

# Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,  
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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## An appalling majority of unilateral sanctions violate international law

**Sanctions have enormously aggravated the situations in many affected countries and have led to economic, social and humanitarian crises**

*Interview with Professor Dr Dr hab. Alena Douhan*

*Current Concerns: With forceful statements, you recently called for the lifting of sanctions in Syria (26 December 2020) and in Venezuela (14 February 2021). What prompted you to do so?*

**Alena Douhan:** These sanctions, as well as many others, are violating the human rights of entire populations in the countries affected. The problem is particularly acute in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the sanctions have prevented these countries from getting all of the medicines, medical equipment, testing supplies and other materials needed to fight the disease. Both countries in different ways were experiencing serious economic problems before sanctions had been imposed. At the same time, the sanctions exacerbated enormously these pre-existing situations, turning them into economic, social and humanitarian crises.

In Syria, reconstruction after years of conflict is being impeded by sanctions against people and companies who cooperate with the government's efforts to restore vital infrastructure, or with its efforts to revive oil and gas production. This prevents the economy from functioning, and slows down the process of building housing, hospitals, power supply networks and much more.

### **Venezuela: Malnutrition and mortality on the rise**

In Venezuela, the government must operate on a fraction of the income necessary to ensure the well-being of its people. With fuel shortages already severe, sanctions are being used to prevent it from getting foreign supplies. This has led to shortages of electricity, and since water pumps need electricity, to water shortages as well, affecting most of the population. The unavailability of new equipment and spare parts prevents maintenance and restoration of infrastructure. Hospitals can't do as many operations, people who are ill can't get to the hospitals because of petrol shortag-

es, and malnutrition and mortality rates are growing.

People become more and more dependent on governmental social aid and international humanitarian aid. All sorts of human rights are affected by this, from the right to education and access to information to the right to health, the right to food, the right to life and the right to development, especially affecting people in extreme poverty, women, children, medical workers, people with disabilities or life-threatening or chronic diseases, and the indigenous population.

### **Unilateral sanctions are a violation of international law and human rights**

*Can you explain your criticism of the sanctions policy?*

Several aspects shall be mentioned here. First of all, a devastating majority of unilateral sanctions today are taken in the breach of international law. Every country has the right to choose how it conducts its relations with other countries, or to not have relations at all. At the same time, under the UN Charter, only the UN Security Council has the right to authorize sanctions as a mechanism to enforce aspects of international law. Unilateral measures may only be taken with due account of the rule of law, human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law; must comply with states' international legal obligations; and may only be applied in the course of internationally lawful countermeasures. In most circumstances, the legality of unilateral sanctions is questionable under international law, and by harming human rights the sanctions clearly violate it.

Secondly, sanctions imposed unilaterally – that is, by individual countries or groups like the European Union or ECOWAS in Africa – virtually always violate human rights, often many rights at once despite the fact that rather often they allegedly intend to improve human rights records. In the majority of cases the whole population of the country is affected, in-



*(Picture ohchr.org)*

Ms Alena F. Douhan, (Belarus) was appointed as UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights by the Human Rights Council in March 2020. Ms Douhan has extensive experience in the fields of international law and human rights as, a Professor of international law at the *Belarusian State University* (Minsk), a visiting Professor at the *Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict* (Bochum, Germany) and the Director of the Peace Research Centre (Minsk). She received her PhD at the Belarusian State University in 2005 and obtained Dr hab. in International Law and European Law in 2015 (Belarus). Ms Douhan's academic and research interests are in the fields of international law, sanctions and human rights law, international security law, law of international organisations, international dispute settlement, and international environmental law.

cluding their fundamental human rights: right to health, to food, to life. With the scarcity of resources, countries have to stop or suspend all reconstruction and developmental projects, which undermines the achievement of sustainable development goals. Figures provided in my reports of the impact of unilateral sanctions in the course of the pandemic (October 2020) and the preliminary assessment report on my country visit to Venezuela are

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rather illustrative. I believe that it is absurd to protect human rights by violating them. There is no such thing as a tolerable level of "collateral damage" when countries are obliged by international conventions and customary law to protect the rights of everyone and to behave in accordance with international law.

**Found guilty outside any legal system**

Third, targeted sanctions against individuals usually involve freezing their bank assets and other property and impeding their ability to travel, and this generally occurs without due process. There is simply a determination that occurs outside of any legal system that someone is guilty, and the sanctions are the penalty imposed. Due process rights, such as a right to fair trial and the right to be presumed innocent unless proven guilty, as well as the right to freedom of movement, are denied when international law says they must be protected. The *European Court of Human Rights* provides for some possibility of access to justice on the ground of Article 275 of the *European Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, and the number of so-called sanctions cases is rapidly growing. At the same time, a mechanism of appeal for the U.S. sanctions is virtually non-existent.

It is also necessary to mention problems which exist as concerns the delivery of humanitarian aid and the growing extraterritoriality and over-compliance with sanctions regimes.

**Impact of secondary sanctions and extraterritoriality**

*What do the extraterritorial – or secondary – sanctions, which are illegal under international law, mean for a country like Syria, which is in the process of reconstruction after 10 years of war?*

Secondary sanctions and extraterritoriality are two different but closely related things. Secondary sanctions are unilateral sanctions that are imposed on people and companies accused of doing business with sanctioned countries, individuals or entities. The United States in particular uses secondary sanctions to enforce the original sanctions it applies. The people and companies targeted by secondary sanctions may be in the sanctioning country, or they may be in other countries. Indeed, some U.S. secondary sanctions can target anyone, anywhere, who is accused of dealing with a sanctioned party.

This is where the issue of extraterritoriality comes in, because here, too, the legality of extending a country's jurisdiction by enforcing its sanctions abroad through secondary sanctions is highly doubtful.

**Tasks and areas of activity of the UN Special Rapporteur on unilateral sanctions**

*Current Concerns: What is your task as UN Special Rapporteur on unilateral sanctions?*

*Alena Douhan:* As the UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, my role is to monitor the situation with the use of unilateral sanctions by states and regional organisations when there is no authorisation by the UN Security Council; to assess unilateral measures taken from the point of international law; to monitor the impact of unilateral sanctions on the human rights of a country's population, specific groups of people and individuals; and to analyse the impact on the various categories of human rights. This is done through thematic studies, country visits, assessments of specific situations, and communicating with specific individuals who believe that their rights have been affected, NGOs and academic society. I report my findings to the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly at their sessions, and communicate to other UN organs and agencies, regional organisations, national governments and the private sector about these matters.

**Rule of law and humanitarian concerns must take priority**

I do investigations and research and solicit information from a wide variety of sources, from sanctioning governments to individuals, in order to identify and assess trends in unilateral sanctions and the ways that specific sanctions regimes imposed by a country affect human rights. I deal with individual cases that

are brought to my attention, and communicate with the relevant parties to request information and to inform them about my findings. Of course, I am not a judge or arbitrator, but I am an international law expert and I have specialised in this area for some years. My task is to inform and convince countries that in their activity the rule of law and humanitarian concerns shall prevail over political aims.

**Today more sanctions than ever**

The Human Rights Council created my mandate in 2015 as it was becoming increasingly evident that unilateral sanctions are enormously expanding in their number, types and forms and affect human rights in many ways, in many countries. Sanctions are often seen as a way to exert unilateral pressure on foreign governments without going to war. However, sanctions can severely erode the human rights of the populations of affected countries, especially when they target entire economies or economic sectors. Sanctions can also have devastating effects on the human rights of targeted individuals. All countries have the obligation under international law to protect every person's human rights, and ultimately my job is to promote greater adherence to this. It's not easy, as there are more sanctions today than ever before, as well as more types of sanctions, more kinds of targets and more methods of enforcement. I see my mandate as offering a path to minimise their humanitarian impact and bring international relations back to the standards of international law.

Once again, a penalty is imposed without regard for the due process rights of a person targeted by secondary sanctions. Indeed, under the law of the country where that person is, it may be perfectly legal to have dealings with the target of U.S. sanctions.

The main danger of secondary sanctions is that every individual and company may be targeted by them, which has the effect of causing enormous over-compliance. During my country visit to Venezuela, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, universities, sport clubs and citizens of Venezuela were reporting the rejection or reluctance of foreign banks to open or keep their bank accounts, including those with correspondent banks in the United States and Europe; difficulties with getting visas and buying tickets; the need to act via third-country agents; and the need to pay extra insurance costs. Similar problems have been repeatedly cited by international humanitarian organisations involved in the

delivery of humanitarian aid to the targeted areas or societies.

**So-called humanitarian exemptions do not withstand in practice**

*What is the status of international humanitarian aid and to what extent is it hampered by the sanctions?*

On paper, most unilateral sanctions regimes today have provisions that allow for flows of humanitarian goods and services to sanctioned countries and individuals. The problem is that these so-called "humanitarian exemptions" don't work very well in practice. There are many reasons for this. The rules are often complex, causing humanitarian aid providers to be reticent to export humanitarian goods to sanctioned countries out of fear of accidentally violating the sanctions and being targeted themselves by secondary sanctions. Even those that are willing to export humanitarian goods may be unable to do so because banks

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and other service providers have the same fears, affecting sources of finance for this humanitarian trade and the ability to transport it to the sanctioned country. The multilayer character of sanctions (sanctions imposed by several states or regional organisations with their own sanctions lists and exemption mechanisms) make the situation even more complicated.

Other problems include the time it takes to approve humanitarian exports to sanctioned countries, and the requirements that must sometimes be met before permission is granted. For example, exporters of humanitarian goods that might be dual-use (civilian and military) items, such as certain medical equipment or substances, are asked to ensure that the goods won't be diverted to military use upon arrival in the sanctioned country. This can be impossible in some cases. Even toothpaste has been reported to be among the personal hygiene products that are affected by such rules. Overall, the complexity and time necessary for approving humanitarian exports adds to their cost, which is another obstacle.

It shall also be taken into account that "humanitarian exemptions" provisions, even when applied, are traditionally interpreted very narrowly, excluding in particular equipment and spare parts as well as other goods which are necessary for reconstruction of the economy, impeding there the right of people to development.

**How sanctions prevent humanitarian aid**

*What impact do the sanctions have on humanitarian aid? Can you give us concrete examples?*

The COVID-19 pandemic has allowed us to see many examples of how sanctions have impeded the ability of sanctioned countries to get humanitarian aid, even when the sanctions have humanitarian exemptions to allow for such assistance. Doctors in some countries tar-

**How sanctions obstruct humanitarian aid**

"The deliverers of humanitarian aid, including humanitarian organisations, are obliged to get a necessary license from the sanctioning countries. I had expert consultations with a huge number of humanitarian NGOs, mostly faith-based NGOs. They were trying to deliver humanitarian aid to Syria. [...]"

Even when they try to deliver medical equipment, they have to prove a genuine humanitarian aim for delivery. Even if we speak about, for example, the COVID test, or about the CT scanners, or any other types of medicines. As a result, small humanitarian NGOs prefer not to be involved in the delivery of these humanitarian aid at all, because they do not have lawyers who will deal with the process, and who will be able. And the organisations themselves are not able to pay for going through the process.

Again, when for example, the permission is received to deliver humani-

tarian aid to Syria, it doesn't mean that if the organisation brings it across the border, the organisation is allowed to buy fuel for its car to deliver necessary medicine or medical equipment. It will mean that the organisation will need another permission to get fuel for a single car in the process of delivery of humanitarian aid.

Some other humanitarian organisations have complained that because of their humanitarian work aim to deliver medicine, medical equipment, and food to Syria, in the course of the pandemic, their bank accounts have been frozen — as well as the bank accounts of their personnel have been frozen. So, they basically fall under the secondary sanctions as a result."

*Alena Douhan interviewed by Aaron Maté (excerpt) <https://thegrayzone.com/2021/01/14/un-expert-crippling-us-sanctions-on-syria-are-illegal-and-hurt-ing-civilians/> of 14. January 2021*

geted by U.S. sanctions could not avail themselves of telemedicine meetings on Zoom because its use is blocked in those countries. Medical equipment donated by a Chinese businessman to help Cuba fight the coronavirus could not arrive as planned because the U.S. company hired to transport the equipment withdrew, fearing it would be targeted by secondary sanctions for shipping goods to a sanctioned country. Swiss humanitarian organisations that had intended to collaborate with Cuban medical entities were thwarted by banks that refused to transfer the money necessary for this to happen. U.S. sanctions against Iran and Venezuela resulted in electricity supplies being disrupted in both countries, affecting the normal functioning of hospitals. The lack of fuel in Venezuela, a situation exacerbated by sanctions, has prevented people from getting to hospitals and impeded the use of ambulances.

Unilateral sanctions, fear of secondary sanctions and growing over-compliance

result in a growing number of bank transfer refusals; the extension of bank transfer periods (from 2 to 45 days); higher delivery, insurance and bank transfer costs; as well as reported price rises for all (especially imported) goods, sometimes up to 2-4 times. Humanitarian exemption mechanisms also put enormous burdens on humanitarian operators, which have to prove the "pure" humanitarian purpose of the deliveries and face all possible risks. This negatively impacts their ability to act, limits their resources, negatively affects the willingness of donors to provide assistance and therefore affects their beneficiaries in targeted and other countries.

