

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

“Man as creator and creature of culture”.

Why it is vital that we learn from our parents and ancestors

by *Moritz Nestor, psychologist*

*“It is not happy people who are thankful.
It is thankful people who are happy.”
(Sir Francis Bacon)*

*It is vital, not only for the individual child, that children learn from the experiences of their parents' generation and from their ancestors. This ultimately affects all areas of a culture. For the generations growing up will one day have to take on responsibility as the supporting pillar of their culture, and their social skills will then be in urgent demand. Eliane Perret examined this problem from the perspective of psychology and pedagogy in her article (“You know, if you do it like this, it'll go well ...” – Why we need to pass on our experience to the next generation” in *Current Concerns* No. 27 of 7 December 2021). Here, the focus will be on the significance of education for the tradition of culture.*

As a result of the spread of a pampering style of upbringing, disorders in children's language acquisition as well as in their motor skill and social development have been increasing for decades. This is most evident in the increasingly poor pronunciation of many. Considering that the child acquires thought and speech in constant dialogue with its parents, as it is integrated in a trustful relationship with them and thus emotionally supported, the question arises: Why is this dialogue missing or at least reduced to an alarming degree in our culture? A recent scientific study points out that many children today are no longer able to absorb themselves in a game. This also shows an impairment of very basic developmental processes which are a prerequisite for the formation of the learning ability which is part of a healthy child's personality. *Eliane Perret* sums up the consequences in her article: “A generation of princes and princesses is growing up who care little about the concerns of the community but insist on their exclusive status.” What does it mean for a society when its children want to learn less



... securely held by culture. (picture ma)

and less from the experiences of their parents' generation?

It is only because culture sustains him, that man becomes capable of life as a human being

The typical behaviour of each animal species “breaks through in each individual by itself on the basis of inherited instinctive traits”. But the tracks along which human life is realised are our own work. “The nature of man is culture”, says anthropologist *Adolf Portmann*. Man can make the whole world his environment through research and, in living together with his fellow human beings, reshapes nature into “second nature”, into culture. Man's environment is always the corresponding nature reshaped by him: the “community sphere” (*Portmann*). For this very reason, however, “the individual, whose creative powers are, after all, limited, is necessarily dependent on the fact that others have already worked before him and that he may profit from what they have achieved”, as the cultural anthropologist

Michael Landmann wrote in his 1961 book “*Der Mensch als Schöpfer und Geschöpf der Kultur* (Man as Creator and Creature of Culture)”, which is well worth reading. “As a cultural being, he is necessarily a being of tradition.” (*Landmann*, p. 19) “In his entire construction,” man is “directed towards the enveloping medium of culture; he is, as it were, embedded in culture as is the fish in the water and the bird in the atmosphere. It is only thanks to the support this gives him that he stands upright, only because it sustains him that he becomes capable of life as a human being”. (*Landmann*, p. 22)

Man is first of all a creature of his culture

However, man is not destined for a single form of culture. Man is “an unfinished open question to which he gives himself as many answers as the number of his cultures” (*Landmann*, p. 27). His social order and social institutions, his customs and

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traditions, his conception of himself, religion, art, literature, technology and science – the entire behaviour and course of life and the ideological attitudes given in a culture are “the coagulated creativity of our ancestors. What the life of the late-comer is based on was produced by them in their time and then institutionalised”. (Landmann, p. 23)

The whole diversity of the respective culture into which a child is born is first passed on to it in and by way of the family, then later through kindergarten, school, education, clubs and community life. The child does not learn *the* language, but always the language of *its* culture, its mother tongue, and it does not learn a *universally valid way* of thinking, but the way of thinking and feeling of *its own culture*, as well as other things. And these are different in every culture. But always the growing child is first of all a creature of its culture and learns everything through identification with its parents and teachers. It has to learn everything; it cannot “create everything by itself, for every human being [...] is not only born with the human gift of creation, but is always born into the faithfully recorded creations of earlier generations, which are passed on to the following generations and are made available for the aid of their children. We are always already heirs of a previous world which has in turn already acquired knowledge, created life-saving facilities and accumulated them in a long-lasting cumulative process”. (Landmann, pp. 18 f.)

The child’s high dependence is an advantage

This “cultural inheritance” through tradition is incomparably more malleable than any genetic inheritance. “All our thinking and acting, and even the most intimate things, even our praying and our loving, everything gains [...] its shape only through this.” (Landmann, p. 20) The socially prevailing style of education is also the “coagulated creativity” of the respective ancestors. The construction and transmission of all cultural goods take place in and through language. It is itself a creation by successive generations over millennia. Without it, the transmission of a culture dries up.

The culture created and handed down by human beings is not subject to any kind of historical or natural process that must automatically lead to ever fairer institutions and values. However, it is just as much a part of human nature and fundamentally always within our power to re-

think, improve and develop what is traditional, and to strike out on new paths.

But before man learns to think for himself in later years, during a long period of childhood he is completely a creature of his culture embodied in the persons of his parents and teachers, who introduce him to the lifestyle and intellectual attitudes of his culture and its riches. The child is totally dependent on the social and educational skills of his family which is embedded in its culture. But this is a real advantage. For the later-born child now finds the “collected abundance of this wealth of generations, such as an individual could never acquire in his short life”; he is “the beneficiary of this wealth, he need only grow into the orders and pathways prepared for him since time immemorial, in which his life will then also proceed. And only because he may do this, only because he may use well-trodden paths which also guide him and lead him smoothly to his goal, only for this reason, and not out of

ised remnants from the educational tradition of the old culture still lived in him, which always also flowed into his educational behaviour. Often this led to typical procedures: In the well-meaning effort, borne of love, of not wanting to be strict or oppressive – and this was soon understood to mean any normal claim to authority as a person experienced in life – towards the end of the century fewer and fewer parents wanted to adopt an attitude which the animal mother instinctively adopts: that of the pack leader. These parents do not want to be “strict”; they are concerned whether their little ones are “satisfied” with them, want to let the child flourish freely and are quick to consider behavioural corrections as “authoritarian”. A pampering style of upbringing has slowly gained acceptance.

Precisely because we humans have to learn everything in order to be able to live independently, we have to appreciate the consequences of what it means when, due

“We humans owe the life they gave to us to the generation of our parents and grandparents. It was through their help and care that we were able to become humans. Therefore we all feel a deep obligation of gratitude and want to give back to them today what was once given to us by them – given out of love, without our asking for it. This invisible contract naturally binds the generations together. It forms the core of our social nature.”

his own powers and abilities, he is, for one thing, able to keep himself alive at all and, for the other, to raise his life to an ever-higher level”. (Landmann, pp. 18)

From an authoritarian to a pampering style of parenting – and the consequences

Parents, too, were once creatures of their culture and of the educational tradition of their ancestors. Under the influence of the zeitgeist, they creatively reshape this once they have children of their own. Thus, under the influence of overall societal shifts and ruptures in cultural values and norms, many a person who received an authoritarian upbringing in the 1950s and 1960s became an “anti-authoritarian” educator or even an “anti-pedagogue”, who wanted to educate his children more “freely” – and did so. But from those days when he was still a “creature” of his parents’ educational traditions, unrecognised internal-

to a change in cultural values, the transmission of experience to the next generation is diminished or even dries up. For a culture can only be passed on and maintained from generation to generation through upbringing and education. This is most evident in the case of language. Everything that a human culture has created in the course of its history, the vital dense network of values, value attitudes, man-made rules and laws, was created through language and can only be learned through language. If the learning of experiences diminishes, above all also through the atrophy of language, then the all-encompassing bond of culture becomes weaker. Ultimately this will become an irreversible process with tragic consequences for social cohesion in all areas of community life, and ultimately also for the state as a means of culture to ensure a secure and just condition of peace.

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Human cultural formation is unique in nature

Human beings are free to do and learn whatever they want - but only within the limits of nature. The nature of man as a cultural and traditional being is a natural fact. The more social the way of life of a species of animal is, the less it will live in a purely hormone- and instinct-driven way. Its members will, on the contrary, also be capable of perceiving, experiencing and acting as subjects themselves – out of their own inner selves. Social learning is therefore observed above all in the higher mammals. Social bonds are vital for the healthy development of new-borns in all primate species. Different ape hordes even develop different forms of behaviour that are passed on through generations. We therefore speak of ape “cultures”. Human culture formation, however, is unique in nature.

We are not genetically adapted to one environment, but can adapt to all living conditions on earth by creating everything that keeps us alive through cooperation with our conspecifics. This always happens in cultures which also develop the languages that make culture building possible in the first place. Each cultural unit thus shapes areas in the world that we “inhabit”, that we understand and are familiar with, and where the life of the species is protected – and all this in and through an individual language. The human child is born open-minded, “open to the world”, with strong formative and educable social dispositions and an almost unlimited capacity for learning. From the very beginning, its senses are alert to learning from its parents what people are like and how they behave, how adults cope with life in this unknown world, and what this world is like. This is how it grows into its culture.

Cultures as individual answers to life’s tasks

The child learns all the solutions that its culture has developed to make life secure, as if they were natural means. Only later, when it becomes acquainted with other forms of life, does it begin to realise that everything it has hitherto considered natural has been learned, that its own culture’s solutions to the basic questions of subsistence and living together are different from the ways of life in other cultures.

But all cultures are under the same pressures set by nature: they must protect and preserve life, protect the old, the sick and the weak, provide food, clothing, protection against the weather, pass on life

through the family, learn to love, to care for a safe and just form of community life, build friendships and learn to cooperate in small groups, etc. *Alfred Adler* once summarised all this into the three areas: Love, Work and Community. And the highest civilisational achievements, the best cultural solutions, have been created by those cultures that have in all their cultural creations striven for and realised the goal of humanity, fellow humanity and love of ones neighbours.

Cultural growth through the lessons from ancestral experience

These humane values of a more peaceful culture, its lifestyle and its view of humanity are inherited from one generation to the next through tradition. The respective state of cultural development shows the constructive cooperation of many generations in history. This way of cultural growth is species-typical for humans and is not found in any other species. Only man knows the teacher in the broadest sense of the word. Not every generation has to start all over again to learn everything. Rather, teachers, which of course include above all parents as the first teachers, can impart to others the experiences and skills of generations in history in the form of knowledge. And the new members of a human community already bring into the world observational learning through identification and are thus well equipped by nature to learn from the parent and grandparent generation the ancestral experiences contained in the wealth of their culture.

The natural generational contract and the value of experience ...

In this, a natural “contract” binds the successive generations: Without man, man cannot become man. All human community life is always, but especially in the first and last phase of life, fragile and highly dependent on support and help. However, great prosperity and a lifestyle geared towards pleasure and enjoyment increasingly obscure the view of the rich life experiences of the elderly. Actively living life, they have experienced what it means to have lived a whole life span. Young persons at the beginning of life are not yet able to do this. Old people, who can be their teachers, are still living witnesses of the past. It is precisely they who help to ensure that cultural development is not interrupted when they pass on their experiences and those of their ancestors to the next generation. What we might call the wisdom of old age comes from the greater peace of mind of which old people are capable, because they have gained an

overview of life. The younger generation in particular can learn from them in order to weigh their own small and large worries of entering life more calmly and confidently through the more experienced realistic view of the elderly person.

... and the shock when the contract breaks!

We humans owe the life they gave to us to the generation of our parents and grandparents. It was through their help and care that we were able to become humans. Therefore we all feel a deep obligation of gratitude and want to give back to them today what was once given to us by them – given out of love, without our asking for it. This invisible contract naturally binds the generations together. It forms the core of our social nature. Just as we were then as children, the old generation is now entitled to the same full commitment and loving care that we once gladly received from them. This is the natural right of the generation of parents who have grown old. This intergenerational contract is irrevocable. We can violate it, but a person’s “mistaken opinion of himself and of the tasks of life sooner or later meets with the sharp objection of reality, which demands solutions in the spirit of community”, since without mutual help human coexistence becomes impossible. “What happens in this collision can be compared to a shock effect,” *Alfred Adler* remarks: the co-human damage is an accusatory expression of the denied right to assistance.

Being grateful to our ancestors, as without them we would not exist

When we realise that everything we have to live on is a joint effort of countless generations over many centuries, a construction that no generation, and certainly no one person alone, can manage, then an insight comes to the fore that is threatening to disappear today: as a human being, I have every reason to be grateful to my ancestors, for without them I would not be here. And I want to pass on to the next generation in an improved way what I was given when I grew up in this world. Only in this way can we live as human beings and not as Robinsons who despair. *Otto Friedrich Bolnow* called this the “virtue of gratitude”.

“If a teacher teaches you one sentence, then you must be grateful to him for the rest of your life”

I taught German as a foreign language for many years. In one of my classes there once sat a forty-year-old father of a fami-

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ly from Egypt. Next to him was an Italian, maybe 18 years old, with a pronounced attitude of male prestige, who was unable to learn because he refused to be told anything – one of those spoilt “princes” who were not yet so common at that time. The Egyptian did not look on for long. He came from the Arab culture, he told the class, he did not understand why people did not want to learn from others. His father had taught him, he said, “If a teacher teaches you one sentence, you have to be grateful to him all your life.” I can still see his laughing face: he was so sure of this. He was proud of his father and of his culture, which had given him this certainty on his life’s journey. “We venerate the teacher! The teacher, that is what is most important!” he beamed at us all. This man was grateful! - and: he had the same certainty as the mother dog who instinctively guides her puppies correctly. This is what

rything to him out of love. He cannot be grateful for what he has been given and will hardly develop the need to give something to his descendants as well. “The grateful person continues to feel obliged to his benefactor; the ungrateful person immediately forgets the good he has received” and “is not minded to let consequences arise from this for his later behaviour. However, in so doing he places himself outside his natural community. [...] Gratitude is in this way a virtue that makes human coexistence smooth and frictionless.” (Bollnow, p. 130) But the spoiled person lacks the training for mutual support. “There is a peculiar warmth of human affiliation which springs from the consciousness of being obliged and which easily combines with the feeling of an adoring affection.” (Bollnow, p. 130) The achievements of culture are in fact a gift from the previous world to the coming generations, created for the future without the possibility to reap the fruits them-

mance is not exchanged for performance economically. This contract is the natural bond of human solidarity and is based on an unforeseeable “service” given without any claim to a service in return, which “generates in the other person the willingness to respond in future cases with a voluntary service that cannot be achieved by any contractual coercion”. (Bollnow, p. 130) Genuine gratitude happens in freedom and love and is precisely not a slavish relationship of dependence. But how could this be conveyed to a generation of princesses and princes? This question arises in the face of a reality in education that we ourselves have created and that only we can change.

The natural desire to help can become a characteristic of nature

Man is the only being in nature that can, indeed must, create social institutions in order to survive: Everything that a culture has created in the way of institutions of public order, of justice – from the simplest rules of etiquette in the family up to state institutions – everything has never come from those who think, feel and act alone. Helpfulness and cooperation mature in the human child in the course of its first year of life and then emerge as an inner need. This is the core of the human social nature and does not have to be instilled. It can be formed into the salient characteristic of a human being. In this way, human children can learn to develop a secure identity as well as thinking and feeling for the community in a man-made cultural world. This is what the human sciences tell us.

