

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Protests in Cuba

Food shortages, lack of medicines, power outages – a consequence of mismanagement or US sanctions?

by Gisela Liebe

A few weeks ago, reports and images of mass protests in Cuba went through the media worldwide. On 11 July, there were mass demonstrations that spread from the San Antonio de los Baños neighbourhood in Havana to various cities. The protests were against food shortages, lack of medicines and power cuts. Some protesters looted shops and attacked patrol cars. There were violent police reactions, casualties and arbitrary arrests. The internet in Cuba was initially shut down. Are the protests real, and if so, against what background? Or is this another attempt to orchestrate a “colour revolution”?

In the German-language media, the view of the US government was mostly one-sided. US President *Joe Biden* said that Cuba was a “failed state” that oppressed its citizens. The mayor of Miami, the headquarters of Cuban exiles, even called for US military action against Cuba.

In Latin America, a more differentiated view can be found. *Gerardo Szalkovicz*, editor of the online platform *Nodal*, like many others, first points to the economic blockade by the USA, which has lasted since 1962 and also restricts the import of food and basic supplies such as medicines, syringes and respirators. Over the last 60 years, this has caused a permanent state of shortage with an estimated damage of 144 billion dollars. During the pandemic, a further 243 sanctions were imposed by then US President *Donald Trump*, which were not withdrawn by his successor *Biden* – despite announcements to the contrary during the election campaign.

The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution condemning the blockade almost unanimously every year since 1992. In June this year, the USA and Israel were the only countries to speak out against an end to the blockade. Mexican President *Andrés López Obrador* said it clearly: if you really want to help Cuba, the first thing you have to do is lift the economic blockade, that would be a real humanitarian gesture.

With the pandemic, the economic problems worsened again. Tourism, the most

“The problem is further complicated by the enormous oversizing and distortion of facts in the international press, with a whirlwind of ‘fake news’ and manipulated photos, from pictures from Egypt as if they came from Cuba to photos of demonstrations in support of the revolution and the government presented as opposition marches.” (*Pedro Brieger, director of the online platform Nodal*)

important source of foreign currency income, collapsed. Cuba has so far coped better with the Covid-19 pandemic than most other countries in Latin America thanks to its good health system and has even been able to support many countries with its well-trained doctors. However, the number of infections and deaths has increased in recent weeks. There is a shortage of medical supplies, including vaccine production.

Szalkovicz cites the too slow and too inefficient economic reform process that had been initiated since 2011 as the deeper roots of the discontent expressed on 11 July. *Franco Cavalli*, former National Councillor, oncologist and President of *Medicuba*, a good friend and connoisseur of Cuba, also complains about the “sprawling bureaucracy and exhausting slowness in implementing the reforms that have been decided on for a long time”.¹ But he equally points out the dishonesty and double standards of our reporting, which hardly finds words for the scandal of the longest and equally illegal economic sanctions, which the country has been able to resist “almost miraculously”, as he says, for decades.

Since the spread of mobile internet in 2018, a number of opposition groups such as the *San Isidro* movement have emerged in recent years. Among them are artists and YouTubers supported from Washington and Miami, but also young people who sincerely want to express their pent-up discontent.

An inglorious role in the protests is played by the international media: for

example, *Pedro Brieger*, director of the online platform *Nodal*, notes: “The problem is further complicated by the enormous oversizing and distortion of facts in the international press, with a whirlwind of ‘fake news’ and manipulated photos, from pictures from Egypt as if they came from Cuba to photos of demonstrations in support of the revolution and the government presented as opposition marches.”²

Cuba is still a thorn in the flesh of the USA. After all, the small country with today eleven million inhabitants has managed to maintain its independence for 60 years against its overpowering neighbour. Many people in the brother countries in Latin America are also aware of this and feel a deep solidarity with Cuba, even if they have different political ideas.

Pedro Brieger sums up: “Certainly, many Cubans are against socialism, they do not agree with the revolution and prefer to live in a capitalist society or in the abundance that they imagine exists in capitalism for the large majorities. There are also numerous groups of young people born after 1959 who are organising with demands that are typical of that time, they are very critical and want changes within the revolution; and on these occasions they don’t feel heard by the leaders of the country.”³

Cuban President *Miguel Díaz Canel* conceded that many of the demands were justified and promised a readiness to talk.

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“There is no reason to maintain the Cold War politics”

An open appeal to president Joe Biden, to lift the sanctions against Cuba

Over 400 former heads of state, politicians, intellectuals, scientists, members of the clergy, artists, musicians and activists from across the globe have issued an urgent appeal to United States President Joe Biden to lift the 243 unilateral coercive measures (sanctions) that were imposed on Cuba by former president Donald Trump. They argue that these measures “have intentionally throttled life on the island and created more suffering.”

The signatories which include former presidents Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva of Brazil, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Noam Chomsky, Oliver Stone, Jill Stein, Judith Butler, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Yanis Varoufakis, Chris Hedges; artists Boots Riley, Chico Buarque, Jane Fonda, Susan Sarandon, Danny Glover, and Emma Thompson and hundreds of others, highlight that the country’s ability to buy lifesaving food and medicine has been hindered due to the restrictions imposed by the United States on sending remittances and Cuba’s access to global financial institutions, among other unilateral measures.

Despite the economic embargo, Cuba has developed 5 anti-COVID-19 vaccines and has sent medical professionals to more than 50 countries to support their efforts to prevent the spread of the virus and treat those infected.

According to official reports, between April 2020 and December 2020, the blockade caused losses of 3,586.9 million USD to Cuba. These, including the losses of the previous period, amount to a total of 9,157.2 million USD (from April 2019 until December 2020). The humanitarian damage, suffering

and shortages caused to Cuban families during all these years are immeasurable.

The open letter was published as a full-page ad in the “New York Times” on 23 July 2021.

Source: peoplesdispatch.org

Dear President Joe Biden

It is time to take a new path forward in U.S.-Cuban relations. We, the undersigned, are making this urgent, public appeal to you to reject the cruel policies put into place by the Trump White House that have created so much suffering among the Cuban people.

Cuba – a country of eleven million people – is living through a difficult crisis due to the growing scarcity of food and medicine. Recent protests have drawn the world’s attention to this. While the Covid-19 pandemic has proven challenging for all countries, it has been even more so for a small island under the heavy weight of an economic embargo.

We find it unconscionable, especially during a pandemic, to intentionally block remittances and Cuba’s use of global financial institutions, given that access to dollars is necessary for the importation of food and medicine.

As the pandemic struck the island, its people – and their government – lost billions in revenue from international tourism that would normally go to their public health care system, food distribution and economic relief.

During the pandemic, Donald Trump’s administration tightened the embargo, pushed aside the Obama opening, and put in place 243 “coercive measures” that have intentionally throttled life on the island and created more suffering.

The prohibition on remittances and the end of direct commercial flights between the U.S. and Cuba are impediments to the wellbeing of a majority of Cuban families.

“We stand with the Cuban people,” you wrote on 12 July. If that is the case, we ask you to immediately sign an executive order and annul Trump’s 243 “coercive measures.”

There is no reason to maintain the Cold War politics that required the U.S. to treat Cuba as an existential enemy rather than a neighbor. Instead of maintaining the path set by Trump in his efforts to undo President Obama’s opening to Cuba, we call on you to move forward. Resume the opening and begin the process of ending the embargo. Ending the severe shortages in food and medicine must be the top priority.

On 23 June, most of the member states of the United Nations voted to ask the U.S. to end the embargo. For the past 30 years this has been the consistent position of a majority of member states. In addition, seven UN Special Rapporteurs wrote a letter to the U.S. government in April 2020 regarding the sanctions on Cuba. “In the pandemic emergency,” they wrote, “the lack of will of the U.S. government to suspend sanctions may lead to a higher risk of suffering in Cuba.”

We ask you to end the Trump “coercive measures” and return to the Obama opening or, even better, begin the process of ending the embargo and fully normalizing relations between the United States and Cuba.

Source: letcubalive.com

“Protests in Cuba”

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The question remains why a country – supposedly in the name of freedom and

democracy – can maintain measures that are clearly contrary to international law for decades and for more than 30 years, even against the will of practically all other states.

¹ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 4 August 2021

² <https://www.nodal.am/2021/07/la-columna-de-pedro-brieger-en-cuba-tambien-protestan/>

³ <https://www.nodal.am/2021/07/cerrar-filas-con-cuba-sin-romantizarla-por-gerardo-szalkowicz/>

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War on Armenia's state borders

by Gerd Brenner, Oberst d G

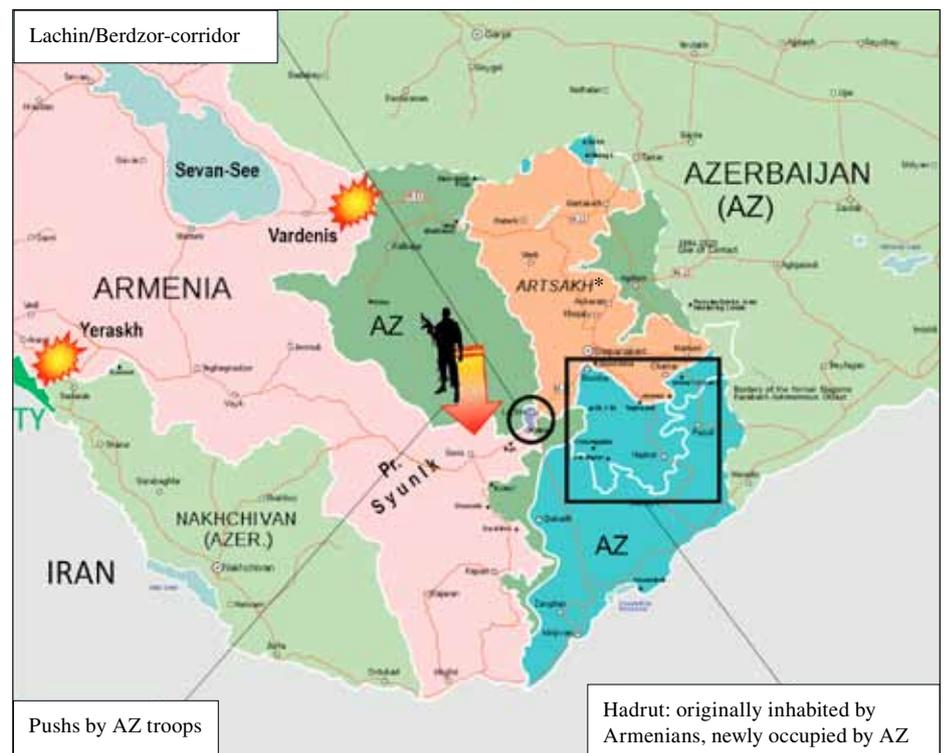
Despite the obvious military aggression of Azerbaijan last autumn, Armenia so far hasn't received anything more than rhetorical support from the so-called Western community of values. The United States and France, as co-chairs of the group of states that has been committed to a peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict, have done nothing to stop Azerbaijani aggression. This once again sheds a revealing light on the double standards and weakness of Western foreign policy. Economic interests quickly push aside principles of international law, especially when the geopolitical setting is convenient.