**The Caesar Act has opened a very wide door**

*The Caesar Act, enacted by the US government in June 2020, has an impact on the health care of the population in particular. It includes sanctioning all those persons and entities who want to trade with the Syrian government or with Syria at all. How do individual countries or aid organisations that want to help deal with this? Can you give us a concrete description?*

The *Caesar Act*, actually enacted in 2019 and implemented in 2020, does indeed cast a very wide net with the sanctions that it authorises. The best advice I can give countries and aid organisations is to inform the US authorities and also my office of problems they encounter in providing humanitarian aid to Syria, and about anything they learn about the human rights impact of sanctions against persons who want to trade with Syria – how their

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**Ethical Aspects of Sanctions**

"Comprehensive economic sanctions [...] have the ethical quality of terror bombings: the civilian population is explicitly taken hostage in the framework of a security strategy of power politics."\*

"Art. 2 [in its resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights of 4 March 1994] expressly maintains that coercive economic measures prevent the full realisation of human rights, with special reference to children, women and the elderly. Directing our attention to the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights, the resolution calls on all states to forbear such practices."

"Sanctions which invalidate the fundamental economic and social rights of the population (and in many cases even the right to life) are – in view of human rights as the jus cogens of international law – impermissible."

*\*All quotes from: Hans Köchler, Ethical Aspects of Sanctions in International Law. The Practice of the Sanctions Policy and Human Rights, International Progress Organization, Vienna 1994. <https://i-p-o.org/sanctp.htm#l>*

## Documentation

# Eliminating the accumulated social and economic imbalances

## Core problem and core task of the world community for the new decade

*President of Russia Vladimir Putin's Speech at Session of Davos Agenda 2021 online forum on 27 January 2021*

*Mr Schwab, dear Klaus,  
Colleagues,*

I have been to Davos many times, attending the events organised by Mr Schwab, even back in the 1990s. Klaus [Schwab] just recalled that we met in 1992. Indeed, during my time in St Petersburg, I visited this important forum many times. I would like to thank you for this opportunity today to convey my point of view to the expert community that gathers at this world-renowned platform thanks to the efforts of Mr Schwab.

First of all, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to greet all the World Economic Forum participants.

It is gratifying that this year, despite the pandemic, despite all the restrictions, the forum is still continuing its work. Although it is limited to online participation, the forum is taking place anyway, providing an opportunity for participants to exchange their assessments and forecasts during an open and free discussion, partially compensating for the increasing lack of in-person meetings between leaders of states, representatives of international business and the public in recent months. All this is very important now, when we have so many difficult questions to answer.



*Russian President Vladimir Putin during his speech for the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Davos Agenda 2021 online forum. (Picture kremlin.ru)*

### **Pandemic: accelerator, not cause of structural change**

The current forum is the first one in the beginning of the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and, naturally, the majority of its topics are devoted to the profound changes that are taking place in the world.

Indeed, it is difficult to overlook the fundamental changes in the global econ-

omy, politics, social life and technology. The coronavirus pandemic, which Klaus just mentioned, which became a serious challenge for humankind, only spurred and accelerated the structural changes, the conditions for which had been created long ago. The pandemic has exacerbated the problems and imbalances that built

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rights are being affected. Keeping silent because of the fear of secondary sanctions does not help to settle but rather exacerbates the situation.

A report just issued by the *U.S. Government Accountability Office* revealed that U.S. authorities don't systematically monitor the humanitarian impact of the sanctions against Venezuela, and I assume the same is true for the U.S. sanctions against Syria. It is important that this information is known as a first step toward resolving the human rights problems that arise from the Caesar Act sanctions and others.

### **The problem of sanctions is too little known**

*You said that much stays in the shadows of public discussion and that questions of humanitarian impact are unfortunately often forgotten or ignored. Why is there so little resistance?*

Most likely the problem is not well-known because of a lack of public exposure and because it has not been studied very much. It is usually assessed as very politically motivated – in "black and white" terms as something good used against something bad. I believe, however, that the only mechanism to guarantee human rights is to observe the law. That is why we shall speak about international obligations of states, the rule of law, humanitarian impact assessment and humanitarian precaution.

The multiplicity of notions, the absence of consensus among countries, the unclear notion and characteristics of unilateral sanctions and unilateral coercive measures; the absence of agreement about targets; the increasing involvement of private actors and therefore consequent over-compliance, the absence of assessment of the humanitarian impact and political concerns are all influencing the situation and its assessment by country leaders and the public. It happens because of the unawareness about the problem and insufficient

humanitarian assessment, insufficient legal assessment, the lack of discussion with victims and those who are working in the field.

That is why I try now to bring attention to the problem; to assess the legality of measures taken from the point of international law; to initiate precaution and assessment of the humanitarian impact of unilateral sanctions; to deal with individual cases and to invite scholars and humanitarian non-governmental organisations as partners for the dialogue.

I would also like to use the chance to invite contributions of states, scholars, NGOs and other relevant partners for the preparation of a report on the notion, types, elements and targets of unilateral sanctions for the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly as a way of raising awareness, identifying the rule of law, protecting human rights and starting the dialogue.

*Professor Douhan, thank you very much for this interview.*

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up in the world before. There is every reason to believe that differences are likely to grow stronger. These trends may appear practically in all areas.

**Exacerbated imbalances – crisis of previous models of economic development**

Needless to say, there are no direct parallels in history. However, some experts – and I respect their opinion – compare the current situation to the 1930s. One can agree or disagree, but certain analogies are still suggested by many parameters, including the comprehensive, systemic nature of the challenges and potential threats.

We are seeing a crisis of the previous models and instruments of economic development. Social stratification is growing stronger both globally and in individual countries. We have spoken about this before as well. But this, in turn, is causing today a sharp polarisation of public views, provoking the growth of populism, right- and left-wing radicalism and other extremes, and the exacerbation of domestic political processes including in the leading countries.

**Impact on international relations**

All this is inevitably affecting the nature of international relations and is not making them more stable or predictable. International institutions are becoming weaker, regional conflicts are emerging one after another, and the system of global security is deteriorating.

Klaus has mentioned the conversation I had yesterday with the US President on extending the New START. This is, without a doubt, a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, the differences are leading to a downward spiral. As you are aware, the inability and unwillingness to find substantive solutions to problems like this in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the WWII catastrophe.

**Threats to global development**

Of course, such a "heated" global conflict is impossible in principle, I hope. This is what I am pinning my hopes on, because this would be the end of humanity. However, as I have said, the situation could take an unexpected and uncontrollable turn – unless we do something to prevent this. There is a chance that we will face a formidable break-down in global development, which will be fraught with a war of all against all and attempts to deal with contradictions through the appointment of "internal" and "external" enemies and the destruction of not only traditional values such as the family, which we hold dear in Russia, but fundamen-

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I would like to point out the negative demographic consequences of the ongoing social crisis and the crisis of values, which could result in humanity losing entire civilisational and cultural continents.

We have a shared responsibility to prevent this scenario, which looks like a grim dystopia, and to ensure instead that our development takes a different trajectory – positive, harmonious and creative.

**Three important challenges**

In this context, I would like to speak in more detail about the main challenges which, I believe, the international community is facing.

**1. Socio-economic tasks**

The first one is socioeconomic.

Indeed, judging by the statistics, even despite the deep crises in 2008 and 2020, the last 40 years can be referred to as successful or even super successful for the global economy. Starting from 1980, global per capita GDP has doubled in terms of real purchasing power parity. This is definitely a positive indicator.

**Globalisation – profiteers and losers**

Globalisation and domestic growth have led to strong growth in developing countries and lifted over a billion people out of poverty. So, if we take an income level of \$5.50 per person per day (in terms of PPP) then, according to the World Bank, in China, for example, the number of people with lower incomes went from 1.1 billion in 1990 down to less than 300 million in recent years. This is definitely China's success. In Russia, this number went from 64 million people in 1999 to about 5 million now. We believe this is also progress in our country, and in the most important area, by the way.

Still, the main question, the answer to which can, in many respects, provide a clue to today's problems, is what was the nature of this global growth and who benefitted from it most.

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, developing countries benefitted a lot from the growing demand for their traditional

and even new products. However, this integration into the global economy has resulted in more than just new jobs or greater export earnings. It also had its social costs, including a significant gap in individual incomes.

**Gap also in developed countries**

What about the developed economies where average incomes are much higher? It may sound ironic, but stratification in the developed countries is even deeper. According to the World Bank, 3.6 million people subsisted on incomes of under \$5.50 per day in the United States in 2000, but in 2016 this number grew to 5.6 million people.

Meanwhile, globalisation led to a significant increase in the revenue of large multinational, primarily US and European, companies.

By the way, in terms of individual income, the developed economies in Europe show the same trend as the United States.

But then again, in terms of corporate profits, who got hold of the revenue? The answer is clear: one percent of the population.

And what has happened in the lives of other people? In the past 30 years, in a number of developed countries, the real incomes of over half of the citizens have been stagnating, not growing. Meanwhile, the cost of education and healthcare services has gone up. Do you know by how much? Three times.

In other words, millions of people even in wealthy countries have stopped hoping for an increase of their incomes. In the meantime, they are faced with the problem of how to keep themselves and their parents healthy and how to provide their children with a decent education.

There is no call for a huge mass of people and their number keeps growing. Thus, according to the *International Labour Organisation* (ILO), in 2019, 21 percent or 267 million young people in the world did not study or work anywhere. Even among those who had jobs (these are interesting figures) 30 percent had an income below \$3.2 per day in terms of purchasing power parity.

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## Exaggerated expectations

by Gerd Brenner

The transatlantic press complained about the affront allegedly offered by Russian Foreign Minister *Sergey Lavrov* to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs *Josep Borrell* on occasion of the visit to Moscow. While Borrell was still in Moscow, Russia expelled three diplomats from EU countries. Well, every coin has two sides.

For years, the EU delegation has dominated the official statements of the EU member states, especially in the OSCE, which sees itself as a bridge builder between East and West in difficult times. In the past six years, these statements have been characterised by nothing other than fundamental criticism of Russia in every area. This did not change after Joseph Borrell took office as EU Commissioner for Foreign Affairs.

For years, EU member states Germany and France have been trying to find a political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. For years, their NATO ally USA has torpedoed the implementation of the Minsk agreements negotiated by France and Germany, by telling Ukraine that these are a bad deal. Apparently, the *Trump* administration in particular believed it could get a better

deal, as already in the area of the New START Treaty on strategic nuclear arms, in the area of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), in the area of the nuclear deal with Iran (JCPOA) and others. Once again, a loudmouth could not deliver and for years, the revisionism of the Poles and the Balts set the tone of the EU towards Russia. Ukraine, Crimea and other point of issues are only the occasion. It is a matter of principle. If it weren't for Crimea and the Donbass, they would find something else.

Russia has always denied that officials of its intelligence services have poisoned *Alexei Navalny*. The Western states which have accused Russia of doing so have so far failed to provide any evidence that could be used in court. Sanctions actually require more than some desk investigations by internet spies. Several events in the past have shown that it is not necessary to provide solid evidence to justify sanctions. Nevertheless, the EU is constantly imposing sanctions against Russia and threatening new ones. In the latest controversy over demonstrations by supporters of *Navalny*, Russia accuses European diplomats of taking part in illegal demonstra-

tions. To justify their actions, they said that they had only observed the demonstrations. That may be how it is. Other states instruct their diplomatic staff to avoid government-critical demonstrations in general, because communicating official government views and participating in protests may be incompatible. Sweden, Germany and Poland seem to have a more relaxed view. How would these countries react if, for example, Russian diplomats took part in illegal demonstrations against the lockdown? The question is academic, because Russian diplomats are, from experience, too professional for such games. The height of cheek came from Albania, which expelled a Russian diplomat for contravening COVID protection measures. Probably didn't wear a mask in the tram? When announcing the expulsion, Tirana also apologised for it. All clear! Brussels had exerted pressure.

In this situation, Josep Borrell came to Moscow hoping for a warm welcome. From *Sergey Lavrov's* point of view, it looked more as if the "good cop, bad cop" game was being played with him. Russia does not allow such games to be played with it. That's right!

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#### *Imbalances: consequences of failed concepts of the Washington Consensus*

These imbalances in global socioeconomic development are a direct result of the policy pursued in the 1980s, which was often vulgar or dogmatic. This policy rested on the so-called *Washington Consensus* with its unwritten rules, when the priority was given to the economic growth based on a private debt in conditions of deregulation and low taxes on the wealthy and the corporations.

As I have already mentioned, the coronavirus pandemic has only exacerbated these problems. In the last year, the global economy sustained its biggest decline since WWII. By July, the labour market had lost almost 500 million jobs. Yes, half of them were restored by the end of the year but still almost 250 million jobs were lost. This is a big and very alarming figure. In the first nine months of the past year alone, the losses of earnings amounted to \$3.5 trillion. This figure is going up and, hence, social tension is on the rise.

At the same time, post-crisis recovery is not simple at all. If some 20 or 30 years

ago, we would have solved the problem through stimulating macroeconomic policies (incidentally, this is still being done), today such mechanisms have reached their limits and are no longer effective. This resource has outlived its usefulness. This is not an unsubstantiated personal conclusion.