What a great cultural treasure, what a beautiful thought. Only our actions, borne by insight and compassion, can bring this treasure to life. •

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“When we realise that everything we have to live on is a joint effort of countless generations over many centuries, a construction that no generation, and certainly no one person alone, can manage, then an insight comes to the fore that is threatening to disappear today: as a human being, I have every reason to be grateful to my ancestors, for without them I would not be here. And I want to pass on to the next generation in an improved way what I was given when I grew up in this world.”

Landmann meant when he wrote: Man is by his nature “oriented towards the enveloping medium of culture; he is embedded in it in a sense similar to the fish in the water and the bird in the atmosphere. It is only thanks to the support it gives him that he stands upright, only because it carries him that he becomes able to live as a human”. (Landmann, p. 22)

The spoilt child lacks training for mutual support

The spoilt child never realises this greater connection. Here we sense the grave consequences of a generation of princes and princesses who can no longer take care of the needs of their communities because every service to others seems an imposition. The pampered person takes for granted what is given to him by culture, demands it, “enjoys” it, but no longer feels a loving obligation to the benefactors who have gladly given and handed down eve-

lives, so that those who come may gain a firmer hold on life as human beings and a secure identity in and through attachment to their culture. The natural feeling, however, of which every human being is intrinsically capable and to which the spoilt individual should find access again, is gratitude for the fact that my life is not my work alone. But this always presupposes human maturity, the understanding that man can never live by his own efforts, but that “the best must always be given to us”, namely the love of parents and the cooperation of an entire culture over centuries, that these give and cherish and pass on life: the good teachers in the broadest sense, who, alongside parents, pass on the protective culture.

Assistance can only flourish in freedom and love

The reciprocity between generations is an invisible contract, but one in which perfor-

USA, NATO, Russia and the OSCE Security Charter

Two official statements from Russia

cc. The intensified confrontation between the USA, NATO and the EU on the one side and Russia on the other has resulted in the fact that here in the West we no longer receive unbiased reports on the position of the Russian side. Our Western media generally report the Russian position, if at all, very briefly, out of context and distorted. This does not serve a political solution

to the conflict. That is why we are once again documenting official statements from Russia. The public in the West should also at least take serious note of the Russian position. The English translation of the following two statements can be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's answer to a media question, Moscow, 27 January 2022

Question: You have received the Americans' response to Russia's security guarantee proposals. What does it say? What is their reaction? Antony Blinken has said that they are against releasing the document publicly. What has Russia decided on this score?

Sergey Lavrov: I believe that the general public will know the essence of this document soon. As our American colleagues have said, although they would like to keep this document confidential so as to provide space for confidential talks, they have coordinated it with their allies and with Ukraine. Are they sure that it will not be leaked very soon?

As for the essence of the document, the responses offer grounds for serious talks only on matters of secondary importance. There is no positive response to the main issue, which is our clear stand on the continued NATO enlargement towards the east and the deployment of strike weapons that can pose a threat to the territory of the Russian Federation,

which we consider unacceptable. This stand did not appear out of the blue. As you may know, the issue of NATO's non-enlargement or enlargement, however you put it, has a long history. In the early 1990s, or more precisely in 1990, when Germany was reunified and the issue of European security was raised, they solemnly promised that NATO would not expand even an inch eastward beyond the Oder River. These facts are well known and have been included in many memoirs by British, US and German officials. But now that this issue has become a matter of fierce debates, we have been told that the promises were only verbal. When we mentioned the memoirs, our Western partners responded that they were not serious and that their words were misinterpreted. They chose a rather immature way to explain the reckless expansion of the alliance.

But now that we have cited the promises made not in word but in the form of documents signed by the leaders of all OSCE

states, including the US President (the 1999 *Istanbul Declaration* and the 2010 *Astana Declaration*), our Western partners have to find a way out of a very serious situation. The point is that both declarations set out the participating states' commitment to the principle of indivisible security and their pledge to honour it without fail. This principle was formulated very clearly. It includes two interconnected approaches. The first is the freedom of states to choose military alliances. The second is the obligation not to strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other states. In other words, the freedom to choose security arrangements is conditioned by the pledge to respect the security interests of any other OSCE state, including the Russian Federation.

It is indicative that now when we propose coordinating legally binding security guarantees in the Euro-Atlantic region, our Western colleagues respond

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The OSCE's Istanbul Charter for European Security

cc. The OSCE *Charter for European Security*¹, which was adopted in Istanbul in 1999 and reaffirmed in Astana in 2010, guarantees freedom of alliance in a sentence in point 8 of the Charter. It states:

"We reaffirm the inherent right of each and every participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve."

More often, however, it speaks of the *indivisibility of security* within the space of the OSCE states:

"The Charter will contribute to the formation of a common and indivisible security space. It will advance the creation of an OSCE area free of dividing lines and zones with different levels of security."

"We will build our relations in conformity with the concept of *common and comprehensive security*, guided by equal partnership, solidarity and transparency. *The security of each participating State is inseparably linked to that of all others.* We will address the human,

economic, political and military dimensions of *security as an integral whole.*"

"We are determined to make further efforts within the FSC in order to jointly address *common security concerns* of participating States and to pursue the OSCE's concept of *comprehensive and indivisible security* so far as the politico-military dimension is concerned. We will continue a substantial security dialogue and task our representatives to conduct this dialogue in the framework of the FSC."

"We are determined to broaden and strengthen our dialogue concerning developments related to all aspects of security in the OSCE area. We charge the Permanent Council and the FSC within their respective areas of competence to address in greater depth security concerns of the participating States and to pursue the OSCE's concept of *comprehensive and indivisible security.*"

The OSCE will work co-operatively with those organisations and institutions

whose members individually and collectively, in a manner consistent with the modalities appropriate to each organisation or institution, now and in the future [...] actively support the OSCE's concept of *common, comprehensive and indivisible security and a common security space free of dividing lines* [...].

Even Point 8 of the Treaty, which guarantees the "freedom of alliance" of OSCE states, there are conditions for this. The first sentence of point 8 reads: "Each participating State has an equal right to security." And after guaranteeing the right "to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve" but also the "right to neutrality", the following sentence reads: "Each participating State will respect the rights of all others in these regards. *They will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States.*" (emphasis cc)

¹ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/16/15/39569.pdf>

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's answer to a media question following his telephone conversation with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Moscow, 1 February 2022

Question: Has Moscow responded to the Americans' written materials that were sent following Russia's proposals on security guarantees? What was the gist of your telephone conversation today with Antony Blinken? What contacts are planned for the future in this context?

Sergey Lavrov: Today, we heard from the US Department of State that they have allegedly received a response from Moscow to the document that the Americans sent in reply to our initial proposals on security guarantees in Europe.

This is a misunderstanding. We started studying the US response when we received it about a week ago. It was clear from the start that the Americans prefer to focus on discussing important albeit secondary issues. They asked if it was possible to agree on the non-deployment of offensive weapons on a reciprocal basis, including medium- and shorter-range missiles that had been covered once by the INF Treaty which the US destroyed. They mentioned transparency in holding exercises, measures for avoiding unforeseen incidents between combat aircraft and ships and other confidence-building measures.

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by urging us to respect the coordinated principles of security guarantees in that region. After saying this, they add that this means that NATO has a right to expand, and nobody can prohibit it from considering any country's request for joining the alliance. The principle according to which no state may strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other states is being deliberately ignored. Our Western partners make no mention of the Istanbul or the Astana declarations during the ongoing discussions on European security. They are keeping away from this matter. We cannot accept this. They explained their failure to honour the non-enlargement promises in the 1990s by the absence of written obligations, but such promises were given in writing later. They have been reaffirmed within the OSCE framework several times, including at the top level. We will now focus on getting clarity regarding this hypocritical position of our Western partners.

During my talks with *Antony Blinken* in Geneva, I asked him to explain why they regard the obligations made within the OSCE as a menu from which they are free to choose the dishes that taste

As for the key issue that prompted us to send our initiatives to the United States and NATO, their response was negative. I am referring to our demands for honest implementation of the agreements on the indivisibility of security, which were reached in the OSCE framework in Istanbul in 1999 and in Astana in 2010. These agreements not only envisage the freedom to choose alliances but also make this freedom dependent on the need to avoid any steps that would enhance security at the expense of the security of others. We saw that the US and NATO response to our key question was extremely negative. They focus only on the freedom to choose alliances and completely ignore the condition that was approved at the highest level, notably, that it is unacceptable to encroach on the security of other states in the process.

We are also concerned over the position of other NATO countries, for instance, France. Its defence minister said not so long ago that they insist on the need to ensure security based on the documents that preceded the adoption of the *Istanbul Charter* and the *Astana Declaration*. The minister cited a document of

good to them, and why they are disregarding or talking round their pledge to honour the interests of other countries. Mr Blinken did not reply to my question. He only shrugged his shoulders, and that's it. I told him, just as I have told our other colleagues, that we would shortly send them an official request for an explanation why they choose only one of their commitments and disregard the other commitments on which its implementation depends. It will be an official request sent to all countries whose leaders signed the Istanbul and Astana declarations. I hope that it will not take them long to explain the Western position.

Other than that, we are analysing the Americans' response. As Antony Blinken has said, they have coordinated it with Ukraine and with the other Western countries, with US allies. We have also received NATO's response from Secretary General *Jens Stoltenberg*. We are analysing these two documents as a package, because they have been provided in response to the draft treaty and draft agreement we proposed in December 2021. After an inter-agency coordination of our conclusions, we will submit them to President *Vladimir Putin*, who will make a decision on our further actions.

Source: https://www.mid.ru/de/foreign_policy/news/1796041/?lang=en

the 1990 OSCE summit in Paris, which did not contain a demand not to enhance security at the expense of others. In other words, our Western colleagues are trying to consign to oblivion rather than simply ignore a key principle of international law accepted in the Euro-Atlantic space. To prevent this from happening, when we received Washington's response to our initial proposals, I described in detail everything we are talking about now in a separate message and sent it to all foreign ministers of the OSCE states and some other countries to familiarise them with our position.

Today, I reaffirmed to Secretary of State *Antony Blinken* that we won't allow this issue to be dragged out. We will insist on honest conversations and explanations of why the West does not want to honour its commitments at all, or only selectively when it benefits them. Mr Blinken agreed that this is a subject for another conversation. We will see how it goes. At present, we are completing the interdepartmental work on US proposals on other issues. We will report on them to our President.

Source: https://www.mid.ru/de/foreign_policy/news/1796663/?lang=en

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The new Cold War and the realignment in Belarus

by Professor Dr Peter Bachmaier



Peter Bachmaier (picture ma)

Professor Dr Peter Bachmaier, historian of Eastern Europe and political scientist, board member of the *Austrian Institute for Eastern and Southeastern Europe* in Vienna (1972-2005), lecturer at the University of Vienna (1993-2007), President of the *Austro-Belarusian Society* (since 2006).

There have always been protests against the government in Belarus since the election victory of *Alexander Lukashenko* – who did not come from the nomenklatura – in July 1994 with 81 %. Eventually they started out in the USA and aimed at regime change (a colour revolution like in the Ukraine). In October 2004, President *George Bush* signed a “Belarus Democracy Act” which stipulated that financial aid for Belarus would not benefit the government and the state, but only the “democratic opposition”. On 4 May 2006, in his speech in Vilnius, Vice President *Dick Cheney* sharply attacked Belarus and declared: “There is no place in Europe for a regime of this kind.” In May 2008, the Washington government cut off diplomatic relations with Belarus and closed the US embassy in Minsk. Belarus has also been asked to close its embassy in Washington and its consulate in New York.

Colour revolution

However, in 2014, after the colour revolution in Ukraine, President Lukashenko started a “multi-vector policy” and tried to maintain good relations with the EU and Ukraine. In November 2019, he first visited the EU country Austria.

In May 2020, even before the presidential elections of 9 August 2020, protests against President Lukashenko began again. The immediate reason for this was his refusal to adopt the West’s corona measures based on Italy’s model, even though the IMF had offered him a loan of more than USD 900 million in May 2020. The West’s growing conflict with Russia was the real reason for the attacks. Protests began, which led to an attempt at a

violent coup like in Ukraine on the day of the election on 9 August. The protest movement was controlled by Belarusian activists in Poland and Lithuania, primarily from the Telegram channel NEXTA. The pictures and videos of the protests were manipulated so that all the time many more demonstrators could be seen. In reality, according to reports from the Belarusian Interior Ministry, there were never more than 50,000.

Ukraine, which is linguistically and culturally closely related to Belarus, played a major role in all protests against the government, especially the Maidan revolution in Kiev. Belarus’ trade with Ukraine fell from a positive balance of \$ 3 billion to \$ 1.5 billion after 2014. Belarus therefore tried to convene a Ukraine conference with Russia, Germany, Great Britain, France and Ukraine (“Normandy format”), and in 2015 managed to conclude a ceasefire agreement. The Chinese Silk Road, which runs through Minsk, also played a role. Its development was to be slowed down.

Western media launched an attack on Belarus, as did the universities. The Institutes for Slavic Studies and Eastern European History in particular held online conferences to which Belarusian opposition figures were invited.

Political films were produced, such as the film “Courage” by opposition director *Aleksei Palujan*, which received an award from the *Berlinale* in 2021.

The participants in the protests, apart from the small group of leading activists, were young well-educated people from the private IT sector, where you can also find Western companies. The young people were well informed about the “sweet life” in the West via their smartphones and the Internet and wanted to adopt it. The protests ended in November 2020, and *Svetlana Tikhonovskaya*, the leader of the opposition, lamented: “We lost the road!” But soon there were new actions.

New actions against Belarus in April and May 2021

On 18 April 2021, the *Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation* (FSB) presented a video of a conversation about the planned subversion of Lukashenko. In the video, two Belarusians, political scientist *Alexander Feduta* and US-based lawyer *Yuri Senkovich*, discussed the subversion of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko with high-ranking Belarusian officers in a restaurant in Moscow. The recordings were shown on the *Rossiya-1* TV channel. “The first task is to eliminate the main character [by assassinating Lukashenko during the Vic-

tory Day parade on May 9]. The second task is to block the internal troops and the riot police (OMON). The third task is to occupy the radio station and the TV station so that we can spread an appeal”, *Yuri Senkovich* said in the video. The group of conspirators was arrested by the Russian police and handed over to the Belarusian authorities. The main Western media reported nothing about it.

On 23 May 2021, Belarusian Foreign Minister *Vladimir Makei* presented the *Ryanair* incident at a press conference in Minsk as a planned Western provocation. The *Ryanair* plane, which flew from Athens to Vilnius on 23 May sent an emergency message over the territory of the Republic of Belarus. The cause was a bomb threat received by the pilot of the *Boeing 737*. The pilot, who received a negative response from Vilnius, Warsaw and Kraków airports, decided to make an emergency landing at Minsk airport. The plane and the luggage of the passengers were examined by special services. The bomb was not found. Among the passengers was *Roman Protasevich*, one of the two editors-in-chief of the opposition blog NEXTA, who was arrested.

Western media reported this incident, but only by accusing Belarus of hijacking the plane. However, Protasevich himself explained in an interview for the Belarusian broadcaster *ONT* that he was “sacrificed” by the opposition in order to blame Lukashenko.

EU’s sanctions

The EU had already imposed the first sanctions against Belarus in 1997 on the basis of the presidential constitution, which grants the president extensive rights, but these were lifted by 2015, when the last opposition members were released.

