth of voluntariness proves to be a real ideology of legal

"The current balance of power in the German milieus is not only an indication and proof of the existence of long since well-functioning and proven networking structures, ranging from the Roma ghettos in Bulgaria, the poor areas of Romania, the crisis and war zones in the Ukraine, the Albanian mountains or of Chisinau, Belgrade or Budapest to the red-light districts of Hamburg, Berlin, Hanover and Ulm. They are also an indication and proof

"But an actual containment of the problem of sex slavery and human trafficking requires a societal rethinking in those countries which today rely on misunderstood liberty and openness. Without human morality – and this includes the unconditional protection and respect for human dignity of everyone – liberty degenerates into power of the stronger, bolder, most impudent."

obstruction: Women are no longer victims, but "service providers", and "through this legalisation police work in the milieu can become considerably more difficult or even impossible." (p. 136) In view of the large number of red-light representatives in the courtrooms, women hardly dare to go to the police – if they had the freedom of movement at all. And right from the very beginning, they are taught the mafia law using appropriate methods, according to which treason is threatened with the most drastic punishments. The worst betrayal in the red-light milieu, however, would be if women "ever let it be known that they are not voluntarily engaged in prostitution, but are forced to do so" (p. 110). It is easy to understand that the work in this environment is very difficult and demanding for the police and the judiciary.

That this does not necessarily have to be the case, however, is shown by experiences in countries in which this whole wave of legalisation could not gain a foothold, such as Iceland, Norway, Canada, Northern Ireland, France, Ireland and Sweden, which Manfred Paulus describes in more detail.

Experiences with the Swedish model

Sweden also thought about a change of the prostitution laws – but with different preconditions and consequences: Here the purchase of sex was criminalised in 1998 and the punters were threatened with punishment. This legislation (the Swedish model) was based on Swedish society seeing prostitution basically as male violence against women and children." (p. 145) Although in the run-up to the legislation only about one third of the Swedish population

that trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of women and children in prostitution have become the most important and lucrative business area of the justifiably feared Organised Crime, alongside the closely related drug trafficking. This OC, which uses the red-light districts as gateways, is dangerous; its influence does not stop at the borders of the districts. It tries to penetrate further into society." (pp. 119)

supported a corresponding ban on sex buying, in the meantime this is welcomed by 80 % of the women and 60–70 % of the men. Prostitution is now considered as unacceptable. Although it could not be brought to vanish totally even in Sweden, Manfred Paulus comes to a clear conclusion: There is "no way around measures similar to the 'Swedish model'" if victims are really to be helped, human trafficking really to be curbed, the destructive consequences for victims and society really to be contained and organised crime in this area effectively to be stopped. (p. 148)

Education and support

Efforts of numerous non-governmental organisations are pointing in the same direction. Manfred Paulus appreciates and supports their activities. Their informational and educational work in the countries most affected, often in very sensible cooperation with representatives of the police, is bearing fruit as the police and legal measures in these countries do.

But an actual containment of the problem of sex slavery and human trafficking requires a societal rethinking in those countries which today rely on misunderstood liberty and openness. Without human morality – and this includes the unconditional protection and respect for human dignity of everyone – liberty degenerates into power of the stronger, bolder, most impudent.

The book is hard to digest at times, but urgently necessary, and one feels on each page the commitment of the author who long since reached retirement age and could have turned to other things as well. He knows: To tolerate violence ultimately means to submit to it. With all the consequences. The book is a (renewed) call to all to become aware of the problem and to work towards the urgently needed rethinking in ones own environment – to protect the victims and the generation growing up, but also to protect and preserve democracy, and the rule of law.

* Paulus, Manfred. *Menschenhandel und Sexsklaverei. Organisierte Kriminalität im Rotlichtmilieu. (Human Trafficking and Sex Slavery. Organised Crime in the Red Light Milieu.)* Vienna 2020. ISBN 978-3-85371-467-6

Fun society at the time of the Covid 19 pandemic?

That's where the fun stops!

by Winfried Pogorzelski, Switzerland

A society whose lifestyle is mainly focused on personal pleasure and is not interested in the common good is a fun society. Has a society that has devoted itself to hedonism ever been a sustainable one? Hardly ever, as the fall of the Roman Empire showed. And what good is a fun society at the time of a worldwide pandemic like that of COVID-19? Nothing at all, of course - more than that: it is dangerous. And yet, at the moment, it seems to be celebrating its happy revival!

It is true that this year's Street Parade, the Zurich version of the so-called Love Parade – the largest of its kind worldwide with up to one million participants – has been wisely cancelled, to the sorrow of the Zwingli city, to which it has left behind 90 tons of waste, but also a turnover of no less than 100 million Swiss francs. But we must nevertheless celebrate again, as the motto in wide circles of the population is, as soon and as often as possible and apparently at any price, even at the cost of public health, which is currently in great danger anyway.

At least that seems to have been the attitude of those Zurich party-goers who – as soon as clubs and bars were allowed to reopen under certain conditions – defied these conditions: they deliberately gave false, i.e. invented e-mail addresses; many left no details at all. The disaster only became apparent after a time delay, making it all the more difficult for authorities and club operators to react appropriately. "Things cannot go on like that," said Nathalie Rickli, Director of Health for the Can-

ton of Zurich. And she added: "The virus is no joke, not even for the fun society." She threatened to close the clubs in case of another super-spreading incident, i.e. if – as happened in Zurich – one infected person infects several people within a short time. Infections had also occurred at sporting events and among airline passengers. Her sobering conclusion: "Our calls to be careful have not been heeded." If things continue like this, cases of infection will also be reported in prostitution, which has recently been permitted again. Fortunately, it is said that there is currently a shortage of "workers", who have travelled to their home countries and have no possibility to return. And on top of all this, the summer holidays are now beginning everywhere...

You rub your eyes in amazement: What was that again about the rules of distance? With the hygiene measures like hand disinfection and mouth protection? We had all just practised this, and we practised it with the confidence that we were making a meaningful contribution to maintaining public health! But it is now quite obvious that occasions are now permitted by the state that are not compatible with the precautionary measures, which are still indispensable, because they simply cannot be observed: How is a masked person in a disco supposed to be able to consume alcohol, dance and at the same time speak loudly?

At least one measure, for which many in this country were desperately waiting and which has in some cases been in force abroad for some time, was announced

by the Federal Council on 1 July: From 6 July, public transport users will be required to wear a face mask, and more recently in shops in the Canton of Vaud. The Association of Swiss Cantonal Doctors is now also demanding compulsory masks throughout the public domain, as it has been practised for some time by our neighbour Germany. Since 9 July, in the north western Swiss Cantons of Basel Stadt, Baselland, Aargau and Solothurn, clubs and restaurants are now only allowed to accommodate a maximum of 100 people at a time.

And what was that about the fun society? It has never brought a community forward, but in the long run it did harm to it, so that it had to fear for its existence or at least suffered severe setbacks. The current variant is no coincidence: it was deliberately brought about, driven by the neoliberal absolutism of pleasure, of consumption for the pleasure of the consumer goods and entertainment industry. To experience and enjoy as much as possible in the limited time of life is the motto of the young people of today.

The end of the fun society has already been announced several times, most prominently by the author and journalist Peter Scholl-Latour in the wake of 9/11, and I would not mind if, on the occasion of the current pandemic, we were to say goodbye to it forever in order to devote ourselves more to promoting the common good, especially as the number of infected people continues to rise in our country, in our neighbouring countries and even more so worldwide ...

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Escalation between China and India

Peaceful co-existence or nuclear inferno at the Himalayas?

by Dr Matin Baraki, Marburg



Disputed borders and border areas between China and India. (Map Graphik News)



Matin Baraki
(picture Bremer-friedensforum)

Unnoticed by the global public because of the corona pandemic, dangerous tensions are building up at the Himalayas. This is how the current situation between the two nuclear powers, the People's republic of China and the Republic of India, can be summarised. Since the beginning of May China and India have concentrated additional troops along their common border. The arena is located in 4000 meters of altitude in Ladakh, a high plateau, which India has claimed for a long time as a part of Kashmir. China has occupied the area East of Ladakh around Lake Aksay-qin and renamed it to be Chinese territory.¹ Not only here, but at many points in the Himalayas, the border is controversial, as the former colonial power Great Britain left the region in unclear circumstances. The factual border as it is tolerated by both sides is referred to as "Line of Actual Control" (LAC).²

India and China have kept accusing each other of provoking the other side by allegedly improper patrols and trespassing

of the disputed border line. In 1962 this had culminated in a short but bloody war,³ which ended with the defeat of India. The disgraceful memory of this lost border conflict is still very much alive among the Indian elites.