According to the IMF, the aggregate sovereign and private debt level has approached 200 percent of global GDP, and has even exceeded 300 percent of national GDP in some countries. At the same time, interest rates in developed market economies are kept at almost zero and are at a historic low in emerging market economies.

#### *Quantitative easing enlarges financial bubble and deepens social divide*

Taken together, this makes economic stimulation with traditional methods, through an increase in private loans virtually impossible. The so-called quantitative easing is only increasing the bubble of the value of financial assets and deepening the social divide. The widening gap between the real and virtual economies (incidentally, representatives of the real economy sector from many countries have told me about this on numerous occasions,

and I believe that the business representatives attending this meeting will agree with me) presents a very real threat and is fraught with serious and unpredictable shocks.

#### *Saving the old model thanks to technological development?*

Hopes that it will be possible to reboot the old growth model are connected with rapid technological development. Indeed, during the past 20 years we have created a foundation for the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution based on the wide use of AI and automation and robotics. The coronavirus pandemic has greatly accelerated such projects and their implementation.

However, this process is leading to new structural changes, I am thinking in particular of the labour market. This means that very many people could lose their jobs unless the state takes effective measures to prevent this. Most of these people are from the so-called middle class, which is the basis of any modern society.

### 2. Socio-political challenges

In this context, I would like to mention the second fundamental challenge of the forthcoming decade – the socio-political

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one. The rise of economic problems and inequality is splitting society, triggering social, racial and ethnic intolerance. Indicatively, these tensions are bursting out even in the countries with seemingly civil and democratic institutions that are designed to alleviate and stop such phenomena and excesses.

The systemic socioeconomic problems are evoking such social discontent that they require special attention and real solutions. The dangerous illusion that they may be ignored or pushed into the corner is fraught with serious consequences.

In this case, society will still be divided politically and socially. This is bound to happen because people are dissatisfied not by some abstract issues but by real problems that concern everyone regardless of the political views that people have or think they have. Meanwhile, real problems evoke discontent.

*Technology giants and the dangers of mono-polarised power*

I would like to emphasise one more important point. Modern technological giants, especially digital companies, have started playing an increasing role in the life of society. Much is being said about this now, especially regarding the events that took place during the election campaign in the US. They are not just some economic giants. In some areas, they are de facto competing with states. Their audiences consist of billions of users that pass a considerable part of their lives in these eco systems.

In the opinion of these companies, their monopoly is optimal for organising technological and business processes. Maybe so but society is wondering whether such monopolism meets public interests. Where is the border between successful global business, in-demand services and big data consolidation and the attempts to man-

age society at one's own discretion and in a tough manner, replace legal democratic institutions and essentially usurp or restrict the natural right of people to decide for themselves how to live, what to choose and what position to express freely? We have just seen all of these phenomena in the US and everyone understands what I am talking about now. I am confident that the overwhelming majority of people share this position, including the participants in the current event.

**3. Challenge: the threat of aggravating international problems**

And finally, the third challenge, or rather, a clear threat that we may well run into in the coming decade is the further exacerbation of many international problems. After all, unresolved and mounting internal socioeconomic problems may push people to look for someone to blame for all their troubles and to redirect their irritation and discontent. We can already see this. We feel that the degree of foreign policy propaganda rhetoric is growing.

*Accusations, aggressive measures and warlike confrontations*

We can expect the nature of practical actions to also become more aggressive, including pressure on the countries that do not agree with a role of obedient controlled satellites, use of trade barriers, illegitimate sanctions and restrictions in the financial, technological and cyber spheres.

Such a game with no rules critically increases the risk of unilateral use of military force. The use of force under a far-fetched pretext is what this danger is all about. This multiplies the likelihood of new hot spots flaring up on our planet. This concerns us.

**Common approaches are needed to overcome the imbalances**

Colleagues, despite this tangle of differences and challenges, we certainly should

keep a positive outlook on the future and remain committed to a constructive agenda. It would be naive to come up with universal miraculous recipes for resolving the above problems. But we certainly need to try to work out common approaches, bring our positions as close as possible and identify sources that generate global tensions.

Once again, I want to emphasise my thesis that accumulated socioeconomic problems are the fundamental reason for unstable global growth.

So, the key question today is how to build a programme of actions in order to not only quickly restore the global and national economies affected by the pandemic, but to ensure that this recovery is sustainable in the long run, relies on a high-quality structure and helps overcome the burden of social imbalances. Clearly, with the above restrictions and macroeconomic policy in mind, economic growth will largely rely on fiscal incentives with state budgets and central banks playing the key role.

Actually, we can see these kinds of trends in the developed countries and also in some developing economies as well. An increasing role of the state in the socioeconomic sphere at the national level obviously implies greater responsibility and close interstate interaction when it comes to issues on the global agenda.

**Inclusive growth and decent living standards for all**

Calls for inclusive growth and for creating decent standards of living for everyone are regularly made at various international forums. This is how it should be, and this is an absolutely correct view of our joint efforts.

It is clear that the world cannot continue creating an economy that will only benefit a million people, or even the "golden billion". This is a destructive precept. This model is unbalanced by default. The

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# Their goal is to defend the freedom of research and teaching

## 70 German-speaking university lecturers are founding an “network academic freedom”

by Karl-Jürgen Müller



*Would Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller and Wilhelm von Humboldt enjoy living in today's Germany? (Pictures Wikipedia)*

On 3 February 2021, 70 German-speaking university lecturers – including some from Austria and Switzerland – addressed the public as the Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit (Network Academic Freedom) with a “manifesto”. They also launched a website: <https://www.netzwerk-wissenschaftsfreiheit.de/en/home-2/>. So far, the website contains a brief introduction to the network and its concerns, a press release from the network, the names of the 70 university teachers, the names of the five-member “steering group” and a “manifesto”.

The manifesto states: “The Network for Academic Freedom is an association of academics with the common concern to defend the freedom of research and teaching against ideologically motivated restrictions and to contribute to strengthening a liberal academic climate.”

### “Those who do not play along must expect to be discredited”

The “constitutionally guaranteed freedom of research and teaching”, according to the text, “is increasingly being placed under moral and political reservation. [...] Individuals claim, against the background of their world view and their political goals, to be able to determine which questions, topics and arguments are objectionable. This is an attempt to standardise research and teaching ideologically and to instrumentalise them politically. Those who do not play along must expect to be discredited.” This would “create a pressure to conform [...] that increasingly leads to scientific debates being nipped in the bud”.

In addition, there are attempts to “prevent research projects that do not conform to ideological ideas and to prevent

the publication of correspondingly unpopular results”. Of particular importance were “the indirect effects of this pressure: They send the signal that one had better refrain from the ‘controversial’ use of one’s freedom of research and teaching in future”. This is creating an environment producing “university members limiting their own freedom of research and teaching because they anticipate being discredited as a person through statements, topics or events”.

### For an argumentative debate

The objectives of the network are stated as:

- “counteract all attempts to restrict the academic work of university members. The only limits to this freedom are the constitution and the law,

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**"Their goal is to defend ..."**

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- actively advocate that intellectual freedom and scientific pluralism in research questions, research approaches and research methods are taken for granted and that argumentative debate with other approaches and perspectives takes place, even and especially if they are not shared in terms of content;
- advocate for a culture of debate in which all scholars and students can pursue their epistemological interests free of concerns about moral discredit, social exclusion or professional disadvantage and can contribute their arguments to debates. We insist that debates are characterised by mutual respect and that ad hominem arguments are avoided."

For these goals, the "importance of freedom of research and teaching through public events" is to be highlighted, the "threats to academic freedom in practice" are to be analysed, cases where they were restricted are to be exposed and counter-strategies are to be developed. The network wants to create "debate formats that bring together as many perspectives as possible on different topics" which can be "exchanged in an open intellectual climate". Those "who face attacks on their academic freedom" are to be supported.

\* \* \*

The fact that as many as 70 German-speaking university professors from different disciplines and different university locations are speaking out with a manifesto on the topic of academic freedom is not an everyday occurrence. And a look at history shows that intolerance at universities – which are supposed to be a place of a pronounced culture of discussion – can lead to real excesses. In the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, it was the attribute of the radical forces of the student movement and the increasing influence of neo-Marxism on research and teaching. The problems that now are again leading to a call for freedom of research and teaching are different from those in the wake of the student movement – but it would also be interesting to examine more closely the relationships between elements of the neo-Marxist theory of the Frankfurt School and what today is called "cancel culture" and has long been called "political correctness". The parallels to the situation at US universities are obvious. Their "identity politics"<sup>1</sup> is the model.

**Little support from the media**

The founding of the Network Academic Freedom has generated widespread media

coverage, but the number of positive responses has so far been low. Instead, there is criticism of the lack of concrete evidence of a threat to academic freedom, attempts to trivialise the concrete cases as isolated incidents, some sometimes clumsy polemics, labelling with the label "right-wing" or even sharp attacks such as that of the German-language Trotskyist *World Socialist Web Site*, which claims that the network was promoting "the rehabilitation of Hitler".

A few representatives of the network were able to present their views in interviews, for example, the German political scientist and sociologist *Ulrike Ackermann* in the German newspaper "Welt" of 11 February 2021 – and also on 8 February in more detail in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" with the title: "The principles of the Enlightenment are fundamental. We must defend them."

**An everyday example ...**

In an argument between *Sandra Kostner*, the spokesperson of the network, and the political scientist *Gudrun Hentges*, published online by the German newspaper *Freitag* in its February 2021 issue, it becomes clear which phenomena are at stake in concrete and everyday terms: A dark-skinned student with German citizenship was asked by her university teacher in Cologne where she came from. She felt approached in a racist way by this question and sent a petition to the government of her federal state with the aim of "deconstructing institutional racism". The student's entry in her "social network" received more than 50,000 responses. Ms Hentges finds it "courageous that the Cologne student shared her experience, intervening in the political debate". "Racism" cannot be "reduced to individual prejudices", it was "a structural problem".

**... and the ideology behind**

Behind this is the view that the history and present of the "West" was first of all and to this day a history of colonialism, racism, misogyny and white male domination. *Ulrike Ackermann* says: "Patriarchal critique, anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism were driving forces for these movements. [...] The centuries-long discrimination and disadvantage of women, ethnic minorities and religions should move to the centre. Eurocentrism and patriarchal rule had obscured the view. The crimes of colonial history were not reflected in the classical academic canon." (translation of all quotes by Current Concerns)

Ms Kostner counters: "Until about ten years ago, it was taught [in seminars on intercultural competence] that one should ask the question about one's origins be-

cause it was a sign of politeness, signalling interest." In the meantime, however, the question about a person's origin "is interpreted as a denial of belonging or even as a sign of racism, especially in the identity-left milieu".

University teacher or students can make similar experiences if they do not adhere to the prescriptions of gender theory or the LGBTQ movement. Anyone who questions the theory and practice of multiculturalism and internationalism, or even argues for sovereign nation states, must also expect to come under fire. It can be enough if a university member continues to use the German "Student" instead of "Student\*in".<sup>2</sup>

Ms Hentges also says that everyone has a "responsibility" to "protect vulnerable groups". This means "people affected by racism who are exposed to verbal or physical attacks. Refugees are a particularly vulnerable group due to their traumatic experience in their country of origin and while fleeing." Ms Hentges does not say it, but the question arises: Is it then still permissible to criticise the concrete behaviour of refugees?

**Forming opportunists?**

In her interview with the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", *Ulrike Ackermann* says that the "narrowing of questions, topics and arguments" is linked to a "politicisation", "with the aim of changing society". Ms Kostner states in the debate that the protagonists of the movement are concerned with "creating pressure to conform. In other words, to call everyone a racist, sexist, Islamophobe, etc. who does not share their point of view". And with regard to the students at the universities, Ms Ackermann says: "Independent judgement, the ability to change perspectives, the pursuit of knowledge without absolute certainty, scientific pluralism – in other words, all the basic principles of Humboldt's ideal of education – this is precisely what students will not learn under these new conditions. And that, of course, is fatal for future key players. Graduates then tend to be opportunists who do not want to stand out, do not engage in conflict and cannot really advance the contest of ideas." •

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction, see the entry on "Identity politics" in *Wikipedia*. That "identity politics" is promoted by German state organisations is demonstrated by a publication by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung: "Identitätspolitik"; from: *Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 9–11/2019 of 25 Feb. 2019 (<https://www.bpb.de/apuz/286499/identitaetspolitik>)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "Student\*innen! Verklagt die Sprachpolizei an eurer Uni!" (Students! Sue the language police at your university!), in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 31 October 2019; <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/bildung/universitaet-gender-verein-deutsche-sprache-1.4661809>

**"Eliminating the accumulated ..."**

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recent developments, including migration crises, have reaffirmed this once again.

**Action is needed  
to reduce social inequalities**

We must now proceed from stating facts to action, investing our efforts and resources into reducing social inequality in individual countries and into gradually balancing the economic development standards of different countries and regions in the world. This would put an end to migration crises.