In June 2021, the EU again imposed sanctions on Belarus, on the entire leadership of Belarus and on the main Belarusian companies. The country will no longer be able to import anything from the West, but instead will be forced to produce many things in its own country. All public transport leading to Belarus (flights, trains or buses) had to stop operating by EU decision.

The whole situation is not in favour of the continental Europeans, but of the British and Americans, for whom creating barriers in Eurasia has always been part of the strategic game of controlling territories and trade routes. The sanctions did not go unanswered. Belarus took action against those trying to bring them to their

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knees. Import substitution, the search for new markets, intensifying integration with allies, the search for new partners – this is the Belarusian response to the sanctions.

The EU does not want to allow a more or less successful example of another way to develop right next door. The Belarusian model will attract many citizens from within the Western countries themselves, where the population is increasingly expressing dissatisfaction with the realities and is looking for new political forces to change the situation in the future.

The Corona pandemic and the economy

Belarus took its own political path in the Corona pandemic. The country was not shut down, the factories and shops, inns, schools, universities and churches were not closed, but continued to work. The sports facilities were also open and held football games and ice hockey tournaments.

The pandemic also came to Belarus in March 2020. The country was prepared, there was a comprehensive plan to fight the pandemic. From Soviet times there were still hospitals for infectious diseases, precautionary measures for an pandemic with medical equipment, institutes of virology and trained staff. The Belarusian health service was able to cope with everything. According to the UN, Belarus was well prepared for the crisis. There were 41 medical doctors, 114 nurses and 110 hospital beds per 10,000 inhabitants. In EU countries the average is 30 doctors, 91 nurses and 55 hospital beds.

In 2020, the first year of the Corona pandemic, Belarus was able to keep its gross national product at the same level as in 2019 because the factories were not closed. Lukashenko declared at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly on 11 February 2021: "Over the past five years, the real income of the population has increased by 15 %, the average salary has reached 1200 roubles. There is also a social package – free education and medicine, housing and transport benefits."

In the first half of 2021, GDP increased by 3.3 % and industrial production by 10.4 %.

The illegal migrant crisis

Belarus has always rejected illegal migrants at the border. However, since June 2021, the country changed its policy on this issue.

In 2021, Lithuania was ravaged by mostly Iraqi migrants trying to enter the country illegally from Belarus. Their flow has increased following rising tensions between Belarus and the European Union. In 2021, about 4000 illegal migrants from Belarus entered this country.

The Lithuanians initially tried to take in the migrants, but this caused problems. They therefore began disallowing asylum applications while rejecting migrants at the border. They erected a barrier modelled on the barbed wire fence built by Hungary in 2015. The flow of migrants was diverted to Latvia and Poland, and they responded in the same way as Lithuania.

The border guard of Poland recorded more than 3000 attempts to illegally cross the Belarusian-Polish border in August 2021. At the end of August 2021, the Polish army began building a three-metre-high and 180-km-long border fence intended to stop migration to Poland.

Opposition against the Western culture

Belarus defended its national culture and closed the *Soros-funded European Humanities University* in Minsk in 2005, which subsequently moved to Vilnius. After 2010, Belarus attempted rapprochement with the EU, started a process of rapprochement with Western universities, and in 2015 joined the Bologna process to align with EU educational standards and integrate into European science. One reason for this was also to attract foreign students to study at Belarusian universities.

However, Belarus opposed the "Westernisation of culture", i. e., the threat of losing cultural sovereignty and attempts to distort historical truth and destroy historical memory. In 2021, Belarus stopped participating in the EU's *Eastern Partnership* and withdrew from the Bologna University Agreement. The Belarusian PEN Club and 40 NGOs funded by Western foundations have been dissolved.

Family policy

Belarus has taken effective measures to support families with children in recent years. Every fourth child in the country is covered by the state benefit system. As a result, the number of large families has almost doubled in the last decade.

An expanded family capital programme has been in place since 2015. The number of open accounts is already approaching 100,000 people and totals over a billion US dollars. Last year the programme was extended by a new period of five years.

Currently, systematic work is being done to develop family models for the upbringing of orphans and children without parental care. Almost 400 babies were adopted in 2020 alone. About two thousand children are being raised in three hundred family houses. Children who are deprived of parental affection are not to live in barracks but in these houses.

The new constitution and education in patriotism

The new constitution aims to involve society in the government of the country: par-

liament, governors and local authorities. The powers of the president are to be delegated. Parliament and local councils are to be elected by a proportional list of parties. However, the country is to remain a presidential republic even under a new president. At the beginning of 2022, the draft of a nationwide vote was presented.

The new constitution, which was discussed at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly on 11-12 February 2021 in Minsk, therefore provides for increased education of youth in patriotism and a rejection of the Western nihilistic worldview. Article 54 of the constitution already states: "Everyone is obliged to protect the historical, cultural and intellectual heritage and other national treasures."

Patriotic rallies were organised, such as on 22 June 2021 in Brest, where a large commemoration event was held to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the attack on the Soviet Union and the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. The three-week resistance of the Brest Fortress against the invasion, as Lukashenko said, should be a day for all Belarusians to commemorate the greatest national feat of the Belarusian people. "We will not give our home, our independence and sovereignty to anyone. The holy army that defended Brest back then is now helping us to take care of our homeland of Belarus. It helps, first of all, by the example of indomitable perseverance, courage and devotion shown during the Great Patriotic War."

3 July 2021 celebrates Independence Day, the Liberation Day in 1944, the main celebration of Belarusian statehood. On 17 September 2021, the "Day of National Unity", the Day of Reunification, was celebrated as a new holiday commemorating the reunification of West Belarus with East Belarus in 1939. At that time, after almost twenty years of Polish occupation, the Belarusian people were reunited.

The global confrontation between the West and Russia

The global confrontation between the West and Russia and China looks like a new Cold War and includes the scenario of a coup in Belarus. The answer to this is that Western NGOs dealing with politics, culture and education will be shut down, as will media which is funded by the West. Belarus has withdrawn from the EU's Eastern Partnership and the Bologna Agreement, which stipulates common standards for all universities. Western values are thoroughly criticised.

In the union with Russia, Belarus differs from the integration projects of the *Eurasian Economic Union* (EAEU) and the *Commonwealth of Independent States* (CIS) in the fact that it has very deep inte-

“We are available for a factual dialogue at any time”

Interview with the Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus to Switzerland, Aliaksandr Ganevich



Aliaksandr Ganevich (picture wp)

Aliaksandr Ganevich has been the Extraordinary Ambassador and Plenipotentiary (First Class) of the Republic of Belarus in the Swiss Confederation since 2020. He was born in Lida, Grodno Region. He completed his education at the Military Command School in Ussuriysk, at the *Moscow Diplomatic Academy* and at the Diplomatic School of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany. Since 1993 he has worked in the diplomatic service in Minsk, Berlin, Bern and Munich. Aliaksandr Ganevich is married and has two children. He speaks Belarusian, Russian and German.

Current Concerns: Ambassador Ganevich, our readers do not learn from most Western media what your country's position really is. That is why we would like to let you have your say today as Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus to

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gration not only in the economy, but also in politics. The ministries sometimes act together, especially in defence. There is no such thing in the EAEU, it is an economic union. The CIS today is primarily a platform for discussing certain issues related to a free trade area. The most advanced integration is taking place in the Union of Belarus and Russia. In the referendum in the 1990s, the question of whether there should be integration with Russia was answered in the affirmative by 71.5 per cent. Around 30 per cent spoke out in favour of the European Union.

The Eurasian orientation

On 26 May 2021, President Lukashenko said in a speech to parliamentarians: “We will replace the inexorably aging Europe with fast-growing Asia. Our society is poised to become part of the new Eurasia, its outpost. That is, there is an orientation towards Russia and China, and towards the community, the people and the

Switzerland. According to the principle: *audiat et altera pars*. How has the internal situation in Belarus developed since the presidential elections of August 2020?

Aliaksandr Ganevich: Since August 2020 the situation in Belarus has changed fundamentally. The attempt at a typical “colour revolution”, massively financed and skillfully steered by the West, has completely failed. The state has learned lessons from the events and taken necessary steps to consolidate power and society. It has strengthened the legal mechanisms to protect sovereignty and the constitutional order, prevented the growth of extremism, brought order to the streets. The rules for receiving free aid from abroad were adjusted, the state information policy was improved, responsibility for behaviour in the virtual space and the security of personal data were increased.

The constitutional reform in Belarus brought together the constructive forces of society, including the opposition, in an inclusive process. Its aim is to modernise the country's political system and increase resilience to current challenges.

The economy is developing dynamically despite Western economic sanctions. The gross domestic product increased by 2.3 % in 2021, the exchange rate of the national currency remained stable, and the foreign trade surplus reached 4 billion US dollars (the highest

level since 2012). Employees' real wages grew by 5%.

level since 2012). Employees' real wages grew by 5%.

The year 2021 passed in Belarus under the slogan People's Unity. My impression is that quite a few Belarusians seriously revised their views this year. They have recognised the value of an independent and strong Belarus in a world that is currently very turbulent and unpredictable. Sociological surveys show a high level of national self-confidence, unity and cohesion.

How do you assess the external situation of your country in the current conflict with the NATO countries Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, but also with Ukraine?

At the end of January, in his message to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly, the President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko described the current situation around our country very clearly: “Belarus is at the epicentre of a global confrontation. In the West, the military infrastructure is being strengthened – of an offensive nature, by the way. NATO troops are concentrated near the borders of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, flights of American strategic bombers have been activated (more than 30 sorties per day). Neighbouring countries are talking about deploying nuclear weapon carriers. Our western neighbours – Poland, Lithuania – are actively acting in line with Washington's policy. Increasing tensions in the south are a growing concern. Ukrainians are being pushed into the flames of conflict, specifically prepared for aggression ...”

Belarus sees the strengthening of military presence on our borders as the main cause of destabilisation in the region. From our point of view, such an escalation, which can be seen above all in Poland, is not acceptable at all. With the joint military exercise “Allied Determination 2022”, which will take place in our country from 10 to 20 February 2022, Belarus and Russia want to show their readiness to respond to any possible scenario. They also want to improve the protection of the border with Ukraine, identify and eliminate problem areas and deficiencies.

Belarus supports the justified demand of our ally and partner – the Russian Federation – to respect the principle of “indivisible security” as formulated in the basic OSCE documents, including the *Istanbul Charter for European Security* (1999): “Each participating State will

nation. The main achievements of Belarus remain the welfare state and national sovereignty.”

A new cultural project has been launched in Moscow – the “New Eurasia” movement, which aims to become a serious ideological engine involving a significant circle of like-minded people. “New Eurasia” is an ideological platform that wants to build a new culture and a new economy.

There are many well-known figures in the ranks of the movement, including *Zakhar Prilepin*, the leader of the “Fair Russia” movement. A participant in the constitutive congress of the “New Eurasia” movement, the philosopher *Alexei Dsermant*, said in an interview: “The New Eurasia is an association of philosophers, political scientists, writers and artists who are called upon to explore the Eurasian space parallel to economic and political processes with new meaning. Obviously, the time has come to unite and propose something very different.”

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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[...] respect the rights of all others. They will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States.”

For Belarusians, who were subjected to outright genocide during the Second World War and lost almost one in three of their inhabitants, peace is truly sacred. In order to preserve it, enormous efforts are currently needed not only from the major states, but from the entire world community.

On 27 February 2022, the Belarusian people will vote on a new constitution. What are the basic lines of this new constitution?

Proposals to amend the current Constitution of 15 March 1994 (with amendments of 1996, 2004 and 2021) had already been discussed throughout the country during preparations for the VI All-Belarusian People’s Assembly from October 2020 to February 2021.

As a result of the subsequent work of a constitutional commission, a draft of the amendments and additions to the Constitution was submitted for public discussion on 27 December 2021. Since then, 3000 dialogue platforms have been held in the country with over 140,000 participants. Citizens showed a high level of interest in the discussion – almost 9000 opinions and suggestions were received in just a few weeks. Many of them were taken into account or later flowed into the legislative process.

If one summarises all the additions and amendments to the constitution, one can distinguish five thematic blocks around which they are grouped:

- Preservation of the identity of the Belarusian people, its values and its historical memory;
- Preservation and development of the foundations of the social state;
- Building a socially responsible society;
- Ensuring political stability in the further development of the political system and its institutions;
- Creation of constitutional guarantees of social and technological development for the benefit of people, society and the state.

Belarus is currently being sharply criticised by the NATO countries, but also in the Swiss media. How do you deal with this?

Of course, we are deeply concerned about the unrelenting unprecedented pressure on our country from Western countries. In addition to the criticism in the media, which is mostly completely groundless and exaggerated, rigorous sanctions are also being applied against a number of Belarusian citizens and important companies (unfortunately also with the participation of Switzerland), flight connections between Belarus and all other countries in Europe have been interrupted for over nine months. Recently, our neighbour Lithuania stopped the transit of Belarusian potash fertilisers through its territory, which grossly violates its obligations under international law and will have an extremely negative impact on global food security.

It should be said that the President of the Republic of Belarus clearly distinguishes between a hostile attitude of those in power in some countries and the opinion of the population of these countries. Often these positions are far apart. We strive to maintain friendly relations with all countries even in today’s conditions and hope for the early return of our Western partners to normal dialogue based on mutual respect.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and other state bodies, Belarusian missions abroad actively respond to accusations and insinuations by foreign politicians and mass media, the main international bodies and forums are also used for this purpose. For example, the Foreign Minister of Belarus, Mr *Vladimir Makei*, very clearly stated the official position in his speeches at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2021 and at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in December 2021. The Belarusian representations in Bern and Geneva are also trying to use existing means to disseminate reliable information, to combat slander and “fake news”, to create clarity.

What do you see as your main tasks here in Switzerland and what would you like to see from Swiss politics?

My tasks are complex and not easy these days. Belarus continues to put a high value on the development of friendly relations with Switzerland. This was reaffirmed several times last year alone by the Head of State and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus.

Of course, the main obstacle to this goal is the extensive sanctions that Switzerland, in line with the EU, has imposed on Belarus. That is why I would primarily like to see Swiss politicians lift the corresponding decisions as soon as possible. We always have an open ear for the concerns and worries of our Swiss colleagues and are available for a factual dialogue at any time.

In the past two years, Belarus and Switzerland have been confronted with two major challenges at the same time – the COVID-19 pandemic and political discord over events in my country. This had a negative impact on the intensity of bilateral cooperation. Many high level agreements that were made at the beginning of 2020 could no longer be implemented.

I hope that this year, which also marks 30 years of diplomatic relations between Belarus and Switzerland, we will be able to revive bilateral contacts in various areas. The upcoming inauguration of my colleague in Minsk, Ambassador *Honegger Zolotukhin*, should also contribute significantly to this.

In the coming months, we expect, among other things, the resumption of inter-parliamentary contacts and regular work of the Joint Economic Commission, progress in the preparation of bilateral visa and readmission agreements.

We remain interested in the expansion of mutual trade and the successful operation of Swiss companies in Belarus. We also see great potential in expanding cooperation with Switzerland in the areas of environmental protection and disaster relief, education and research, youth exchange, culture, sports and town twinning.