On 5 May 2020 brawls between Chinese and Indian border patrols erupted, who engaged in fist fights on the shores of Lake Pangong. Tensions between both countries intensified on 25 May. In a severe brawl up to 250 soldiers were injured. It is the worst border crisis since 2017, when troops of the People's Republic of China and India had a face-off in Doklam, close to the Kingdom of Bhutan. This confrontation had lasted for 73 days before it was stopped by negotiations between Chinese party leader and head of state Xi Jinping and Indian prime minister Narendra Modi.⁴

Again the situation looks highly explosive. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi gathered generals and his security Advisor Ajit Doval for a crisis meeting on 26 May, the talks revolved around "India's military readiness". The news Agency PTI emphasised: "China's strategy to put military pressure on India will not work."⁵ China's head of state and ruling party Xi Jinping responded promptly. His country would increase the willingness to armed struggle, with-

out, however, explicitly referring to the tensions in the Himalayas. Shortly before, a spokesman for the Chinese foreign Ministry had stressed that the country will maintain a "consistent and clear position" in the border conflict and that it is the duty of the Chinese army to defend China's territories and national sovereignty. Now the tone gets rougher. The state-run "Global Times" published a report in which they spoke of several "illegal defenses" ranging into Chinese territory that have been built in India. The defence forces had no other option than to respond with movements of troops. India would bear the responsibility for the risk of an escalation.⁶

As early as mid of May Indian military analysts had raised the question of timing: Major General Ajay Das (retd.) spoke of the "aggressive maneuvers" of the Chinese military in the Himalayas as reminiscent of the behavior of the Chinese fleet in the South China sea. The newspaper "Financial Express" quoted the Indian security expert Ajey Lele with the words: "Why is this happening now, in the midst of the COVID-19-crisis?" Lele thinks that it is possible that China wanted to test the resolve of the Indian military, now that Delhi is so busy with

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the Coronavirus. And the former Indian Diplomat *Phunchok Stobdan* warns in the "Indian Express" against China intending to push back the Indian armed forces further West, in order to be closer to the strategically important Siachen glacier where Indian and Pakistani troops have been in a face-off for years.⁷ Since Pakistan and the People's Republic of China are military and strategic partners such a move would increase the pressure on India.

Beijing, in turn, had practiced earlier criticism of the construction of an Indian street close to the lake and in response had tripled the number of their patrol boats on the lake. These projects – by 2020, at least 66 new roads along the border – are a response of India to China's numerous infrastructure projects in the framework of its Initiative of the new silk road. Beijing has been expanding its influence in South Asia and Southeast Asia steadily in recent years, often venturing into regions which India has traditionally viewed as its exclusive backyard. In these remote areas India and the People's Republic of China are separated by the 3,488 kilometres long LAC.⁸

It is in any case becoming increasingly clear: neither side seems to want to give in, no side wants to convey the impression that she breaks in the mountains since both the Chinese and the Indian government have fueled nationalist feelings for domestic political purposes in recent years. "India Today" reported on 27 May about the alleged transfer of 5,000 soldiers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to Ladakh. India would follow suit, if China was to increase the number of its troops, it was stated in press reports from New Delhi. The press agency *Reuters* quoted an Indian government spokesman as saying that defense systems would be built in the region on both sides of the border. Chinese trucks are to transport material into the region – an indication that Beijing could adjust to a longer conflict.⁹

Political commentators in India speak of an "unprecedented situation". On 26

May the Beijing government announced to start evacuation of Chinese citizens beginning of June, including students, tourists and business travellers.

With the death of 20 Indian soldiers at the Indian-Chinese border in June a further escalation might have occurred, strategists in the region warn. According to Indian sources there had been victims on the Chinese side, too. While the government in Beijing did not confirm this, the chief editor of the "Global Times" announced on twitter that there had been Chinese casualties.¹⁰ *Brahma Chellaney*, strategic expert at the *Centre for Policy Research* in Delhi, talked on Indian television about a turning point. "After this incident things will never be the same again between India and China"¹¹, he said. That sounded dire, since mutual distrust is already now quite profound. The foreign secretaries of both nuclear powers expressed their will to "cool down" the border conflict between the two countries. Both sides had a telephone conference. They agreed to handle the events in the Galwan valley „in a fair way“ and aim for a solution of the conflict.¹²

Noteworthy in conclusion, US administrations have tried for years to recruit India as a strategic partner and to instrumentalise the country against the PR of China.¹³ Already US president *Bill Clinton* had re-recognised India as the only nuclear power in South Asia rather than their closest long-time ally, the nuclear power Pakistan. The government in Beijing warns their counterparts in India not to let themselves be instrumentalised by the *Trump* administration in the China-US controversy about the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Hongkong. One should hope that the political and military elites of India are self-confident and prudent enough not to let themselves be belittled to mere henchmen of the USA.

⁴ cf. Perras, Arne/Deuber, Lea: Grenzkonflikt im Himalaja: "Die Unruhe zwischen China und Indien wächst" (Border conflict in the Himalayas: The unrest between China and India is growing), in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), 27 May 2020.

⁵ ibid.

⁶ ibid.

⁷ ibid.

⁸ cf. Fähnders, Till/Böge, Friederike: "Tote, aber keine Schüsse", in: FAZ, 17 June 2020, p. 6.

⁹ cf. Perras, Arne/Deuber, Lea: "Grenzkonflikt im Himalaja: Die Unruhe zwischen China und Indien wächst", in: SZ, 27 May 2020.

¹⁰ cf. Fähnders, Till/Böge, Friederike: "Tote, aber keine Schüsse", in: FAZ, 17.6.2020, p. 6.

¹¹ Perras, Arne/Deuber, Lea: "Grenzkonflikt im Himalaja: Die Unruhe zwischen China und Indien wächst", in: SZ, 27 May 2020.

¹² cf. Fähnders, Till: "Entspannung im Himalaja" (Detente in the Himalayas), in: FAZ, 7 July 2020, p. 5.

¹³ cf. Fähnders, Till: "Gegen Chinas Salamitaktik" (Against China's salami tactics), in: FAZ, 23 June 2020, p. 8.

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¹ cf. Baraki, Matin: "Kashmir – genesis of the conflict", in: *Current Concerns*, No. 19, 9 September 2019.

² cf. Fähnders, Till/Böge, Friederike: "Tote, aber keine Schüsse" (Deaths, but no gunfire), in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), 17 June 2020, p. 63

³ cf. ibid.

Security Council underlines support for Secretary-General's global ceasefire appeal, fight against COVID-19

Resolution 2532 (2020) unanimously adopted

Pressrelease of the UN Security Council from 1 July 2020 (SC/14238)

The Security Council, in a 1 July videoconference meeting*, announced its decision to adopt a resolution expressing its support for the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire, which he issued in March to help unite efforts to fight COVID-19 in the most vulnerable countries.

In unanimously adopting resolution 2532 (2020), the Council demanded a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on its agenda and supports the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives and Special Envoys in that respect.

The 15-member organ called upon all parties to armed conflicts to engage immediately in a durable humanitarian pause for at least 90 consecutive days, to enable the safe, unhindered and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance, and provision of related services by impartial humanitarian actors, in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The pause would also enable medical evacuations, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian and refugee law as applicable.

However, the Council affirmed that the general and immediate cessation of hostilities and humanitarian pause does not apply to military operations against *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL/Da'esh), *Al-Qaida* and *Al-Nusra Front*, and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with *Al-Qaida* or ISIL, and other Council-designated terrorist groups.

The Council requested the Secretary-General to help ensure that all relevant parts of the United Nations system, including country teams, accelerate their response to the COVID-19 pandemic with an emphasis on countries in need, including those in situations of armed conflict or affected by humanitarian crises.

The 15-member organ also requested the Secretary-General to provide updates on the Organization's efforts to address the coronavirus in countries facing situations of armed conflict or affected by humanitarian crises, as well as on the impact of COVID-19 on the ability of peacekeeping operations and special political missions to deliver their mandated priority tasks.

Furthermore, it requested the Secretary-General to instruct peacekeeping operations to provide support, within their mandates and capacities, to host country authorities in their efforts to contain the pandemic.

The Council also acknowledged the critical role that women play in COVID-19 response efforts, as well as the disproportionate negative impact of the pandemic, notably the socioeconomic impact, on women and girls, children, refugees, internally displaced persons, older persons and persons with disabilities. It called for concrete actions to minimize this impact and ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth in the development and implementation of an adequate and sustainable response to the pandemic.