The essence and focus of this policy aimed at ensuring sustainable and harmonious development are clear. They imply the creation of new opportunities for everyone, conditions under which everyone will be able to develop and realise their potential regardless of where they were born and are living

I would like to point out four key priorities, as I see them. This might be old news, but since Klaus has allowed me to present Russia's position, my position, I will certainly do so.

*Reasonable living conditions*

First, everyone must have comfortable living conditions, including housing and affordable transport, energy and public utility infrastructure. Plus environmental welfare, something that must not be overlooked.

*Jobs*

Second, everyone must be sure that they will have a job that can ensure sustainable growth of income and, hence, decent standards of living. Everyone must have access to an effective system of lifelong education, which is absolutely indispensable now and which will allow people to develop, make a career and receive a decent pension and social benefits upon retirement.

*Safe medical care*

Third, people must be confident that they will receive high-quality and effective medical care whenever necessary, and that the national healthcare system will guarantee access to modern medical services.

*Educational opportunities for all*

Fourth, regardless of the family income, children must be able to receive a decent education and realise their potential. Every child has potential.

This is the only way to guarantee the cost-effective development of the modern economy, in which people are perceived as the end, rather than the means. Only those countries capable of attaining progress in at least these four areas will fa-

cilitate their own sustainable and all-inclusive development. These areas are not exhaustive, and I have just mentioned the main aspects.

**Our development goals for Russia**

A strategy, also being implemented by my country, hinges on precisely these approaches. Our priorities revolve around people, their families, and they aim to ensure demographic development, to protect the people, to improve their well-being and to protect their health. We are now working to create favourable conditions for worthy and cost-effective work and successful entrepreneurship and to ensure digital transformation as the foundation of a high-tech future for the entire country, rather than that of a narrow group of companies.

We intend to focus the efforts of the state, the business community and civil society on these tasks and to implement a budgetary policy with the relevant incentives in the years ahead.

We are open to the broadest international cooperation, while achieving our national goals, and we are confident that cooperation on matters of the global socioeconomic agenda would have a positive influence on the overall atmosphere in global affairs, and that interdependence in addressing acute current problems would also increase mutual trust which is particularly important and particularly topical today.

**The attempt for a unipolar  
world order is now history**

Obviously, the era linked with attempts to build a centralised and unipolar world order has ended. To be honest, this era did not even begin. A mere attempt was made in this direction, but this, too, is now history. The essence of this monopoly ran counter to our civilisation's cultural and historical diversity.

The reality is such that really different development centres with their distinctive models, political systems and public institutions have taken shape in the world. Today, it is very important to create mechanisms for harmonising their interests to prevent the diversity and natural competition of the development poles from triggering anarchy and a series of protracted conflicts.

To achieve this we must, in part, consolidate and develop universal institutions that bear special responsibility for ensuring stability and security in the world and for formulating and defining the rules of conduct both in the global economy and trade.

I have mentioned more than once that many of these institutions are not going through the best of times. We have been bringing this up at various summits. Of

course, these institutions were established in a different era. This is clear. Probably, they even find it difficult to parry modern challenges for objective reasons. However, I would like to emphasise that this is not an excuse to give up on them without offering anything in exchange, all the more so since these structures have unique experience of work and a huge but largely untapped potential. And it certainly needs to be carefully adapted to modern realities. It is too early to dump it in the dustbin of history. It is essential to work with it and to use it.

**Multilateral forms  
of cooperation work**

Naturally, in addition to this, it is important to use new, additional formats of cooperation. I am referring to such phenomenon as multiversity. Of course, it is also possible to interpret it differently, in one's own way. It may be viewed as an attempt to push one's own interests or feign the legitimacy of one's own actions when all others can merely nod in approval. Or it may be a concerted effort of sovereign states to resolve specific problems for common benefit. In this case, this may refer to the efforts to settle regional conflicts, establish technological alliances and resolve many other issues, including the formation of cross-border transport and energy corridors and so on and so forth.

Friends, Ladies and gentlemen, this opens wide possibilities for collaboration. Multi-faceted approaches do work. We know from practice that they work. As you may be aware, within the framework of, for example, the *Astana format*, Russia, Iran and Turkey are doing much to stabilise the situation in Syria and are now helping establish a political dialogue in that country, of course, alongside other countries. We are doing this together. And, importantly, not without success.

For example, Russia has undertaken energetic mediation efforts to stop the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, in which peoples and states that are close to us – Azerbaijan and Armenia – are involved. We strived to follow the key agreements reached by the OSCE Minsk Group, in particular between its co-chairs – Russia, the United States and France. This is also a very good example of cooperation.

As you may be aware, a trilateral Statement by Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia was signed in November. Importantly, by and large, it is being steadily implemented. The bloodshed was stopped. This is the most important thing. We managed to stop the bloodshed, achieve a complete ceasefire and start the stabilisation process.

Now the international community and, undoubtedly, the countries involved in crisis resolution are faced with the task of

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**"Eliminating the accumulated ..."**

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helping the affected areas overcome humanitarian challenges related to returning refugees, rebuilding destroyed infrastructure, protecting and restoring historical, religious and cultural landmarks.

Or, another example. I will note the role of Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United States and a number of other countries in stabilising the global energy market. This format has become a productive example of interaction between the states with different, sometimes even diametrically opposite assessments of global processes, and with their own outlooks on the world.

**Pandemic response: testing and vaccination must be accessible to all**

At the same time there are certainly problems that concern every state without exception. One example is cooperation in studying and countering the coronavirus infection. As you know, several strains of this dangerous virus have emerged. The international community must create conditions for cooperation between scientists and other specialists to understand how and why coronavirus mutations occur, as well as the difference between the various strains.

Of course, we need to coordinate the efforts of the entire world, as the UN Secretary-General suggests and as we urged recently at the G20 summit. It is essential to join and coordinate the efforts of the world in countering the spread of the virus and making the much needed vaccines more accessible. We need to help the countries that need support, including the African nations. I am referring to expanding the scale of testing and vaccinations.

We see that mass vaccination is accessible today, primarily to people in the developed countries. Meanwhile, millions of people in the world are deprived even of the hope for this protection. In practice, such inequality could create a common threat because this is well known and has been said many times that it will drag out the epidemic and uncontrolled hotbeds will continue. The epidemic has no borders.

There are no borders for infections or pandemics. Therefore, we must learn the lessons from the current situation and suggest measures aimed at improving the monitoring of the emergence of such diseases and the development of such cases in the world.

**Problems that we can only solve together**

Another important area that requires coordination, in fact, the coordination of the efforts of the entire international community, is to preserve the climate and nature of our planet. I will not say anything new in this respect.

Only together can we achieve progress in resolving such critical problems as global warming, the reduction of forests, the loss of biodiversity, the increase in waste, the pollution of the ocean with plastic and so on, and find an optimal balance between economic development and the preservation of the environment for the current and future generations.

**Conflicts of interest are not an obstacle to cooperating at critical moments**

My friends, we all know that competition and rivalry between countries in world history never stopped, do not stop and will never stop. Differences and a clash of interests are also natural for such a complicated body as human civilisation. However, in critical times this did not prevent it from pooling its efforts – on the contrary, it united in the most important destinies of humankind. I believe this is the period we are going through today.

It is very important to honestly assess the situation, to concentrate on real rather than artificial global problems, on removing the imbalances that are critical for the entire international community. I am sure that in this way we will be able to achieve success and befittingly parry the challenges of the third decade of the 21st century.

I would like to finish my speech at this point and thank all of you for your patience and attention.

Thank you very much.

*Klaus Schwab: Thank you very much, Mr President. Many of the issues raised, certainly, are part of our discussions here during the Davos Week. We complement the speeches also by task forces which address some of the issues you mentioned, like not leaving the developing world behind, taking care of, let's say, creating the skills for tomorrow, and so on. Mr President, we prepare for the discussion afterwards, but I have one very short question. It is a question which we discussed when I visited you in St Petersburg 14 months ago. How do you see the future of European-Russian relations? Just a short answer.*

*Vladimir Putin: You know there are things of an absolutely fundamental nature such as our common culture. Major European political figures have talked in the recent past about the need to expand relations between Europe and Russia, saying that Russia is part of Europe. Geographically and, most importantly, culturally, we are one civilisation. French leaders have spoken of the need to create a single space from Lisbon to the Urals. I believe, and I mentioned this, why the Urals? To Vladivostok.*

I personally heard the outstanding European politician, former Chancellor *Helmut Kohl*, say that if we want European culture to survive and remain a centre of world civilisation in the future, keeping in mind the challenges and trends underlying the world civilisation, then of course, Western Europe and Russia must be together. It is hard to disagree with that. We hold exactly the same point of view.

Clearly, today's situation is not normal. We need to return to a positive agenda. This is in the interests of Russia and, I am confident, the European countries. Clearly, the pandemic has also played a negative role. Our trade with the European Union is down, although the EU is one of our key trade and economic partners. Our agenda includes returning to positive trends and building up trade and economic cooperation.

Europe and Russia are absolutely natural partners from the point of view of the economy, research, technology and spatial development for European culture, since Russia, being a country of European culture, is a little larger than the entire EU in terms of territory. Russia's resources and human potential are enormous. I will not go over everything that is positive in Europe, which can also benefit the Russian Federation.

Only one thing matters: we need to approach the dialogue with each other honestly. We need to discard the phobias of the past, stop using the problems that we inherited from past centuries in internal political processes and look to the future. If we can rise above these problems of the past and get rid of these phobias, then we will certainly enjoy a positive stage in our relations.

We are ready for this, we want this, and we will strive to make this happen. But love is impossible if it is declared only by one side. It must be mutual.

*Klaus Schwab: Thank you very much, Mr President.* •

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64938>; in Russian: [kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64938](http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64938) Video with simultaneous translation: <https://www.weforum.org/events/the-davos-agenda-2021/sessions/special-address-by-vladimir-putin-president-of-the-russian-federation>

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**“It is clear that the world cannot continue creating an economy that will only benefit a million people, or even the ‘golden billion’. This is a destructive precept. This model is unbalanced by default.”**

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# A compass for the economic policy of all peoples: Self-sufficiency of the population in the first place

## EFTA-Indonesia Free Trade Agreement and Swiss Agricultural Policy 22+

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

How should the smaller states or those less in the limelight navigate the globalised world and effectively represent their interests? In the last issue of *Zeit-Fragen*, we took a close look at the free trade agreement between the EFTA states and Indonesia. Trade agreements have been an important instrument of economic cooperation between sovereign states for centuries. But they must be win-win agreements from which everyone benefits, said Geneva organic winegrower Willy Cretegnny in an interview: The focus should not be on the profits of the big corporations, but on taking social and ecological issues into account and on supporting tried and tested local standards. These goals are not sufficiently targeted by the agreement between EFTA and Indonesia (CEPA), on which we will vote on 7 March.

This assessment is now reinforced by a widely supported statement from Indonesia. The open letter from civil society there to the Indonesian parliament gives us an insight into what concerns the people in their country and what objections they are raising against the trade agreement.

In Switzerland, the planned AP 22+ agricultural policy is currently under parliamentary scrutiny. It is about ensuring the greatest possible self-sufficiency for the population and the preservation of Swiss farms.

### Indonesian civil society says no to CEPA

The *Coalition for Economic Justice* is a network of fishermen, women, farmers, environmental activists, academics and other civil society groups. It has been following the *European Free Trade Association* (EFTA) negotiations with Indonesia since 2011 until the signing of the agreement<sup>1</sup> on 16 December 2018, and has submitted a number of analyses, comments and submissions on this to the government.

In early February, this coalition has now sent an open letter to the Indonesian Parliament asking it “to seriously consider not ratifying the Indonesia-EFTA CEPA Agreement.”<sup>2</sup>

This is because it does not bring any economic benefits to Indonesia, but threatens “its abundant natural wealth and biodiversity”.

The open letter lists four main points of criticism from an Indonesian perspective. It is good that we Swiss learn about this before we vote. In brief:



Seed varieties collected and preserved by farmers' wives. (Image Civil society letter on EFTA-Indonesia comprehensive economic partnership agreement (Cepa) of December 2018; <https://www.bilaterals.org/?civil-society-letter-on-efta&lang=en>)

### 1. Palm oil: two sides of the coin

While Swiss farmers must fear that the agreement would lead to a disproportionate increase in the import of cheap palm oil from Indonesia, Indonesian civil society conversely points out that the quota of a maximum of 12,500 tonnes per year foreseen for Switzerland is a very small quantity for Indonesia – which exports over 30 million tonnes annually. Moreover, the EFTA requirements for the sustainability of palm oil production are so strict that it is practically hardly possible to meet them: “the exported palm oil should not be produced on slash-and-burn land, peatlands, free of water and air pollution, and it should guarantee the protection of the rights of smallholders and indigenous peoples. However, anyone who understands the palm oil industry in Indonesia is certainly aware of the fact that no Indonesian palm oil producer is free from these problems. This means that it is unlikely that Indonesia can export its palm oil to Switzerland by using the tariff reduction facility”.