In the past few weeks – largely unnoticed by the Western public – more than just incidents have occurred on the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan: we can speak of border skirmishes, indeed. Such clashes are especially worrying because they didn't take place on the disputed border in Nagorno-Karabakh, but on the border between the two states in the South Caucasus recognised under international law.

Dangerous potential for escalation in a geopolitically fragile region

The potential for escalation is enormous in a region where Russia, Georgia, Turkey and Iran share borders. Therefore, it is incomprehensible why the warlike events of the last few weeks have attracted so little attention.

In the Armenian-Azerbaijani war, which ended in 1994, the Armenians and the Karabakhs together conquered the settlement area of ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as the surrounding areas inhabited by Azerbaijanis. The Azerbaijanis living there fled to the Azerbaijani heartland, where they have since been awaiting their return to their ancestral land in refugee settlements. In the years between 1994 and 2020, Armenia and Artsakh, as the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh has been referring to itself for a few years, developed the conquered territories into a kind of military glacis in which they built strong field fortifications. Again and again, discussions arose as to whether Armenia or the Republic of Artsakh should return these territories to Azerbaijan in exchange for peace. Sceptics pointed out that after such an exchange, Artsakh's military position would become very precarious because it would then be completely surrounded by Azerbaijani territory. Furthermore, they argued that there was no guarantee that Azerbaijan would remain peaceful after such a ter-



(*Artsakh, formerly Nagorno-Karabakh; graphic: <https://theconversation.com/nagorno-karabakh-in-the-aftermath-of-war-armenia-faces-an-unpalatable-choice-161375> / Gerd Brenner)

ritorial swap. Hardliners strongly opposed a deal based on the principle of “land for peace” because they didn't accept why territories conquered with bloody losses should be returned to the enemy. In retrospect, the current behaviour of the Aliyev regime in Baku proves the sceptics right: Azerbaijan has regained its territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, but it doesn't seem as if Ilham Aliyev is satisfied with it.

In the border region between Armenia and Turkey, around the famous Mount Ararat, the cold war still hasn't ended. Basing on a bilateral treaty, Russian border troops have been stationed on the Armenian-Turkish border since 1992.¹ Moreover, Armenia and Russia are allies in the *Collective Security Treaty Organisation* CSTO. This is a clear message from Russia to Turkey: an attack on Armenia would be tantamount to an attack on Russia, which operates an airbase in Armenia and has stored the equipment for a motorised rifle division.² Russia is both willing and able to repel a Turkish attack.

OSCE peace efforts

In an attempt to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, in 2007 a group of OSCE participating States formulated the so-called *Madrid Principles*, which envisaged the return of the Azerbaijani-inhabited territories conquered in 1994 from Artsakh

to Azerbaijan.³ Only the so-called Lachin corridor, a strip of land a few kilometres wide, was to remain under the control of the Republic of Artsakh. It connects Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia representing a kind of umbilical cord between Artsakh and the Armenian motherland.

In the six-week war from 27 September to 8 November last year, the Azerbaijani army recaptured large parts of the “glacis”, captured the symbolically important town of Shusha/Shushi and conquered part of the Hadrut district.⁴ Hadrut had always represented part of the core of Nagorno-Karabakh and had been inhabited by ethnic Armenians. After the Russian-brokered ceasefire of 9 November last year, the inhabitants of Hadrut had to leave their old homeland, because a peaceful coexistence of Armenians and Azerbaijanis is out of the question in the foreseeable future.⁵ On both sides of the front, a generation has been growing up since 1994, educated in hatred and fear of the respective opposing side. Under the slogan “preparing peoples for peace”, Western diplomats tried to persuade the parties to the conflict to abandon atrocity propaganda, fully aware that it could take years or decades to reduce mutual mistrust and fear.⁶ With the conquest of the Hadrut dis-

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trict, Ilham Aliyev has now shown the West what he thinks of peaceful conflict resolution.

Russian peacekeepers to secure the state existence of Artsakh

In the ceasefire of 9 November 2020, Artsakh had to cede the territories it had captured in 1994 to Azerbaijan, but retained the Lachin corridor. Shortly after the agreement was concluded, Russian peacekeeping troops moved into Nagorno-Karabakh. They are now stationed in the remaining territory of the Republic of Artsakh for a period of at least five years. After that, according to the terms of the ceasefire agreement, a decision will be made on their continued presence or replacement by an international peacekeeping force. Attacking the Russian peacekeepers would cost Azerbaijan dearly, both politically and militarily, and would completely destroy any remaining sympathy. The Russian peacekeepers thus became the second "tripwire force" in the South Caucasus after the Russian border troops, and Russia became the guarantor of the state existence of the Republic of Artsakh. Over the next five years, the Russian peacekeepers prevented Aliyev from regaining control of all of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan: calculating with ceasefire violations

In recent weeks, there have been far more than mere incidents on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which in many cases is unmarked and runs through confusing terrain. For example, Azerbaijani troops apparently advanced several kilometres into Armenian territory in the Armenian province of Syunik.⁷ On 20 July, the village of Yeraskh in the tri-border area between Armenia, the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhichevan, Turkey and Iran came under fire.⁸ And at the end of July, two Armenian settlements near Vardenis on the south-eastern edge of Lake Sevan became the scene of fighting.⁹ All these settlements are undisputed territory of Armenia and not disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh under international law.

The events of the past weeks show that Ilham Aliyev wants more than he got in the ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020. The Russian peacekeepers are preventing him from seizing the remaining territory of Artsakh by force and expelling the last Armenians from his country. Therefore, he wants to conclude a peace treaty with Armenia in which the latter

recognises Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh. If such a peace treaty is concluded, Aliyev can demand that Russia withdraw the peacekeepers. The method he wants to use to persuade Armenia to take such a step is military force. Reversing the motto "land for peace", he wants to force the Armenian government to give in by striking Armenian territory by 2025 at the latest. Coupled with further measures to isolate Armenia economically, this method could well lead to success.

Armenia – once again pawn sacrifice of power politics?

Armenia noted with disappointment the Western silence in the face of Azerbaijan's open military aggression last October and would also have wished for an earlier intervention by Russia. Like its neighbour Iran, Armenia must slowly come to the realisation that even blatant violations of international law do not trigger countermeasures by the international community if there is a lack of political will to do so. And this, in turn, is often a function of geopolitical ambitions.

In Armenia, there is also growing concern about missing Armenian soldiers, and the suspicion arises that Azerbaijan has so far not exchanged all prisoners of war as contractually agreed, but is still holding back a number of them in order to blackmail Armenia.

Armenia's borders with its neighbours Georgia and Iran are still open. Aliyev would like to close these borders, too. Western pressure on Iran is just what he needs, as are tensions between Russia and Georgia. For Armenia, the future prospects are bleak. For the next five years, it can expect little more than economic pressure and small-scale warfare on its borders, and at best rhetorical support from the West.

¹ The basis for this is the "Treaty between the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation on the Status and Operating Conditions of the Border Troops of the Russian Federation on the territory of the Republic of Armenia" of 30 September 1992, Russian. "Договор между Республикой Армения и Российской Федерацией о статусе и функциях пограничных войск Российской Федерации, дислоцированных на территории Республики Армения", online at <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1900722> and <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/280284/>. See also "О пограничных войсках" on the homepage of the National Security Service of Armenia, <https://sahmanapah.sns.am/ru/%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%85>

² See Ирина ПАВЛИУТКИНА: Министр обороны Республики Армения Сейран ОГАНЯН, Россия - исторически наш стратегический союзник, in: Красная звезда, 20 March 2009. The base remains contractual-

ly in place for the time being until 2044. Cf. also the homepage of the Russian Ministry of Defence. Ministry of Defence: "Министры обороны России и Армении подписали Соглашение об Объединенной группировке войск двух стран", 30 November 2016, online at https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12105072@egNews#txt and Алина Назарова: Российская база под Ереваном заработала в "сирийском" режиме, 2 декабря 2020, online at https://yandex.ru/turbo/vz.ru/s/news/2020/12/2/1073492.html?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop. On the Erebusi airbase also homepage of the Russian Ministry of Defence: На российскую авиабазу в Армении поступила партия современных вертолетов, 8 December 2015, online at https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12071115@egNews#txt

³ See CSS Studies on Security Policy: Nagorno-Karabakh, Obstacles to a Negotiated Settlement, No. 131, April 2013, online at https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/CSS-Analysen_131-DE.pdf. The so-called OSCE Minsk Group consists of Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Turkey, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to the rotation principle, the three states of the OSCE Troika are also permanent members. The group is co-chaired by the USA, France and Russia.

⁴ For an overview see Halbach, Uwe. "Nagorno-Karabakh", in: *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* of 26 November 2020, online at <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/weltweit/innerstaatliche-konflikte/224129/nagorny-karabach>. On the much mentioned use of drones, see: Wissenschaftliche Dienste des Deutschen Bundestags, Dokumentation zum Drohneinsatz im Krieg um Bergkarabach im Jahre 2020, o. O. 2021, online at <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/825428/5b868defc837911f17628d716e7e1e1d/WD-2-113-20-pdf-data.pdf>

⁵ The text of the treaty at 3 аявление Президента Азербайджанской Республики, Премьер-министра Республики Армения и Президента Российской Федерации 10 ноября 2020 года, online at <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>, engl. Translation at *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* of 1 December 2020. Documentation: Ceasefire Agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia of 10 November 2020, online at <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/russland/analysen/322104/dokumentation-waffenstillstandsvereinbarung-zwischen-aserbaidschan-und-armenien-vom-10-november-2020>.

⁶ The author himself took part in corresponding talks.