* Security Council resolutions are currently adopted through a written procedure vote under temporary, extraordinary and provisional measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as set out in a letter (document S/2020/253) by its President for March (China).]

Source: www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14238.doc.htm

Is the corona pandemic giving the world economy a new face?

More confidence in your own country

km. At the beginning of July, the *Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce* (DIHK) published a survey of 3300 member companies of *German Chambers of Commerce Abroad, delegations and representative offices* (AHKs) represented worldwide.¹ The 16-page report is entitled "AHK World Business Outlook. Special Survey on COVID-19 Effects" and is intended to record the opinion of the companies surveyed on the economic effects of the corona pandemic in the summer of 2020. The respondents are branches and subsidiaries of German companies and companies with close ties to Germany. 48% of the responding companies come from the industry and construction sector, 34% from the service and health sector and another 18% are trading and logistics companies. Smaller companies with less than 100 employees worldwide account for almost 50% of the respondents. 24% of the companies have 100 to 1000 employees. Large companies with more than 1.000 employees account for 26% of respondents.

The survey results show that the economic consequences of the corona pan-

demic are considered to be very large. The extent of the crisis is perceived as "tremendous": "59 % see a lower demand for their products and services. 83 % of the companies expect a slump in sales, 15 % even at least a halving of their turnover". The crisis is also changing business policy: "56 % want to invest less, 43 % want to reduce staff. 38 % of companies are looking for new suppliers." The respondents assume that the crisis cannot be overcome quickly: "93 % do not expect an economic recovery until 2021 or even beyond."

Production downtimes and delivery difficulties have been recorded in almost all regions of the world. Of the 38 % of German companies abroad that are increasingly looking for new suppliers, more than 60 % do so primarily with local suppliers in the respective country. 37 % of the 38 % mentioned are looking for new suppliers in the European Union and 31 % in their parent country Germany.²

This, according to the study, "primarily affects smaller companies, which in comparison to large companies are looking for new suppliers to an even greater extent

and are then also increasingly looking towards Europe". What consequences are to be expected? "One result of the corona crisis could be that, when searching for suppliers, companies are increasingly looking at default risks in order to obtain their necessary preliminary products and goods even in times of crisis or in the event of a pandemic." New suppliers are particularly necessary for companies in the retail and construction sectors – around one in two companies is looking for them. The need for new suppliers is also great in industry: 40 % of all industrial companies are planning changes in their supply chain.

21 % of the companies are even thinking of relocating previously outsourced activities back to the European Union, and almost 20 % of the responding companies plan to return to their home country Germany.

¹ <https://www.dihk.de/resource/blob/25672/1a0e7354855aa46f3fcceeb34f9eff30/ahk-world-business-outlook-2020-corona-sonderbefragung-data.pdf>

² The percentage figures add up to more than 100, because multiple answers were possible.

This voice should also be heard

The Russian President Vladimir Putin has once again commented on the history of the Second World War

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

“Putin is playing the Stalin game” – this sharp polemics from the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” of 2 July 2020 against a recent substantial article of the Russian President *Vladimir Putin* on history and current implications of World War II give reason to thoroughly read the Russian President’s contribution. The article appeared in English language¹ on 18 June 2020 in the US American journal *The National Interest*, the following day also on the Russian President’s homepage², after the Russian original article³ appeared the same day. On 19 June the Russian Federation’s embassy published the text in German translation.⁴

The National Interest chose the headline “Vladimir Putin: The real lessons of the 75th anniversary of World War II”; on the Russian President’s homepage we read: “75th anniversary of the Great Victory: Shared responsibility to history and our future”, very similar the official German translation.

We cannot reproduce all information and the text’s complete argumentation here, but reading the whole text is highly recommended.

What moved and still moves people in Russia

In a first part, the Russian President is addressing the question of what the Second World War and the victory of the Red Army over the German Wehrmacht and its allies meant for the Soviet Union, but above all for the people living in the country. In this, he includes the history of his own family who, like all inhabitants of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), has suffered from the siege of the city and whose memory the Russian President cherishes carefully. But he also addresses the question of what was essential for the people in the Soviet Union to be able to resist the attack on their country: they had been united by love of their homeland, their motherland. It was “one of the characteristic features of the peoples of Russia to fulfil their duty without feeling sorry for themselves when the circumstances so demand.” Vladimir Putin adds: “selflessness, patriotism, love for their home, their family and Fatherland remain fundamental and integral to the Russian society to this day.” The first part of the article ends with a declaration: “We have a responsibility to our past and our future to do our utmost to prevent those horrible tragedies from happening ever again.” Hence, as

Putin says, “he was compelled to come out with an article about World War II and the Great Patriotic War.”

Historical storytelling, history politics and historical science

Starting point for the second, historical part of the article is the criticism of the role of the Soviet Union regarding the German attack on Poland on 1 September 1939, a criticism that, in September 2019, made the European Parliament adopt a resolution making the Soviet Union, just like Nazi Germany, responsible for the outbreak of the war, declaring the Non-Aggression Pact between the countries of 23/24 August 1939 as pivotal for the outbreak of war. (5)

The Russian President is contradicting this verdict with extensive explanations on the developments of the time. He sees “a need to further examine the reasons that caused the world war and reflect on its complicated events, tragedies and victories, as well as its lessons, both for our country and the entire world.” He emphasises that it was “crucial to rely exclusively on archive documents and contemporary evidence while avoiding any ideological or politicised speculations.”

The Versailles Treaty and the rise of the Nazis

According to Putin, “the root causes of World War II mainly stem from the decisions made after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles became a symbol of grave injustice for Germany.” Putin writes the victorious powers of World War I had been concerned about “robbing” the country by “enormous reparations”, citing the French Marshall Foch’s verdict on the Treaty of Versailles: “This is not peace. It is an armistice for twenty years.” The “national humiliation of Germany” had become “a fertile ground for radical and revenge-seeking sentiments in Germany”. The Nazis “skilfully played on people’s emotions and built their propaganda promising to deliver Germany from the ‘legacy of Versailles’ and restore the country to its former power.” The Nazis, according to Putin, were “essentially pushing German people into war”.

The politics of the victorious powers of World War I

Putin adds: “Paradoxically, the Western states, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, directly or indi-



The President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.
(picture <https://russische-botschaft.ru/de/>)

rectly contributed to this. Their financial and industrial enterprises actively invested in German factories and plants manufacturing military products.” “Besides, many people in the aristocracy and political establishment supported radical, far-right and nationalist movements”.

The Treaty of Versailles had changed the map of Europe with “borders of new European states randomly set [...]. That boundary delimitation was almost immediately followed by territorial disputes and mutual claims that turned into ‘time bombs’”. Putin also criticises the League of Nations which had contributed little to preserving the peace and even gave its consent to the “Munich Agreement” of September 1938.

The “Munich Agreement”

Putin goes into the “Munich Agreement” in detail [the English translation calls it “Munich Betrayal”]. The agreement, which was concluded in Munich by the government representatives of Germany, Italy, Great Britain and France, separated the territories of the German-speaking Sudeten from Czechoslovakia, which was founded in 1918, and assigned them to National Socialist Germany. The government of Czechoslovakia had no say in this. The Polish government of the time participated in this agreement from the background, as it also claimed territories in Czechoslovakia. Putin presents a number of documents to show how close the German-Polish alliance was on this issue. And not only for Poland, but also for Great Britain and France, the “Munich Agreement” had not been a contribution to peace in Europe and the world,

"This voice should also ..."

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but a very important piece in the mosaic for directing the aggression of National Socialist Germany towards the Soviet Union. Thus he writes: "It was the Munich Betrayal that served as the 'trigger' and made a great war in Europe inevitable." And: "Britain, as well as France, which was at the time the main ally of the Czechs and Slovaks, chose to withdraw their guarantees and abandon this Eastern European country to its fate. In so doing, they sought to direct the attention of the Nazis eastward so that Germany and the Soviet Union would inevitably clash and bleed each other white." The Soviet government alone, he said, had endeavoured at the time to forge a European alliance against Nazi Germany and to secure the existence of Czechoslovakia. In vain. Even more: "The Munich Betrayal demonstrated the Soviet Union that the Western countries would deal with security issues without taking its interests into account. In fact, they could even create an anti-Soviet front, if needed." But even after the "Munich Agreement", the government of the Soviet Union tried to forge a European alliance against Germany until August 1939. That too was in vain.