Here it is easy to see that the enormous difference in size between the two countries (Indonesia 1,905,000 km<sup>2</sup>, Switzerland 41,285 km<sup>2</sup>) alone can lead to completely different ideas of small or large quantities. Moreover, the high environ-

mental protection standards of the rich industrialised countries are obviously hardly feasible for the small farmers in the newly industrialised country of Indonesia – while large landowners with their plantations might find the knack more easily. Just remember the 1970s and 1980s, when Swiss lakes were so polluted as a result of strong economic development that bathing had to be banned. It was not until later that the necessary sewage treatment plants were built, which Switzerland could afford financially. In Indonesia, it should actually be the local large corporations from the industrialised countries that take over the financing of environmental protection.

### 2. Access to medicines and the preservation of the farmer seed system would be made more difficult.

One of the objectives of the Agreement according to Art. 1.2 is (d) “to ensure adequate and effective protection of intellectual property rights in accordance with international standards”. Without being able to go into details here: The open letter refers to experiences with other free trade agreements, according to which especially the pharmaceutical and agrochemical industries benefit from such protec-

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**"A compass for the economic policy ..."**

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tive provisions, which in part went beyond the standards of the WTO. There is a fear that medicines will become more expensive for the Indonesian population.

Another issue is the protection of plant varieties. The EFTA States are part of the "International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants", referred to in the open letter by the English abbreviation "UPOV 1991".<sup>3</sup> This restrictive and inflexible plant variety protection system was initiated by the industrialised countries and is not suitable for Indonesia: "Agriculture in Indonesia is dominated by small and medium farmers, with small plots. The farmer seed system is the basis of livelihoods and food security in Indonesia, and it is the main way for small and medium scale farmers to access the seeds". That is why Indonesia has not joined the agreement to date. If farmers had to comply with plant variety protection according to EFTA standards, their costs for seeds would rise sharply. This regulation would violate people's right to food.

**3. Prevention of cheaper generics for fertilisers and pesticides**

Similarly, the agreement with a ten-year data protection for fertilisers and pesticides in favour of foreign agricultural companies would prevent cheaper generics from being marketed in Indonesia. This is because their producers do not have access to the data of the original products, so they cannot then prove to the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture that the active ingredients of their generics are equivalent to the original. Without a free trade agreement (FTA), the patent protection rules of the WTO apply, but the Indonesian authorities are freer to tolerate generics produced in the country.

**4. Inundation of the fish market with Norwegian sea fish**

Already at present, a lot of salmon and cod are imported from Norway, which are allegedly healthier than Indonesian fish. With the agreement, the influx of marine fish, especially from Norway, would increase: "If this agreement comes into force, more than 80% of Norwegian exports to Indonesia will be free of import duty, including fishery products." The impact: 2.7 million Indonesian fishermen would have to fear for their livelihoods, even though their fish is just as good.

**Conclusion of the open letter: Self-sufficiency first**

In conclusion, the authors of the open letter state: "Therefore, through this open letter, we – the civil society who are members of the organizations below<sup>4</sup> – encour-

age a serious consideration of the Indonesian Parliament not to ratify Indonesia's participation in the EFTA - Indonesia Free Trade Agreement which does not provide economic benefits. This agreement will in fact harm the majority of the Indonesian people, especially farmers and fisherfolks, and threaten to lose food and agricultural biodiversity in Indonesia".

This takes us back to *Willy Cretegnny's* call for trade agreements to take into account social and environmental issues and to endorse proven local standards. Especially in the area of raw material extraction, it is of great importance that the supply of people with essential commodities comes first. This is best achieved everywhere in the world through small-scale, local self-sufficiency, as research in the *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development* (IAASTD) has shown.

For us Swiss, this means on the one hand: supporting our own agriculture and commercial SMEs in everyday life and in referendums. But it also means looking beyond one's own nose and taking note of what Indonesian civil society, for example, has to say about the planned free trade agreement — simply take note.

**Halt for Swiss Agricultural Policy 22+!**

In Switzerland, a struggle over the direction of agricultural policy has been underway for years. Despite great differences to Indonesia in geographical, social and economic terms, as well as in the size of the territories and the population, the same applies in Switzerland as everywhere else in the world: In order for people to feel safe and at home in the country in which they live, they need first and foremost the certainty that the highest possible level of self-sufficiency is also ensured for the future. A one-sided profit-oriented view, as represented by some exponents of large corporations, is also repugnant in essence to the majority of people in our country.

Unfortunately, the majority in the Swiss parliament tends to support free trade agreements that are detrimental to our farmers. The next one against which we will have to hitch up our knickers would have even more serious implications for Swiss agriculture than the one with Indonesia: the planned FTA with the Mercosur countries Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, signed in Buenos Aires in August 2019, would exempt from customs duty large quotas of food products that are also produced in Switzerland.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the Council of States has now fortunately and surprisingly suspended the controversial Agricultural Policy 2022-2025 (AP 22+) in the winter session 2020 by 28 votes to 16. This means a halt for one to two years "until the Federal Council has presented a report on the

future direction of agricultural policy".<sup>6</sup> A real chore for President *Guy Parmelin* and his administration team! Accordingly, the head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research reacted angrily before the Council of States: for years, this project had been worked out in cooperation with the cantons, parties, the farmers' association and the other organisations concerned. "And now, all of a sudden, you think you have to reheat the whole thing and start from scratch again. [...] I don't think working like this is serious." – I, on the other hand, find this decision very courageous from the Council of States!

On 2 February the *Economic Affairs and Taxation Committee of the National Council* (EATC-N) has now joined the Council of States by 14 to 11 votes: it recommends its Council to suspend AP22+. The National Council will decide on this in the spring session (on 16 March).

**Council of States backs farmers and self-sufficiency**

This is not the place to present the agricultural policy planned by the federal administration or the entire objections to it by the Council of States. Here are briefly the most important arguments of the Council of States for a halt, summarised by the Economic Commission of the National Council in its media release of 2 February.

With AP 22+, "the degree of self-sufficiency would decrease, which would contradict the goal of Article 104a of the Federal Constitution; [...] the income of the agricultural sector would decrease, valuable cultivated land would be lost, [food] imports would increase, the administrative burden for farmers would increase." Parliament had already adopted the necessary measures to reduce pesticides and nutrients, so no further regulations were necessary.<sup>7</sup>

For once, all members of the Council of States from the Centre Group (CVP) and the SVP, as well as the majority of the FDP, agreed that the strict ecological regulations envisaged by AP22+ would have too restrictive consequences for farm(ing) enterprises. It should be noted that Swiss law already contains very strict ecological standards and a high level of animal welfare.

On the other hand, the Council of States accepted the direct federal payments for agriculture (around 13,5 billion Swiss francs for the next four years) without reservations by 43 votes to 0 – a sign of appreciation from all political parties towards farming families – and the overall vote at the end was also unanimous.<sup>8</sup> •

<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CEPA). Concluded in Jakarta on 16 December 2018

# Reflections on some characteristics of Swiss neutrality

by Ivo Rens, Honorary Professor Law Faculty University of Geneva



Ivo Rens  
(Picture ma)

Switzerland's neutrality is by no means limited to its non-participation in the two world conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It predates this period, having been established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and recognised by the Peace of Westphalia.

This neutrality was indeed violated by revolutionary and then Napoleonic France, indicating its fragility, but it was reaffirmed and enforced by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Perhaps it should be

\* Prof. Dr Ivo Rens, retired honorary professor of the University of Geneva, was a full professor at the University of Geneva until his retirement. He taught at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne and at the Sorbonne in Paris, in addition to other international teaching assignments. In the 1960s, he was advisor on constitutional issues to the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, one of the fathers of a united Europe.

## "A compass for the economic policy ..."

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- <sup>2</sup> Open Letter of Civil Society to the Indonesian Parliament. EFTA-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CEPA) (Letter from 8 February 2021)
- <sup>3</sup> International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants of December 2, 1961, revised at Geneva on November 10, 1972, October 23, 1978, and March 19, 1991 (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants; UPOV 1991).
- <sup>4</sup> Signatories are the following 16 organisations: Indonesia for Global Justice; Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity of Human Rights); The People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice (KIARA); Federasi Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia (FPBI); Kabupaten Asahan (Federation of Indonesian Worker's Struggle); FIAN Indonesia; GRAIN; Serikat Petani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Union – SPI); Koalisi Rakyat untuk Hak Atas Air (People's Coalition for the Right to Water KRUAHA); The Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM); Universitas Indonesia (Universitas Indonesia – UI); Kajian Wilayah Eropa – Universitas Indonesia (Center for European Studies – University of Indonesia); Palangkaraya Ecological and Human Rights Studies (Progress); IndoWater CoP; Forum Benih Lokal Berdaulat (Organic Heirloom Seed Forum); Perkumpulan Kediri Bersama Rakyat (The Association of Kediri together with the People – KIBAR); Komisi Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation GKPT
- <sup>5</sup> "EFTA-Mercosur free trade agreement: agreement on substance". *Federal Council media release*, 24 August 2019.
- <sup>6</sup> 20.022 *Agricultural policy from 2022 (AP 2022 plus)*. Council of States debate of 14 December 2020.
- <sup>7</sup> EATC-N. "AP22+: Back to field one". Media release of 2 February 2021
- <sup>8</sup> 20.022 *Agricultural policy from 2022 (AP 2022 plus)*. Council of States debate on 14 December 2020.

"In international relations, Switzerland occupies a unique role in the world due to its perpetual neutrality and its commitment to peace. This is due to the perseverance it has shown throughout its history with regard to its sovereignty."

pointed out that Swiss neutrality has always been armed neutrality, even if this precision no longer has the significance it had until the Second World War.

In an initial period from 1815 to 1918, this neutrality was essentially passive. Switzerland did not interfere in international affairs, but naturally strove to maintain good neighbourly relations with its immediate neighbours and even with other states.

"During this period from 1872 (the date of the famous Alabama arbitration in Geneva between the USA and Great Britain) to the beginning of the First World War, international arbitration experienced a heyday, which is also illustrated by the peace conferences in The Hague in 1899 and 1907 (*Hague Conventions*). Thanks to the experience it had gained during the Old Confederation, Switzerland was then entrusted with arbitration mandates almost continuously."<sup>1</sup>

Parallel to this development, two first intergovernmental organisations with universal aspirations emerged in Switzerland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: The *International Telegraph Union* was founded in Geneva in 1865 and the *General Postal Union*, today's *Universal Postal Union*, in Berne in 1874. But perhaps most significantly, the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (deliberate inversion of the Swiss flag) was founded in Geneva in 1863, on the initiative of *Henry Dunant* from Geneva, author of *Un souvenir de Solferino*, a book published in 1862 and dedicated to the humanitarian catastrophe of the battle of the same name. When, on 26 January 1871, the Swiss Confederation agreed to give refuge to the 87,000 exhausted and destitute men of General *Bourbaki's* army after the French defeat in the conflict with Prussia, it seemed to give its neutrality a humanitarian interpretation in line with that which had guided the birth of the Red Cross and which was to prevail in more recent periods of Swiss neutrality.

In the second period from 1914 to 1945, Swiss neutrality was strongly influenced by the efforts that led to the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, which Switzerland immediately joined. Incidentally, Article 435 of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles recognised Swit-

zerland's neutrality "for the preservation of peace". It is no coincidence that Geneva was chosen as the seat of the League of Nations, the ILO, the WHO and several other international organisations, for example the oldest international political organisation, the *Inter-Parliamentary Union*, which was founded in 1889 and established itself in Geneva in 1921.<sup>2</sup> At the request of the parties concerned, Switzerland, Swiss nationals or the International Red Cross intervened in many international disputes. In addition, disputes between Greeks and Turks were settled in two Swiss cities, Lausanne in 1923 and Montreux in 1936, particularly in relation to shipping through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.

In a third period after the Second World War – although Switzerland did not join the UN until 2002 – the European headquarters of the UN was established in Geneva, in the palace that had been built for the League of Nations, and thus in the city that was home to the headquarters of several organisations of the UN system and others.

The Swiss government (the Federal Council) tried to give Swiss neutrality a much more active course by not only initiating mediation or arbitration in international disputes, but also by offering its good offices, for example facilitating contacts between conflicting parties or even acting as a "facilitator" of such contacts. This explains why a Swiss city, Geneva, was chosen as the venue for several important international conferences.

Two examples: In 1954, in the midst of the Cold War, the so-called *Asia Conference* took place in Geneva, attended for the first time by the People's Republic of China, with which Switzerland had maintained diplomatic relations since 1950. The *Geneva Accords* emerged from this conference, sealing the fate of Korea and Vietnam and putting an end to years of war in these two countries. In 1955, Geneva also hosted the "Atoms for Peace" exhibition, which offered a peaceful outlet to the hitherto purely military activity, but unfortunately without taking into account the catastrophic risks and harmful ecological consequences of nuclear ener-

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# Mega-Merger in canton of Glarus

## Critical comments on the 10-year anniversary

by Hans-Markus Stuck, Niederurnen

Ten years after the mega-merger in the canton of Glarus, I can (unfortunately!) only confirm the findings of *René Roca* (“Communal mergers and direct democracy”, *Current Concerns* No. 27 of 11 December 2020). At the *Landsgemeinde* in 2006, a majority had decided to merge the 25 communes of Glarus. On 1 January 2011, the three large municipalities came into being.