⁷ See Brenner, Gerd. "Caviar and war in the Caucasus, venality and greed for power do not let the region rest", in: *Current Concerns* No. 12/13, 8 June 2021, online at <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/archives/2021/no-1213-8-june-2021/caviar-and-war-in-the-caucasus.html> and <https://www.fr.de/politik/rote-linien-am-schwarzen-see-90612220.html> as well as <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/neue-spannungen-zwischen-armenien-und-aserbaidschan-17341621.html>

⁸ See <https://twitter.com/NKobserver/status/1417255693107834881>. See also Latton, Marcus. "Nagorno-Karabakh is not enough". In: *Jungle.world* 30/2021 of 29 July 2021, online at <https://jungle.world/artikel/2021/30/bergkarabach-ist-nicht-genug>

⁹ See Gyulumyan, Gevorg. "Fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani Line of Contact Halted". In: *The Armenian Mirror Spectator* of 28 July 2021, online at <https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/07/28/fighting-on-the-armenian-azerbaijani-line-of-contact-halted/> and Ghazanchyan, Siranush. "Armenia downs Azerbaijani Aerostar drone near Vardenis". In: *Public Radio of Armenia* of 30 July 2021, online at <https://en.armradio.am/2021/07/30/armenia-downs-azerbaijani-aerostar-drone-near-vardenis/>

More upright gait* suits Switzerland well

A look back at a watered-down 1 August

by Peter Küpfer

The 1 August has been the Swiss Confederation's bank holidays for 130 years. On this day, Switzerland recalls its founding days in memory of the Letter of Confederation of 1291. In commemoration of the pact of assistance in the event of war-like threats, the three old founding valleys of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden assured each other of mutual assistance in the High Middle Ages. The conclusion of this fundamental treaty is generally regarded as the "birth of Switzerland", officially celebrated on 1 August and commemorated with seriousness, reflecting on history and the present. Recently, this reflection has increasingly moved into the background. Is this due to the lack of self-confidence of Switzerland and some of its representatives, as diagnosed by many?

Switzerland's national objective, protected by its constitution, is not only to safeguard its quadrilingual population internally, but also to protect it against external threats, including military ones. The protection of Swiss territory and the prevention of war are constitutionally established as a state duty and were credibly and efficiently protected for 160 years by the Swiss militia army. The fact that the Swiss army is being largely dismantled today is due to reasons that we have repeatedly named and documented in this newspaper (see also the article by *Gotthard Frick* on page 6).

Insufficient analyses

This development away from substance was promoted by circles that already see "right-wing bias" in the reflection on the nation, dismiss pride in the preserved freedom as arrogance and denigrate the defense of one's own interests, even Swiss sovereignty, as "typical Swiss egoism" and "cherry-picking". According to various media texts on 1 August 2021, a certain listlessness or the attempt to switch to sidings predominated. The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", the internationally respected forum of the Swiss Liberals, limited mainly its contribution to 1 August to a two-page potpourri in which it gave original idea producers space for promising ideas for the future, or what was thought to be promising, in the sense of a "Swiss Future workshop". The CH media newspapers ("St. Galler Tagblatt" and other media) published an interview with former Federal Councilor *Couchepin* (FDP),

in which he represented the Federal Council's determination to put an end to the tragedy of the Framework Agreement with the EU as "power play". Contrary to the mood of parts of his own party, whose policy of affiliation with the EU has recently experienced resolute and factually argued opposition within the party, he continues to advocate the credo that only adaptation to the EU is of benefit to Switzerland. The former Federal Councillor did not address the question of how this was compatible with its sovereignty, its direct democracy and its neutrality.

Die Weltwoche published an ill-tempered, sarcastic commentary by its editor-in-chief *Roger Köppel* under the title "Surviving in a crazy world". It is obvious that many things are out of control. But the fact that sentences like the following from a pointedly bourgeois position claim to be taken seriously is astonishing. Köppel writes in his editorial on the federal celebration, among other things: "People have a disposition to avarice and greed for power. The strong would kill or exploit the weak if they were allowed to. I am amazed every day that something like Switzerland exists at all. A country where the people govern themselves." A little later, he argues that Switzerland owes its existence essentially "to chance". However, the fact that Switzerland exists is not so much due to chance and not at all due to the characteristics that the author attributes to our species, contrary to the established findings of anthropology. On the contrary, the human species has survived precisely because individuals have always been able to join forces and work together.

Encouraging

While all this seems like a kind of concerted distraction from the real issue, some encouraging statements stand out in a good way. They should be mentioned here. In the "Tages-Anzeiger", author *Marius Huber* sees in his editorial the main problem of the insipid 1 August celebrations in the state of isolation of the citizens among themselves: "We are becoming a country of fools who no longer want to listen to each other. Who prefer to untroubledly celebrate their ego-partys. That has to change." (Huber, Marius. So, we'd rather skip 1 August, "Tages-Anzeiger", 31 July 2021). He sees a large part of this isolation in the retreat of many to pure

self-affirmation circles, a phenomenon in which the social media play a major role. As a remedy, Huber expects much from the new initiative launched at the same time as 1 August, which calls for the creation of a general service to civil society, for him a possible "way out of this dead end of egocentricity". In a guest commentary, historian *Markus Somm* rightly places the emphasis on the early autonomy of the nascent Confederation: "In Uri, which was now de facto autonomous, the *Landsgemeinde* ruled from 1231 onwards, all men over the age of 14 were entitled to vote and be elected, and so a new political entity grew up here in the Alps that was not unique in Europe, but rare nonetheless: a kind of republic where no prince ruled, but where the country people ruled themselves." (Somm, Markus. Switzerland has its charms, guest commentary, "Tages-Anzeiger" of 31 July 2021).

The thereby encouraged spirit of solidarity and the struggle for common action was also emphasised by various Federal Councillors in their speeches on 1 August this year. President *Guy Parmelin*, in his speech on the Glacier 3000 in the middle of the Vaud Alps, is quoted here as a representative of them. He put the often painstakingly won but sustainable decisions of Switzerland as a "Willensnation" (nation based on a common political will) into the image of a demanding mountain climb: "Switzerland owes its success to clear decisions. Not guesswork, coincidence, arrogance or recklessness. Our country was built with hard work, with mutual help, with courage and optimism. [...] We face great health, environmental, social and geopolitical challenges. Only if we see ourselves as a team in which everyone is committed to the other, will our country succeed in mastering these challenges. Just like a roped party here in the mountains that wants to conquer a peak. [...] Let us move forward step by step – with a steady foot and trusting in our abilities." (www.admin.ch/reden-der-Bundesräte-zum-1.August). There is nothing to add. Parmelin, showing backbone as demonstrated in Brussels and afterwards, suits him well. Not only on 1 August. •

* The usage that is still present today, often in the realm of politics and society, was shaped in particular by the philosopher *Ernst Bloch* (1885–1977), who understood the "upright gait" as an expression of human dignity. – Ed

Switzerland without a constitutional army in the next war?

Indispensable lessons from the Second World War

by Gotthard Frick, Bottmingen*



Gotthard Frick
(picture ma)

In the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 30 July 2021, there is a detailed report on an interesting, but in military terms only symbolic, resistance action against the German occupiers of Norway during the Second World War.¹

What is hardly known today is that almost all European states declaring themselves neutral at the time were immediately subjugated by force to their war interests by Nazi Germany, Italy, but also by the Allies, provided they did not have strong armies that could have prevented this. Many capitulated within days.

In terms of topography and location, Norway was even better suited for successful defence than Switzerland. But its pacifist *Labour Party*, which ruled the country, did not want to spend money on an army. The Norwegians paid with four years of war. (In 1940, Norway’s armed forces comprised 30,000 men, Switzerland’s at mobilisation on 11 May 1940 450,000 men plus 150,000 auxiliary conscripts).

The numerous other invaded neutral countries, such as Finland, which was governed by a social-democratic-agrarian alliance, also had no armies worth mentioning. Its prime minister, *Aimoo Kaarlo Cajander*, had proudly proclaimed in August 1940 that he had not “wasted” any money on weapons, whereupon a powerful Soviet army invaded Finland in November 1940. The prime minister resigned immediately. Of the 200,000 Finnish soldiers (out of a population of about 3 million at the time), many were equipped only with their private firearms and clothing. With virtually no air support and heavy weapons, they successfully resisted the Soviet army on skis in white camouflage suits for almost four months in the freezing winter, supported by plenty of snow. The latter suffered catastrophic losses and had to be rebuilt by *Stalin* according to universal military principles – instead of according to his previous “socialist” ones – before defeating Finland. Every Finnish soldier wore a government-issued badge to recognise him as a soldier according to international agreements, even if he only wore his private clothes (as, for example, members of the Swiss local armed forces had to wear an armband with a Swiss

cross for the same reason). Finland was the only country defeated by the Soviet Union that was not incorporated into the Eastern Bloc. Was the resistance so impressive to Stalin?

Greece had also fought resolutely. That is why Churchill said after its surrender: “*Hence, we will not say that Greeks fight like heroes, but that heroes fight like Greeks.*” Why? At 3.00 a.m. on 28 October 1940, the Italian ambassador had presented the authoritarian, politically right-wing prime minister *Ioannis Metaxas* with an ultimatum, refusal of which would mean war. Metaxas refused (“*Oxi. So it’s war then.*”). At mass demonstrations that same day, Greeks chanted only “*Oxi, oxi, oxi*”, “no” to submission. That is why 28 October is still a Greek bank holiday today as “*Oxi Day*”.

A large Italian army attacked from Albania, which had already been occupied, but was pushed back by the Greek army far into Albania and got bogged down there. *Mussolini* personally took over the supreme command and on 9 March 1941 attacked again with 17 divisions the 13 Greek fighting there. He failed after a few days and stopped the attack. In the meantime, *Hitler* had prepared a large army for the attack on the Soviet Union. But first he had to help Italy solve the Greek problem. He ordered the 12th Army, which was standing by in Bulgaria, to attack Greece from the other side, via Thessaloniki, on 6 April 1941. Since Greece had to withdraw large units from the front on the Albanian border to fight the Wehrmacht, Italy’s troops also succeeded. On 23 April 1941, after a total of six months of successful resistance, Greece had to capitulate.

Today it is hardly common knowledge that it triggered the first catastrophic defeat for the Wehrmacht with its long resistance. Because of the unplanned deployment of the German 12th Army in Greece, which was intended for Russia, the German attack on Russia was delayed by six weeks. Thus, the Wehrmacht not only encountered additional, strong, well-trained troops (700,000 men) brought quickly from Siberia to Moscow, but was also fully immersed in the Russian winter (at -35° Celsius), for which the Wehrmacht was not prepared. It lost one million men and practically all its equipment (e.g., 2,800 out of a total of 3,400 tanks, 35,000 heavy trucks, etc.) because of the cold and enemy action. In the gun emplacements alone 100,000 men froze to death). Only with an extreme effort was

Federal Constitution Art. 58 Armed Forces

- 1 Switzerland shall have armed forces. In principle, the armed forces shall be organised as a militia.
- 2 The armed forces serve to prevent war and to maintain peace; they defend the country and its population. They shall support the civilian authorities in safeguarding the country against serious threats to internal security and in dealing with exceptional situations. Further duties may be provided for by law.
- 3 The deployment of the armed forces is the responsibility of the Confederation.

Hitler able to bring the situation more or less under control.