The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 23/24 August 1939

Only then had the government of the Soviet Union made the decision to conclude a treaty with Germany. Putin writes "In these circumstances, the Soviet Union signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. It was practically the last among the European countries to do so. Besides, it was done in the face of a real threat of war on two fronts – with Germany in the west and with Japan in the east, where intense fighting on the Khalkhin Gol River was already underway."

Putin also answers the question of how the "Secret Protocol" to the Non-Aggression Pact on the division of spheres of influence between Germany and the Soviet Union has to be assessed. He gives a quite precise explanation of the Soviet position and policy at that time, but also refers to a resolution of the Supreme Soviet of 24 December 1989, which officially denounced the Secret Protocols as an "act of personal power". These secret protocols, it was said in 1989, "in no way reflected 'the will of the Soviet people, who bear no responsibility for this collusion'".

The German-Polish war 1939

Putin goes into detail about the background and the course of the German-Polish war and the behaviour of the So-

viet Union. For example, he shows that the Soviet Union hesitated for a long time to invade Poland and also refrained from drawing the new border agreed with Germany in the secret protocol, but limited itself to an area further east that had belonged to the Soviet Union before Poland's war of aggression against the Soviet Union in the 1920s and had been conquered and occupied by Poland. The Soviet government had only decided to attack Poland in September 1939 when Poland's defeat was obvious and the Polish government had fled abroad and Germany threatened to occupy all of Poland.

Putin's historical conclusion

Once again, not all information and arguments of the text can be presented here, but the historical conclusion of the Russian President shall be quoted: "World War II did not happen overnight, nor did it start unexpectedly or all of a sudden. And German aggression against Poland was not out of nowhere. It was the result of a number of tendencies and factors in the world politics of that time. All pre-war events fell into place to form one fatal chain. But, undoubtedly, the main factors that predetermined the greatest tragedy in the history of mankind were state egoism, cowardice, appeasement of the aggressor who was gaining strength, and unwillingness of political elites to search for compromise. Therefore, it is unfair to claim that the two-day visit to Moscow of Nazi Foreign Minister *Joachim von Ribbentrop* [in August 1939] was the main reason for the start of World War II. All the leading countries are to a certain extent responsible for its outbreak. Each of them made fatal mistakes, arrogantly believing that they could outsmart others, secure unilateral advantages for themselves or stay away from the impending global catastrophe."

And he adds: "Saying this, I by no means intend to take on the role of a judge, to accuse or acquit anyone, let alone initiate a new round of international information confrontation in the historical field that could set countries and peoples at loggerheads. I believe that it is academics with a wide representation of respected scholars from different countries of the world who should search for a balanced assessment of what happened. We all need the truth and objectivity. On my part, I have always encouraged my colleagues to build a calm, open and trust-based dialogue, to look at the common past in a self-critical and unbiased manner. Such an approach will make it possible not to repeat the mistakes committed back then and to ensure peaceful and successful development for years to come."

How to continue in the world community?

A very important way to achieve this - and this brings us to the third part of the contribution - is the commitment of the Russian President to maintain the international order after the end of the war, as established under international law and institutionally in the Charter of the United Nations. Putin refuses to question the construction of the Security Council. He emphasises the great importance of the veto right of the five victorious powers in preventing another great, new world war. "The victorious powers", Putin says, "left us a system that has become the quintessence of the intellectual and political quest of several centuries." And: "What is the power of veto in the UN Security Council? To put it bluntly, it is the only reasonable alternative to a direct confrontation between major countries. It is a statement by one of the five powers that a decision is unacceptable to it and is contrary to its interests and its ideas about the right approach. And other countries, even if they do not agree, take this position as a given, abandoning any attempts to realise their unilateral efforts. It means that in one way or another it is necessary to seek compromises. [...] The calls that have been made quite often in recent years to abolish the power of veto, to deny special opportunities to permanent members of the Security Council are actually irresponsible. After all, if that happens, the United Nations would in essence become the League of Nations – a meeting for empty talk without any leverage on the world processes."

The responsibility of the victorious powers for the world of the future

Putin's conclusion for present and future: "Today the world is going through quite a turbulent time. Everything is changing, from the global balance of power and influence to the social, economic and technological foundations of societies, nations and even continents. In the past epochs, shifts of such magnitude have almost never happened without major military conflicts. Without a power struggle to build a new global hierarchy. Thanks to the wisdom and farsightedness of the political figures of the Allied Powers, it was possible to create a system that has restrained from extreme manifestations of such objective competition, historically inherent in the world development."

The Russian President suggests a summit meeting of the five veto and nuclear powers. It would "be useful to discuss steps to develop collective principles in world affairs. To speak frankly about the issues of preserving peace, strengthening global and regional security, strategic arms control, about joint efforts in

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75 years end of the war

“Only understanding leads to freedom”¹

Daniel Barenboim’s lessons from the Holocaust

wp. In the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” of May 12, 2020, Daniel Barenboim takes the upcoming swearing-in of the 35th government of Israel on May 13, 2020 – and probably also the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War – as an opportunity to examine what lessons must be drawn from the Holocaust if freedom and peace are to be established.

An essential principle of Judaism is the striving for justice for all people, so Barenboim. Israel, however, is handing over this capital with its behavior and its policies, namely that its culture of remembrance is only about the injustice that has been inflicted on it, and secondly through the unjust treatment of the Palestinians. It

only makes sense to remember if there is a constructive aspect of what this means: For Israel, the Holocaust must not be “the only moral criterion for its existence”², and the Palestinians can only accept Israel if they “accept its history, including the Holocaust”. However, it is not just about knowledge, but also about understanding, that – following a thought by Spinoza – leads to freedom: The Holocaust with all “its horror” and “its tragedy”; belongs to “humanity as a whole”. He must – and it should be added, like all other monstrous crimes against humanity – be understood by people so that they do not remain “slaves to memories”.

Finally Barenboim made a clear statement on Israel’s politics: not only Israel’s

“ethics of remembrance” was wrong, but also the occupation and settlement policies in the West Bank and the annexation of parts of this area planned by the new coalition government. But also the Palestinians are seen in a duty: Just as the Israelis must understand the Palestinians, the Palestinians must understand the Israelis. And Barenboim would not be Barenboim if he did not involve the music as a teacher who lives from dialogue, from counterpoint: “If there is only one voice, it is an ideology and that could never happen in music.” •

¹ Barenboim, Daniel. “Nur Verstehen führt zur Freiheit” in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of May 12, 2020

² Translation of all quotes *Current Concerns*

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countering terrorism, extremism and other major challenges and threats.”

* * *

“Putin is playing the Stalin game” is, as quoted above, one of the responses in our countries to the contribution of the Russian president. This is no exception in the mainstream Western media. This is no proper way to accommodate Vladimir Putin’s concerns. Presumably, it is not easy to abandon Cold War positions and politico-strategically generated historical narratives that have been held for decades – especially within the context of a new Cold War policy. If confrontation and more tension are the goal, that is hardly to be hoped for. But if peace is the goal, such insinuations are disturbing. They disrupt the dialogue, which is urgently needed. Why not quote what the text says? For example the differentiating statement: “Stalin and his entourage, indeed, deserve many legitimate accusations. We remember the crimes committed by the regime against its own people and the horror of mass repressions. In other words, there are many things the Soviet leaders can be reproached for, but poor understanding of the nature of external threats is not one of them.” Or: “Of course, fear, confusion and desperation were taking over some people during this terrible and bloody war. There were betrayal and desertion. The harsh splits caused by the revolution and the Civil War, nihilism, mockery of national history, traditions and faith that the Bolsheviks tried to impose, especially in the first years after coming to power – all of this had its impact.”

The Russian president does not rely on any “leaders”, but on the people of the country. So, the above quotation is followed by these sentences: “But the general attitude of the Soviet citizens and our compatriots who found themselves abroad was different – to save and protect the Motherland. It was a real and irrepressible impulse. People were looking for support in true patriotic values.”

Is that what’s so “annoying” about the Russian president? Is that why there is practically no appropriate coverage in our media about Russia, and even less about the country’s current president?

You don’t have to consent to everything the Russian president has written. But thinking about it would be appropriate. But you can only do that if you also take note of what he has really written. •

¹ <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/vladimir-putin-real-lessons-75th-anniversary-world-war-ii162982>

² <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63527>

³ <https://russische-botschaft.ru/de/2020/06/19/75-jahrestag-des-grossen-sieges-gemeinsame-verantwortung-vor-geschichte-und-zukunft/>

⁴ <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63527>

⁵ European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2019 “Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe”, [www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.pdf](http://europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.pdf)

Security Council adopts German-Belgian draft resolution on cross-border aid delivery into Syria

km. On 11 July the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution extending authorisation of a mechanism that brings life-saving humanitarian aid into Syria for another year, through one Turkish border crossing.