“Creating three communes out of 25 is, in my opinion, a huge nonsense,” said the economics professor and happiness researcher *Bruno S. Frey* in the then new book by the *NZZ publishing house* “Was vermag Ökonomie?” (“What is economy capable to do?”). This and other comments can be read in the counter-memorial for the exceptional *Landsgemeinde* 2007. A newspaper recently ran

the headline: “The new communes have grown up”. Grown up at the age of ten years?

I consider the loss of proximity to the population as an important “construction site”. Even most of the Glarus cantonal governing councillors see this as a problem. A “bureaucratisation” has taken place. One example: In a village, a piece of fencing was needed in a place with a precipitous hillside. In the previous commune, it would have taken one contact to put that fence in place. Now it took four contacts for the fence to stand – but in the wrong place on top.

How can we reconnect with the citizens and strengthen the militia principle?

Nor has the relationship between smaller and larger villages been resolved. It is not a sign of equality if a village with, for

example, four hundred inhabitants has an issue, puts it to the vote and twenty times as many people from other villages can vote on it.

In the former commune of Elm, more people were present in the communal assembly as now in the merged large commune as a whole! In all three communes, attendance at communal meetings is low. There are many indications that the population is disenchanted with politics, because people identify less with the large commune as they used to with its own commune.

Government Councillor *Dr R. Widmer* is right saying in an interview that Rome was not built in a day.

But let us take care that the old common practices applied in the communes before the merger will not get lost! •

### “Reflections on some characteristics ...”

continued from page 14

gy. Swiss territory also hosted the meetings between the Algerian insurgents and the French leaders in 1961 and 1962, who sealed their agreement across Lake Geneva in Evian in 1962.<sup>3</sup>

“Another tailor-made area is the representation of foreign interests (protecting power mandates). Here Switzerland tries to maintain contacts as far as possible between two states that have broken off their diplomatic relations. Its first experiences in this field date back to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871; they were to expand during the First World War and reach an unsurpassed level during the Second World War with the mutual representation of 35 states resulting in 200 mandates. Although the number of protecting power mandates declined rapidly after the cessation of hostilities, it was to increase again with the emergence of new international tensions (46 mandates from 1946 to 1964). The Representation of American Interests in Cuba (since 1961) and the Mutual Representation of American Interests in Cuba (since 1991) were still in force in 1998. Particularly important were the mandate exercised from 1982 (Falklands War) to 1990 for Great Britain (representing its interests in Argentina) and the mandate exercised since 1980 for the USA in Iran fol-

lowing the taking hostage of members of the American embassy in Tehran.”<sup>4</sup>

In international relations, Switzerland occupies a unique role in the world due to its perpetual neutrality and its commitment to peace. This is due to the perseverance it has shown throughout its history with regard to its sovereignty. If Switzerland were to accept to submit its disputes with its giant neighbour, by which it is surrounded, to the *Court of Justice of the European Union*, which the latter urges it to do,<sup>5</sup> both its neutrality and its sovereignty would be destroyed. For in such a case, its autonomy vis-à-vis Brussels would be comparable to that of Hong Kong vis-à-vis Beijing. •

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, Entry “Gute Dienste” (Good Offices), Version of 1 July 2014

<sup>2</sup> The Inter-Parliamentary Union was involved in the establishment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 1899. This court exists in The Hague alongside the International Court of Justice, which was established by the United Nations Charter in 1945 to replace the Permanent Court of International Justice of the League of Nations, which was also based in The Hague.

<sup>3</sup> Mettan, Guy. *Genève, Ville de paix. De la conférence de 1954 sur l’Indochine à la coopération internationale*, Editions Slatkine, Geneva 2004

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. in particular Article 10 of the draft Framework Agreement between the EU and the Swiss Confederation and Article 9 of Protocol III on Arbitration, which make the Court of Justice of the European Union the court of final instance in all disputes. [https://suisse-en-europe.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Accord-inst-Projet-de-texte\\_fr.pdf](https://suisse-en-europe.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Accord-inst-Projet-de-texte_fr.pdf)

## Current Concerns

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# Respectful dealings is the be-all and end-all of a living democracy

About the book “Respekt geht anders” by Gabriele Krone-Schmalz

by Werner Voss, Germany

Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, born 1949, is a German historian with a doctorate, freelance journalist, publicist and audio book speaker. She was the ARD’s Moscow correspondent from 1987 to 1991 and then anchored the ARD’s *Kulturweltspiegel* (cultural world view) until 1997. Since 2011, she has been a professor of TV and journalism at the University in Iserlohn.

Gabriele Krone-Schmalz’s new book is a valuable contribution to counter the polarisation in our society. Based on various debates that are being held in our country, it shows that an either-or-thinking cannot contribute to solutions that are developed jointly. Rather, there is a need for an “as well as”, which requires a respectful approach to dissenters. Only the turning away from two extreme poles towards a compromise promotes democracy and public spirit. This can only be achieved by listening to the dissenters, by accepting their arguments mentally in the first place, in order to possibly recognise a spark of truth in them.

## Division of the world into the “good” and the “bad”

Many terms commonly used today, such as “Putin-understander”, “right-wing populists”, “racists”, “angry citizens”, “corona denialists”, to name but a few, counteract what has been described above. Dividing the world into “climate denialists” and “climate saviours”, into “the good” and “the bad”, by no means contributes to democracy, but rather excludes certain groups of people from the start. Thus, Ms Krone-Schmalz warns of a Germany as a country of hysterics when, for example, according to PEGIDA and large parts of the AfD, Germany is on the verge of a “Umvolkung” and will soon be dominated by Muslims. In another corner, people fear that Nazis will soon rise to power. Democracy “still” exists.

She counters other statements from the left, namely that poverty in Germany is becoming more and more dramatic, by saying that the concept of poverty in this country is measured by the wrong criteria. Namely, one is poor if he or she has less than 60% of the average net median income at his or her disposal, which in Germany is about 1,136 euros per month for a single person. This is indeed little, but there is no question of existential hardship, because sufficient food and shelter can be provided from it. In comparison, this statistical value in our neighbouring

country Luxembourg is 1,716 euros. According to the World Bank, the threshold for absolute poverty is 58 US dollars per month. Poverty is therefore very relative.

Instead of talking about poverty here, she thinks the word social inequality is more appropriate for the situation here. However, she does not overlook the fact that it is worthwhile to work for more social justice, it is just that the repetitive descriptions and a rather ritual indignation do not help the socially weak in our society at all.

Another topic where the polarisation is evident is the refugee crisis that began in 2015, where Gabriele Krone-Schmalz warns against exaggeration on either side: On the one hand, she sees an exuberant “welcome culture”. On the other hand, she also considers a statement by *Alexander Gauland* (AfD) as exaggerated, who said in 2018 that “he feels reminded of the last days of the GDR in view of the *Merkel* regime”.

In another passage, Gabriele Krone-Schmalz criticises the good and evil scheme in our society. This scheme designates parts of the world as good states, but others as evil states. According to this, we and our Western allies belong to the side of the good states. On the other side were or are the so-called bad, including countries such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya and Russia and their political leaders, who have to be shown what is “right”. If necessary, this can also be done by military force in order to bring about regime change and “liberate” the peoples of such countries from the “evil”. The fact that this goes hand in hand with the violation of international law then finds its supposed justification in the “Responsibility to Protect”.

As a further example of this good-evil division, the author takes up the topic of climate protection, in which there are climate angels and climate devils, which are then also found, among other things, in evil and good mobility.

The author is interested in bringing the shades, the nuances between these extremes into focus, because humans, as beings endowed with reason by nature, are certainly capable of more differentiation.

## Preserving the dignity of the dissident in a pluralistic society

The dignity of the dissident in a pluralistic society is very close to her heart. The freedom of the individual finds its limits where it violates the other person. This would require rules supported and lived



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by the responsible citizen for the protection of others. Without these rules (laws) we would live in anarchy. Part of this, she says, is decent arguing. The other person must be treated with respect, on an equal footing, and the substance of his or her opinion must be taken into account. One has to concentrate on the facts instead of looking for a label that devalues the statement of the dissenter. As examples of defamatory labels, she mentions terms such as populist, racist, anti-Semite, right wing or left wing, neo-Nazi, conspirator, etc.

Furthermore, she warns against the division of young and old, in the sense of “we have to plod for the old”, or the old leave us an earth that will soon no longer be worth living on account of global warming. How this is reflected in everyday life is illustrated by a satirical video by the WDR, in which a verse of a children’s song – “Meine Oma ist ’ne ganz patente Frau” (“My grandma is a very practical woman”) – was rewritten in “unsere Oma ist ’ne alte Umweltsau” (“My grandma is an old environmental pig”).

According to Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, an important role in this context is played by the “fourth power” in the state, thus the media, which are primarily concerned with quotas and circulation in order to en-

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## “Actually, not that difficult, at least in theory”

### Text passages from: Gabriele Krone-Schmalz “Respekt geht anders”

“Compromise is the lubricant of democracy. [...] Only those who assume that there can also be a grain of truth in the opposing position are capable of compromise. Those who consider it ‘evil’, on the other hand, construct images of the enemy that usually have little to do with reality.” (pp. 33 and 58)

“I believe that people around the world long for a combination of free-market freedom (without necessarily calling it that) and state security. To be able to develop oneself, to take responsibility for what one does or does not do, and to be sure that one will be picked up by the community in which one lives if one needs help. Utopia? [...] Is that Christian or communist? Why does there always have to be a stamp on it? So that one knows whether to be for or against?” (p. 41)

“How much freedom does a society need to be able to call itself pluralistic? How many rules can a society tolerate in order to still be allowed to call itself pluralistic? In order to decide this question, not only formal democratic processes are needed, but also a number of virtues that the much-cited responsible citizen - on whom a functioning democracy depends [...] should possess: Willingness to engage in dialogue and the ability to engage in dialogue, in short, a culture of argument that knows how to distinguish between factual argumentation and insult.” (p. 87)

“Democracy must ensure that its citizens are as well-educated and informed as possible. That is the uncomfortable thing about democracy if it is to be taken seriously and not allowed to degenerate into an empty shell.” (p. 99)

“The first step should be to take note of the substance of a dissident’s thoughts, to concentrate only on the facts and not to look for a label that devalues or devalues the dissident’s statement and with which this statement is then banished to a drawer that all the like-minded people don’t even want to open because they don’t want to have anything to do with what is written on it anyway. [...] There are a number of methods to exclude or defame dissidents in this way and thus banish them from public discourse. Very popular and, so to speak, ‘small cutlery’ is the accusation of populism.” (p. 99)

“The most convenient and safest way to get rid of someone and not have to deal with them substantively is to find the most vile corner possible to put them in. By far the most odious is the one labelled anti-Semitism.” (p. 101)

“Talking to each other, listening to each other, not shutting up after the first half-sentence because you supposedly know what’s coming anyway, ac-

ording to the motto: What else can be expected from him? Take the other person seriously, even if you don’t like them. Putting what the other person says and means in the foreground, and not what you think you know. Actually, not that difficult, at least in theory.” (p. 170)

“Personal contact between people worldwide is the be-all and end-all, imparts one’s own powers of judgement and makes one immune to stupid, inflammatory talk. For me, commitment to youth exchange at the most diverse levels is active peace policy in the most convincing form. Only in this way are there at least chances that future generations will be able to turn crises into wars.” (p. 173)

“Dispute in the sense of dispute culture is something thoroughly constructive and has nothing to do with exclusion or even annihilation. Arguing respectfully – that’s what it would be.” (p. 174)

Source: *Respekt geht anders: Betrachtungen über unser zerstrittenes Land (in German), Band 6399 von C.H. Beck Paperback, Author Gabriele Krone-Schmalz Verlag Beck C.H., 2020 ISBN 978-3-4067-5486-9 (Translation Current Concerns)*

### “Respectful dealings ...”

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sure economic success as an advertising medium, so to speak.

For reasons of cost, thorough research and objectivity in order to establish the truth fell by the wayside, because sensational headlines, underpinned with corresponding pictures, served the commercial purpose to a much greater extent.

The last chapter is dedicated to peace, which she describes as a process of hard work. In this context, she mentions exemplarily the history of German foreign policy at the beginning of the 1970s, when rapprochement in the relationship between West and East was based on personal relations and trust. On 12 August 1970, the German Chancellor *Willy Brandt* on the one side and the Soviet Prime Minister *Alexei Kosygin* on the other signed the Moscow Treaty on the mutual renuncia-

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“The ability to engage in a dialogue includes talking to each other, listening to each other and not shutting up after the first half-sentence because you know what’s coming next anyway. To do this even if one does not like one’s collocutor at all. Only a personal dialogue with the other person can contribute to compromise and reconciliation of interests and thus to peace at all levels.”

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tion of the use of force. “Change through rapprochement” was the credo of *Egon Bahr*, then State Secretary in the Federal Chancellery.

The ability to engage in a dialogue includes talking to each other, listening to each other and not shutting up after the first half-sentence because you know what’s coming next anyway.

To do this even if one does not like one’s collocutor at all. Only a personal dialogue with the other person can contribute to compromise and reconciliation of interests and thus to peace at all levels.