Back to Switzerland again

All the major forces deployed in Europe at the time were considering an attack on our country, not just Germany. Like all the others, the High Command of the US forces, so powerful and experienced in war, came to a negative conclusion in 1944 when examining the attack from France through Switzerland on Germany called for by Stalin, which it communicated to the Commander-in-Chief in Europe in the following words: “*The difficulties of the terrain and the recognised capabilities of the small but efficient Swiss forces in fighting on their own soil would make such a project doubtful.*” (Telegram of 29 December 1944 from the US Combined Chiefs of Staff, Washington, to General *Eisenhower* in Versailles).

Despite the clearly defined purpose of the Swiss army in the Federal Constitution Art. 58, i.e., to “prevent war”, we have largely crushed it. In contrast to the Second World War, today no general staff, when examining an attack on our country, will conclude that success is “doubtful”, and so we would be immediately involved at the very beginning of a quite possible major war in Europe – lying in the middle of NATO. Some time ago, at a friendly dinner in Beijing with an executive of one of the largest Chinese corporations, the latter asked the author quite abruptly: “*Why has the richest country in the world abolished its army?*” •

¹ Nuspliger, Niklaus. “Geheimoperation ‘Shetland-Bus’” [Secret operation “Shetland-Bus”]. In *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 30 July 2021, p. 6

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Horizon Europe” and cohesion billion are two pairs of shoes

Swiss Federal Council has many plans B in its back pocket

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

With or without a Framework Agreement: The EU leadership tries to put Switzerland under pressure whenever it wants something from us — in true great power style. The current issue is the “Horizon Europe” research programme: Switzerland would only be allowed to participate as a full member if it released the promised 1,3 billion in cohesion payments beforehand, Brussels says. The Federal Council was somewhat hasty in promising the rapid payment, knowing quite well that Parliament could put a spoke in its wheel. This has now been accomplished by the Office of the Council of States, at least for the next few months. This is not a catastrophe, because Switzerland is one of the world’s best research centres and can dock on to Horizon even without an agreement. The false allegation that the Federal Council does not have a plan B for the Framework Agreement does not become true by repetition. The Federal Council has long since given the answer: there is not one, but many plans B in the back pocket.

For years it was said that full association with Horizon Europe would only be possible if Switzerland agreed to the Institutional Framework Agreement. Now that the Federal Council has scuttled the agreement, the EU is quickly pulling out another instrument of exerting pressure and thus tacitly accepting the burial of the agreement — apparently it is not without alternative after all! Now Brussels is linking access to “Horizon Europe” to the payment of the cohesion billions. Yet the CHF 1,3 billion, spread over ten years, would flow into the EU’s pot of money since long ago if the EU had not repeatedly imposed punitive measures against Switzerland that violated the law and the agreement. Parliament approved the funds in December 2019, but then put their disbursement on hold as a reaction to the non-recognition of the Swiss stock exchange by the EU — another means of pressure from Brussels to force the framework agreement.

Switzerland remains an attractive centre of research even as a “non-associated third country”

Despite all the prophecies of doom from the EU turbos, Switzerland’s position as a centre of research is apparently not in danger, even though the European Commission (EC) announced on 12 July that “Switzerland will have the status of a non-

Support for vocational education and training in the newer EU states suits Switzerland well

mw. From the viewpoint of the subject, it would be desirable to release the cohesion funds soon — without pressure from Brussels, of course! — because they are intended for a meaningful purpose. Most of them are to be utilized to vocational training projects in the new EU member states: Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Cyprus. For the youth in these countries, support from Switzerland which is skilled in vocational education and training, would be a boon, especially in the rough times of the

pandemic. According to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA, Switzerland decides autonomously on the projects to be supported: “Switzerland accompanies the project selection process in the partner country, examines the calls for proposals and monitors project implementation.”

By launching the projects as soon as possible, Switzerland can achieve two goals: it fulfils its obligation as a neutral and prosperous country towards the less fortunate people of this world, and it makes friends within the EU.

Source: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/erweiterungsbeitrag/de/home.html>

associated third country for all calls for proposals in 2021”¹. The excited buzz in the press and in some universities about this news seems somewhat artificial, since the EC had been threatening this decision for some time, and Switzerland was well prepared for it.

In any case, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) comments on the announcement from Brussels in a completely unagitated manner: “In this mode, researchers in Switzerland can also participate in ‘Horizon Europe’ and related programmes and initiatives and apply for the programme components and funding instruments open to them. As a rule, however, they do not receive funding for their project costs from the EC. Wherever participation is possible, funding is provided by SERI. Parliament has already decided on the financing of Swiss participation in the Horizon-package to the tune of CHF 6.15 billion [!] as well as the possibility of direct financing of researchers in Switzerland.”² So everything’s hunky-dory!

The President of the ETH Board, *Michael Hengartner*, does not express his fears very convincingly in an interview with the “Tages-Anzeiger”: “It is well known in the EU that we have excellent researchers who offer added value. But what is the added value if there are problems with Brussels afterwards? It is more complicated for everyone, and we have become less attractive as a partner.” *Michael Hengartner* fears that talented young people might “prefer a more stable environment in the future”.³

That self-organised dealing with the bureaucratic jungle in Brussels might be

more complicated is probably true. But the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI has already gained experience with this after Switzerland’s exclusion from the student exchange programme “Erasmus plus” (as a “punishment” in breach of the treaty for the Swiss vote in favour of the mass immigration initiative in 2014). Switzerland organised the student exchange itself, which went very well after a short time — and we also saved money!

So why should Swiss universities be “less attractive” with self-organised research cooperation? For the ETH Zurich in particular, there is a question mark here: It is one of the best universities in the world (according to the QS World University Ranking 2020, it ranks 6th worldwide and 1st in continental Europe⁴). Where should young people from the EU region find a more “stable environment” than in Switzerland? Immigration to Swiss universities has increased sharply since the agreement on the free movement of persons with the EU, and a considerable proportion of lecturers and students come from abroad. It cannot be assumed that this will change due to the lack of full association with “Horizon Europe”.

“We will not let ourselves be pushed in the Council of States”.

Swiss Federal President *Guy Parmelin* already pointed out in May that the EU itself has a vital interest in research cooperation and trade with Switzerland: “If the EU were to refuse Switzerland par-

Russian-American disarmament talks as hope for world peace

mw. Just a few weeks after the summit meeting of the two presidents *Joe Biden* and *Vladimir Putin* in Geneva on 16 June 2021, high-ranking representatives of Russia and the USA began the agreed dialogue on nuclear disarmament there, also in Geneva. At the meeting on 28 July, the Russian delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister *Sergei Ryabkov*, the American delegation by Deputy Secretary of State *Wendy Sherman*. The talks are to continue as early as the end of September.

“It is an attempt to set a new example.”

The statements of both countries as well as many media agree: The fact that Russians and Americans are sitting down at the table again after years and are talking to each other is an important first step towards the urgently needed détente between the great powers.

“The governments of both countries saw the meeting as a promising sign for global security. *Ned Price*, spokesman for the US State Department, classified it as a starting point for the agreed dialogue. [...] ‘The talks in Geneva were professional and business-like,’ he said. [...] According to Kremlin spokesman *Dmitry Peskov*, it was a positive signal that experts from both countries had met. ‘We hope that in the course of contacts we will at least manage to put forward more extensively the respective positions,’ he said.”¹

Some other media voices: The meeting “is seen as an important signal for global security. Topics for future negotiations

are to be defined”.² “It is a small success, but its importance for international security should not be underestimated.”³ “It is an attempt to set a new example.”⁴

Bringing the conflicting parties to the table: Switzerland’s Good Offices

As the media rightly note, the aim of the working meeting of 28 July was first of all to sit down at the table with each other and to enter into discussion on an equal footing. It is the task of neutral Switzerland to make this “table” available and to create an atmosphere in which a gradual rapprochement becomes possible. In a report on the Good Offices, the Federal Council says: “Switzerland, in its role as host, guarantees security, calm and discretion for sensitive negotiations. It has the necessary infrastructure to organise and host such events. The positive environment helps the parties in peace negotiations to come closer to solutions.”⁵ This positive environment is not only important in peace negotiations, as evidenced by the Russian-American summit in June: Its positive outcome is the rapid start of the current disarmament talks.

The Swiss Federal Council and its diplomats will do their best to ensure that this dialogue continues. However, in order to achieve concrete results, not only further rounds of negotiations are needed, but above all the political will on both sides. The decision-makers of the world’s great powers (and their backers) have a respon-

sibility to dismantle their overflowing arsenals and end the horrors of war. The joint statement of the two presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin on the occasion of the summit on 16 June goes some way in this direction: they agreed that a nuclear war cannot be won. The Russian President added: “The United States of America and the Russian Federation have a special responsibility for strategic stability in the world, at least on the basis that we are the two largest nuclear powers.” In view of the fact that thousands of nuclear warheads are stored on our globe, a fraction of which would be enough to wipe out all of humanity – along with the rest of nature – one can only hope that the nuclear powers (not only the USA and Russia) will live up to this responsibility as soon as possible. Switzerland, with its Good Offices, is ready to actively accompany any efforts towards peace. •

¹ “Russland und USA nehmen Gespräche über Abrüstung auf”. In: *Zeit online (dpa, Reuters, iso)* of 28 July 2021

² «Abrüstungsgespräche: USA und Russland verhandeln in Genf». *News@ORF.at* of 27. July 2021

³ Kireev, Maxim. “Nach einer Serie von Entspannungsgesprächen führen die USA und Russland Gespräche in Genf.” In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 28 July 2021

⁴ “Abrüstungsgespräche zwischen USA und Russland: ‘Ein neues Zeichen’”. Interview with *Matthias Dembinski* from the Hessischen Stiftung für Friedensforschung. *ARD Inforadio* of 28 July 2021

⁵ “Der Bundesrat verabschiedet einen Bericht über die Guten Dienste der Schweiz”. *Media Release* of 14 December 2018 (see also “Good offices and humanitarian aid of the ICRC”. In: *Current Concerns* No. 24 of 12 November 2019)

“‘Horizon Europe’ and ...”

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participation in the Horizon research programme, for example, this would weaken Europe as a research location compared to Asia or the USA. Needle pricks would do no one any good.” For this reason, the Federal Council would not react with countermeasures to any punitive actions by the EU: “Such games do not fit in with our policy. We work for the interest of our citizens, which often also corresponds to the interest of the population in the EU.”⁵

It is certainly reasonable for the Federal Council to refrain from a tit-for-tat response — but to offer a gift as a reaction to a pinprick of the coarser kind, namely the swift payment of the second cohesion billion, is a bit excessive. Moreover, the Federal Council is once again making the mistake of promising something that is not even within its competence.