So, there is still a lot to do, but I am optimistic and look forward to further positive developments in the relations between our countries.

Ambassador Ganevich, thank you very much for the interview.

(Translation Current Concerns)

The enemy image propaganda against Russia is becoming ever more unbearable

km. Sure, one can well categorise the current propaganda of Western media and politicians against Russia and its President *Vladimir Putin*. The article by *Hans Köchler* in *Current Concerns* No. 2 of 7 February offers a very good analytical frame for this. And there are still the dissenting voices in one's own countries or in one's own language – one almost wants to say NATO samizdat* – be it *infosperber*, the *Nachdenkseiten* or the *Anti-Spiegel*, to name just a few.

Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly unbearable what is now being hammered into people's minds and souls every day. One must really speak here of a conformity of large parts of our media world. The reality is turned upside down: Russia is supposed to be the aggressive warmonger that disregards the law – and NATO is supposed to be righteous, peace-loving and ready for dialogue, but unfortunately forced to take tough countermeasures against Russia.

Michael Lüders, in his latest book, "Die scheinheilige Supermacht. Warum wir aus dem Schatten der USA heraustreten müs-

sen" (The Hypocritical Superpower. Why we must step out of the shadow of the USA), he reviewed literature on the subject and illustrated the manipulation techniques of our media with many examples.

The dangers of this conformity are great. Millions of people in our countries only get these messages. People are affected even if they do not want to believe what is constantly coming down on them. Propaganda is a form of violence against spirit and soul, and it violates everyone.

Add to this the fact that those who have (so far) publicly expressed themselves differently within the power elites are bombarded with media broad sides and pilloried – be it the former Inspector General of the German Navy, the former German Chancellor *Gerhard Schröder* or those parts of the German Social Democrats that deviate even slightly from the US and NATO line. Campaigns are staged to intimidate and silence those who are attacked, but also the people who dared to think alike.

It is true that everyone can also see, hear and read the other side. Russian websites

in German or English: the website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the website of the Russian President or even the German-language websites of Russian media. It is easy to see that things are presented differently there than here. As a precaution, we dismiss these voices with the accusation of "disinformation" – while our media are supposed to be "quality media" with "quality journalism". And of course, only the others are accused of "propaganda", according to the principle: "Stop thief!"

Who has the time and the strength to inform themselves on all sides and then form their own opinion? Nevertheless, the basic idea remains: "Have the courage to use your own reason!" And brace yourself inwardly against everything that is out to sow enmity and turn people, peoples and states against each other. •

* In the Soviet Union and later also in large parts of the Eastern Bloc, the term "samizdat" referred to the dissemination of alternative, mostly forbidden literature that did not conform to the system via unofficial channels. For example, texts were copied by hand or typewriter, photocopied or otherwise reproduced and then passed on privately from hand to hand.

Argentina and Russia seek closer cooperation

gl. Argentine President *Alberto Fernández* met with his Russian counterpart *Vladimir Putin* in Moscow on 3 February before travelling then to Beijing to meet with Chinese leader *Xi Jinping* before the opening of the Olympic Games.

Fernández explicitly thanked Putin for Russia's great support during the COVID pandemic, when vaccine was still in short supply worldwide. "You were there when the rest of the Western world did not help us with vaccines." The results of the Russian vaccine, *Sputnik V*, had been excellent in Argentina, he said. Fernández declared it was a good time to "move forward in other areas as well".

The circumstances are very favourable for closer relations between Russia and Argentina, he said. "We need to see how Argentina can become a strong door opener for Russia to Latin America." He reminded that his country "is in a special situation because of the debt I inherited". Since the 1990s, Argentina was very strongly aligned with the United States, and the Argentine economy depended to a large extent on the debt it owes to the US and the IMF, he explained. In 2015, a government had taken office in Argentina that was once again aligned with the US, and it was this government that gave the country the enormous debt that Ar-

gentina now has. For this reason, he said, he was firmly determined that Argentina must end its overdependence on the IMF and the US. The country must open up a path to other parts of the world. In this context, Russia plays a very important role, he said.

For his part, Putin congratulated Argentina on the success of its vaccination campaign. He said there were many areas where the two countries could improve their bilateral cooperation, especially with regard to the great potential in trade. •

Source: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/399427-alberto-fernandez-con-vladimir-putin-argentina-tiene-que-dej> of 3 February 2022

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The danger of war is less than claimed

Assessment of the situation by two former top Swiss diplomats

ef. According to *Thomas Greminger* and *Yves Rossier*, the current danger of war in the Ukraine is much lower than has been and is being claimed in many Western media in recent weeks and to this day. This can be found in an article that was published in various Swiss newspapers on 1 and 2 February 2022.

Thomas Greminger, Lieutenant Colonel in the General Staff of the Swiss Army, was Secretary General of the *Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE) from 2017 to 2020 and today heads the *Geneva Center for Security Policy*.

Yves Rossier was State Secretary in the *Federal Department of Foreign Affairs* (FDFA) and Swiss Ambassador in Moscow from 2017 to 2020.

Yves Rossier is being quoted as saying: “I do not expect a Russian military

invasion of Ukraine.” Even if Russian troops were concentrated on a larger scale, the technical and military preparations on the border “did not indicate an invasion”. In addition, an invasion would also have to be prepared propagandistically. “I don’t see any signs of this in the Russian media”, so the former Swiss ambassador in Moscow.

Thomas Greminger is being quoted as saying: “Currently, I don’t see any strategic interest on either side to let an armed conflict happen.” For Greminger, the many aggressive statements that have been heard for weeks are the part of diplomacy, that has been granted open access to the public. But there was “a lot of rhetorical swaggering”. It is true that provocations or actions that are perceived as such could also trigger an escalation. But neither side has “currently the stra-

tegic intention to bring about an armed conflict”.

Greminger referred to a fundamental dilemma of European security policy. On the one hand, the principle of the right of states to self-determination applies, including the right to decide on a military alliance of their choice. On the other hand, the principle of “indivisibility of security” applies. This means that the increase in one’s own security must not reduce the security of another state (see also box on page 5). However, according to Greminger, this is exactly what could happen if Ukraine joins NATO.

With their assessment, Yves Rossier and Thomas Greminger confirm the analyse by *Ralph Bosshard* in this newspaper (Current Concerns No. 28/29 of 21 December 2021 and Nr. 2 of 7 February 2022).

“Crimea in times of upheaval”

by *Christian Fischer, Cologne*



The headlines conjuring up the threat of Russian aggression are omnipresent. Apart from current reports about troop deployments in Russia (see Current Concerns No.

28/29 of 21 December 2021), the basis of the danger reports is the false claim that Russia “annexed” the Crimean peninsula in spring 2014. This is supposed to serve as proof that Russia expansively invades and annexes foreign countries. The historical context of the events around Crimea and which actors committed which actions is hardly the subject of consideration. It would also fit poorly with the narrative that a Russian lust for conquest was at work here in an exemplary manner. There it is a beneficial clarification work Rüdiger Kipke is doing with his book “Die Krim in Zeiten des Umbruchs. 1920–2014” (“Crimea in times of upheaval. 1920–2014”).

Rüdiger Kipke, a lawyer, political scientist and Slavic scholar, professor emeritus at the University of Siegen, has written a slim book, but very densely grounded in historical sources, which examines the political history of Crimea from 1920 to 2014 and sheds a different light on the events than our media usually convey. It is summarised below:

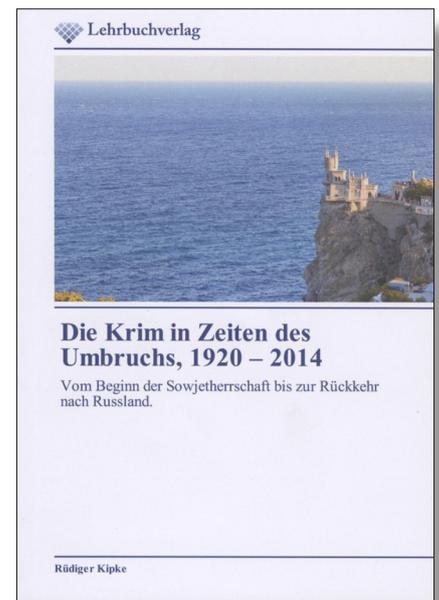
Little known to us is that Crimea is considered almost “sacred” to many traditional Russians because it was from here that the Christianisation of the great country began since the 10th century. The spe-

cial significance of the Crimea for many Russians indicates that a reintegration of this piece of land does not necessarily imply comprehensive plans of conquest by Russia, as is widely done.

After the October Revolution, Crimea became a Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921 and remained relatively autonomous until 1928. The great famine triggered by Stalin’s collectivisation in the early 1930s did not have quite as strong an impact here as in northern Ukraine; industrialisation also took place and the population grew. The population had long been multi-ethnic, consisting of Russians, Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and minorities such as Jews and Germans. The Russians were favoured by Stalin on almost racist justifications.

The Jews living in the Soviet Union were given their own land in Crimea in the 1920s, but bad land, so that many did not stay long. Completely unexpectedly, they were allocated an autonomous territory in the Soviet Far East a little later. A renewed attempt during the Second World War to create a Jewish homeland in the Crimea ended in execution for many of its protagonists.

From September 1941, the Wehrmacht advanced on Crimea and occupied it. Parts of the population collaborated with the Germans, especially Crimean Tatars, because they hoped for help against Soviet Russian oppression. *Hitler’s* plan was to Germanise the area and annex it to the Greater German Reich as the “Gothic Gau”. When the Red Army recaptured



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Crimea in 1944, the Crimean Tatars were deported to Uzbekistan, even those who were not Nazi collaborators. Since 1945, Crimea has also officially lost autonomy status within the Soviet Union. The Crimean Tatars were “rehabilitated” in 1967, but this meant practically nothing; it was only in 1989 that their resettlement was classified as criminal and they could return to Crimea – albeit to a country where conditions had long since changed to their disadvantage. In 1991, Ukraine, and with it Crimea, became independent. Large parts

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The Father of the Social Market Economy Ludwig Erhard was born 125 years ago

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

125 years ago, on 4 February 1897, *Ludwig Erhard* was born in the German city Fürth as the son of a textile merchant. He could no longer afford the profession he had learned as a textile merchant because of a foot injury, but he was able to study in Nuremberg and later in Frankfurt without taking his Abitur. He then stayed on at various economic institutes and wrote as an economic journalist during the war about the reconstruction after a lost war – which the ruling party resented and prevented him from becoming a professor.

After the war, he was entrusted by the Allies with the preparation of the currency reform, became director of the two-zone economic administration of the western occupation zone in 1948 and wrote the “Düsseldorf Principles of the Social Market Economy” for the CDU in 1948.

The first federal elections in 1949 were still dominated by the bitter economic policy dispute between planned economists and market economists. For many, abandon-

ing the hitherto existing centrally administered economy seemed like a betrayal of distributive justice and of the lower classes. Ludwig Erhard, on the other hand, was an advocate of the social market economy, which wanted to steer the production and distribution of goods via the price system. Today, one can no longer imagine the bitterness with which both sides defended their positions. The author campaigned for the CDU together with Ludwig Erhard at the time and still remembers how heatedly it was discussed in the election meetings whether “market economy is not just egoism”, whether “market economy can provide jobs”, whether “the supply of goods functions at all if it is no longer planned”. The counter-argument that a free market organises itself if the state only provides it with the framework data was listened to with great scepticism and the majority did not believe it.

The CDU’s election victory in 1949 made Ludwig Erhard the Federal Minister of Economics (until 1963) and he was able to push through his concept of a market

economy and liberation from state constraints. Price proved its worth as a means of control. Where prices rose, they indicated scarcity, the increased prices offered higher profits and thus an incentive for more production. And consumers reached for the cheaper products, thus forcing prices down.

The state was only supposed to ensure that all market participants had the greatest freedom of action and that the basic law of the market economy – equality of opportunity – (like equality of rights in society) was enforced. Competition law with a ban on cartels, the ban on discrimination and Ludwig Erhard’s care in building up a strong middle class in fair competition served this purpose.

However, so that “no one gets lost in our market economy”, he demanded social security (social market economy) in the event of failure.

A return to Ludwig Erhard would be particularly important today, where the state is again expanding like an octopus in

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“Crimea in times of upheaval”

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of the people living on the peninsula were dissatisfied with this development.

Crimea was “given” to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic by the Moscow leadership in 1954, which happened without much fuss, remained without practical consequences within the economic space of the Soviet Union and has no clear justification to this day. It may have played a role that the rising Communist Party leader *Khrushchev* needed Ukrainian support to consolidate his power, that he wanted to strengthen the bond between the Ukrainian and Russian Soviet Republics and would have preferred to also annex parts of Slovakia and Poland to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

At the end of the *Gorbachev* era, the Russian parliament declared the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine unconstitutional as early as 1990, which was indeed true according to Soviet law at the time, but was initially not given any further attention, as people everywhere in the country had other concerns after the end of the Soviet Union. The 1991 referendum on the peninsula, in which 93 % of those who voted (turnout 81 %) were in favour of an Autonomous Republic of Crimea independent of Ukraine, also received little attention at the time. Finally, a compromise was reached with Kiev: Crimea was grant-

ed the status of an autonomous republic within the otherwise unitarian Ukraine. In a national referendum in December 1991, 90 % of those who voted were in favour of Ukraine’s independence; in Crimea, the figure was only 54 %.

Leonid Kuchma had been president in Kiev since 1994. He revalued the Russian language, but continued to place Crimea under the Kiev administration. In 1998, Crimea was granted further autonomy rights within Ukraine, as the independence efforts in Crimea had not abated in the 1990s. Russia and Kiev mutually assured each other of territorial integrity by treaty in 1997. In addition, the Russian Federation concluded a lease agreement with Ukraine in the same year that ensured the Russian fleet would remain in Crimea – initially for 20 years, later extended until 2042.

The historically grown tensions escalated in 2013 after Ukrainian President *Yanukovich* did not sign an association agreement with the European Union. He feared disadvantages for his country with regard to economic relations with Russia. As a result, the Maidan demonstrations began in Kiev, which eventually turned violent and led to armed confrontations. In February 2014, the Kiev parliament deposed the president in an unconstitutional process; Yanukovich fled the country. EU countries and the US immediately recognised

the new pro-Western government that had come to power in the course of the coup d’état. Russia accused the West of having massively interfered, if not initiated the events. In Crimea, there were protest demonstrations against the Maidan movement in January 2014, and violence between opponents and supporters of the new Kiev rulers in February.

There were Russian soldiers in Crimea at the time, though fewer than the 25,000 troops allowed by the aforementioned lease agreement. On 16 March 2014, a referendum was held in Crimea to decide between, firstly, annexation of Crimea to Russia or, secondly, recognition of the validity of the 1992 constitution with Crimea as part of Ukraine. There was no “preservation of the status quo” option. With 83 % voter turnout, 97 % voted for the first option, which may not only be due to the population majority of 68% Russians, but also to the fact that, from the population’s point of view, there is a better economic perspective alongside Russia. On 18 March 2014, the government of Crimea declared the Autonomous Republic of Crimea independent and, on the same day, applied for the republic’s admission to the Russian Federation. Subsequently, Crimea was gradually integrated into the Russian Federation as a special economic zone. •

Ludwig Erhard

cc. Ludwig Erhard was born on 4 February 1897 in Fürth, the son of a textile merchant. After attending secondary school, he completes a commercial apprenticeship in Nuremberg. From 1916-1918 he was a soldier in the First World War and was seriously wounded at Ypres on the Western Front in 1918.