The text received 12 votes in favour to none against, with 3 abstentions (China, Dominican Republic, Russian Federation). The resolution is a compromise, the result of a hard struggle in the Security Council. In the days before, Russia and China had vetoed the draft resolutions submitted by Germany and Belgium.

Russia is in favour of phasing out the mechanism for cross-border delivery of humanitarian aid to Syria. In order to help the population in areas not controlled by the government, it has so far been appropriate to deliver humanitarian aid via Syria’s neighbouring countries. Now, however, the situation on the ground has changed, the Syrian

army is bringing more and more areas under its control and the mechanism is no longer necessary. Humanitarian aid should now be delivered via Damascus.

The Permanent Mission of Russia to the United Nations had pointed out on 10 July that the mechanism for cross-border delivery of humanitarian aid had been established in 2014 as an exceptional measure. At that time, the mechanism represented a compromise to solve the problems within the conflict-ridden country and alleviate the plight of those in need. However, there was no doubt that it “was contrary to the principles of international humanitarian law and undermined Syrian sovereignty”.

Even after the adoption of the resolution, most Western media and politicians still put Russia and China in the dock. Both states would prevent humanitarian aid for millions of people in northern Syria. Russia’s position is mostly not presented.

Big question mark on Federal Council foreign policy programme

What has neutral Switzerland got to do on the UN Security Council?

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

In his speech on 26 June 2020 in Geneva on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations' Charter, Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis confirmed Switzerland's candidacy for a seat on the UN Security Council for the years 2023/24, a candidacy long hatched and nurtured in Federal Bern.¹ As early as 2011 the Federal Council decided, despite serious reservations on many sides, to officially submit Switzerland's candidature for a non-permanent mandate on the Security Council. Over the years, a number of initiatives were launched in parliament to counter this submission, but unfortunately all of them were rejected by the majority of both Councils.

*Today, the Federal Council's goal has disastrously come within reach: namely to obtain a seat in the UN Security Council, this instrument of power which, contrary to the principle of equal rights for all states, is authorised to legitimise coercive measures against member states, including war missions, "for the maintenance or restoration of world peace" (Articles 39-43 of the Charter). Professor Hans Köchler has repeatedly written on this issue in Current Concerns. His valuable contributions have been published as a book by *Zeit-Fragen* in 2019.²*

For the great powers, the Security Council may in practice be an instrument to try to avert a world conflagration with their veto. For Switzerland, on the other hand, a seat on the Security Council ought to be rejected because it would contradict the principle of neutrality, an indispensable part of the Swiss concept of government.

Switzerland only joined the UN as a full member in 2002 – and not because the Swiss were against positive activities within the UN framework. On the contrary, Switzerland has actively supported the UN since its foundation, with the establishment and maintenance of international Geneva, the UN's most important seat next to New York, and with major personnel and financial contributions to the United Nations' numerous social, humanitarian and cultural sub-organisations. Instead of the CHF 20 million a year that Switzerland would have had to pay as a member at the end of the 1980s, it was then contributing around CHF 170 million a year to the UN and its sub-organisations.³ Although the majority of the population approved of these activities, the voters rejected accession to the UN with a massive

"no" vote of over 75 per cent of the votes and from all cantons in the referendum of 16 March 1986. Finally, in the vote of 3 March 2002, a not exactly overwhelming majority of 54.6 per cent of the Swiss voted yes to joining the UN (with a wafer-thin cantonal majority of 12 to 11). What was the reason?

The 1986 referendum: Swiss neutrality as the main reason against joining the UN

In the Federal Council's 1986 voting booklet, the "Action Committee against Accession to the UN" argued in plain language: "The main reason that makes accession to the UN impossible for us is its incompatibility with our permanent and armed neutrality. The Charter stipulates that members must take economic, transport and diplomatic measures, i.e. sanctions, against individual states in accordance with the Security Council's decision. Even neutral Switzerland would be forced to implement such sanctions against other states. This would be a clear, blatant violation of neutrality, because the unilateral declaration of our neutrality which the Federal Council is to make according to the draft has no legal significance and would not exempt us from the obligation to impose sanctions." And further: "We would have to follow the Security Council's will, which is not ours, and that duty is in open contradiction to the constitutional article according to which the first purpose of the Confederation is the 'assertion of the independence of our fatherland against the outside'." (Voting booklet, p. 6)

The 1986 referendum proposal contained the following provision: "Before accession, the Federal Council will make a solemn declaration in which it expressly confirms that Switzerland will maintain its permanent and armed neutrality."

So much for the recent history of Swiss neutrality policy. Even at that time, the stone of contention was the Security Council, even though a seat for Switzerland on this body was not an issue. What is striking is the unity with which the voters defended themselves against Federal Bern's imposition.

Swiss commitment to a more peaceful world in the Security Council?

Today we live in a different era. There are Swiss who have almost got used to the fact that, by exposing them to a constant stream of questionable messages, their

"representatives of the people" mean to lure them away from meaningful, historically grown principles of the state and nudge them into a supposedly better and fairer world.

It was in this spirit that on 26 June in Geneva, Federal Councillor Cassis attempted to whitewash the Swiss candidacy for the UN Security Council in an almost grotesque way: "Cet engagement en faveur d'un monde plus juste, plus pacifique et, donc, plus vivable est la base de notre candidature à un siège au Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies pour les 2023 à 2024. Voici dévoilé le slogan de notre candidature: 'La Suisse. Un Plus pour la Paix - Switzerland. A plus for peace.'" In English: "This commitment to a fairer, more peaceful and therefore more liveable world is the basis for our candidacy for a seat on the United Nations Security Council for 2023 to 2024. In the Security Council, we want to be a Plus for Peace. So here is the slogan of our candidacy: 'Switzerland.' A Plus for Peace."⁴

In this fantasy sketched by the Swiss head of the FDFA (Foreign Minister) no-one who has read Professor Köchler's book or even only the relevant articles in Chapter VII of the UN Charter (see box) will recognise the Security Council, that body dominated by the great powers.

Small states have hardly any influence in the Security Council – they can take more suitable measures

According to Article 23 of the UN Charter, the Security Council consists of 15 members of the United Nations. China, France, Russia, Great Britain and the USA are permanent members; the ten non-permanent members are elected by the UN General Assembly for a two-year term each. Paragraph 1 of Art. 23 prescribes "an appropriate geographical distribution of seats." In practice, they are allocated as follows: Africa 3 seats, Asia/Pacific 2 seats, Latin America 2 seats, Eastern Europe 1 seat, Western Europe and others 2 seats. For the two Western European seats, Malta is the only other country besides Switzerland to apply for 2023/2024.

The undemocratic voting procedure in the Security Council has been explained in detail several times by Professor Köchler. Here is just a brief explanation: According to Article 27 of the UN Charter, each member has one vote. In all important matters, the approval of nine of the 15

"Big question mark on ..."

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members is required. In order for a decision to come about, the approval of the five permanent member states is necessary, i.e. each of them can block a decision by voting against it (veto right). How did George Orwell characterise such conditions in his "Animal Farm?" "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others." It should be added that the veto right of the great powers can prove to be quite useful in some dangerous situations in order to avoid a direct war between individual great powers. However, the small neutral state of Switzerland – and most other states – do not play in this league.

In a *Radio SRF* broadcast on 24 April 2019, it was confirmed that it is very difficult for non-permanent members to exert influence in the UN Security Council. According to a study by the *International Peace Institute*, however, in 2017/2018 for example Sweden made progress possible in the Security Council "in the humanitarian field – especially with regard to access for aid agencies in Syria."⁵

But surely we do not need a representative on the Security Council for this! In the humanitarian field, Switzerland has for a long time had far more suitable means of cooperation with other states and international organisations: in particular the ICRC and the Good Offices, but also the SDC (*Agency for Development Cooperation of the Swiss Confederation*), and Swiss commitment in numerous UN organisations such as UNDP (UN Develop-

ment Programme), OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) as well as in the OSCE.