A book that stimulates deeper reflection, especially in today’s times, also marked by the pandemic. •  
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# A comment from a Swiss point of view

by Dr rer. publ. Werner Wüthrich

The moralising style of politics, as described by Ms *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz* and well explained by *Werner Voss* in his review, also occurs in Switzerland. People are quick to judge something good or evil, and they are indignant and outraged when confronted with a different opinion. What is astonishing, is the lack of compromise in this. Anyone who expresses a critical opinion on the climate debate, for example, is quickly labelled a “global coolist” or “flat-earther” and thus ostracised. This prevents or hinders objective debates. Ms Krone-Schmalz describes numerous such situations. In her opinion, Germany is a “divided country”.

In addition, an unpleasant sharpness and barbarisation is increasingly to be observed in the culture of debate at all political levels. This tendency has been increasing in recent years. However, both of these developments are less pronounced in Switzerland than in Germany, as German citizens living here confirm. One reason is probably direct democracy, which cannot do without factual and substantive debate. Political debates have probably reached a low point in the last few months in the USA, where substantive and factual disputes have been practically non-existent, but instead personal attacks and denigration have dominated debates – an unsavoury power struggle. Some media, including some in Switzerland, have known no bounds. So, the former US president, who had, after all, received the vote of 70 million Americans, was dubbed an “ill-tongued and boorish buffoon” and “the most despicable tyrant of modern times”, for example by the “Standard”, the leading newspaper in Austria (quoted in the Swiss “Tages-Anzeiger” of 20 January 2020). The debates are escalating, and the impression is created that some journalists and politicians are competing in the art of belittling the political opponent. One gets the feeling of being in the Middle Ages with witch hunts and exorcisms. Is human dignity, considered inviolable in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and in many national constitutions, to become a punching bag?

## Respect does not work this way

The moralising style of politics often impedes or deliberately prevents disputes about content, programmes or factual issues, as *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz* repeatedly points out with reference to Germany. Historical and cultural explanations are usually of no interest. But the fact is that there is no substitute for what is exciting and sparkling in factual and respectful debates. *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz* calls this “decent contention”. What are the consequences if things go differently? It does



Re-enactment of a citizens' meeting about 2500 years ago on the Pnyx – a hill west of the Acropolis. (Picture Bild/Wissen/Gestaltung, Humboldt Universität)

not take much for people to drift apart and for society to split, which is particularly noticeable in the USA today. Citizens rightly feel frustrated, often offended, and lose the joy of political discussion because the common ground has been lost. *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz* analyses with a great deal of psychological sensitivity – but not only that: she also gives concrete examples of how things could be done differently. – For this purpose, here is a historical comparison made by the author of this article:

## Why did democracy perish in classical Greece?

About 2,500 years ago, the Greeks in Athens summoned up the courage to take the first big steps towards direct democracy. Free citizens met for forty days every year for the *Ecclesia*, first in the *Agora*, then in the *Dionysus Theatre* and finally on the *Pnyx*, a small hill to the west of the Acropolis. The voice of the rich had the same weight as that of the poor. The citizens' assembly decided not only on laws, but also on war and peace, special treaties and urgently pending decisions. This developed into a special period – a real golden age for human history – in almost all areas of life: the art of building, the art of sculpting, architecture, literature, historiography, the theatre, personal education, science, law, philosophy. Today, Greek culture is part of our heritage, and Christian occidental culture is built on it. The Greeks also agreed on matters concerning the economic and military spheres and achieved much in a short time. They settled on numerous shores of the Mediterranean and on the Black Sea as far as the Crimea. Everywhere they built their unique buildings and works of art, which tourists visit today. They also had military success. They succeeded in repelling the attack of the numerically far superior Persian army at Mar-

athon and at sea at Salamis. – Of course, democracy 2,500 years ago did not correspond to democracy today. At that time, slavery was common, and there was also no separation of powers. As a developmental step, however, Greek democracy was ground-breaking in human history.

However, this great period lasted for no more than about two generations. Quarrels, strife and senseless fratricidal warfare arose. Decline set in, and the liberal and unifying spirit and the democratic achievements with it were largely lost. Added to this there was a long inner-Greek war of Athenians against the rising power of Sparta. In Athens, opinions were monitored and censorship was exercised. *Socrates*, for example, was sentenced to death in 399 BC, on a charge of exerting a corrupting influence on youth and of not respecting the gods. “Political correctness” already existed at the time. Today, *Socrates* and his pupil *Plato* are considered to belong among the most important figures in the history of philosophy. Once so proud and powerful, Greece was later conquered by the Romans without much resistance and integrated into their empire.

## Why has democracy survived to this day in the canton of Glarus?

The men, and today also the women, of the canton of Glarus in Switzerland have been meeting since 1387 for the “Landsgemeinde” (the cantonal assembly), where they decide on all important issues and laws on an equal footing. (I refer here to my article “Die Landsgemeinde als direktdemokratische Basis für den Ordnungsrahmen im Wirtschaftskanton Glarus” (The Landsgemeinde as a direct democratic basis for the regulatory framework in the economic canton of Glarus) in *Zeit-Fragen* of 17 November 2020).

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**"Their goal is to defend ..."**

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The Landammann (chief magistrate) introduces each item on the agenda that the Landrat (parliament) has discussed in advance. He then opens the discussion: "Ds Wort isch frii! (The word is free!)". Even amendments are possible during the meeting. Then the Landsgemeinde decides by a simple majority. This fascinating event has taken place every year – for over 600 years. There have only been two brief interruptions: once for four years when *Napoleon* ruled Switzerland, and in 2020 when the Landsgemeinde had to be cancelled because of Corona. (Today, the canton of Glarus has about 40,000 inhabitants and about 30,000 voters).

However, is that possible? – The reason is that the people of Glarus have cultivated a respectful manner at the Landsgemeinde for centuries and avoid insults and expressions of displeasure such as whistling. If this happens (which is rare), the Landammann comments immediately and invites the person in question to take a seat in the gallery and speak on the matter. This principle also applies in the numerous municipal assemblies in Switzerland, which still take place in about three quarters of the 2200 municipalities – even in larger ones.

The respectful interaction at the Landsgemeinde has become second nature to the people of Glarus, which I feel has an effect on everyday life and also shapes the local media such as the "Fridolin". – This is the only way that this unique institution has been able to survive even in difficult times (for example, when the Reformation divided the population). Landammann *Andrea Bettiga* put it in a nutshell in his opening speech at the last Landsgemeinde 2019: "Here in this place, the people of Glarus come together to decide on their own future. The ring, a symbol of togetherness and solidarity since time immemorial, unites us. The Landsgemeinde forms part of the Glarus identity, regardless of social origin, religion and political convictions. We listen to each other, fight for solutions. We accept the views of others and, in the end, bow to the majority. Everyone who is entitled to vote can contribute and has an audible voice. [...] That is Landsgemeinde. That is us. We are Landsgemeinde."

Respectful interaction is the be-all and end-all of any lively and vibrant democracy. The people of Glarus have been cultivating this relationship for centuries, and they still cultivate it today. – How do you achieve respectful interaction? Here is an example from the long history of Glarus:

**Jakob Heer – the Glarus "Pestalozzi"**

*Jakob Heer* was a pastor in the mountain community of Matt at the beginning of the 19th century. One of his main concerns



Landsgemeinde in Glarus 2019.

(Picture Photo gallery of the Glarner Landsgemeinde)

was the school, which he ran entirely in the spirit of *Pestalozzi*. He founded a private institute with a vicar and an additional teacher, so that a large number of pupils soon brought life to his house. Civic education was important to him: every year he took his pupils to the Landsgemeinde. During the proceedings, the boys sat directly in front of the tribune where the government and the speakers were seated. In this way, they received direct visual instruction. The people of Glarus still adhere to this custom today. All the schoolchildren are invited to take their seats in this privileged place - very close to representatives of the national and cantonal governments, foreign guests and senior military officers. They are thus directly involved in political events.

Jakob Heer is one of the greats in the canton of Glarus, and like *Pestalozzi*, he lived his conviction: "Political freedom is an absurdity for a spiritually immature people. Inevitably, it either falls under the tutelage of a caste that often knows how to direct it for its own special purposes, or it will perform quite a lot of monkeyshine. Only a people who have matured to autonomy through education and upbringing will preserve their freedom and use it wisely to promote their true happiness." (*Thürer* 1986, pp. 115-128)

Under Jakob Heer's guidance a "pupils' state" with a Landsgemeinde was established in the vicarage from 1823 to 1826. Four 15-year-old pupils, including a girl as well as his own son *Oswald Heer*, enacted numerous laws and ordinances. Father Heer mostly let them have their way. They regulated the numerous duties and offices in the large household – but not only that. They also dealt with questions of decency and teaching. The pupils were careful to treat each other with respect: for example, one law regulated reading aloud: "When a student begins a chapter or a book, the others may not laugh at him scornfully or insult him in other ways." (*Brunner*, p. 67) Central was the provision: "Whoever demands the abolition of the Landsgemeinde shall pay a shilling." (p. 27) – To date,

such a motion has only been made once (2002) at the real Landsgemeinde in Glarus and was rejected without even a request to speak. (The institution of the Landsgemeinde had been abolished in the cantons of Obwalden and Nidwalden and Appenzell-Ausserrhoden in the years before).

**Democracy as a model**

How is that to be achieved? Well – read the book by *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz*. Her message of respectful interaction deserves to be heard far beyond Germany. Or ask the people of Glarus. Without a minimum of respect for those who think differently and also for political opponents, democracy degenerates to a farce. Undignified treatment repels people. Perhaps something is happening similar to what happened in ancient Greece, when much was lost that had been valuable.

In today's world politics, it seems strange for a country to put forward the ideals of democracy and also build an intellectual wall (and probably soon a military one as well) against countries like Russia or China. What is the point of this? – It would certainly be the better way if we in the West acted as a role model by cultivating and renewing our own democratic culture and cultivating human contacts with these countries. This will serve humanity far better than the questionable policy of forcing "more democracy" through economic war or even military means – a policy that usually fails and has dire consequences for the civilian population. •

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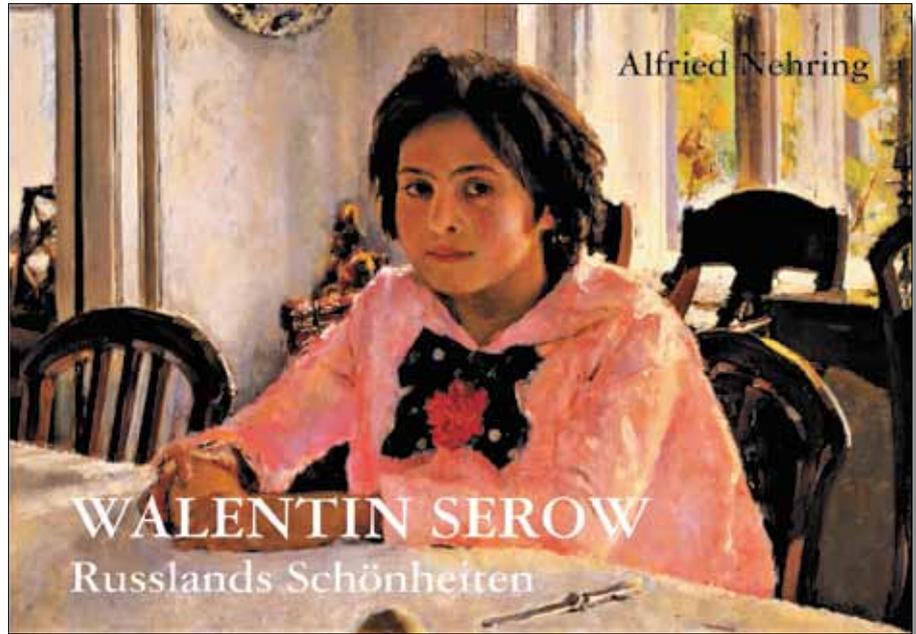
## “Let’s have merry things – I vow that all my paintings shall be pleasant”

**Valentin Serov – Portrait painter of the late Czarist period and bucolic impressionist**

by Winfried Pogorzelski

Without much ado Alfried Nehring, author of an illustrated biography of the painter Valentin Serov (1865–1911), jumps right in medias res: In 1887, the 22-year-old Serov is on his grand tour through Italy and describes his impressions of the light-filled Mediterranean country enthusiastically to his bride; on this occasion he pens down the ultimate goal of his art: “In this century of ours only cruel topics are painted, nothing pleasant. I prefer merry things and vow only to paint what is pleasant.”<sup>1</sup> Valentin Serov, pupil and friend of Ilja Repin, the famous painter of realism, is an important representative of Russian painting who took glamour and daily routine of the Czarist period as his motives and excelled in portrait painting. He introduced Europe to Russian painting and was a co-founder of the school of classic modernity.

Despite numerous publications about Valentin Serov which were printed in Russia but also abroad only a few art lovers in Europe are aware of him and his outstanding oeuvre. Thanks to Alfried Nehring this community is now increasing. The author succeeds with his 90 pages book, which includes images of many paintings and drawings of Valentin Serov but also photographs, to acquaint the reader with life and work of this extraordinary artist. Twelve phases of his eventful life are shown in episodes, some of which shall now be sketched out in this



*Girl with Peaches, 1887, oil on canvas, 91 x 85 cm,  
State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow, as book title*

article with special consideration of outstanding artworks.