From 1919 to 1922 he studied at the Nuremberg Commercial College and from 1922 to 1925 business administration, national economics and sociology at the University of Frankfurt/Main. Doctorate (Dr. rer. pol.) on a monetary policy topic. 1925-1928 works as managing director in his parents' business. 1928-1942 he is scientific assistant and later deputy director of the "Institute for Economic Observation of German Manufactured Goods" in Nuremberg. In 1942 he founds his own consumer research institute, the "Institute for Industrial Research".

In March 1944 he completed a memorandum in which he assumed that Germany would lose the war. Immediately before the assassination attempt of 20 July 1944, he sends this memorandum to *Carl Friedrich Goerdeler*, who is at the centre of the civil resistance against the Nazi regime.

After the end of the war, Erhard first became Minister of Economics in the new Bavarian government. In 1947 he becomes head of the expert commission



(picture wikipedia)

"Sonderstelle Geld und Kredit" (Special Office for Money and Credit) under the Bizone established by the British-American administration. He is entrusted there with the preparation of the currency reform.

In March 1948, the Economic Council of the American-British Bizone elects him Director of the Economic Administration. Parallel to the currency reform in June 1948, Erhard initiates the abolition of management and the liberali-

sation of prices in the western occupation zones.

In July 1949, the CDU in the British occupation zone adopts Erhard's economic policy concept of the social market economy in the "Düsseldorf Guidelines". In September 1949 Erhard is elected to the first German Bundestag and becomes Federal Minister for Economic Affairs in *Konrad Adenauer's* first cabinet. He remains so until 1963.

In February 1957, Erhard publishes his most important book, in which he presents and explains in detail his concept of the Social Market Economy for the general public: "Wohlstand für alle" (Prosperity Through Competition; Thames & Hudson 1958).

After Adenauer's resignation in October 1963, the German Bundestag elects Erhard as the new Chancellor. He remains so for only three years. In October, the members of the FDP government resign in protest against the financial policies of the CDU and CSU. This is followed by Erhard's resignation as Chancellor on 1 December. He is succeeded by *Kurt-Georg Kiesinger* of the CDU with a Grand Coalition government of CDU, CSU and SPD.

Ludwig Erhard remains a member of the German Bundestag until his death on 5 May 1977.

Compiled according to <https://www.hdg.dellermo/biografie/ludwig-erhard.html>

"The Father of the Social Market ..."

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all areas of life, where prosperity depends less and less on one's own performance than on the use of subsidy and social programmes, where two-thirds of the population live on state transfer payments¹ and where global banks and corporations dominate our market and our politics and discriminate against the independent middle class, where personal companies are taxed more heavily than corporations,² where politics is no longer about value creation, growth and economic benefit, but, as in unfortunate times, about imposing ideologies (ecology instead of economy) with the help of dirigisme, the rule of functionaries, control and a growing planned economy.

Ludwig Erhard's secret for the "economic miracle" he created lay in his definition of profit. He enforced that only the surplus taken out by the company was considered taxable profit.³ This meant that companies could first finance themselves with internal profits, create investments and jobs, before the state octopus withdrew this money from them, as it does today (over 70%).

However, this infuriated the international financial industry, which did not want self-financing companies, but rather external financing through loans given by them, and was finally able to convince Adenauer⁴ that the state would receive more taxes if it taxed not only surpluses, but also internal revenues. Thus, the time of Ludwig Erhard remained the golden age of small and medium-sized enterprises. Everyone could start up on their own, even without outside capital, finance themselves from profits, grow and create an equity ratio that was also common internationally as a precaution against economic crises.

In the meantime, the banks with their borrowed capital are calling the shots again, more than a million medium-sized businesses will not survive the next crash due to a lack of equity capital, and the corporations have grown unilaterally at the expense of medium-sized businesses.

The author has inherited another legacy from Ludwig Erhard. Ludwig Erhard was the first and only Federal Minister of Economics who knew that prosperity does not come from international corporations but from small and medium-sized

businesses that are loyal to their home country, that small and medium-sized businesses are the decisive population stratum for jobs, investments, economic growth and for public finances. He was the only one to successfully pursue SME policy (thus also having the greatest success), to found an SME research institute in Bonn and, through a former comrade-in-arms, to initiate the SME Institute in Hanover, thus founding SME research in Germany.

In the SME Institute Niedersachsen, concepts and strategies for a reconstruction of the German economy after the eco-ideology phase and its coming crash are again being worked out – as Ludwig Erhard did during the Nazi period – including the new dimension in EU centralisation, EU government and EU centralised economy. •

¹ cf. Hamer/Jörgens. *Wer ist Mittelstand?* (Who is Mittelstand?), Hanover 2021

² Where global banks and corporations even enjoy tax advantages by shifting their profits.

³ Not, as is the case today, every in-house surplus through allocations and settlements and the most complicated tax calculation in the world.

⁴ Through the German Banker *Hermann Josef Abs* (*Deutsche Bank*)

«Horizon Europe» and medtech products Switzerland reinforces its “Plans B”

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

In a completely arbitrary manner and in violation of the treaty, Brussels is currently denying Switzerland the rights laid down in two Bilateral I agreements. The research agreement allows Swiss researchers to participate in the European research framework programmes with equal rights; Switzerland has been an associated state since 2004, granting it the right to participate in all programmes. The “Mutual Recognition Agreement” (MRA) allows entrepreneurs intending to sell industrial products abroad to complete the required certification or approval processes only once. This is time and money saving and ensures equal opportunities.

As a high-quality research and production site, Switzerland is keen on joining any changes to the EU regulations within these two agreements. Obviously aware of this, Brussels bureaucrats therefore focus on harassing in this area, albeit – as we will see – a number of EU member states themselves will be suffering if research and trade with Switzerland are made more difficult. Swiss Plans B are already in action. What is the current state of affairs?

Exodus of good researchers to other countries?

In May 2021, not long after the Federal Council had broken off negotiations with the EU on a framework agreement, the EU Commission (EC) downgraded Switzerland – immediately and without any legal context – to a “non-associated third country” with regard to participation in the “Horizon Europe” research programme. At least implicitly, the Federal Council criticised Switzerland’s exclusion: “Swiss participation in the EU-Framework Programme for Research and Innovation is part of the first series of bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU that entered into force in 2002. However, the EU views the question of Switzerland’s association with Horizon Europe in the light of overall relations between Switzerland and the EU.”¹ “In the light of overall relations”? What a strange interpretation of contract compliance!

On January 23, the three heads of the university association *swissuniversities*, the ETH Board and *science-industries* (chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences trade association), passed a resolution urging the Federal Council to “take all necessary measures” to ensure that Switzerland “by 2022 will be fully associated with ‘Horizon Europe’ again”. According to the resolution without full associ-



Research and innovation in Switzerland. (Image SBF1 – The Federal Council admin.ch)

mw. Radio SRF’s “Rendez-vous” programme on 1 February 2022 featured two young scientists who were recently awarded the coveted “ERC Starting Grant” for their research work, along with 26 other researchers in Switzerland. This is a grant of up to 1.5 million euros (per person!) for a period of five years from the “Horizon Europe” research programme, which is awarded by the ERC (European Research Council). However, because Switzerland was excluded from “Horizon”, Swiss researchers do not receive the money from Brussels, but from the federal treasury.

In a radio conversation with two of the winners, it is confirmed that Switzerland’s expulsion from “Horizon” is not a reason for young people to emigrate to an EU country. Neurobiologist *Anissa Kempf*, assistant professor at the Biocentre of the University of Basel, received the Starting Grant for her research on the molecular basis of sleep. The fact that she doesn’t get the prize paid out by Brussels doesn’t bother her: “The only thing that will change is where the money actually comes from.” That’s why *Anissa Kempf* has decided to stay in Switzerland, adding: “If I didn’t have the job at the Biocentre here and the research environment at the Biocentre wasn’t so fantastic, I might have changed my mind.”

Likewise, the lawyer and economist *Elliot Ash* from the USA, who holds a professorship at the Center for Law & Economics at ETH and researches on artificial intelligence, also

wants to stay in Switzerland. He is glad that “his project is supported by the *Swiss National Science Foundation* with the same budget and duration”.

“But the Swiss solution also has disadvantages,” says interviewer *Irène Dietschi*. An ERC grant offers a researcher the opportunity to “move internationally”. In reality, both *Anissa Kempf* and *Elliot Ash* received several offers from foreign universities, so they could have easily “moved internationally” and collected their grant in the corresponding EU country, for example in Sweden, which tries to lure Swiss award winners to its universities. The sparrows are whistling it from the rooftops: top Swiss researchers and their projects are still in demand – all the punitive actions of the EU Commission cannot prevent that.

Only two of the 15 grant winners *Irène Dietschi* contacted want to move to an EU country. Precisely: they also find infrastructure and nice colleagues in Switzerland. It’s good when they realise that all the fuss about the “higher prestige” in EU countries is humbug and that the “resources” in the form of 100-franc notes are no worse than euro notes.

Source: *Dietschi, Irène. “Nach Horizon-Aus: Kampf um Schweizer Forschende” (After Horizon-end: Fight for Swiss researchers). Radio SRF, Rendez-vous from 1 February 2022. Editor: Daniel Hofer*

ation with “Horizon”, “Switzerland’s position as a research and development site will lose much of its appeal”. And further: “There is a risk that both researchers and spin-offs² will be migrating abroad, where they can apply for EU funding.”³

Migrating abroad? They won’t believe that themselves. In fact, since the freedom of movement agreement with the EU, the opposite has happened. Due to the favourable working conditions and the excellent reputation of Swiss research, for the past twenty years far more professors and students have been streaming into Switzerland than leaving it. According to a report on *Radio SRF* the other day, this is also

the case today (see box “Young researchers stay in Switzerland despite luring EU funding”). Meanwhile, the spin-offs supported by our universities – hundreds of them by the ETH alone, i. e. by the Swiss Confederation! – are obviously just as successful in obtaining funding in Switzerland.⁴

Plan B for participation in “Horizon Europe”

My research has brought to light: Plan B for Switzerland’s participation in the Horizon framework programmes is ready to go, and federal funding is in place.

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“Horizon Europe’ and medtech ...”

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Funding: In December 2020, the National Council and the Council of States already approved a sum of over CHF 6 billion for Switzerland participating in EU research programmes (2021-2027).⁵

Responding to my question about the organisation of the “Plan B”, National Councillor *Franz Grüter*, newly President of the “Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council (FAC-N)”, stated as follows: “Efforts are currently underway at various levels in the sense of supplementary and substitute measures for the temporary non-association to ‘Horizon Europe’.” He referred to the Federal Council’s media release of 20 October 2021 entitled “Horizon package 2021-2027: Federal Council enables direct financing and examines further measures”. It lays down:

- **Participation in research programmes:** Within Switzerland’s current status as a “non-associated third country” Swiss researchers can participate in around two thirds of the programme.
- Transitional and replacement measures:** are being examined by the “State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation” (SERI).
- **Direct funding of research projects:** Swiss researchers don’t receive any funding from the European Commission (EC), but they receive funding directly from SERI or the *Swiss Na-*

tional Science Foundation. The funding, which amounts to just over CHF 400 million per year, “covers all elements of the 2021–2027 Horizon package. These include Horizon Europe, the Euratom programme, the Digital Europe Programme DEP and participation in the ITER research infrastructure.”

Comment: Why Switzerland prefers to remain without EU integration

Obviously, the EU Commission is pursuing no other goal than to bully Switzerland – “zleidwerche” [Swiss term for to harm somebody] is the term we call it here. But we won’t succumb to it: Until now, we have done very well with the various Plans B, which have always been inventive and suitable for everyday use.

Let us listen to the entrepreneurs’ organisation “autonomiesuisse”, which together with many others contributed to the break-off of the negotiations on the framework agreement: “In international rankings, Switzerland is one of the top workplaces – thanks to our open mindedness, our economic freedom and our innovative strength. With close institutional ties to the EU and subordination to the *European Court of Justice*, Switzerland would have to adopt EU law to a large extent. Economically and politically, Switzerland would become increasingly aligned with the EU. Direct democracy and federalism

would be gradually eroded.” (<https://www.autonomiesuisse.ch/de/>)

Further remarks on the subject of open-mindedness

There are many other countries in the world with which Swiss researchers can and want to cooperate. National Councillor *Franz Grüter*: “In addition to these measures, strengthening international research and innovation cooperation with other important research centres is a priority of our *Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER)*.” He mentioned the Memorandum of Understanding between Switzerland and the USA to expand their cooperation: This was signed on 19 November 2021 by the *Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)* and the US National Science Foundation (NSF), in the presence of President *Guy Parmelin*.⁶

While searching for this news item, I came across the fact that Swiss researchers also conduct joint projects (*Joint Research Projects*) with partners in numerous other countries, for example in Latin America, Africa and Asia: “In the period from 2017 to 2020, more than 100 joint research projects were supported [with the participation of the *State Secretariat for Economic Affairs* and the *Swiss National Science Foundation*]. Based on their success to date, the bilateral programmes will

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German recognition of Swiss medtech products – Brussels’ catch-22

mw. Just as being contrary to the contract – and just as embarrassing – as the unsuccessful attempt to withdraw Switzerland from the European research community is the vexatious decision of the EU Commission of 26 May 2021, according to which certificates for medical technology products issued in Switzerland would no longer be recognised – even retroactively!¹ With regard to Brussels – this is catch-22. Because such violations of the Bilateral Agreements with Switzerland also harm some EU-states, including our big neighbour Germany. In order to ensure the supply of high quality medtech products from Switzerland for the German health care system, the highest health authorities of the Federal States analysed the new EU Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) and concluded that according to EU law the Swiss certifications had to be valid until 24 May 2024 at the latest. The Swiss products could therefore continue to be sold in Germany. This was communicated on 25 January 2022 to the interested German industry associations, much to the displeasure of the EU Commission. The latter insists that the German imports are “not in conformity with the rules”. In any case the letter should be “merely a draft of a letter from a working group of the federal states”. This was “not a binding letter” so the chief spokesperson of the EU Commission according to *SRF News*.²

Pretty arrogant, the people in the Brussels bureaucracy! An official letter of the highest health authorities of the German Federal States is dismissed as a mere “draft

of a working group”? In contrast the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” criticises, for once refreshingly, “the fact that Brussels, in its increasingly dogmatic attitude towards Switzerland loses sight of the economic interests of the member states”. But at some point, the author warns, the member states will “refuse to obey the directives”. The EU member states “continued to have a vital interest in stable economic relations with Switzerland”, and it would “serve no one’s interests if patients from the EU because of new bureaucratic obstacles had to forego optimal health care”.³

BDI: Maintain and strengthen a traditionally very good relationship to the southern neighbour

The *Federation of German Industries (BDI)*, too, does not want to and cannot do without good economic relations with Switzerland. In its brochure “To reshape the partnership with Switzerland” of 19 January 2022 it draws attention to the already considerable economic disruptions in trade with Switzerland, currently in the area of medical products, further disruptions were foreseeable in mechanical engineering. The BDI reminds: “Many SMEs, but also large companies from Germany and Switzerland have maintained intensive economic relations for many years.” Germany is the most important economic partner of Switzerland which is the fourth most important trading partner for the EU. “It is therefore of particular interest to the German economy that this traditionally very good re-

lationship with our southern neighbour will be maintained and strengthened.”