**Votes from Parliament:
Mandate in Security Council
diametrically opposed to the
Confederation's principle of neutrality**

In its reports and statements, the Federal Council relentlessly asserts that a Security Council mandate is compatible with the law of neutrality and Switzerland's neutrality policy. In its report of 5 June 2015, it states, among other things, that only a small part of the Security Council's decisions contain coercive measures [in accordance with Article 42/43 of the UN Charter]. Moreover, the coercive measures taken rarely concern an armed conflict between states, but mostly internal conflicts to which the principle of neutrality was not applicable. Furthermore, coercive measures to which the Security Council gives the go-ahead were not acts of war in the sense of the law of neutrality, because the Security Council does not act as a party to the conflict, but "acts on the basis of a mandate from all member states which have entrusted it with the maintenance and restoration of peace as guardian of the international order."⁶

Here, the Federal Council is confusing the law of neutrality and neutrality policy: if Switzerland takes sides in a domestic conflict, this does in fact not violate the law of neutrality in its narrower sense, but it does violate the neutrality policy that Switzerland is obliged to follow (see box on the law and policy of neutrality). How will you explain this subtle difference to

the other party when Switzerland takes the one party's side in a domestic conflict and also wants to provide humanitarian aid in the country concerned! And explain to the suffering civilian population, on whom the Security Council is imposing economic sanctions, that Switzerland is supporting these sanctions in order to "restore peace" ... Such hair-splitting by the Federal Council is fundamentally contrary to the spirit and purpose of Swiss neutrality. Is it really worth it – just to be in the photos of the UN power circles?

Neither does it help if the Federal Council, in its 2015 report on page 20, cites other neutral states such as Austria, Ireland or Finland, which have also been on the Security Council: From this, they say, it can be concluded that the credibility of neutrality would not be damaged in this way. Objection! Each individual state must decide this question for itself on its own responsibility, on the basis of its own understanding of neutrality, its history and the anchoring of the principle of neutrality in the population. Austria, Ireland and Finland are members of the EU and are subject to its "Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)". This is a very different starting point from that of Switzerland.

Like others before it, the SVP (Swiss People's Party) parliamentary group's recent motion for Switzerland to renounce its candidacy was justified primarily on the basis of the principle of neutrality: "Those who sit on the Security Council can no longer claim a neutral position for themselves. The purpose of the seat is to help shape world policy on war and peace, otherwise participation in the Security Council is pointless. The [...] intention to seek membership is diametrically opposed to the age-old principle of neutrality of the Swiss Confederation."⁷ Like previous attempts, this motion was unfortunately rejected by the National Council on 12 March of this year, by 127 votes to 52.

Encouragingly, one member each of the FDP (Free Democrats) and CVP (Christian People's Party) also agreed to the renunciation of candidacy. Twelve members of the National Council, eleven of them from the CVP, abstained from voting: because they recognised the incompatibility of the Security Council seat with Switzerland's neutrality, but did not want to agree to a motion filed by the SVP?

One of those who abstained is National Councillor and CVP party president *Gerhard Pfister* (Zug). A year and a half ago, he issued a remarkable media release on behalf of his party, which read, among other things, "Switzerland has been a member of the UN since 2002, which makes it possible in principle to participate in the Security Council. But does it also make sense to

Powers of the UN Security Council under the Charter of the United Nations of 26 June 1945

Chapter VII: Action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression

Article 39

The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Article 41

The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.

Article 42

Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.

Article 43

(1) All Members of the United Nations, in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage, necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.

"Big question mark on ..."

continued from page 12

join this body? If a state violates international peace, the Security Council can order binding and, in the case of serious violations, even military measures. Switzerland would have to decide and take sides on all issues to be assessed. Particularly at a time when conflicts are on the increase, when geopolitical shifts threaten, it is important for Switzerland to reflect on its strengths. Switzerland cannot contribute much in the UN Security Council because the permanent members block important decisions by their veto anyway, and because Switzerland would have to abstain time and again due to its impartiality. Why not use energy and money for Switzerland's strength? Let us continue to provide our good offices in the other UN organisations. Let us commit ourselves to international Geneva. Let us commit ourselves to the objectives of the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the OECD and many other multilateral organisations. The Federal Council would do well to reconsider its application for a seat on the UN Security Council."⁸

"Should Switzerland become an active member of the UN Security Council, it will no longer be neutral. If it is silent, on the other hand, it does not belong there"⁹

One of those who, on the basis of the Swiss principle of neutrality, persistently opposes a Swiss mandate in the Security Council, is long-standing Ambassador Dr. Paul Widmer.¹⁰ As early as 2015, under the title "Switzerland does not belong in the UN Security Council", he took a firm

Law of neutrality and neutrality policy

mw. "The law of neutrality defines the rights and duties of a neutral state." The legal basis is primarily the "Hague Convention on the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in the Event of a Land War" of 18 October 1907. The most important duties of a neutral state are: Non-participation in wars and in military alliances, self-defence, equal treatment of the warring parties with regard to the export of war material, non-allocation of territory to the warring parties.

"The policy of neutrality ensures the effectiveness and credibility of neutrality. It is based on law, national interests, the international situation, tradition and history."

Source: "Die Neutralität der Schweiz" (The neutrality of Switzerland). An information brochure of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports DDPS; in cooperation with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA. 4th revised edition.

stand on the candidacy, which the Federal Council had declared to be compatible with neutrality in its above-mentioned report to Parliament on 6 June 2015.¹¹

In this article Widmer uses the example of the military mission against Libya to illustrate the ignoble situations in which Switzerland could find itself with a mandate in the Security Council: "Ten states voted in favour, five – China and Russia as permanent members, Germany, India and Brazil as non-permanent members – abstained. No one vetoed, no one voted against."

Widmer continues: "Let us suppose Switzerland had been on the Security Council in 2011. How would it have acted? It could have voted against the no-fly zone. But it would certainly not have done so. Nor is it appropriate that a neutral should be the only one to try and prevent a UN project. Second option: it would have voted with the majority to support military action. That too would have been unreasonable for a neutral state, when even a NATO country like Germany abstained. Third possibility: it would have abstained. That would have been the most likely course. But for that we need not join the Security Council.

Whichever way you look at it, Switzerland on the Security Council would either by its frequent abstentions further weaken an already weak leadership body in delicate matters or otherwise endanger its own neutrality by taking sides."

**External neutrality:
"The respect of neutrality by the international community is worth more than the restrictions imposed."**

In another newspaper commentary Paul Widmer points out that Switzerland's political elite did not think much of neutrality after the end of the Cold War: "It was thought that it had been useful during the period of East-West confrontation, but that it no longer had a place in the new Europe. The Federal Council wanted to lead Switzerland into the EU and sought proximity to NATO.

For this reason they felt that neutrality was a millstone around the Swiss neck. This disdain was reflected in the 1993 neutrality report. In this interpretation, in peacetime almost everything is compatible with neutrality – except full membership of a military alliance. Neutrality has been reduced to the minimum required by law. That is very little indeed. Neutrality policy, on the other hand, has faded away."¹²

In light of this, Widmer warns: "Respect for neutrality by the community of states is worth more than the restrictions imposed". Because ultimately it depends on what the other states think of our policy: "An excessively permissive interpretation threatens to damage our credibility. So why go to the Security Council? [...]

For a little prestige? That is a high price to pay. Switzerland would probably lose more than it gains."¹³

**Neutrality within:
"Neutrality is very strongly anchored in the Swiss population"**

Quite unlike the political elite, the overwhelming majority of the Swiss population persists in its insistence on neutrality. In surveys, 90 to 95 per cent of those surveyed are in favour of maintaining it. With a touch of irony, Paul Widmer explains this area of tension as follows: "There is a contradiction between external power and internal freedom. Where citizens have little say in foreign policy matters, those responsible for foreign policy can act quickly and confidently. Autocrats are best at this. Where citizens have extensive political rights, the reverse is true. Direct democracies are the worst. There, the people want to have everything put before them. For most of the Swiss the starting position is clear. They want comprehensive political rights and a state system that is as free as possible. Foreign policy is of secondary importance to them. The political elites, on the other hand, have a hard time with this. Time and again, they take a stab at expanding the scope for foreign policy at the expense of neutrality. And this will continue to be the case in the future."¹⁴

Fortunately, in Switzerland the citizens usually have the last word – but not on the question of whether Switzerland wants to run for the UN Security Council. By agreeing to join the UN in 2002, we have bought the pig in a poke – a possible seat on the Security Council. Anyone who voted against joining the UN for reasons of neutrality (for example the writer) had listened very carefully to Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss, who already at that time uttered his wish for: "... perhaps even a seat on the Security Council". But our politicians can still pull the emergency brake. The decision of the UN General Assembly will not be made until June 2022.●

¹ Speech by Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations, 26 June 2020 in Geneva

² Köchler, Hans. *Schweizer Vorträge – Texte zu Völkerrecht und Weltordnung*. (The Swiss Lectures) Verlag Zeit-Fragen 2019. ISBN 978-3-909234-23-3