### Early beginnings of the future artist

Valentin Serov is born in 1865 into a family of artists: His mother is a pianist, the father is an opera composer and music pedagogue; their house in St. Petersburg is an important place for artists to meet. They

have regular soirees where actors, students, opera singers, musicians, and artists – including *Ilja Repin* – get together. These were occasions of vivid discussions about literature, art and society, about the nihilists and women’s rights – and of playing music together. After finding out early about Valentin’s drawing talent, his parents make it one of their priorities to foster his gift. The eight-year-old boy gets lessons from *Karl Köpping*, painter and engraver in Munich, where he is also introduced to the treasures of the art collections.

The encounter with *Ilja Repin*, the most important representative of Russian realism, proves to be of major significance for Valentin’s development. When Repin spends some months in Paris, the centre of French impressionism, Valentin’s mother follows the advice of one her artist friends that he would be the best teacher for Valentin and follows him to the French capital with her son. The young boy is eager to learn from his hero, such as how to draw with the pencil, the right approach to oil colour painting and much more.

Back from Paris the family become acquainted with *Savva Mamontov*, a wealthy patron of the fine arts who became rich with railroad building. North of Moscow he has turned his estate *Abramtsevo* into an artists’ colony. This is where *Valentina Serova* settles with her son. In constant interaction with other artists and guided by

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*Summer, 1895, oil on canvas, 73 x 94 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow  
(in the exhibitions in Baden-Baden and Potsdam), p. 48*

**"Let's have merry things ..."**

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Ilya Repin the young painter can steadily develop his skills. He tries out landscape painting but already starts what would later become his domain of excellence, portrait painting. In these circles people liked to have portraits made of themselves, not the least in order to establish themselves as patrons. Here Valentin also meets his future wife *Olga Trubnikova* for the first time, a foster child of his aunt *Adelaida Semjonovna Simonovich*. Together with Repin he visits the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, they travel to South Russia and Crimea together. Destinations of more travels, specifically for the purpose of furthering his development in the arts, are Munich, the Netherlands, Belgium, Berlin, Dresden and finally Italy. In 1880, at the age of 15 years, Valentin Serov had enrolled at the academy of arts in St. Petersburg, where he graduated in 1886.

**"Girl with peaches" – starting point of classical modernity in Russia**

Back in Abramtsevo, the 22-year-old Valentin Serov sets his first exclamation mark: He meets the now 12-year-old *Vera Mamontova*. Almost a young lady by now, her charm and unsophistication enthrall him at once. He paints her portrait in oil and calls the first important piece of early Russian impressionist art "Girl with peaches".<sup>2</sup> A young girl in a bright pink blouse sits at a table and focuses directly upon the observer. In front of her there are peaches and a fruit knife. At the background there is a window with a view into the summer garden. This colour play and light composition had been unseen before in Russia: the blouse, highlighted by the sun, renders life and freshness to the painting, as well as the face of the twelve-year-old with reddish cheeks, dark, alert eyes and self-confident, earnest gaze and her youthful dark hair do – which is mirrored by her black tie with a red blossom. For days and weeks "Veruschka" had patiently modelled for the painter, her daily "reward" for sitting quietly were the peaches.

Valentin Serov gives the painting – "one of the pearls of Russian portrait painting"<sup>3</sup> – to *Yelizaveta Grigoryevna Mamontova*, who had asked him for it, to thank for the pleasant and carefree time in Abramtsevo; it marks both the end of his years of apprenticeship which he had spent to a large degree at her place and also the be-

ginning of a new period. In 1888 the "Girl with peaches" is on display in the periodic art exhibition of the Moscow Society of Art Lovers and makes Valentin Serov famous at once. Today it can be seen in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

**Marriage and breakthrough as a portrait painter**

On invitation by his friend and former fellow student at the academy, *Vladimir von Dervis*, Serov lives and works for some time at his estate Domotkanovo near Moscow. By now he creates his artworks without commission, finds buyers for them and gets financially more and more independent. Predominantly he still paints portraits, of colleagues such as Ilya Repin and *Isaak Levitan*, of composers, opera singers and actors. In 1889 he and Olga Trubnikova, whom he had known since childhood, get married. The couple have six children, two of them are immortalised in the beautiful painting "Summertime"<sup>4</sup>. Almost the entire left half of the painting is dedicated to Olga, sitting in the foreground in the shadow of a wooden house. She wears a bright summer dress, on her head a big straw hat, adorned with a dark

blue ribbon with a big loop. She looks at the observer and appears earnest but happy. The right half of the painting is all in green, the foreground is dominated by the dark green of a shadowy meadow getting ever brighter towards the background. There in the background the children are playing, behind them bright green birch trees in the sun. Among the paintings which *Alfried Nehring* includes and comments on in his book there are some very impressive examples of the "rural Serov", in which the artist depicts the work-intensive reality of the life at the countryside.

**Court portrait painter for the Czar and his family**

Serov is 23 years old, when a railroad accident (possibly yet another attempt to assassinate Czar *Alexander II.*) exerts notable influence on the course of his life: In October 1888 a train carrying the Imperial family from Crimea to St. Petersburg is derailed at high speed. 23 passengers lose their lives, miraculously neither the Czar nor one of his family are among them. This incident urges the Romanovs to have portraits painted of many

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*Portrait of Henriette Hirschmann, 1907, tempera on canvas, 140 x 140 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow, p. 75*

**"Let's have merry things ..."**

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of their family members, this prestigious commission is bestowed on Valentin Serov. He succeeds in creating many outstanding portraits, such as the portrait of the young Grand Duchess *Olga Alexandrovna*<sup>5</sup>, the portraits of Czar Alexander II. in the red coat of the Danish life guards<sup>6</sup>, the portraits of Grand Duke *Alexandrovich Romanov* with shiny golden cuirass in front of his horse<sup>7</sup>, the one of Czar *Nikolai II.*<sup>8</sup> and many more. The young artist is not too comfortable mingling with these exalted circles whose way of life doesn't mean a lot to him, but in any case he gets more famous: his paintings are well-known, estimated and even award-winning throughout Europe now.

In this time around 1899 the painting of his two sons *Sasha and Yura*<sup>9</sup> is created during a vacation at the Gulf of Finland. Serov is fascinated by the "unsophistication and openness" of the two, which he regards as "precious gifts of childhood and of beauty in the life of human beings"<sup>10</sup>. This gets him back to the slogan which he had chosen for himself at the beginning of his career, namely the focus on "merry things" and "to paint only what is pleasant".

**Protest against the "Bloody Sunday of St. Petersburg" (1905)**

Since 1897 Valentin Serov has been teaching at the Moscow academy of fine arts, graphic art and architecture. In 1899 he is elected to the council board of Tretyakov Gallery in St. Petersburg. A fixed income provides for the growing family.

However, the political development in Russia doesn't allow Valentin Serov to stick to only nice and pleasant subjects for his art: On 22 January 1905 workers and farmers march to the winter palais in St. Petersburg to peacefully protest against the dismal conditions of their lives and to demand representation of the lower classes in parliament. Fire is opened on the demonstrators. Hundreds of them get killed, the day goes down in Russian history as "Bloody Sunday". Valentin Serov becomes a witness when workers get shot even in front of the academy of arts. He feels sympathy for the writer *Maxim Gorki* whose portrait he had painted<sup>11</sup> and who had been among the demonstrators, as a punishment Gorki is incarcerated in the Peter & Paul fortress for six weeks.

Serov draws a sarcastic caricature: in the foreground the Czar decorates soldiers who stand in file with medals, behind them the bodies of shot workers, while the Czarina in her carriage is driving across a graveyard. Another drawing is entitled "Harvest 1905" and shows a stub-



*Portrait of Maria Yakovlevna Lvova, 1895, oil on canvas, 90 x 59 cm, Musée d'Orsay Paris, p. 38*

ble field on which the pyramids don't consist of grain sheafs but of bayonettes.<sup>12</sup>

**The portrait as a characterisation**

"The painter and his models" is the title Alfred Nehring gives to the last chapter of his documentation. It deals with the transition into the new century and into classical modernity. New techniques are explored, watercolours are tried out as well as distemper, one adventures into the area of nude painting.

In this phase the remarkable portrait of *Henriette Hirschmann*<sup>13</sup> is painted, the wife of the Jewish art dealer *Vladimir*

*Hirschmann*. The couple move constantly back and forth between Moscow and Paris. Valentin Serov shows the decadence of their way of life. No expense is too much, no detail is left un-stylised: the walls of the Boudoir are covered with grey linen, the model who is dressed all in black holds the white ermine fur with spread fingers to make sure the shiny precious stones on her rings catch the observer's eye. She is standing next to a wardrobe made of Karelian birch wood, in the mirror one can get a glimpse of Serov's face. The way he painted her face gave food for gossip: she fo-

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**"Let's have merry things ..."**

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cuses on the observer her gaze, is earnest with almost greyish tint as if her make-up was poor as someone commented. When the work was finished after one and a half years Serov receives letters in which people express their indignation about the way he allegedly had "disfigured, overaged and misread" Henriette Hirschmann<sup>14</sup>. The protesters can't find any resemblance between the painting and the model. The latter, however, likes the result: she regards it as an artwork, "in which Serov succeeded to achieve his desired effects in a masterly way".<sup>15</sup>

During a stay in Paris Serov attends a performance of the "Ballets Russes". Like many others he gets to be intrigued by the extraordinary beauty and stage presence of the Jewish-Russian dancer *Ida Rubenstein*, whose style marks the end of 19<sup>th</sup>

century ballet dancing. The two meet and she is willing to have her portrait painted by the famous Valentin Serov and also agrees that it will be a nude painting. Serov uses charcoal for the lining and distemper, namely Blue and Green only, for the body and and the background he uses the same bright Brown<sup>16</sup>. The portrait is not realistic but Serov morphes the dancer's body into an "figure of art" with long lean limbs, which appears "overly slender and fragile"<sup>17</sup>. The head with the black curly hair is partially turned towards the observer whom she focuses upon, with an earnest and even sceptical gaze. In this oversized painting one can grasp the idea of what Serov's intention had been in general when painting portraits: "As soon as a look at a human being carefully I am intrigued, yea even enthralled each time – not by the actual individual face, which may be plain, but by the characteristics it may assume on the canvas."<sup>18</sup>

During the last year of his life he once again turned to a more traditional style of painting. At the age of only 46 years he dies from a heart attack in Moscow.

Alfried Nehring succeeds in a remarkable way to acquaint the reader with the private and artistic life of Valentin Serov, which unfolds in correspondence with the societal changes in Russia at this time, not the least he achieves that by showing many artworks from all periods of Serov's life and explains their peculiarities to the observer. That way he gives a profound insight into the artistic development of this great Russian painter from an early stage to the peak of his expertise which has earned him an eternal place in the history of Russian painting and will continue to touch human beings for ever. The bibliophile illustrated book is bound in red cloth, the coloured book jacket shows the "Girl with Peaches". A table of content would have made orientation easier for the reader.

At the museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden (Germany) an exhibition with the title "Impressionism in Russia. Departure to avant-garde" will be on display from 1 March through 1 August 2021, including works of Valentin Serov<sup>19</sup>. From 28 August onwards it will be shown at the Museum Barberini in Potsdam.<sup>20</sup>



*Yelizaveta Mamontova, 1887, pencil on paper, 47x34 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow, p. 28*

<sup>1</sup> Nehring, Alfried. *Valentin Serov, Russlands Schönheiten*, Rostock (Klatschmohnverlag), Linen bd., 2021, 87 p., format 21 x 30 cm, 145 coloured illustrations, ISBN 978-3-941064-84-3, 24 Euro, to order: [www.valentin-serov.de](http://www.valentin-serov.de), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32, oil on canvas, 1887, 91 x 85 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48, oil on canvas, 1895, 73 x 94 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56, oil on canvas, 1893, 60 x 49 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57, oil on canvas, 1899, 170 x 117 cm, Collection of the King's Life Guard in Copenhagen

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58, oil on canvas, 1897, 167 x 50 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62, Portrait of Nikolai II in the uniform of the Royal Scottish Guards Regiment, oil on canvas, 1900, 116x89 cm, Collection of the Edinburgh Regiment, and Portrait of Czar Nicholas II., Oil on canvas, 1900, 71 x 52 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63, oil on canvas, 1899, 71 x 54 cm, State Russian Museum St. Petersburg

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 71, oil on canvas, 1905, 124 x 80 cm, Institut der Weltliteratur "Maxim Gorki" Moskau

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 75, tempera on canvas, 1907, 140 x 140 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 74

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77, Portrait of Ida Rubinstein, tempera und charcoal on canvas, 1910, 147 x 233 cm, State Russian Museum

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81

<sup>19</sup> cf. <https://artinwords.de/baden-baden-museum-frieder-burda-impressionismus-in-russland> and *Wikipedia*, under the keyword "Valentin Alexandrovich Serov".

<sup>20</sup> cf. <https://www.museum-barberini.de/de/aussstellungen/591/impressionismus-in-russland-aufbruch-zur-avantgarde>