For it is the parliament that is responsible for lifting the blockade. The Na-

tional Council will discuss the release of the “cohesion billion” in the autumn session, the Council of States then in the winter session. Now, however, the Federal Council is urging the two chambers to deal with the bill under the urgent procedure, i. e., to reach an agreement within the three-week autumn session. *Alex Kuprecht*, President of the Council of States, is opposing this. He heads the five-member office of the Council of States, which is responsible for drawing up the session programmes. It has spoken out against an urgent procedure. This is because in the Swiss bicameral system, the rule is that business is dealt with in only one of the Councils per session, and then in the second Council in the next session. This procedure is “part of serious legislation”, says *Alex Kuprecht*, President of the Council of States. “We in the Council of States do not allow ourselves to be rushed”, because such an important issue requires a well-founded discussion.⁶

The Council of States is right not to let the Federal Council interfere with its affairs! •

¹ State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). “Horizon Europe: Switzerland currently with third country status” *Press release* of 14 July 2021

² State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). “Horizon Europe: Switzerland currently with third country status” *Press release* of 14 July 2021

³ Sturzenegger, Martin. “ETH zu Ausschluss von Horizon – Besteht das Risiko, dass die ETH ihre besten Köpfe verliert? ‘Ja’”. (ETH on exclusion from Horizon - Is there a risk that ETH will lose its best brains? ‘Yes’). Interview with ETH-Ratspräsident *Michael Hengartner*. In: *Tages Anzeiger* of 15 July 2021

⁴ Staub, Norbert. “Etabliert an der Spitze” (Established at the top). *News of the ETH Zurich* of 10 June 2020

⁵ “Beziehung Schweiz und EU. Parmelin: Bundesrat will keine Spielchen” (Relationship between Switzerland and the EU. Parmelin: Federal Council does not want to play games). *SRF News* of 30 May 2021

⁶ Burckhardt, Philipp. “Zahlungen an EU-Staaten. Kohäsionsmilliarde: Der Ständerat hat es nicht eilig” (Payments to EU states. Cohesion billion: The Council of States is in no hurry). *SRF News* of 3 August 2021

Germany upside down

On the loss of credibility in German politics

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

Germany has changed a lot. Two events in Berlin and the public reactions to them are emblematic of this: the authorised LGBT demonstration on *Christopher Street Day* on 24 July and the banned demonstration of the “Querdenker” – a movement in Germany opposing vaccination and other government policies.

A few extracts from media reports make this clear. First about the demonstration on 24 July:

As the “Rainbow Capital of Europe” for LGBT...

“Senator for Culture *Klaus Lederer* (Die Linke) was among the participants [of the Christopher Street Day demonstration]. Berlin’s mayor *Michael Müller* (SPD) had previously called for solidarity with persecuted gays, lesbians, and transgenders. Although today’s Berlin is ‘cosmopolitan and liberal’, homophobic thinking and acting is also a problem in the ‘rainbow capital of Europe’, Müller explained. We have to stand up to this together.” (*Deutsche Welle* of 24 July 2021)

“65,000 people at parade – biggest demo in COVID-19 crisis. The Christopher Street Day parade was bigger than expected. It was also political: Senator Lederer wants to make Berlin a ‘queer freedom zone’.” (“*Der Tagesspiegel*” of 25 July 2021)

... and against “Querdenker” with “their cult-like behaviour”

The demonstration on 1 August, on the other hand, had previously been banned by the police because of expected disregard for COVID-19 hygiene rules. Two Berlin administrative courts had upheld the ban. Subsequently, the organisers, “Querdenken 711” from Stuttgart, officially withdrew as organisers, at the same time calling on the participants not to let their “freedom” be taken away. So, a few thousand people attempted an unorganised march through Berlin. When the police tried to prevent this, violent clashes broke out with injuries on both sides and more than 500 arrests. The media stated:

“The federal government responded with concern on the partly violent protests from the Querdenker scene on Sunday in Berlin. There were also ‘attacks on persons from within the protest scene’, said vice-government spokesperson *Ulrike Demmer*, adding: ‘The Federal Government perceives this with great concern.’ There was as little room for violence and provocation as there was ‘for

“Realising the common good without or even against the state is not possible. A policy oriented towards the common good is also not possible if citizens rely solely on comprehensive control of state action. Because a democracy cannot function without a foundation of trust by citizens in the state organs and their office holders. The principle of ‘good faith’ is indispensable. If the well-founded basic trust gives way and more and more mistrust spreads, a country gradually becomes ungovernable, and the extreme consequences can be anarchy and/or dictatorship. In other words: The common good suffers.”

right-wing extremist ideas, for conspiracy myths, regardless of which side they come from’.” (*Zeit online* of 2 August 2021)

“It is not acceptable that these people, with their cult-like behaviour, use Berlin as a doormat to trumpet their ugly images to the public,” said *Tom Schreiber*, constitutional policy spokesman for the SPD parliamentary group in the Berlin House of Representatives.” (*Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 August 2021)

Question marks

Now, one could say that things are clear: Of course, the peaceful LGBT demonstrators should be able to exercise their constitutional right to freedom of demonstration. But if a demonstration has been banned, then the police must enforce the ban with the means at their disposal.

But is the matter really that clear? Two further media raise doubt:

“Leipziger Strasse is totally congested. No chance of keeping a distance of 1.5 metres. I feel quite uncomfortable here right now, also because not all the people are wearing masks. When I ask a group of young people why not, they answer with a big grin: ‘Because we shit on the police’. But apparently also on the health of the community.” (*Twitter* message of *Tagesspiegel* editor *Nadine Lange* of 24 July 2021 on the Christopher Street Day demonstration)

“When [...] critics of the COVID-19 measures didn’t wear masks at demos recently, the outcry was always great: how these people were lacking solidarity and how selfish they were. Now, when many of the tens of thousands at the Christopher

Street Day (CSD) in Berlin [...] ignored the obligation to wear masks, the same cry-babies suddenly remained silent.” (“*Die Welt*” of 26 July 2021)

Influential minority ...

Who were the participants of the LGBT demonstration? A very small, but in the meantime very influential minority in Germany, whose demands are largely met by politics.

... and great mistrust

Who were the participants of the “Querdenker” demonstration? It is not easy to answer this question. Probably a minority. But the available pictures do not show people from whom violence had emanated so far. The people look more like our neighbours, women, and men of all ages, also parents with their children, not neglected, also not as one imagines extremists, rather “normal” ... and where they have been able to speak in the media, they seem rather agitated and upset, not like habitual rioters or extremist thugs. What these demonstrators have in common is their rejection of the state’s restrictions on fundamental rights because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They do not want to be vaccinated. They deny that they are endangering not only themselves but also others. They have the almost incontrovertible conviction that the state measures are not objectively justified, but only one step further towards the disenfranchisement of citizens in Germany. They presumably now distrust everything the German state is doing.

"Germany upside down"

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How can it be explained that quite "normal" citizens of the country now think – and act – in this way?

All just conspiracy theory? ...

The simple answer is: Stuffed with – right-wing extremist – conspiracy theories, these people have radicalised themselves and are now becoming more and more extremists. That is the official reading. That the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution has made the "Querdenker" movement an object of observation is only logical from such a point of view.

But is the answer really that simple?

What experiences have people in Germany had with German politics in the past decades? There is the saying, "A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth." If you look up *Wiktionary*, *Wikipedia's* dictionary, it says about the meaning of this saying: "A lie can permanently destroy credibility". And as

A book worth reading

Where this has become public and continues to do so, those politically responsible almost always react with defensive reflexes. The best known of these is the counter-cry: conspiracy theory. That this is in fact not the case is shown by the courageous personalities who have rendered outstanding services to the truth. Here is just one example, because I am currently reading this book. *Hubert Seipel* wrote it. He was an editor and foreign correspondent for *Stern* and *Spiegel*, then switched to public television in the nineties. He was twice awarded the *German Television Prize* for his more than 40 films, as well as the *Helmut Schmidt Journalist Award* and the *Adolf Grimme Award*. His book published in spring 2021 is entitled "*Putin's Power. Why Europe Needs Russia*" (in German). The title is misleading, because the book is primarily about the campaign against the policies of the Russian President which has been going on for 20 years. A campaign that, as Hubert Seipel explains with many examples and evidence, has little to do with the truth, but a lot to do

What the common good would require ...

But that cannot be a solution. Realising the common good without or even against the state is not possible. A policy oriented towards the common good is also not possible if citizens rely solely on comprehensive control of state action. Because a democracy cannot function without a foundation of trust by citizens in the state organs and their office holders. The principle of "good faith" is indispensable. If the well-founded basic trust gives way and more and more mistrust spreading, a country gradually becomes ungovernable, and the extreme consequences can be anarchy and/or dictatorship. In other words: The common good suffers.

Sayings, as we know, have only a limited validity. Lies can fade away when insight and transformation become evident. Most people are not so resentful when they realise that politics does really change. Are Germany's politicians ready for that? A new Bundestag with new MPs and a new government could be a help in taking the step. If there is understanding and the will to do so.

... and the German politics we have

But those in charge in Germany are still far from that. Especially in foreign and defence policy, Germany has been standing on its head for years. While the Germans are busy with "Querdenker", LGBT etc., the course of an aggressive foreign policy (bypassing the citizen) is continued unperturbed. On 2 August 2021, *Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer* sent the German Navy frigate "Bayern" to the Indo-Pacific region. The minister said: "The message is clear: we are flying the flag for our values and interests, together with our partners and allies!" The German warship is to defend the "freedom of the seas" in the South China Sea. Just as "freedom on the Hindu Kush" was once to be defended? But the new deployment is no longer directed against a Taliban government in Kabul, but quite obviously against the government of a great power with Beijing as its capital. Almost word for word with the US president, the minister said: "The way I see it, we cooperate with China where we can, and we counter where we have to." Hence, no happy ending yet. •

The "House of Cards" principle, even in Germany?

km. An article in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", published on 5 August 2021, entitled "The necessary taming of the politician" begins with taking a look at the US Netflix series "House of Cards". It tells the story of the American politician *Frank Underwood*. According to the newspaper, he "knows no scruples. For achieving the American presidency, he does not shrink back from hypocrisy, intrigue, lies and even crime. The political attitudes of Underwood stay never quite clear throughout the series. But it

doesn't really matter. The ultimate politician's goal is power itself." Further down in the text, the newspaper writes: "The political intrigues in Washington and other Western capitals are exaggerated in the series, but the mechanisms shown, are quite real." Finally, there is the sentence: "The series can therefore open one's eyes for those who still believe that politics is about something like the common good."

(Translation of quotes
Current Concerns)

an example, it cites: "A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth. This also and especially applies to politicians."

... or also the price of pure power politics?

Is the high price of a Machiavellian striving for power now also evident in German politics? The deliberate turning away from an orientation towards political ethics conceived in terms of the common good and towards the principle that the end justifies all means could not remain hidden. How often has it become known in the meantime that many politicians, also in Germany, are not taking the truth very seriously. That they are preaching high ideals like freedom, justice and democracy, but in fact are trying to push through the goals of – very influential – minorities.

with the geopolitical power interests of the USA and its allies.