³ Referendum of 16 March 1986, Federal Council's voting booklet, p. 4

⁴ Speech by Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations in Geneva on 26 June 2020

⁵ Gsteiger, Fredy. "Umstrittene Kandidatur. Die Schweiz als Brückenbauerin im Uno-Sicherheitsrat?" (Controversial candidacy. Switzerland as a bridge-builder on the UN Security Council?); in: *Radio SRF. Echo der Zeit* of 24 April 2019

⁶ "Switzerland's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in the period 2023-2024". *Federal Council Report of 5 June 2015* (in fulfilment of the postulate of the For-

“Freedom of the fatherland was my first love”

Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler (1780–1866) as intellectual and political innovator of Switzerland

by Dr. phil. René Roca, Research Institute for Direct Democracy

The Ignaz P. V. Troxler Association (www.ipvtroxler.ch) is working intensively on the legacy of this great Swiss thinker. One fruit of this effort was a first volume with selected essays and lectures from the Troxler commemorative year 2016 with the programmatic title “Erbe als Auftrag” (“The legacy as a mission”). Now the second volume is available with the title “Mythos, Gemeinschaft, Staat. Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler, geistiger und politischer Erneuerer der Schweiz.” (Myth, Community, and State. Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler, intellectual and political innovator of Switzerland)* Andreas Dollfus, the responsible editor, presents an anthology with carefully selected Troxler texts, which is a new edition of a publication first published in 2005 and recently sold out. He introduces the collection of texts and repeatedly provides Troxler’s texts and speeches with profound commentaries. This gives the reader a good overview and insight into Troxler’s extremely multifaceted intellectual and political career.

The collection opens with an autobiographical fragment by Troxler, written in

“Big question mark on ...”

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7 Foreign Affairs Committees FAC-N 13.3005 of 15 January 2013), p. 19

7 Motion 18.4123 “Verzicht auf eine Kandidatur für den Uno-Sicherheitsrat” (Renunciation of candidacy for the UN Security Council), submitted by the parliamentary group of the Swiss People’s Party to the National Council on 29 November 2018

8 “Regarding ... UN Security Council,” Christian People’s Party (CVP) press release of 10 August 2018. Author: Gerhard Pfister, Zug, President of the Swiss CVP, National Council

9 Widmer, Paul. “Why don’t we let Malta go first into the Security Council.” *NZZ am Sonntag*, 16 September 2018

10 Dr phil. Paul Widmer studied history, philosophy and political science. He was Swiss ambassador for many years and teaches international relations at the University of St. Gallen. Paul Widmer is the author of “Schweizer Außenpolitik und Diplomatie” (Swiss foreign policy and diplomacy), NZZ-Verlag 2014 (new edition), reviewed in *Current Concerns* No 17, 7 August 2011 under the title “Neutrality as a guideline, direct democracy as a basis”.

11 Widmer, Paul. “Die Schweiz gehört nicht in den Uno-Sicherheitsrat” (Switzerland does not belong on the UN Security Council). Guest commentary; in: *NZZ* of 1 July 2015

12 Widmer, Paul. “Auf geht es, in den Sicherheitsrat der Uno!” (Here we go, to the UN Security Council!); in: *NZZ am Sonntag*, 3 April 2016

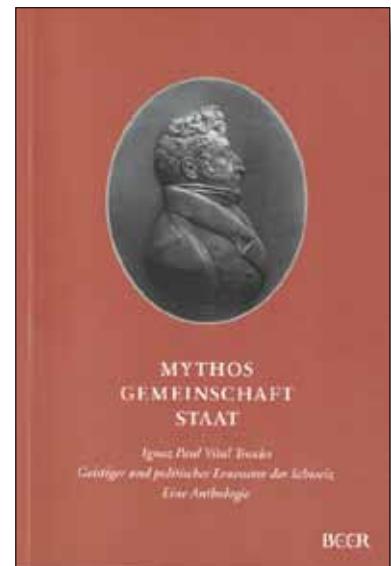
13 Widmer, Paul. “Die Schweiz gehört nicht in den Uno-Sicherheitsrat” (Switzerland does not belong on the UN Security Council). Guest commentary; in: *NZZ* of 1 July 2015

14 Widmer, Paul. “Auf geht es, in den Sicherheitsrat der Uno!” (Here we go, to the UN Security Council!); in: *NZZ am Sonntag*, 3 April 2016

1830. Troxler himself came from a humble background, grew up in Beromünster (Canton Lucerne) and lost his father at an early age. At the age of nine he attended the Latin school in the canon’s monastery in Beromünster, then the grammar schools in Solothurn and Lucerne. His relationship with an uncle in St. Urban’s monastery, Father Gregor, was special. He introduced the young Troxler to literature and philosophy, as well as teaching him a solid Christian foundation: “[...] and so this monastery became the first academy for me.” In Solothurn he came into contact with the French emigrant world, “and this mostly drew my attention to the great event of the French Revolution and its consequences for my fatherland. I began to feel the universal and think for myself, I read German and French newspapers, my love of freedom was awakening [...]”. The theme of “freedom” was henceforth central to Troxler’s work, and his philosophical, political and educational thoughts revolved again and again around this important basic prerequisite for a dignified human life.

Guarantee of neutrality for free Switzerland

In another text, Troxler deals with the neutrality of Switzerland. He himself travelled to Vienna in 1815 and took part in the congress there as a private citizen in order to influence the negotiations that were to reshape the political conditions in Europe and Switzerland. He stressed the importance of a guarantee of neutrality for Switzerland and that this would con-



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firm Switzerland’s freedom. Troxler continued: “An outwardly independent and internally self-reliant people is neutral in the best sense.”

Other texts included in the collection are concerned with the freedom of the press, which is fundamental to the establishment and maintenance of democracy, and with the question of what “the good of our fatherland” should be based on, i.e. the basic political and ethical requirements of a democratic state, for example the text on “Unity in spirit as the true natural force of a people” (“Einheit im Geiste als wahre Naturkraft eines Volkes”).

The new Federal Constitution of 1848 – based on natural law and history

Troxler did not only philosophise about the ethical foundations in politics and society, but also intervened concretely in political debates. Since the beginning of the Regeneration in 1830, a new form of government was being discussed in Switzerland, and Troxler also took part in this debate. At that time, Switzerland was a confederacy of states and had only a federal treaty as its constitutional basis. This was no longer sufficient to meet the political and, above all, economic requirements of the time (incipient industrialisation). In 1832, Troxler added a draft constitution to his writing “The One and True Confederation”, which envisaged Switzerland as a federal state: “All true confederation is a federal state, and such was the original one and remained so until the time of its dissolution. As a federal state, it was built

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Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler (1780–1866).
Bronze bust of the Aargau artist Hans Gessner (1898–1986). Kunsthaus Aarau.
(picture Raphael Schmitt)

The hand disinfectant, a Swiss invention

by Nicole Duprat, France

The Covid-19 pandemic puts the widely unknown deed of Dr Didier Pittet into perspective. This infectologist from the Geneva University Hospitals (Hôpitaux Universitaires Genève) was the first in the world to use the hand disinfectant.

A saving gesture

Thierry Crouzet, a French writer from Sète (southern France), reported on this



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medical odyssey in his book “Le geste qui sauve” (The Saving Gesture), published by *L'Âge d'Homme*. A simple question finally leads to the production of the hand disinfectant: “How can medical personnel clean their hands more effectively?” In the course of his medical studies, during which he specialised in infectious diseases, the epidemiologist at the Hôpitaux Universitaires Genève (HUG) became interested in infections associated with intravenous catheters, which are responsible for 20 to 30 million hospital-acquired infections per year. This is the theme of this easy-to-read book and offers us an inspiring story. It is also worth mentioning that Thierry Crouzet ceded his rights to the “CleanHandsSaveLives.org” Foundation and that a free version of the book is available on the Internet.

This invention is just 21 years old

In the 1990s, the “doctor with the clean hands”, as he is also known, became a specialist for infectious diseases at HUG. He fought the diseases that patients get infected with through their stay in medical institutions, i.e. the diseases that are related to medical treatment. He made Pasteur’s question his own: “Instead of dealing with how to kill the microbes in the wounds, it would be wise not to bring them into the wound in the first place. This painstaking endeavour eventually led to a formula for a disinfectant that was developed with the

help of the English hospital pharmacist, *William Griffith*.