So far, so good. But then the BDI calls on both sides to “quickly resume constructive talks”, whereby a “package solution” is indispensable, this “should not leave out the institutional key issues”.

This reminds me of the remark made by Swiss National Councillor *Franz Grüter*, who with other members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council visited Brussels a few months ago to talk to EU parliamentarians. Even the EU-turbos among the National Councillors came back rather disillusioned. *Franz Grüter* described his impression to me as follows: “Most of them do not understand our system, in which the people decide. They are not interested in the cohesion billion, they insist that we take over their law and their administration of justice. They don’t understand that we Swiss want something different.”

How can we explain to our neighbours that Switzerland has its own political culture?

¹ See “*Switzerland in Europe and the World. News from Parliament and the Federal Council*”. In: *Current Concerns* from 14 October 2021

² “*Schweizer Medtech-Produkte: EU pocht auf Export-Verbot*” (*Swiss medtech products: EU insists on export ban*). *SRF News*, 28 January 2022

³ *Fuster, Thomas*. “*Ein Sieg der Vernunft: Deutschland will Schweizer Medtech-Produkte weiterhin anerkennen*” (*A victory for common sense: Germany wants to continue to recognise Swiss medtech products*). In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 26 January 2022.

“Whoever acknowledges Max Tau acknowledges understanding and brotherhood”

In Memory of a friend of mankind

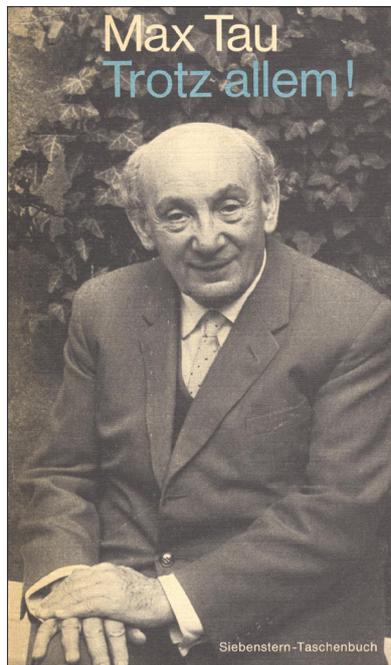
By Karl-Jürgen Müller

It is often by chance that one comes across something valuable. Until 19 January, I had never heard the name *Max Tau*. But in the morning, while driving, I listened to the programme “Kalenderblatt” on *Deutschlandfunk*. On this day, Max Tau was remembered, who was born 125 years ago, on 19 January 1897. The radio station’s broadcast, according to the result of my research in the following days, was the only one to be found on the internet on this birthday. And even otherwise, there are only a few articles where one can learn a little more about Max Tau.

But what I was able to read impressed me a lot.

Two schools are named after him. Since 1967, a school in Kiel, and since 1998, a school in Norway is called “Deutsche Schule Oslo – Max Tau”.

On the website of the school in Kiel I read: “Max Tau studied literature in Kiel until 1928, then worked in Berlin at the *Cassirer publishing house* as an editor. He is considered the discoverer of many important writers, for example *Marie-Luise Kaschnitz*, *Luise Rinser* and *Wolfgang Koepfen*. In 1938, friends helped him to leave Germany because as a Jew his life was in danger. Many of his relatives and friends were killed by the National Socialists. He was able to live and work in Norway until he fled from the German oc-



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cupiers to Sweden in 1942. During the war, he helped found a publishing house for German literature there.”

Warmth of heart

Then follow the passages that particularly appealed to me.

“After the end of the war in 1945, Max Tau immediately campaigned for the reconciliation of the countries invaded by the Nazis with Germany, as well as for the reconciliation of Jews and Christians. Until the end of his life, he remained in Oslo, working as an editor and writing books about his life. [...] In his numerous speeches he spoke about the understanding of people and the peace of nations.

In 1950 he was the first winner of the *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* [Peace Prize of the German Book Trade]. Many awards and prizes followed. [...] In 1965, Kiel University made him its honorary citizen. [...] Once a year he visited the school, and the pupils and teachers loved him for his warmth of heart.”

There follows another sentence spoken by the school supervisor at the inauguration ceremony of the Max Tau School on 23 June 1967: “Whoever acknowledges Max Tau, acknowledges understanding, brotherhood”

“Trying to bring people closer together”

On 19 January, *Deutschlandfunk* quoted the co-founder of the Peace Prize, *Friedrich Wittig*: Max Tau’s attitude was “not

a vague rapture. But rather the knowing love of a man hounded by political fate who, despite difficult experiences, did not lose the belief that we are all creatures of one God, united in all our divisiveness.” In his childhood, he had experienced “that the confessions can live together in harmony and peace”. This experience had given him “the strength to help pave the way for reconciliation”. Then the broadcaster quotes from Tau’s novel “Denn über uns ist der Himmel” (For Above Us is Heaven): “Do not try to improve the world through plans and organisations. Try to get closer to each other, to bring people closer to each other, with the heart, not with the mind.”

Elsewhere I read that Max Tau also campaigned for *Albert Schweitzer* to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1955, three years after Schweitzer was awarded the prize, he wrote a book about this other great friend of mankind.

Faith in man, against the poison of mistrust

Of course, I immediately looked for the laudatory speech and the speech of the laureate himself at the awarding of the first *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* on 22 April 1950. The laudator *Adolf Grimme*, a social democratic politician in the Weimar Republic and in the early Federal Republic, found words still sounding highly topical. “You are a living witness that an individual can impersonate humanity in an age of diabolical inhumanity”. This sceptically ridiculed, if not despised, imperative of ‘faith in man’. You have made it the law of your own way of life. [...] And you have become so because the basic trait of your being is trust. If more people were like you, Mr Tau, things would improve for us all and nations would peacefully live together. That you are the way you are is only possible because you have remained immune to the poison of mistrust, that mistrust which, in our times, has become the world disease that threatens man in his very existence.”

“He who wants peace must first create peace within himself”

Then the sentences of Max Tau himself – spoken more than 70 years ago. Are they not highly topical again these days?

“It is not the workload that oppresses people, it is the senselessness that often drives them to despair.”

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“‘Horizon Europe’ and medtech ...”

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be continued in 2021–2024.” (SERI. Bilateral cooperation programmes) Good to remember that there also exists a world outside the European Union. ●

¹ SERI. Research and Innovation. Horizon Europe and Euratom (<https://www.sbf.admin.ch>)

² Spin-offs are independent companies founded, for example, with financial support from ETH Zurich in order to turn research results into marketable products. (<https://ethz.ch/de/wirtschaft/entrepreneurs/spinoff.html>)

³ <https://ethz.ch/de/horizon-europe-resolution-der-schweizer-wissenschaft-und-der-forschenden-industrie/>

⁴ List of ETH spin-offs. <https://ethz.ch/en/industry/entrepreneurs/spinoff/uebersicht-eth-spin-offs.html>.

⁵ *Bundesbeschluss über die Finanzierung der Schweizer Beteiligung an den Massnahmen der Europäischen Union im Bereich Forschung und Innovation in den Jahren 2021–2027* (Federal Decree on the Financing of Swiss Participation in European Union Actions in the Field of Research and Innovation in the Years 2021–2027), 16 December 2020

⁶ “Schweiz und USA bekräftigen ihre Zusammenarbeit in der Forschungsförderung.” (Switzerland and the USA reaffirm their cooperation in research funding), *Press Release of the Federal Council* 19 November 2021

“Whoever professes Max Tau ...”

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“Peace is indivisible. No one can achieve it alone. We all must try to find it together. War is senseless. No power can dictate peace. Only the spiritual forces can secure it.”

“Man has become lonely. He can make all the technical connections in an instant, but the one connection that is indispensable to him, the connection with man, has been broken. The mechanised world makes it difficult what the human demands. One can only grow towards human. Who wants peace must first create peace within himself.”

Hope in the youth and the cooperation of the generations

Max Tau placed special hope in youth and the cooperation of generations.

“Every human being is born with a dream. He wants to realise the essence of his own in the world. [...] That is why we must try to preserve the spirit of peace in the hearts of children. That is why only the youth can create a non-political new spiritual peace movement. The young people in all countries, the survivors from the con-

centration camps, they know that only he who has overcome himself can find reconciliation. He sees the light in all things. He believes because he has found himself. He has forgiveness because he knows suffering. From him radiates the new spirit of reconciliation.”

His appeal to the youth:

“From here the call goes out to all young people of all nations. We so much want the youth to go to the scholars of their country to learn about the values of life. In every country, young people should write the fairy tale of their lives. The peculiarity of the view, the melody of the mother tongue should sing the praises of life, and the responsible researcher should proclaim in concise sentences the danger of war. The youth in all countries shall then determine who has best told the fairy tale of the meaning of life.”

Helping people regain an ethical basis

Max Tau demands that German publishers set up a “peace library” – he himself with international publishers. He attaches a special peace-making significance to literature:

“It is a fateful hour for literature. Its spirit will decide if we can achieve peace. It bears the responsibility of helping people to find a new ethical basis. [...] What politicians have not succeeded in doing, the spirit and the new literature must succeed in doing – reawakening trust, renewing reverence for life and respect for man.”

At the end of his speech, he returns to the beginning.

“People must try to find each other again. Peace can only be made from person to person. [...] If, through the power of the soul, confidence will be reawakened for the spirit, then the heaven of peace will again be attainable for all countries. [...] The sacrifices of all countries have placed an obligation upon us. We must prove ourselves worthy of the obligation of the dead.”

Now I have ordered three books by Max Tau, antiquarian: “Trotz allem. Lebenserinnerungen aus siebzig Jahren.” (But still. Memoirs from Seventy Years), “Albert Schweitzer und der Friede” (Albert Schweitzer and peace), and “Glaube an den Menschen” (Faith in Man). •

Letter to  the Editor**Millions complain: “After all, one can’t do anything!” – Is that true?**

In 1943, when Stalingrad happened, I was called to the anti-aircraft guns, as a 16-year-old, and I ended the war by deserting. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be alive today. The 17- and 18-year-olds who didn’t run away at that time were almost all killed in the housing war in Berlin.

I didn’t experience anything like Stalingrad, only a few, but highly dangerous situations. I remember a Russian tank that ran over a young German officer. At the very end he had sacrificed his life for the fatherland – what a madness.

Because, on the way home, I told the Russians I was Swiss, they let me go. One of the Russians took my watch and my camera, but I forgave him because he immediately threw me some tinned food from his lorry as compensation. They were worth a lot in those days. From a human point of view, I like the Russians.

There is a book by the Canadian *James Bacques*, “Other Losses”, which describes how American soldiers threw away food in their prison camps or burned it in front of the starving prisoners. Weeks after the surrender, there was still an American death camp in the Rheinwiesen area.

After the war I asked myself: “How could this happen? I didn’t know that! No

one should be able to use that as an excuse again, I want to contribute to that.”

I joined the peace movement and the environmental protection. Wyhl was a lesson. I was there as an amateur filmmaker, for the important film “S’Wespennest” (110 minutes), 8 mm film format, I was there, I contributed twenty minutes of film. It started in Markolsheim, then in Kaiseraugst in Switzerland and Gerstheim. There we prevented an EDF (*Electricité de France*) electricity pylon from being put into operation.

The time in Wyhl was one of the best times of my life. People were so united, practising solidarity against powerful opponents. “Zämme simmer stark!” (Together we are strong!)

I try to be informed. The “annexation of Crimea” is manipulated into people’s heads, constantly repeated. That is propaganda. In the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” there was an article by a Hamburg lawyer, an international law expert: “The annexation was a secession, approved by vote!”

Three things are important for the Americans in their European policy: to keep the Americans in, to keep the Russians out (against good cooperation between Russia and Germany and Europe); to keep the Germans down.

The Americans exploit this where possible; they twist the knife in the wounds (for example in Poland).

Today the Americans are setting traps for the Russians, so that *Putin* has to react, that is malicious. Instead, one should work together.

If the superiors want to, then reconciliation will work. The way Franco-German reconciliation was introduced is a model.

Learning the neighbour’s language creates friendship and serves international understanding. At the end of last year, the author of a newspaper article described her steps in learning French: she had difficulties learning the language. The author’s first teacher was a stubborn person and also grumpy, the author had got a “deficient”. And then she had a younger teacher. She knew how to motivate the pupils. And she got a “very good”. You can see how it depends on the teacher.

Reconciliation between Russia and Germany would be the completion of Europe, as *Gorbachev* aspired to. And *de Gaulle* envisioned a “Europe of fatherlands”, without a super-government in Brussels.

Ernst Udo Kaufmann, Müllheim (DE)

A life for human rights, reconciliation and peace

On the book “Never despair” by Gerhart Moritz Riegner

by Tobias Salander

Last year was the 20th anniversary of the death of Gerhart Moritz Riegner, a contemporary witness and contributor to the history of the 20th century. In an obituary the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” paid tribute to him as a “warner and admonisher”. (<https://www.nzz.ch/artikel7TYCU-1.506318>).

Reason enough to take the autobiography entitled “*Niemals verzweifeln – sechzig Jahre für das jüdische Volk und die Menschenrechte*” (Never despair – sixty years for the Jewish people and human rights) and review some fateful events of the 20th century from the perspective of a contemporary witness. Riegner had received many awards and honours, including an honorary doctorate from the University of Lucerne, and was active for the World Jewish Congress (WJC) for over 60 years, many of those years as its Secretary General. He was the author of the famous “Riegner Telegram”, which in 1942 informed the Western powers about the mass murder of the Jews in Europe – unfortunately without being acknowledged. After the war, he was involved in the formulation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the later anti-discrimination declarations. It was also important to him to improve relations between Judaism and the Christian churches, and he played an active role in the creation of “*Nostra aetate*”, the declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the attitude of the Catholic Church to non-Christian religions of 1965. Not to be forgotten are his words of appreciation for the attitude of the vast majority of the Swiss population during World War II, which Riegner survived in Geneva, despite all the criticism.

Gerhart Riegner’s autobiography is a treasure trove for anyone interested in history and thus in their own origins. From the wealth of material, only a few points can be highlighted here, but they are suitable for contributing to a more differentiated picture of selected historical events. In addition to devastating events, Riegner also describes many positive and hopeful ones. It goes without saying that eyewitness statements, like other historical sources, must always be treated with due source-critical caution.