It is still the case that not only the government press releases but also such books are available – and read.

"A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth. This is also and especially true for politicians." So, it is not that surprising that people are suspicious when German politicians beat the advertising drum for anything. And at first glance, one would almost like to say: when it comes to really important things, politicians should perhaps better keep quiet – because their statements are contraindicated.

"While the Germans are busy with 'Querdenker', LGBT etc., the course of an aggressive foreign policy (bypassing the citizen) is continued unperturbed."

After all, globalisation also has its disadvantages

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V.*



Eberhard Hamer
(pictureb ma)

Since the end of the previous century, “globalisation” has been celebrated by science, journalism and corporations as a major step in development, and at “world economic summits” critics of globalisation have even been de-

clared “a world problem, like international terrorism” (Davos).

Economics sees globalisation as a further stage of development from domestic economy to urban economy, regional economy, national economy and via supranational economic areas (EU) to world economy.¹

Not only an economic dimension

Globalisation is not only an economic dimension, it also exists technologically, politically, socially, culturally and militarily. Significant contributions have been made, for instance, by technological developments in aviation, telecommunications, the new media (Internet) and digitisation. The idea of the “one world” has long been emanating from them.

There are now a number of international organisations, such as the UN, NATO, IMF, GATT, ILO, the World Bank and others, which presume a competence for the whole world and aim at centralising the sovereignty and competencies of people and states in the hands of a few globally ruling forces.

To this end, the “four great freedoms” were proclaimed: global freedom of capital, production, labour and services.

Freedom of capital above all

Large international corporations and banks wanted to use the freedom of capital, above all, to leapfrog national borders, legal systems and tax systems, in order to enjoy unlimited financial and tax exemption in tax and legal oases of the world. What stayed behind were the nationally bound medium-sized companies, which had to take over the tax and social deficit of those corporations and banks, i.e. were exploited to a correspondingly higher extent.

The production of the international corporations was also relocated internationally to where there were the least regulations, the lowest taxes and the cheapest wages, i.e. to the cheapest production locations. This enabled those corporations to sell more cheaply from global cheap production than the indigenous medium-sized

“So far it is clear that globalisation is a major advantage for international corporations, banks and organisations, but predominantly a disadvantage for the self-employed as well as the employed middle class and the lower class. Whether globalisation as a whole will be the doom to our prosperity is likely to be shown shortly by the largest world economic crash to date, that has developed out of the world debt spiral.”

companies working with nationally more expensive production factors, and to out-compete the latter.

The services of international banks and corporations have also been relocated to where it is cheapest (e.g. billing in India), where it is politically ordered (e.g. billing of *Telecom* in Israel) or where this seemed appropriate for military or espionage reasons (cloud concentration from Europe in the USA).

Objectionable free movement of labour

In the last few decades, the free movement of workers required by corporations has been particularly disputed. The international corporations wanted to recruit the cheapest labour for their mass production or services globally, while the small and medium-sized businesses pointed out that they had to provide individual production and services with trained specialists and high national tax and social costs, and were therefore not relieved by migration, but would be burdened with additional social costs.

The fight for globalisation, and then that for diversification, multiculturalism and gender ideology was exacted by the USA from all of its “colonies”, especially from Europe. A global unitary culture has been prescribed, so that today you may no longer even mention different peoples, cultures or religions without running the risk of being globally peripheralised. Accordingly, the sovereignty rights and competencies of the nation states were dismantled and collected in intermediate stations (EU, NATO). Globalisation seems to continue to prevail. However, one may not name its driving forces in international big business (*Gates, Soros, Bezos, Zuckerberg, Rothschild*, etc.) without being socially marginalised as a “conspiracy theorist”.

The losers from globalisation

As early as 2005, SME research in Hanoi² worked out in many individual stud-

ies³ that there are not only winners but also losers from globalisation.⁴ “Just as high finance and corporations are the big winners of globalisation, medium-sized personnel companies are the losers of this development, and this also applies to social groups: the small upper class of the rich has the highest profit from globalisation. It is only they who can use the global freedoms for themselves extensively.”⁵ In contrast, medium-sized companies and employed members of the middle class are place-bound and cannot relocate their activities internationally, because medium-sized companies are only successful in the presence of the entrepreneur and members of the employed middle class have to exercise their service contracts on site.

Global corporations as opposed to medium-sized personnel companies

In our economy, this has led to a split between, on the one hand, global corporations and banks making use of globalised freedoms and, on the other hand, the down-to-earth medium-sized personnel companies. The former can use the great freedoms for tax exemption, cheap labour and cheap international deliveries and, above all, escape the excessive laws and bureaucracies of our old industrialised countries through global relocation. The small and medium-sized enterprises in Germany, on the other hand, which are loyal to their home country, are subject to the highest taxes and social security contributions in the world, to a constantly growing and no longer controllable legal network and a bureaucracy that makes fewer and fewer decisions itself but instead shifts the responsibilities and increasing control efforts on the companies. Only joint-stock companies, corporations and high finance have globalised freedom, have grown out of the national legal systems into a legally free area – on the other hand, the small and medium-sized enter-

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prises, as remaining subjects, have to pay maximum taxes, maximum social security contributions and maximum wages and, on top of this, to accept the monopoly prices of global players, their conditions and discounts and to face their cheap competition on the market. They are therefore clear losers in the game of globalisation.

More dangers than benefits for the lower class

The lower class has also understood by now that globalisation means more danger than benefit for them: If the global corporations relocate to low-wage countries, what remains in Germany will be unemployment.

When the central banks keep heavily indebted states as well as bankrupt companies and banks afloat with ever higher credit levels, when they are about igniting a debt explosion in the world and thus destroying the value of currencies and money, not only does real income dwindle, but so do savings, and all our employees' old-age security loses its value.

Controlled media

And when the media of the western world are financed, controlled, manipulated and bred to a uniformly desired political ideology⁶ by US high finance, the lower class, being most influenced by media propaganda, is also most directly controlled by this.

The freedom of movement of all people in the world demanded by globalists has naturally led to the migration of peoples to economically prosperous and open countries. *Angela Merkel* even invited the world's poor and failed people to enjoy our social system (social immigration), and the lower class is increasingly seeing this as its own exploitation, but is not allowed to express this publicly.

The role of the Greens

Since the turn of the millennium, the globally US-controlled Greens have been pioneers for global feminism, Black Lives Matter movement, and mass migration. They also control the language and the minds of people working for the media they direct as well as their political propaganda. If the leadership of the Greens "can't do anything with Germany", if national thinking is called "Nazism", Christianity is antagonised "because Islam belongs to Germany" and, following the American example, broadcasters (NDR) are required to present 17,5% coloured people⁷ in television programmes and to show 65% of the management positions in films to be held by women, this shows how strongly the US globalisers mentally dominate the world and especially their colonies.

Until the coming collapse of the world financial system and the dollar empire, globalisation will continue to shape our politics, society, economy and our thinking globally and anti-nationally, and it will also bring great advantages to globalists⁸, but bondage, exploitation, loss of freedom and impoverishment to all losers from globalisation.

The real ecological questions

While the green idealists want to save nature globally, the author himself, as a forest owner, has to bear the consequences of globalisation, in that the elm bark beetle introduced to Europe from East Asia in 1979 destroyed all elms, and the also adventive horse chestnut bacterium has equally been infesting and destroying our chestnut trees since 2000; in that the ash fungus was also introduced from Asia at the turn of the millennium and has destroyed most of the ash trees in Germany, in that a soot bark disease with the greatest danger to humans was imported from Canada in 2006, destroying our maple stocks. On the grounds of green ideology, many "forests were left to themselves", and there millions of adventive oak processionary moths, bark beetles, etc. were bred, which now extensively invade and destroy our forests.

Monopolisation of food production

Our food production has also been globalised and monopolised. With a lot of money from *Monsanto* et al., politicians and patent officers have declared genetically modified organisms patentable.⁹ Six global players own 90% of all approved transgenic plants, hold the patents on them and collect global patent fees from all farmers in the world year after year. "With the monopolisation of our food resources that has emerged in this way, a global power instrumentarium has come into being"¹⁰, which keeps the food supply of most of the world under control and exploitation.

With the further developed "terminator" seed the life span of the gene seeds is limited to only one harvest, so the world's farmers annually have to pay no longer only license fees, but instead expensive purchase prices for the new sowing.

Monsanto and Co. have played the same game with pesticides, such as for example *glyphosate*, which is matched to the monopoly seeds supplied by monopolists, and kills everything else. So, whoever uses monopoly seeds must also buy monopoly pesticides. Thus national farmers are kept in double dependency on international corporations; the global corporations outmanoeuvre self-administration and national sovereignty.

Conclusion

So far it is clear that globalisation is a major advantage for international corpo-

rations, banks and organisations, but predominantly a disadvantage for the self-employed as well as the employed middle class and the lower class. Whether globalisation as a whole will be the doom to our prosperity is likely to be shown shortly by the largest world economic crash to date, that has developed out of the world debt spiral. •

¹ see Hamer, Eberhard and Eike (eds). *Wie kann der Mittelstand die Globalisierung bestehen?* (How can SMEs and the middle class meet the challenges of globalisation?) Hanover 2005

² ibid

³ These are studies of monopolisation through globalisation, of the global money fraud, of global networks instead of nations, of the tax state in the globalisation trap, of the fact that globally open social systems never last, of de-democratisation through centralisation, of the monopolisation of our food, of the grabbing for water.

⁴ Hamer, Eberhard and Eike (eds). *Wie kann der Mittelstand die Globalisierung bestehen?* (How can SMEs and the middle class meet the challenges of globalisation?) Hanover 2005, p. 251ff.

⁵ ibid, p. 258

⁶ For example Genderism, Black Lives Matter, Fridays for Future, environmental hysteria etc.

⁷ There are not that many in our population.

⁸ For example the anti-national Greens

⁹ In 1980 the US Supreme Court ruled with 5: 4 judges in its "Chakrabarty decision" that genetic engineering forms of life were patentable.

