

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,
and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

What is wrong with our schools?

by Dr Eliane Perret, curative teacher and psychologist

Acute teacher shortage! In the last few weeks, there was probably no newspaper, no TV channel and no radio station that did not make this a topic. But isn't it true that our schools have been facing the same problem in recent years? That in school buildings teachers were quitting by the dozen, falling ill or switching to other professions, and that we had to make do with stopgap solutions? All at the expense of our children and young people, who only have one school term. Again now! What has been going wrong for years? What are the underlying reasons for this deplorable state of affairs? Facing up to this question is inevitable and must not be denied any longer.

Leo received his new school backpack already six months ago. He is now starting first grade. "Yes, he is happy, but actually kindergarten was already almost like school, filling in worksheets, writing numbers and letters. Leo was watched by his kindergarten teacher and judged with lists of crosses," the mother thinks regretfully, "he missed playing and doing handicrafts together. But now a new time begins for him." But she knows that Leo can hardly linger longer on one thing. "If the teacher will then also tell her again that it needs to be clarified?" she ponders. It was already a topic of conversation in kindergarten. "If only we were in the Canton of Ticino, there they obviously get along better with lively children." Her husband had read in the newspaper a few years ago that fewer children there were being diagnosed with ADHD and prescribed *Ritalin*. "Fortunate-

"Many interested contemporaries puzzle over the reasons for today's problems and look for solutions. This cannot be done without careful analysis, because an honest public debate about the cultural change of our education system never took place."

ly, the school management of her first-grader still found a teacher during the holidays, so actually not a "real" teacher, but someone who is now trying his hand at school after a very, very short training period at the teacher training college," she muses further. The other son will have a young teacher in the middle school who is interrupting her education to gain her first experience in teaching. "Hopefully, at least she won't be one of those who quit after a short time because they can't cope," the mother reflects. That was the case with the eldest daughter in the upper school. There, teachers took turns staying only a short time in the increasingly neglected class, so that they finally pooled all their money in the family to send their daughter to a private school. Actually, they didn't think that was right, because the primary school (Volksschule) is for "the people" (Volk) and is financed by their taxes. But now Leo's mother tries to put her worries aside and face the new challenges with confidence.

Leo's mother is not alone

But Leo's mother is not alone in her worries. In the last few weeks, reports of a blatant shortage of teachers in primary schools have been piling up. One even dared to speak of an "education crisis". Possible solutions ranged from an increase in the size of school classes over a compulsory increase in the teacher's number of teaching hours to easier or, on the contrary, also more difficult requirements for access to training.

Finally, there were "liberating" announcements from the cantonal education departments that the problem had been solved almost everywhere. However, one did not learn exactly how, except that some classes now had teachers without training (but with life and professional experience) or also students from teacher training colleges who interrupted their studies to teach (which, by the way, had already happened before).

Not sugar-coating, but an honest analysis

Wouldn't now be the time to think more fundamentally about what is actually going wrong in our education system? After all, the lack of teachers, the high turnover in the school buildings, teaching outside the subject area or in foreign levels and burn-outs are a problem that our schools have been suffering from for several years – and that is always sugar-coated. Honest, independent research into the causes would be indicated, because the "patient school" also has the right to a careful diagnosis and professionally correct "therapy". Only then can measures be taken that actually work. Because a confectioner works with sugar-coating, it does not belong in the hands of those responsible for education!

A long aberration

The analysis of the current state of our primary school¹, however, requires a look at what has happened in our primary school over at least the last three decades. Many people are hardly aware that this is where the roots of today's misery lie. Anyone who has followed the developments in our education system knows about the tornado that swept over the schools during this period. Previously, Swiss schools had always been certified as being of very high quality in international comparison. The

Dear readers of *Current Concerns*

Due to operational reasons, the next issue of *Current Concerns* (No. 19/2022) will not be published until 27 September 2022.

"The unsubstantiated argument that the development of Swiss schools had come to a standstill in the 19th century and would now lose touch with the world if they did not join in was repeated like a prayer mill. It seemed forgotten that Switzerland had previously always been admired for its excellent school system ..."