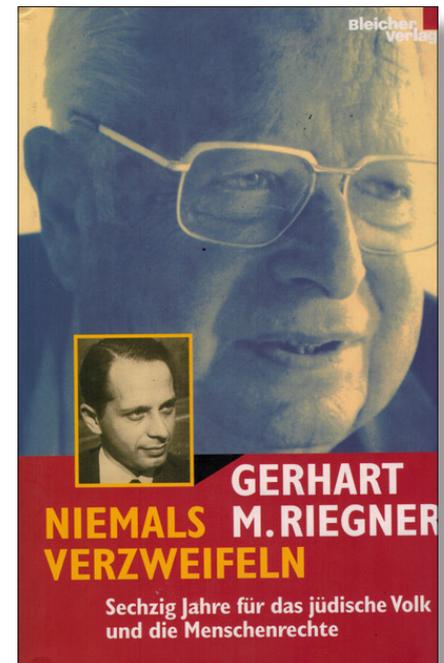
Riegner’s early assessment of Hitler confirmed by “crazy rabbi”

In 1936, Gerhart Moritz Riegner, born in Berlin in 1911, took over the management of the office of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in Geneva. This had

been founded in the same year to fight Hitler and to protect the Jewish minorities in Eastern Europe. At that time, the 25-year-old had been through difficult years, and much worse were to follow. Coming from an upper middle-class, cosmopolitan and highly educated Jewish family in Berlin, he took an early interest in the political affairs of the Weimar Republic. Already as a child, he became aware of his Jewishness through insults, and like so many, anti-Semitism threw him back to his roots. As early as 1933, it had been clear to the young law student, who had become a Zionist in 1930 “out of desperation”: In the German Reich under the rule of the National Socialists, Jews could not live in peace, freedom and security. He could not help but note the cowardice of the German intellectuals, which he could never forget. But a large part of his Jewish compatriots did not want to hear his warnings either and stayed – unfortunately too long – in Germany. They were encouraged in their attitude of repressing the impending disaster, according to Riegner, still full of consternation decades later, by a US rabbi whom Jewish organisations had sent from the USA to Germany to take a stand against another US rabbi, *Stephen Samuel Wise*, and to warn against him, because he was known as a “crazy rabbi”. But what had Wise, the ardent Zionist, honorary president of the *American Jewish Congress* and later co-founder and first president of the WJC, allegedly said that was so outlandish? Immediately after Hitler’s seizure of power, he had called for a boycott of Nazi Germany and warned that what was currently happening in Germany could happen tomorrow in any other country if it was not stopped: “It is not the German Jews who are being attacked. It is the Jews.” (<https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/bio/rabbi-stephen-s-wise>)

Riegner regrets that this crystal-clear assessment by Rabbi Wise in 1933 was so torpedoed by his own co-religionists. If Jewish organisations in the USA had failed, how could the masses have realised the seriousness of the situation?

Riegner’s flight took him first to Paris, then to Geneva in neutral Switzerland. And from here, for the next 60 years, he devoted all his energies to defending and protecting not only Jewish life worldwide. He saw the catastrophe approaching for the Jews and for world peace, but could not stop it – because of the moral indifference and political opportunism of a large number of people, but also states.



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The Riegner Telegram reveals the “Final Solution”

On 29 July 1942, *Benjamin Sagalowitz*, press officer of the *Swiss Federation of Israelite Communities* in Zurich, called Riegner in Geneva to say that he had received information from a major German industrialist named *Eduard Schulte*, according to which Hitler was planning a mass murder of the Jews in Eastern Europe – with prussic acid. It took both of them a few days to really absorb this message. Of course, Riegner knew that on the anniversary of the seizure of power in 1939, Hitler had accused the Jews of warmongering and prophesied that this would lead to the end of the Jews in Europe, and he repeated this in 1940, 1941 and 1942. But was this to be taken at face value? Had “*Mein Kampf*” not been taken seriously? But there were the arrests and deportations of Jews all over Europe in the summer of 1942. And one knew the system of concentration camps in Germany. All this made the warning of the German industrialist seem credible.

Riegner also knew that horrific massacres of Jews had taken place after the invasion of the Soviet Union. And at the beginning of 1942 he had learned of killings by gas in buses. So Riegner confided in *Paul Guggenheim*, the legal adviser to the JWK and a Swiss law professor, with the aim of informing the USA and Great Britain. Subsequently, Riegner met with the US Vice Consul in Geneva. He asked him

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to inform the US government, to have the facts verified by the secret services and to inform the president of the WJC, said Stephen Samuel Wise, a personal friend of President *Roosevelt*. The telegram to be transmitted informed of the "Führer's" plan to kill four million Jews in Eastern Europe and named as an unverified source the aforementioned German captain of industry with ties to the Nazi leadership.

The telegram went from the Vice Consul in Geneva to the US Embassy in Bern, from there to the US State Department in Washington. Riegner did the same at the British consulate. With the request that the telegram be sent to the British leader of the WJC, who should then inform Wise. This was wise foresight, because effectively the US State Department did not forward the telegram to Wise on the grounds that it was "unsubstantiated in nature"! Wise then received the telegram three weeks later, on 28 August 1942. He immediately informed *Sumner Welles*, the US Assistant Secretary of State, who did not want to publish anything until it had been verified by the Vatican and the ICRC. But they were unable to confirm the warning. In Great Britain, the relevant circles wondered who this Riegner was, because they did not want to believe his warning. According to Riegner, it is known today that the British secret service was able to crack the German radio code in 1941 and listen in on everything about the "Final Solution" decided in Wannsee in 1942.

Riegner was shocked by the tardiness of the Allies' reactions. So, he collected further information: letters from Warsaw about the daily deportations, reports from Riga and the report of Swiss doctors who travelled to the Eastern Front and nursed German soldiers – against the explicit prohibition of the former Federal Military Department. The ICRC then also confirmed to Riegner that it had heard such reports from Germans. And the German industrialist who had first reported the plan for the "final solution" confirmed during another visit to Switzerland that Hitler had given the order for its implementation, which was then underway. Riegner passed on all this evidence to the US consul in Geneva.

In mid-October 1942, Riegner was finally invited to the US Embassy in Berne; he appeared with the representative of the *Jewish Agency* and presented a bundle of documents with statements from eyewitnesses. He also named the German industrialist *Eduard Schulte*. The ambassador considered everything credible, had some witnesses give an affidavit and sent the documents to the USA, where Deputy Secretary of State, *Sumner Welles*, confirmed to Stephen Wise that his fears were real. The WJC may now go public.

This was done immediately by Wise and *Nahum Goldmann*, co-founder of the WJC and its president from 1951 to 1978, and the American and British Jewish organisations now put pressure on their governments to finally act. And eventually, on 17 December 1942, the governments of the USA, Great Britain and the USSR, together with numerous European governments in exile released a declaration, published in Washington, London and Moscow, against the Nazi extermination policy of the European Jews. It was reported about the deportations to Eastern Europe, but also about the mass murder in Poland and the system of forced labour. Those responsible would be held accountable after the war.

But the declaration turned out to be mere lip service. To the concrete proposals of the Jewish organisations how the Jews could be saved, the Allies replied that the first thing to do was the winning of the war. And the later request that the railway tracks to Auschwitz and the crematoriums should be bombed was rejected with the specious argument that the bombers did not have the reach – however, the *IG Farben's* industrial plants at Auschwitz-Monowitz, five kilometres from Auschwitz, were taken under fire by the Allied bombers without any problems.

As a reader, one suffers with Riegner and the victims and is dismayed by the indolence of the Allies. Riegner asks himself the question why they failed and sees the reason in the widespread anti-Semitism especially among the Allies. The USA took in hardly any Jews, nor did the British, who also sealed off Palestine as a place of refuge. The US warships that transported material to Great Britain would have had no problem to take with them tens of thousands of Jewish refugees on their way back. The ransom of the 200,000 German Jews, which *Nahum Goldmann* considered in 1942, was rejected by the Allies – the war had to be won first, was the mantra from London and Washington.

In addition to anti-Semitism in the US State Department and the moral indifference of civilian bureaucrats and high-ranking military officers, Riegner identifies as a further cause for the failure of the rescue efforts the monstrosity of the crime, which was unprecedented and simply beyond the imaginable. Moreover, during World War I there was a lot of "fake news", as one might say today, about alleged German atrocities, which were uncovered after the war. In addition, the Nazis carried out the "final solution" absolutely clandestine, and they also adapted the language to blur the facts.

And last but not least, Riegner emphasises that the Jews had hardly any influence on the politics at that time, a circumstance that, Riegner continues, is

hardly imaginable today in view of Israel's strength and the influence of the American Jews on politics.

A great disappointment for Riegner was also the Bermuda Conference of March 1943, where the British and the Americans met – with the Jewish organisations excluded – and decided in secrecy to do nothing for the Jews. The justification? First the war had to be won.

Is it any wonder that the notion that the Jews now needed their own state was achieving a majority among Jewish groups from 1943 on? *David Ben Gurion* had already expressed this in 1942: The objective of the Jews in this war had to be to attain a state of their own.

Cooperation of the WJC and the ICRC

Riegner and the WJC were already in frequent contact with the *International Committee of the Red Cross* regarding humanitarian aid during the Spanish Civil War. The then unsuccessful efforts of the ICRC in 1934 to expand the *Geneva Conventions* to also cover the protection of civilians in times of war were successfully supported by Riegner and the WJC after the war.

Towards the end of the war, Riegner succeeded in getting the ICRC, which he also subjected to massive criticism, to hold talks with the Nazis about the situation of the camp inmates. And actually, the Nazis granted the ICRC access to all the camps until the end of the war. This was an effective protection against the mass murder to be expected in the last months of the war. And on 21 April 1945 *Himmler*, who hoped for a separate peace with the Western powers, even received the envoy of the WJC, *Norbert Masur*, as well as Count *Folke Bernadotte*, the vice-president of the *Swedish Red Cross*. Hundreds of thousands were saved in this way, which, Riegner emphasises, is never written about in books about the Shoah; a fact that astonished him.

Switzerland saved more Jews than most other countries

It is strikingly remarkable that Riegner always takes his own point of view, nourished by his contemporaneity, usually far from any black-and-white portrayal or ideological narrow-mindedness. This is also the case when he focuses on his long-time host and country of refuge, Switzerland.

Riegner admits that despite all the sharp criticism on the Swiss authorities the geo-strategic situation of the Swiss Confederation should not be left out of the equation when judging its role during World War II. From 1940 onwards, Switzerland was almost completely encircled by the Axis powers. Raw materials and food products had to be imported, and they were depend-

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ent on the goodwill of the Nazis. This was a very dangerous situation, and he himself had lived with a packed rucksack, so he could flee to the Swiss Alps at any time. As a contemporary witness, he took the military threat very seriously, unlike certain historians who judged in retrospect. That is why Riegner said that Switzerland had no other choice but to work for the German economy, otherwise there would have been mass unemployment, riots and an increase in the number of Swiss frontists. Here, too, Riegner clearly shows how difficult it was for Switzerland, they had no other choice! They had to constantly reckon with an invasion by the Wehrmacht.

Like many contemporaries, Riegner was offended by Federal Councillor *Pilet-Golaz's* conformist speech, and like many others, he found General *Henri Guisan's* Rütli speech a beneficial corrective. The majority of the Swiss seriously wanted to defend themselves. It was certain politicians who made concessions which the people would have rejected if they had known about it. Anyway, Riegner leaves little doubt about the Swiss population. In general, people did not appreciate Nazi propaganda. Of course, there were Swiss Nazi friends, the frontists, also in French-speaking Switzerland. But they never made up more than 10 per cent of the population. The closer people lived to the border, the stronger was the rejection of the German National Socialists and the Italian fascists! As far as the Swiss press is concerned, it had been a thorn in the side of the Nazis.

Regarding Switzerland's official refugee policy, Riegner agrees entirely with the *Bonjour* Report, criticising the official refugee policy as too narrow-minded; much more would have been possible. But here, too, Riegner differentiates pleasantly when he distinguishes between the official policy and its often inconsistent enforcement.

In total, Switzerland had saved 28,500 Jews, more, and Riegner emphasises this specifically, than most other countries! Nevertheless, three times as many Jews could have been saved. After all, Switzerland had also hosted 100,000 soldiers.

As in all other countries, the Jews were not wanted in Switzerland – even among the Swiss Jews there had been restraint for a while. The *Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities* has been a member of the WJC. However, its president had distanced himself from the WJC during the war due to a misunderstanding of Swiss neutrality, and he was preferably on the side of the government and supported its restrictive refugee policy. After the war, he tried to justify himself to Riegner. His successor was then more courageous.

Even if Riegner states a deeply rooted anti-Semitism in Switzerland at the time, as in other countries, he acknowledges the resistance among the population against the harsh implementation of the refugee policy. During the war, a distinction was made between political and "racial refugees". The latter had no right of asylum. Nevertheless, by 1942 another 1,200 Jews were accommodated in Switzerland as Riegner states.

On 13 August 1942, the so-called "racial refugees" were denied asylum. At least 30,000 to 40,000 Jews were rejected, into the hands of the Gestapo. It was known that they were being sent to certain death. Then there was an uprising from left to right against these harsh measures, which deeply impressed Riegner. Churches also criticised the government. The interventions caused a relaxation of the regulations. Children up to the age of 16 were now accommodated without restriction, including their parents; also, over 65 years old, sick people and pregnant women. And after *Mussolini's* fall, Switzerland opened its doors wide to the Italian Jewish refugees!

Riegner gives Switzerland high marks for the reappraisal of its history and this before the Bergier Report. The *Ludwig* Report, for example, has come to terms with refugee policy very well. The nine-volume history of Swiss neutrality by *Edgar Bonjour* and the study by *Jean-Claude Favez* "The International Red Cross and the Third Reich" also have depicted history openly and honestly and led to the revision of refugee law.

Finally, in 1995, the then Federal President, *Kaspar Villiger*, admitted that one has incurred guilt towards the Jews. The police president of St. Gallen, *Paul Grüninger* was also rehabilitated in 1995. He allowed hundreds of Austrian Jewish refugees to enter Switzerland after the "annexation".

Riegner's commitment to human rights

A question that not only Riegner was bothering was how to prevent mass murders on this scale in the future. Struggling to answer the question of how to prevent genocide, the *World Jewish Congress* met in Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1944. The topic was once again the rescue of the European Jews. The delegates also called for the passage of a human rights declaration for the future, equal rights for all citizens in every country, the protection of minorities and that anti-Semitism has to be prosecuted in the future. Furthermore, the arrest of perpetrators since 1933, restitutions and collective reparations were demanded. Furthermore, the establishment of a secure home for the Jewish people in the British Mandate of Palestine.

Riegner and the WJC now also put all their energy into the formulation of human rights and the United Nations Charter. He points to the Ten Commandments and respect for the other human being, which could be considered as the Jewish roots of human rights. In general, one could say that the history of the Jews in modern times is the history of the struggle for human rights. Even though many countries have been reluctant to accept human rights because they perceived them as an intervention in their internal affairs, the WJC has explicitly supported that the international community could intervene if they were violated. At least five articles of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights bear the impress of the WJC, such as Article 26 on the right of every human being to education and the right to attend school. Article 30, which says that one should not act against the Declaration and Article 29, which lays down that one should not act against the principles of the UN. Article 14 on the right of asylum, Article 7 on the prohibition of discrimination and Article 11 on the prohibition of retroactive laws has also been sharpened by the WJC. With the transition of the non-binding declaration into the two pacts on civil and political rights and on cultural, social and economic rights in 1966, it was possible to transform natural law into positive law.

After there had been a worldwide wave of anti-Semitic smear campaigns in 1959, Riegner and the WJC had become active, and in 1963 the *anti-discrimination declaration on the basis of race/ethnicity* was adopted, and in 1965 the convention.