¹⁰ see Fuchs, R. "Monopolisierung unserer Nahrung" (Monopolising our food). In: Hamer, Eberhard and Eike (eds). *Wie kann der Mittelstand die Globalisierung bestehen?* (How can SMEs and the middle class meet the challenges of globalisation?) Hanover 2005, p. 226

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Liberalism and Direct Democracy

by Dr. phil. René Roca, *Forschungsinstitut direkte Demokratie (Research Institute for Direct Democracy, www.fidd.ch)*

Over the past 200 years, the citizens of Switzerland have developed democracy into a model that is unique in the world. Direct democracy is an integral part of political culture and the decisive foundation for the country's economic success. As a prelude and brief overview text, the article "Historical research and direct democracy" (see *Current Concerns* No.16 of 8 August 2020) summarised the previous research. Now, as announced, the research results are to be explored in depth in a loose sequence, with reference to individual topics. The list started with the article on the topic of Catholicism and its significance for the history of democracy in Switzerland (see *Current Concerns* No. 2 of 5 February 2021). This is now being followed by an essay on the importance of liberalism for the emergence and development of direct democracy in Switzerland. The following is an excerpt from the introductory chapter of the conference proceedings "Liberalism and modern Switzerland".¹

Freedom – community spirit – progress

With a view to the national elections in autumn 2015, the Swiss "Liberal Democratic Party. The Liberals" (FDP) developed a new strategy for the future. The party titled this strategy with the words "Freedom, community spirit and progress – for love of Switzerland." This strategy for the future can still be found on the party's website under the chapter "Values" – even after the elections – and is paraphrased as follows:

"Switzerland is world class. We are doing better than almost anyone else. This success story has always been based on the liberal values of freedom, community spirit and progress. Liberal achievements such as our liberal economic and social order, federalism, direct democracy, the rule of law, a strong but lean state, the militia system, a good education system and cosmopolitanism are based on these values."²

If one studies the history of liberalism in Switzerland, one can undoubtedly determine that it made a significant contribution to the development of the achievements described, with the exception of federalism and direct democracy. With regard to federalism, most liberals were in favour of the Helvetic model of centralised structures for a long time. Only with the resistance of the Catholic Conservatives and the Sonderbund War of 1847 was a federal, federalist compromise possible in 1848.³ The liberals also consistently

fought direct democracy in the first half of the 19th century.

Even before the FDP party was founded in 1894, the liberal movement in Switzerland had been divided into sub-movements, which only integrated direct democratic popular rights into theory and practice after 1848.

Historical positioning of the terms "liberalism" and "direct democracy"

As a political term, the term liberalism can be assigned to the post-revolutionary epoch after 1789. The «Liberals» were united by their rejection of the Ancient Regime and their support for political change. Particular emphasis was placed on the freedom of the individual and freedom of conscience, and early on, there were warnings about the dangers of equality. The goals of most liberals were a constitution with the recognition of individual rights, the separation of powers and the principle of democracy, fixed firmly on the basis of a representative system. The elections were to be subject to a census system. A referendum would, at best, only serve to sanction the constitution, other than that no votes based on direct democratic people's rights were envisaged.⁴

Liberalism is generally based on natural law and appears as a political term on the occasion of the struggle for the Spanish constitution in 1812 and in France during the Restoration ("idées libérales") in 1817.⁵

The liberal movement in Switzerland was successful shortly before and especially after the July Revolution of 1830 in France. In twelve of 22 cantons, upheavals took place, which led to liberal-democratic constitutions and brought a majority of liberal forces into executive and legislative powers. But after 1830, the victorious liberal movement quickly broke apart, and liberal exponents developed radical currents, some of which also advocated revolution and the use of force (Jacobinism). At any rate, they advocated profound changes in the existing conditions. However, parts of the liberal movement in Switzerland (liberal radicals such as *Ludwig Snell* or *Kasimir Pfyster*) had become radicalised even before 1830 and distinguished themselves more sharply from the early liberals and only moderate reformers. During the Sonderbund period, the liberal radicals distinguished themselves as champions of a fundamental renewal of political institutions.⁶

The actual Swiss radicalism, which was more strongly represented in western Switzerland, never had a uniform political theory; what united the different direc-

tions was the goal of national unification and the establishment of a strong central state. After 1848, radical currents gave rise to early socialism, which bore egalitarian and statist features more pointedly, but also more consistently represented the principle of popular sovereignty and advocated more direct democracy (democratic movement of the 1860s).⁷

The term direct democracy means on the one hand a political system and on the other hand a political decision-making process, i.e. for Switzerland, the origin and development of the initiative and the referendum in the first half of the 19th century. Proceeding from individual cantons, the federal government also integrated direct democratic people's rights into its constitution in the second half of the 19th century (1874 optional legal referendum, 1891 constitutional initiative). Important theoretical elements were the cooperative principle, modern natural law and the idea of popular sovereignty. The historical reference points were the American and French Revolutions, whose theorists had discussed elements of direct democracy in the context of constitutional discussions.⁸

The extended liberal family and its relationship to direct democracy

The Swiss historian and political scientist *Erich Gruner* (1915–2001) speaks of the "extended liberal family" when he defines the liberal movement in Switzerland of the 19th century. Apart from all facets and special tints, three important lines of thought showed the development of liberalism and its relationship to direct democracy: Liberalism, radicalism and democratism.⁹ Before Gruner shows the differences between the respective doctrines, he emphasises their common foundations: "The common intellectual basis lies in the commitment to a free social and state order, to free intellectual expression of opinion, in short, it lies in the ideals of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution."¹⁰

Swiss liberalism derived its intellectual roots, on the one hand, from the time of the Helvetic Republic and, on the other hand, from *Benjamin Constant's* (1767–1830) political and social theory. His approaches are particularly anchored in western Switzerland, and such original thinkers as *Alexandre Vinet*, *Charles Secrétan* and *Philippe Bridel* further developed his teaching. Constant, like *John Locke* (1632–1704), is convinced that the people can only act politically

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through representative bodies. He clearly advocates a representative democracy with an electoral census, i.e. the restriction of the right to vote to educated and wealthy classes, and explicitly rejects direct democracy. In clear dissociation and in opposition to *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1712–1778), Constant formulates an individualistic concept of freedom, restricted to a small upper class. With this Constant and his successors leave the principles of natural law and speak for a utilitarian approach. Constant's teaching led to liberal conservatism, advocated for example by *Johann Caspar Bluntschli* (1808–1881) and liberal-radical teachings such as that of *Ludwig Snell* (1785–1854), which was influential for the Swiss Regeneration.

Swiss radicalism, which did not develop a closed system in Switzerland either, but advocated modern natural law, with its main demand for national unity, took up the postulate of a revolutionary reorganisation of Switzerland and thus was in some ways a driving force for the Sonderbund War of 1847 and the subsequent founding of the federal state. A central source of Swiss radicalism is *Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler* (1780–1866), who with his conservative and religious attitudes cannot easily be classified, but, as a radical politician and as a teacher at the *Aarau* *Lehrverein*, had a broad impact in favour of democratisation and the founding of the Swiss federal state.¹¹ It was notably Troxler who emphasised as a natural, primeval and archetypal fact his belief that the nation is nothing other than the expression of its people. The people of the confed-

eration are the real sovereign, enthroned over all laws and treaties. Consequently, it was Troxler who, from the 1840s onwards, together with other radicals, further developed the liberal conception of a representative democracy and made popular sovereignty more concrete with demands for the right to veto, referendum and initiative as well as the election of preferably all authorities.¹²

The demand for more direct democracy, i.e. the expansion of the existing democracy into pure democracy, indicates the third direction, namely so-called de-mocratism. The democratic movement of the 1860s took up the postulate of direct democracy and promoted the ideal of social democracy in various cantons, especially in north-western and eastern Switzerland, in opposition to the established bourgeoisie, which stood for liberalism (in the canton of Zurich, the "Escher system"). Notably *Karl Bürkli* (1823–1901) set early socialist accents with his support of the cooperative movement and his other economic and political demands,¹³ but the democratic movement also drew on conservative sources. Before 1848, the Catholic Conservatives had succeeded in introducing the legal veto in individual cantons (for example in the canton of Lucerne), and this was now attempted by the Democrats. They pursued the goal of balancing out the differences in industrial society and replacing representative democracy; they considered direct democracy to be a community-building force.¹⁴

The three political directions of liberalism, radicalism and democracy were united by their commitment to the national and liberal federal state. For a long time,

the representatives of liberalism were of the opinion that political power should belong to a "natural aristocracy" and not to the "uneducated masses", that otherwise there would be the threat of anarchy and ochlocracy. It was only after 1848 that – also thanks to practical experience with radical and democratic approaches – the liberals began to develop learning processes giving greater weight to the value of direct democracy as a political instrument that permanently ensures the social integration of citizens in a social unit. •

¹ Roca, René. "Introduction". In: id. (ed.). *Liberalismus und moderne Schweiz, Beiträge zur Erforschung der Demokratie*. (Liberalism and modern Switzerland, contributions to the study of democracy.) Volume 2, Basel 2017, pp. 11–50

² www.fdp.ch/werte/zukunftstrategie.html, 7 November 2016

³ Roca, René. "Der Beitrag des Katholizismus und der Katholisch-Konservativen zur direkten Demokratie in der Schweiz – Die Kantone Schwyz und St. Gallen". (The Contribution of Catholicism and Catholic Conservatives to Direct Democracy in Switzerland – The Cantons of Schwyz and St. Gallen.) In: id. (ed.). *Katholizismus und moderne Schweiz, Beiträge zur Erforschung der Demokratie*. (Catholicism and modern Switzerland, Contributions to the Study of Democracy.) Volume 1. Basel 2016, pp. 57–79, here p. 78f.

⁴ Vierhaus, Rudolf. Art. Liberalismus. (Art. Liberalism) In: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. (In: Basic Historical Concepts. Historical Lexicon for Political-Social Language in Germany. Ed. by Reinhart Koselleck et al., Study Edition Volume 3, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 741–785, here pp. 750f.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Bouquet, Jean-Jacques. Art. Liberalismus. (Art. Liberalism.) In: *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS)*. (In: Historical Lexicon of Switzerland (HLS), Volume 7, Basel 2008, pp. 823–827, here pp. 823f.; Roca, René. *Bernhard Meyer und der liberale Katholizismus der Sonderbundszeit. Religion und Politik in Luzern (1830–1848)*. (Bernhard Meyer and the liberal Catholicism of the Sonderbund period. Religion and Politics in Lucerne (1830–1848)). (Bernhard Meyer and the liberal Catholicism of the Sonderbund period. Religion and Politics in Lucerne (1830–1848)).

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René Roca (ed.). Liberalism and Modern Switzerland

Contributions to the Study of Democracy 2

ro. The liberal idea of the state has its roots in the Enlightenment and the French Revolutionary period. It was reflected in the guiding principles of the Swiss constitutions. With this and the promotion of the primary schools, liberalism had a lasting influence on the further democratic development in Switzerland in the 19th century. However, liberal theory and practice, with its tendency towards aristocratisation, repeatedly ran the risk of negating modern natural law and favouring a utilitarian principle in its place.

The relationship between Swiss liberalism and direct democracy, which is the focus of Volume 2, was ambivalent and conflict-loaded, but the two approaches enrich one another and in practice, they became important building blocks of modern Switzerland.