“What is wrong with our schools?”

continued from page 1

gap between high-achieving and weaker children was small and the school was well anchored in the democratic system of our country (as it should be for a primary school!). This changed in the mid-nineties when the OECD, under pressure from the USA, forced *UNESCO* out of its leadership role. The decisive factor was the threat by the USA to withdraw from this international organisation, just as they had withdrawn from *UNESCO* in 1984 when *UNESCO* had not yielded to their demands at the time.² The OECD initially resisted, but then gave in to the pressure and worked out the indicators with which education systems were to be compared internationally. It thus appointed itself the sole arbiter for the assessment of national education systems. To this end, it designed the *PISA* tests, which were prepared over five years by about 300 international scientists. Accordingly, they had no connection whatsoever with the European educational tradition and national educational concepts and curricula, but were based on the proverbially bad Anglo-American educational system. Despite the associated theoretical and cultural break with the European educational tradition, the OECD countries – including Switzerland – gave their blessing to the *PISA* concept and thus established (not least due to incipient peer pressure) the supremacy of the economic organisation in the field of education.³

Shock strategy as catalyst

Switzerland was shocked by the unexpectedly poor results of the first *PISA* test. This acted as a catalyst for a cascade of reforms that steadily removed our primary school system from its democratic structures, which were obviously “disruptive”. This was done so easily that one of the few independent studies marvelled at how loosely these fundamental reforms proceeded in Switzerland and that not even the cantons, as the most important veto players, offered the expected resistance.⁴ Since then, our education system has been characterised by an internationally equalising ranking fetishism, which was absolutely unnecessary because the quality of our schools was outstanding.

Schools and universities as customer-oriented service companies

NPM, these three letters stand for *New Public Management*.⁵ It is the tool of neoliberal governments to reduce public expenditure as much as possible and to turn the state into a customer-oriented service company. This was the beginning of the transformation of our democratically organised and controlled education system into a business-managed school operation taken over from the private sector. From

then on, it was all about austerity programmes, efficiency and effectiveness. In the Canton of Zurich, the name of the then cantonal councillor *Ernst Buschor* and his management team is associated with this. Formerly a professor of business administration at the University of St. Gallen HSG, he was a vehement advocate of NPM. He took over as head of the Zurich Department of Education in 1995 on the condition that he would be able to transform it with these methods (as he had previously done in the health sector). In an article in the “*Tages-Anzeiger*” he pointedly promised to “take the Zurich school system down from its high pedagogical horse and transform it into a service enterprise”. He initiated a storm of reforms – starting with the university, which was converted into the *Bologna system* from 1999; the secondary schools received a new Matura ordinance, and the then new universities of applied sciences were also run according to NPM criteria from the beginning. Always justified by financial

intention was to restructure them into service companies with global budgets and corresponding hierarchical levels. This included corporate structures, which is why school management boards (also known as CEOs in the private sector) were introduced as early as 1996. They replaced the previous collegial cooperation with a house director who, as *primus inter pares*, took over administrative tasks and represented the team at the meetings of the school board. Whereas headmasters were at first dedicated, sometimes overly ambitious teachers, today this “job” can be taken over by managers without any teaching experience. Management theories also determine the content of expensive school management training. A very important point of reform was the abolition of the democratic anchoring of schools, typical of Switzerland, with corresponding subsidiarily organised authority structures in their respective communes and regions. This was the only way to push through the reforms with a top-down strategy. This

“There was – unnoticed by many – a steady reform process at all levels of our education system in the last decades, from the administrative structure to the training and educational content, which tried to detach our school system from its direct democratic roots. This was tantamount to a paradigm shift from the European educational tradition to Anglo-American concepts also at the level of teaching.”

shortages and corresponding pressure to save money.

GATS – public services as a commodity

This period also saw – and not coincidentally – the global free trade agreements concluded in 1995 within the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which today involve 164 countries. One of these agreements was the *General Agreement on Trade in Services* (GATS). It demands an ongoing process of privatisation of public services. Switzerland signed this agreement in 1995.

Education is one of the sectors listed in the GATS; it has not been subject to any of the possible exception clauses by Switzerland. This is important to mention because without including these international aspirations of the globalised economy, the current aberrations in our education system can neither be understood nor corrected.

De-democratisation, corporate structures and CEOs

NPM thus provided the roadmap with which our schools have been turned upside down over the last three decades. The

is why the school boards, which had previously been elected by the people, were deprived of their power in favour of the school management and turned into administrative authorities. The next higher authority, the district school administration, which had previously supervised the schools and had been the contact for appeals, was replaced under the catchword “professionalisation” by a specialist *office for school evaluation*, which was appointed by the administration. Since then, it has been reviewing the quality of schools in a procedure that is labour-intensive for the schools and, according to many, unnecessarily time-consuming and unhelpful. The school levels were also reorganised and the kindergarten, which was well established and appreciated by the Swiss population, was replaced by a basic level that was already designed with school material in mind (even though the term “kindergarten” was retained in many places).