As simple as the idea is, it represents a revolution in the health system: Soap that was used for repeated hand-washing by the nursing staff; or which was used without sufficient water in poor countries with no significant infrastructure, is replaced. Now it was a question of being able to produce the disinfectant solution or disinfectant gel easily and cheaply anywhere in the world. Since 1905 it has been known that alcohol is an effective bactericide and virucide, but that it must be mixed with water or glycerine so that it can adhere to the skin to kill the unwanted germs.

Hurdles to be overcome

However, it was not to be an easy task to convince the world to use this product. Professor Pittet had to go door to door around the world to introduce the sanitizer and to convince institutions to use the gel instead of soap. This unexpected innovation is known as the “Geneva Model” and is freeing poor countries from the problem of water shortage. In Muslim countries there have been difficulties as well because, as the name suggests, the liquid contains alcohol. It was therefore necessary to change the production by using isopropyl alcohol. In Russia, some people drank the solution, so an emetic was

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“Freedom of the Fatherland ...”

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on the representation of all citizens as the particularity of places.” It is worth noting that Troxler repeatedly paid tribute to the beginnings of the Swiss Confederacy and stressed that we must remember that heritage. For him, this was the only way a new federal constitution could be founded “on natural law and history”.

Crucial for the design of the federal state still valid today was Troxler’s writing “Die Verfassung der Vereinigten Staaten Nordamerikas als Musterbild der schweizerischen Bundesreform” (“The Constitution of the United States of North America as a Model for Swiss Federal Reform”), which also found its way into the anthology. He published this text at an epochal historical moment, namely in 1848, when a commission of the “Swiss confederate Diet” (Tagsatzung) discussed the new Swiss constitution after the “Sonderbund War”. Troxler gave

the commission the decisive impetus to introduce a bicameral system (National Council and Council of States). However, Troxler did not want to simply copy the system of the USA, especially since he saw the spiritual source of this model in the Swiss Confederacy: “The seed of this federal republic [...] was sown in our mountains and transferred from Europe across the sea via Pennsylvania to the rest of the world, where it matured into a fruit on the giant tree. So nothing new comes to us from there [...]!” Troxler also saw the model of the federal state as an important work of reconciliation, so that the Swiss people could grow together again after the Sonderbund War as “equal brothers with equal rights”.

A Troxler for Switzerland today

The writings, an unparalleled treasure, show us a Troxler who can be considered in many respects as an intellectual and political innovator of Switzerland. The epilogue of the volume was written by *Max*

U. Rapold, a lawyer and long-time editor-in-chief and publisher of the “Schaffhauser Nachrichten”. It is entitled “Notwendig: ein Troxler für die heutige Schweiz” (“Necessary: A Troxler for Switzerland today”). Rapold thus established a noteworthy reference to the present at the time of the first edition of the text collection in 2005. He states: “It is his [i.e. Troxler’s] spiritual foundation, his courage to go against the grain in disputes, his resistance to bland compromises in the search for viable political solutions and his deep respect for the eternally valid founding impulse of the Swiss Confederation that can inspire the current struggle for the future of our country”. This sentence has lost none of its topicality, and it is to be hoped that it will continue to be realized not only for Switzerland, but for every democratically founded state. •

* Dollfus, Andreas (ed.), *Mythos, Gemeinschaft, Staat. Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler, geistiger und politischer Erneuerer der Schweiz*, Bear-Verlag Zurich, 170 pages, Fr. 28.–

"The hand disinfectant ..."

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added. In order to keep the price low, Professor Pittet had to deal with pharmaceutical manufacturers and convince them of the disinfectant, just as he had to stop the big pharmaceutical companies from enriching themselves at the expense of the sick!

To serve the public

Just as it is helpful at the time of the pandemic, the invention and distribution of the disinfectant gel has saved millions of lives. When he invented it 21 years ago, Professor Pittet could have patented this product, sold it, and become rich. Especially now, his discovery would have made him a multi-billionaire. But he preferred not to patent his discovery for the benefit of mankind. For this, he donated the patent to the WHO so that the drug can be produced locally throughout the world at a reasonable price. "The hand hygiene is too simple and too important to be patented", he said in a report on French television (TF1). The infectologist also used the report to criticize the massive increase in the price of hand dis-

infectants in some countries. He praised France for having set a price limit for disinfectants. He sharply criticized, "It costs 1 euro. To suddenly sell the product for 20 euros is disrespectful".

"Contrary to money, mutual aid is unlimited; it is the currency of abundance." Or: "He who gives, gives. That is economy in the name of peace."

An extract from the book confirms this: "He is the angel of giving..." Didier Pittet has invented a new phrase of courtesy and respect. "I wash my hands to protect you", writes Thierry Crouzet.

His approach to the fight against hospital-acquired infections is being developed at HUG with the help of the WHO. Around 70,000 people are affected every year in Switzerland, of whom 2,000 die. In this way, about eight million lives can be saved worldwide every year. Because of his work in infection prevention and for his work in the United Kingdom, he was elevated to the rank of Commander of the Order of the British Kingdom by Her Majesty Queen *Elizabeth II* in 2007. The British Crown has not bestowed this honour on any other Swiss citizen for over 400 years. Yet, that does not make him haughty.

In Petit Lancy, Didier Pittet is known for his open and benevolent nature. He, who was for many years president of the church council of the Christ-Roi parish, is a child of Lancy.

An internationally recognised medical authority, he still is full of generosity and his reputation extends far beyond the boundaries of the parish. The French writer Thierry Crouzet is not mistaken. In his book, he wonderfully recounts this universally welcomed initiative, dedicating his work to the one who gave mankind the key to the gel that daily saves millions of lives around the world.

To follow this medical adventure of Doctor Pittet means that it is possible to live a new form of humanity that promises a shift from predatory capitalism to an economy for peace. •

¹ Crouzet, Thierry. *Le geste qui sauve, Des millions de vie, peut-être la vôtre, L'Âge d'Homme, Geneva 2014*

² Didier Pittet is head of the Department of Infectious Diseases at HUG Geneva, honorary professor at Imperial College (London), Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Medical School of the Fu (Shanghai), and honorary member of the Academy of Sciences in Russia and the Académie de Chirurgie française.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

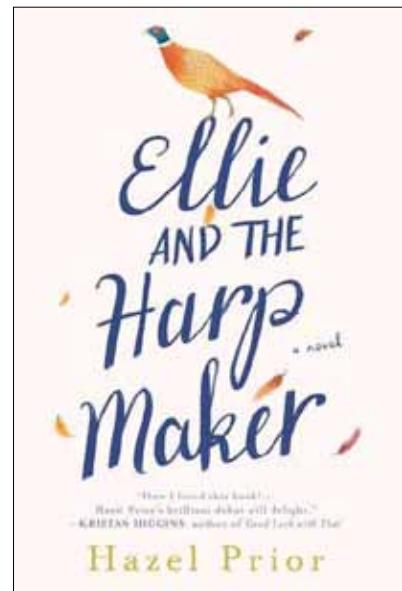
Hazel Prior: Ellie and the Harp-Maker

dk. The story is told from the perspective of two people, harp-maker *Dan* and the woman who passionately likes to take walks, *Ellie*. On her forays through Exmoor – a heathland in Somerset and Devon – Ellie coincidentally discovers the barn where Dan builds his harps. Every single piece he makes is unique. Ellie is so enthusiastic about the instruments that Dan spontaneously gives her a harp. At first she does not want to accept the gift. However, a gift is a gift. Dan suggests a compromise: She can leave her harp with him and learn to play it. Ellie accepts this suggestion and now comes to Dan's barn every day to play the harp.

Then Dan is shot and wounded during a pheasant hunt. Ellie now offers to change his bandage daily as prescribed by the doctor. As time goes on, Ellie takes harp lessons with Dan's girlfriend *Rhoda*. She discovers that Rhoda and Dan have a

son together, of whom Dan knows nothing. After Ellie informs Dan about this, Rhoda takes revenge on Ellie by telling her husband *Clive* that his wife drives to Dan's house everyday to play the harp. As a result Clive neither speaks nor reconciles with Ellie. Unexpectedly, the story takes a dramatic course, which upsets the lives of the people involved. However, in the end, everything works out well. Hazel Prior tells a thrilling and varied story, and the differentiated portrayal of the main characters does their part to captivate the reader. A successful novel, which is ideal for a relaxed summer read.

Hazel Prior was born in Oxford and lives in Exmoor. She is a harpist as well and plays regularly at festivals. She has written many short stories and "Ellie and the Harp-Maker" is her first novel. Her second novel, "Away with the Penguins" was published in March 2020 by *Bentam Press*. •



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