The *anti-discrimination declaration on the basis of religion or belief* took longer. In 1981, the WJC under Riegner succeeded in adopting this together with the Vatican, who was concerned about Christians in Eastern Europe.

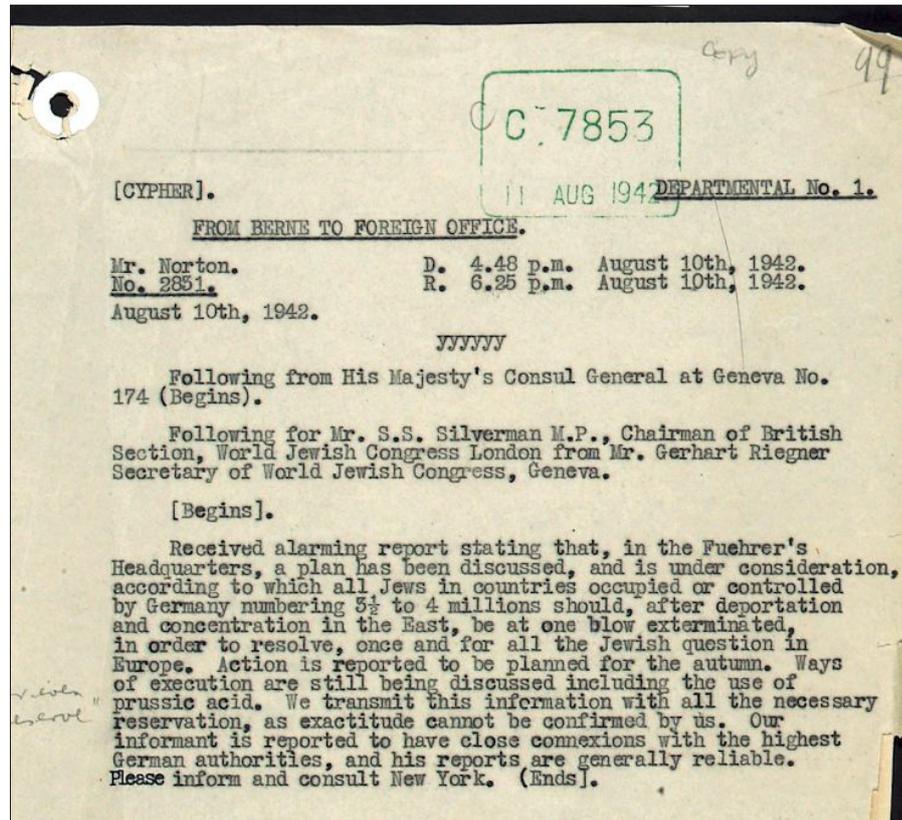
It was the merit of Riegner that in the 1990 *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, paragraph 4 condemned racism and anti-Semitism.

The fact that the protection of human rights was also misused from the late nineties of the 20th century as a pretence for conducting wars of aggression against international law in order to enforce one's own power interests is not addressed in his book, which was first published in French in 1998. One would also have liked to know more about the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. In his book, he only said that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's term has damaged the case of Israel and Judaism worldwide.

Riegner's contribution to Christian-Jewish reconciliation

In search for the reasons for the crime of the Shoah, one must also closely examine

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The famous "Riegner Telegram", with which Gerhart Riegner wanted to inform the world about the Holocaust – initially without meeting with an echo. (Picture www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2_FO-371-30917-Riegner.jpg)

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the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Even if the Nazi-friendly "German Christians," who were racist, anti-Semitic and oriented to the Führer principle, insolently and foolishly declared that the Jew Jesus was an Aryan, the National Socialists were and remained clearly against the basic principles of Christianity, and their racial mania was diametrically opposed to the Christian conception that all human beings, in the image of God, belong to one family. Nevertheless, their biologic racial anti-Semitism was able to connect with centuries-old anti-Judaic resentments of Christian denominations. Starting with the late-authored polemics between the divergent groups of Christians and rabbinic Judaism reflected by passages in the *New Testament*, then with the Church Fathers of the third and fourth century, with *St. Thomas Aquinas* and innumerable councils: The contempt and disparagement of the Jews ran like a red thread through the history of Christianity. Again and again attempts were made to redefine the relationship of Christians to Jews, but only the serious and in-depth reflection on the Shoah brought a decisive breakthrough. Riegner's contribution was essential in the attempts of the Catholic Church and the *World Council of Churches*, an ecumenical association of hundreds of Protestants, Reformed, Anglican and Orthodox

churches, to redefine their relationship with Judaism. He freely admitted that he was able to take advantage of the rivalries among the various Christian denominations. Particularly in the case of the epochal break of the Catholic Church with its two thousand years old tradition of the "doctrine of contempt" (*Jules Isaac*) of the Jews, Riegner was there lobbying in the background. Beginning with the Council's declaration "Nostra aetate" of 1965, especially in its Chapter 4 on the relationship to Judaism, a rapprochement of the Catholic Church to Judaism began. Jews were no longer considered to be murderers of God, blind and hardened, rejected by God, and punished with the Diaspora, to whom God had revoked the old covenant. In several documents up to our present time, the Jews were described by the Catholics as "favoured and elder brothers," according to Pope *John Paul II*, and "fathers in the faith," according to Pope *Benedict XVI*, as worshippers of one and the same God of Israel. Finally, this also cleared the way for the recognition of the State of Israel by the Vatican in 1993, since Catholics no longer considered Jews to be in the Diaspora, since the accusation of the murder of God, as mentioned above, had already been rejected in 1965 with "Nostra aetate". Riegner had played an essential role in this rapprochement and was officially invited to the solemn certification. Riegner, who died in 2001, still could witness the plea

for forgiveness from Pope John Paul II in 2000 in Rome and Israel. This was also an initial reaction of liberal Jewish representatives to "Nostra aetate," also in the year 2000; but this declaration was still sharply criticised by Jewish Orthodox circles. Riegner did not live to see, as of 2011, almost fifty years after the Council's declaration "Nostra aetate," that Orthodox Jewish groups also turned to dialogue and thus reconciliation with the Vatican. They emphasised that, despite all irreconcilable differences concerning Jesus, the common ground should be put to the fore: the commitment to peace and social justice. Riegner would have been very happy about this, this reconciliation of people of different faiths was a matter close to his heart.

It is worthwhile to take the book in hand and go on a tour d'horizon through the 20th century. with all its disasters, but also with all its successful encounters of people of the most diverse provenance with the great goal of achieving more humanity.

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Being human in the Christian faith with a view to world affairs

Obituary of Bishop Dr Elmar Fischer

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

On 19 January 2022, Bishop Dr Elmar Fischer passed away at the age of 85 after a short serious illness in Feldkirch in Vorarlberg, Austria. Elmar Fischer was an honorary member of the working group “Mut zur Ethik”. His funeral took place in Feldkirch Cathedral on 28 January with the participation of numerous church and political dignitaries, priests, relatives, friends and acquaintances. Before the funeral service began, the church bells were tolling for 15 minutes in all the parishes of the country.

It was a dignified and appreciating and also very personal farewell to Bishop Fischer. The requiem was directed by Bishop Benno Elbs, Elmar Fischer’s former student and successor. “On behalf of the Diocese of Feldkirch, I would like to thank former Bishop Elmar Fischer for his service as a priest and bishop. With his many years of commitment, he has set important accents for the appreciation and support of families in our country,” Bishop Elbs praised him. Elmar Fischer’s predecessor, Bishop Klaus Küng, gave the sermon.

“Bishop Elmar never thought of himself as something special, as particularly gifted, particularly skilled, particularly suited. He probably did not even consider himself particularly virtuous, but he had this desire to seek the Kingdom of God in everything,” Klaus Küng emphasised in his sermon.

Active participation in “Mut zur Ethik”

Since the founding of the working group “Mut zur Ethik” in 1993, Bishop Fischer, at that time still Vicar General, has attended and actively participated in the annual three-day congresses which took place in Feldkirch for many years (later in Switzerland).

The basic concern of the congresses was, and still is, to work together on common ground and to let each other live in the smaller to medium differences. The common ground is the democratic rule of law and the long-standing values of Christian occidental culture. Bishop Fischer fully shared these basic concerns and lived great tolerance towards other religions and world views.

“Mut zur Ethik” became a matter close to his heart, and whenever his limited time allowed, he came during the three



Bishop Dr Elmar Fischer during his lecture at the conference “Mut zur Ethik” in September 2021. (Picture wp)

“Seek the kingdom of God – in everything! The other things will be added to you”

Elmar Fischer was born in 1936 in Feldkirch-Tisis, Austria. From 1950 to 1955 he attended the teacher training college in Feldkirch; then he studied philosophy and Catholic theology at the University of Innsbruck until 1962. In 1969 he was awarded a doctorate in theology. He was ordained priest on 29 June 1961. From 1970 to 1982 he was the director of the diocesan boarding school *Marianum* in Bregenz and from 1974 to 1990 director of the diocesan *Training Institute for Marriage, Family and Life Counselling*. From 1979 to 1990 he directed the *Marriage and Family Centre* of the Diocese of Feldkirch (EFZ). In 1989 he was appointed Vicar General of the Diocese of Feldkirch by Bishop Klaus Küng. Pope John

Paul II awarded him the title of Papal Prelate of Honour on 27 February 1990. In 1991, he was officially entered in the state register of psychotherapists. On 24 May 2005, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him Bishop of Feldkirch. He chose his episcopal motto from the *Gospel of Matthew*: “Seek the kingdom of God – in everything! The other things will be added to you”.

After his retirement in 2011, he lived in Hittisau in the Bregenz Forest, where he ran a spiritual centre together with the Sisters of the *Order of the Servants of the Blood of Christ*. Bishop Fischer had helped the order to achieve ecclesiastical recognition, and the sisters thanked him for this with their devoted care until the end.

days and listened closely, even if the various congress contributions often lasted up to late at night. Over the years, numerous contributions by him have also been published in *Current Concerns*. They include his impressive travel reports with deepening reflections from Guadalupe and from Brazil on the work of his friend Bishop *Alfredo*, who has been tirelessly taking care of street children there since 1984

under the most difficult conditions and has since been able to build up numerous social centres.

He made up his own mind

The then Bishop of Feldkirch, Klaus Küng, had asked his Vicar General Fischer, to participate in the congress after the initiator of “Mut zur Ethik”, Dr Anne-

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"Being human in the Christian faith ..."

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marie Buchholz-Kaiser, and some colleagues had presented the basic concern of the congresses to him. It was a very difficult time for us at that time. Topics such as ethical foundations, preservation of values, family, education, drugs, law were not "politically correct" for some even then, and the congress was initially subjected to fierce attacks, including in the media.

Elmar Fischer was not impressed by the barrage of the media, he made up his own mind, and obviously he liked the contents of the congresses. At the annual congresses, he often came for a coffee before the start in our specially equipped coffee shop at the *Montforthaus* in Feldkirch and enjoyed the exchange and also the selection from the vast quantities of homemade cakes that he could savour.

Without having to step into the foreground, he showed interest in all the congress activities. The enthusiastic sportsman was happy to share his experiences of climbing, hiking, ski tours and table tennis. He then listened attentively to the various congress contributions before making his own.

"A great concern for him were young people"

"He liked to go climbing, and I accompanied him a few times. [...] Young people were a big concern for him. He studied at the teacher training college. He came from a family of teachers, and that certainly gave his life a direction, to have a pedagogical goal. [...] He once told me that in his first year as a religion teacher, he was voted the most popular teacher by the pupils. He was sporty, he was young, it made him happy of course, but it also made him think whether he was perhaps demanding too little of the pupils and he then tightened the reins. That's Elmar Fischer. [...] That's how I got to know and appreciate him, as straightforward with a focus on the essentials. [...] Someone who definitely saw the difficulties and problems and named them with openness. He was sincere and loyal. A very good colleague, and he was also my friend, with the difficult tasks and also on the mountain. And I am still very grateful to him today."

Bishop Klaus Küng, excerpt from the Sermon, Feldkirch, 28 January 2022

"Something that was very much Elmar's nature was his sense of humour."

"It is a personal matter for me to still say thank you to Bishop Elmar. The first encounter I had with him was when I was ten years old and a homesick pupil at the Marianum, when he was the director and ran the boarding school there. [...] Over there by the grave I remembered various situations beforehand that we went through together, quite beautiful ones, but also some that were not entirely easy for either of us during those years. But one thing that was very characteristic of Elmar was his sense of humour. There were hardly any situations where there wasn't something somewhere that lightened up a situation, that made it possible for us to move on together. [...] He was a person who tried very hard to understand things, to understand life, to understand theology, to understand psychology, the attitude of man."

Bishop Benno Elbs, personal thanks, Feldkirch, 28 January 2022

Whenever he was able, he personally held the Sunday service for the congress participants in the Feldkirch Cathedral.

In 2015, when reading the final version of the "Manifesto for Europe – We want a Europe of peace and justice!", Elmar Fischer spontaneously and loudly exclaimed: "I fully support that."

Rich wealth of experience from practical activity

He knew how to fruitfully combine his core issues of marriage and family, youth, love, human education, being human with a view to world events and with his Christian beliefs.

The development of the human being towards humanity (ability to love and live) was a great concern of Elmar Fischer. In doing so, he was able to draw on his rich wealth of experience as a teacher, boarding school director and marriage, family and life counsellor. Bishop Elmar Fischer also stood as a psychotherapist and family counsellor in the tradition of the Catholic doctrine of faith, which has reconciled itself with the secular human sciences and applies their insights into the human being for the benefit of those seeking advice. "Person – comprehensive appreciation of being human" was the title of his lecture at "Mut zur Ethik" in 2017: "There I think it is simply hap-

piness when we know from our faith that we have an ideology that can bring people together, without injustice, of course with the difficulties that can exist. But ultimately with the orientation that we deal with each other on an equal footing and that in this way we can also build a society that can get by without big wars, but can level out inequalities with negotiation, with dialogue and with these means. That in this way we have the possibility to create a world that serves peace and that is oriented towards peace. From my point of view and my experience, I would therefore like to point this out again: This conference, which is taking place here, which always has this orientation, serves this goal and thus has a worldwide significance, a world-historical significance. It is a very essential contribution to what today's world needs for survival."

Bishop Fischer was a great support and enrichment to our working group "Mut zur Ethik" over the many years, both professionally and personally, for which we thank him from the bottom of our hearts. We will honour his memory. •

Living dialogue!

"Dialogue requires personal commitment. In these conversations, it is always about communicating one's own point of view to the other in an understandable and open manner, to take up the other's opinion without bias, to clarify differences and points of agreement, to deal with differences of opinion in such a way that factual differences do not undermine human esteem, that even human differences of attitude are still dealt with respect, that ultimately the truth is sought by the dialogue partners.

Dialogue is a way of dealing with each other that demands all of us as human beings. It must not be a mere conversation or communication technique, not a 'means to an end'. For this very reason, it is always a profound challenge to the image of man, especially when it is meant to turn conflicts into peace, when differences of opinion cannot be overcome.

Living dialogue needs commitment. However, it creates meaning, brings values, and therefore carries within it the constructive energy of genuine humanity."

From the lecture by Bishop Elmar Fischer at the congress "Strengthening People – Living Democracy, Values, Education and Dialogue" from 3 to 5 September 2004 in Feldkirch/Vorarlberg