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The Editor

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Curative Education in Dialogue

Riccardo Bonfranchi and Eliane Perret: “Curative Education in Dialogue. Practical experiences, theoretical foundations and current discourses”¹

by Urs Graf

There are many educational policy issues today – not only in curative education – that need to be discussed. The two authors of the book think so and therefore enter into a dialogue about – not only from their point of view – relevant aspects of (curative) education, of school education in general.

As experts in curative education with a large practical background and a broad theoretical basis, they comment on 33 topics briefly, concisely and grasping the essentials. They refer to each other and, in this way, approach the questions posed from different aspects, in small steps with great professional depth and philosophically – and sometimes playfully humorous.

The two authors, despite their partly different approaches, find a broad consensus regarding the natural preconditions of children and the necessary framework conditions for successful teaching. This applies to children with special needs as well as to all other children. They find common ground in their assessment of current developments in the institution of schooling, for example with regard to

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- Meyer and the Liberal Catholicism of the Sonderbund Period. Religion and Politics in Lucerne (1830–1848). Bern 2002, pp. 81–86
- ⁷ Tanner, Albert. Art. Radikalismus. (Art. Radicalism.) In: *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS)*, (Historical Lexicon of Switzerland (HLS)), Volume 10, Basel 2011, pp. 61f.
- ⁸ Roca, René. *Wenn die Volkssouveränität wirklich eine Wahrheit werden soll ... Die schweizerische direkte Demokratie in Theorie und Praxis – Das Beispiel des Kantons Luzern.* (If popular sovereignty is really to become a reality ... Swiss direct democracy in theory and practice - the example of the canton of Lucerne. Zurich/Basel/Geneva 2012, pp. 223–225
- ⁹ Gruner, Erich. *Die Parteien der Schweiz.* (The parties of Switzerland.) Bern 1969, pp. 73–79
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 74
- ¹¹ Roca, René. “Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler und der Aarauer Lehrverein. Wie eine private Bildungsanstalt die Demokratieentwicklung in der Schweiz entscheidend förderte”. (Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler and the Aarau “Lehrverein”. How a private educational institution decisively promoted the development of democracy in Switzerland.) In: *Argovia 2014, Jahresschrift der Historischen Gesellschaft des Kantons Aargau* (Annual journal of the Historical Society of the Canton of Aargau) 126. Baden 2014, pp. 140–154
- ¹² *ibid.*
- ¹³ Roca, René (ed.). *Frühsozialismus und direkte Demokratie, Beiträge zur Erforschung der Demokratie.* (Early Socialism and Direct Democracy, Contributions to Research into Democracy) Volume 3, Basel 2018
- ¹⁴ Bürgin, Markus. Art. Demokratische Bewegung. (Democratic Movement.) In: *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS)*. (Historical Lexicon of Switzerland (HLS)) Volume 3, Basel 2004, pp. 639–641

integration, digitalisation, performance measurement and teaching methodology in general.

Bonfranchi looks at these developments mainly in terms of their effects in everyday education on children with multiple disabilities, physically and mentally. He sees how, under the conditions of “integration”, however well-intentioned, physical and mental impairments are sometimes trivialised and the specific individual support of disabled children is often devastatingly neglected.

Perret focuses more on the historical and ideological aspect of school development and observes with great concern the paradigm shift from curative education to psychiatric treatment of children, especially since the authoritative diagnostic manuals since the 1980s are increasingly limited to the identification of formal and functional disorders. The social and life-historical context is hardly taken into consideration any more.

The respective human individual as a social being is in danger of disappearing behind a cluster of symptoms – and with it the genuine pedagogical concern to strive for the possible beyond the obvious. It is precisely in making up for deficits what curative education is all about. The importance of the relationship between the teacher and the teachers always comes up, which is neglected in current developments.

While a few topics deal with curative education in the narrower sense, the majority of the others deal with changes in education in general, the origins and foundations of which would raise many questions. That is why these chapters are particularly worth reading. If, for example, one is looking for an explanation of how such a paradigm shift in schooling and education could take place without reflection in a liberal democratic society, one cannot avoid an understanding of hypnotic language manipulation techniques in public discussion. Eliane Perret explains this clearly using the term “competence” in the output-oriented Curriculum 21. The school has thus said goodbye to the goal of holistically imparting knowledge and values to the students and thus also to the humanistic-emanipatory concern that the European educational tradition has developed over centuries. After reading her statements, one would like to hope, like Riccardo Bonfranchi, that this aberration will remain a footnote in the history of education.

Another chapter deals with New Public Management. There, the reader learns



more about the background of this anti-democratic policy, which also has an impact on education. In this context, the development of the world trade system since the fall of communism in 1989, when market radicalism became the guiding ideology, must be comprehended. By agreeing to the GATS convention of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the 164 participating countries had decided to open up their basic services – including school education – to a global market. As a result, the school system has been restructured according to the model of business units in the private sector. Decisive changes in our schools would therefore not have a pedagogical but this background reason.

Both authors agree that in order to realise the right to education for all children, different paths must remain open, taking into account individual needs, and that one should not follow any ideology. And they attach great importance to the pedagogical work with the group and the class community in order to strengthen the social feeling of the children. The rights of people with disabilities are better guaranteed through school education for togetherness than through individualised coexistence in global performance competition. In this context, Perret also discusses the possibilities introduced by the inclusion of Alfred Adler's “individual psychology”, especially for the curative education.

The book is interesting and stimulating because two practitioners with deep knowledge of disability education look be-

As a grandmother encourages her grandson

by Brigitte von Bergen

Recently I met my neighbour and we had a chat. She had a big basket bag in her hand with many boxes and boxes of different products. When I asked her if she was about to go to the disposal, she replied: "No, I'm going to my grandson Jens, he's waiting for me, we always play with little objects from everyday life that I bring; this time I'm bringing him these little boxes." Every Saturday afternoon she visits her grandson, he is just about two years old. She looks after him so that her daughter can do the bigger shopping with her husband. Her unexpected answer aroused my interest. I had also noticed the woman before because of her naturalness and her approachability. I found out more during further encounters. She told me so vividly that I would like to reproduce it.

This grandmother is a very sensitive, self-contained personality and is happy to spend time with her grandson. She thinks about what she can play with him. He is happy: Grandma comes with a big bag; he is curious to see what is in the bag this time. He is allowed to look inside and sees many small boxes. Together they look at the different empty boxes: the colourful patterned ones, the long, narrow and rectangular ones, e.g., of a face cream. They take each box in their hands, look at it, feel the edges, touch the corners and open them. That's how he gets to know the dif-

ferent shapes. You can put something in there! Jens looks in the toy box and finds different things, blocks, balls and much more. They try out together what fits into a small box. The balls fit in one box, the blocks fit better in a bigger one and so on. Each filled box is closed with the lid.

Grandma only helps him fill the boxes when it is necessary. The grandmother always says what they are doing, so he hears the words while they are doing it. This is how Jens begins to hear and slowly understand concepts. In this playful process, two-year-old Jens practices many fine motor skills with his little hands. He also develops a feeling for how different things feel and that some boxes are lighter and others heavier. This shared experience gives the child security, and both grandma and Jens enjoy it.

After some time, the game is finished and the little boxes are emptied and everything is put back in its place. Now they have time to do something else, play with the ball or go for a walk, have a snack until the parents come back.

On a next visit, she brings other little boxes, then they look at the colours. Jens points to a colour and hears the name, he points to the red colour and grandma says "red"; the game continues, they look for other colours that can be seen on the boxes. In this back and forth with grandma, the little boy trains all his senses.

Jens learns ideas about how to play with objects from everyday life instead of plastic toys or electronic devices.

Another time in hot weather, they play with a basin full of water. They look for a cup and ladle from the big basin into a small spray can. This is fun and splashes too, which is lovely in the warm sun. As they do this, they count how many times they scoop until the small spray can is full. He learns and practices fine motor skills such as grasping, grasping sequences, logical thinking, trains his senses such as observing and much more in the quiet continuous relationship with his grandmother. His abilities are thereby encouraged according to his age.

Jens experiences early on that his grandmother reliably comes every week and does something with him. His parents as well as his grandmother give Jens this security and commitment, that they enjoy spending time with him and that they help him when he needs it; in the process, a trusting relationship develops.

Children who experience a secure, stable, binding relationship in their early childhood thus become capable of growing resiliently into life and finding human contact. When the person encounters problems in their adult life, they can also let themselves be helped and get help, they can learn well and also enjoy helping others. •

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yond their field to the socio-economic context that has changed throughout the history

and shapes education policy today. Despite the complexity of the issues, it is written in an easy-to-read way.

The book is to be wished a wide circulation so that it can initiate a long overdue

public debate about the school reforms of the last decades. •

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Learning goal exemption: Ethically justifiable?

Excerpt from Chapter 10: Curative Education is Ethical Action – Always (pages 81–83)

Contribution by Eliane Perret

Ten-year-old *Elisa* comes to our school. She has a very poor academic performance, can hardly read and needs her fingers to add up 5 + 3. The tests have determined a correspondingly low IQ – a borderline case to mild mental retardation. Until now, Elisa had been educated integratively, first with integrated support, then as a special student in a regular school. She was freed from "achieving any learning goals". Now we were faced with the question of how we should work with Elisa and whether our school even met her needs. While working with her, we quickly noticed that she repeatedly showed thought processes that pointed to good intelligence. However, we also observed that she would flinch and "drop out" when she made a mistake. She stopped thinking in a sense and could barely add up 1 + 1. This raised an ethical question for me: was it right to free her from the learning goals? What was she freed from? Should we now try to get her back to working on the same learning goals as the other children who were found to be

more mentally alert on the tests? Or would she feel too much pressure? What about her right to education? We continued to observe Elisa and gained initial experience when we taught her together with the other children. Learning goal exemption was out of the question, even though we knew we were facing challenging work with an open-ended outcome. Anything else would have been ethically unacceptable to us and a capitulation on our part as special educators. Incidentally, we are often confronted with similar problems; they challenge us to take a stand. To that purpose we often have to deal with the current state of research.

In my opinion, this is an ethical question, connected with the demand to deal with new findings and research questions as far as possible as a curative educator.

Comment Riccardo Bonfranchi

[...] both of us have tried to connect ethics with the practice of everyday curative education. Reading your post, I was struck by the moral indignation, as ethicists say, to-

wards the notion of learning goal exemption. I know this term all too well from my many years of professional practice.

But it was only through your comments that I became aware of its negative meaning to the fullest extent. "Learning goal exemption" means: What this child does or achieves is basically irrelevant. It falls through the grid of the curriculum anyway. The question now arises: Is the child the problem or is the curriculum no good? Of course, this question is again meant rhetorically. Can a person, as long as they live, even if they are severely and multiply handicapped, be free of learning goals? No – I reject that. That would mean that we have already given up on this person. Or: We do not know what to do with this person in terms of education. But that is, from an ethical point of view, an untenable position. Consequently, the curriculum must be changed.

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(Translation Current Concerns)