For teachers, therefore, a new, sharp wind was blowing. They were no longer elected by the electorate, but were now hired on contracts common in the private

"What is wrong with our schools?"

continued from page 2

sector and subjected to salary-related staff appraisals. Their professional mandate was redefined and they had to adapt their teaching to the now propagated individualising methods of classroom management.

New training concepts at the universities of teacher education

Just like all other reform steps, the redesign of teacher education is therefore also in the context of the predetermined direction set by the OECD and the *Framework for Action on Education 2030* of the UNESCO. A very decisive reform step was therefore – especially in the context of today's misery – the abolition of the previous training centres for teachers, the seminaries, where they had been introduced to their profession by professionals with practical experience and oriented towards the European educational tradition. Now, teacher training colleges were founded, where today students are primarily introduced to the methodological and content-related teaching principles from the Anglo-American world. This includes predominantly self-organised learning, which builds on the competences of the controversial *Curriculum 21* that can be tested by means of tests. This is often taught – as we hear from students – by lecturers whose requirement profile apparently no longer necessarily includes their own teaching experience in primary school.

Silently heading in the wrong direction

In summary: There was – unnoticed by many – a steady reform process at all lev-

els of our education system in the last decades, from the administrative structure to the training and educational content, which tried to detach our school system from its direct democratic roots. This was tantamount to a paradigm shift from the European educational tradition to Anglo-American concepts also at the level of teaching. Referendums followed, with the aim of getting the people on board. The legislative proposals put to the vote were not very transparent and were accompanied by sophisticated propaganda campaigns. They contained a lot of leeway for ordinances, with which those responsible for education could subsequently introduce controversial measures without any problems. Examples were the 2006 referenda on an *education article in the Federal Constitution* and the establishment of the *HarmoS Concordat* by the democratically dubiously legitimised EDK (Education Directors' Conference). Both were "sold" under the premise of aligning the cantonal education systems, but were a further process of de-democratisation that meant an increase in power and centralisation at the federal level at the expense of the cantons. The unsubstantiated argument that the development of Swiss

schools had come to a standstill in the 19th century and would now lose touch with the world if they did not join in was repeated like a prayer mill. It seemed forgotten that Switzerland had previously always been admired for its excellent school system ...

Despite this concentrated propaganda, many alert and responsible contemporaries resisted this misguided development. One example is the popular initiatives in 11 cantons in German-speaking Switzerland with which they tried to prevent the introduction of *Curriculum 21* (although the votes were lost, a quarter or even every third voter always supported these proposals).

Honesty is the order of the day

And what does this have to do with the concerns of Leo's mother described at the beginning and the precarious situation of the teacher shortage? Many interested contemporaries puzzle over the reasons for today's problems and look for solutions. This cannot be done without careful analysis, because an honest public debate about the cultural change of our education system never took place. On the contrary, the critical objections and well-founded analyses of teachers and responsible education officials were not only thrown to the wind and dismissed as conspiracy theories, but were shut down for years with an ugly media campaign that was unusual for Switzerland. Since then, many teachers no longer dare to speak out loud and clear, and more than a few left the profession that was no longer theirs, reduced their workload, took on a pedagogical niche or took early retirement. Others went overboard to "get it right", to avoid criticism, some also because they saw a possible career opportunity for themselves in education administration. Burnouts increasingly became common occupational hazards for teachers. It was also noticeable that although the teacher training colleges were very busy, many of the trainees gave up their studies and the new trainees did not even enter professional life or only with a small workload, or even quit again after a short time in resignation and disappointment. (What company could afford such a flop?)

Without knowledge of the geopolitical connections of the school "reforms", we turn over details and find no remedy. Not in pedagogy, neither in teacher training and nor in administrative structures. One can, according to the principle of "divide and conquer", let the semi-informed become tired of blaming each other and continue to pursue the strategic goal.

Now exactly this statement could be emphasised as pure conspiracy theory, were it not for the many authors (not only in *Current Concerns*) who repeatedly pointed out these connections.

Through integration into international agreements and subordination under supranational authorities such as the OECD, WTO, WHO – I was present when this was discussed in the mid-nineties at the Limmathaus in Zurich among SP exponents – they wanted Switzerland "to be liberated of its

"Market instead of State" was the motto

by Urs Graf

reform back-log". While the globalising Left [party] made "cucumber salad out of the state", the globalising right-wing bourgeoisie favoured *New Public Management*, the denationalisation of the state. "Market instead of State" was the motto. Serious changes, above especially regarding the basic necessities were omitted from the democratic discussion.

The rejection of the popular initiatives "Referendum on state treaties" and "Swiss law before international law" was probably only possible through avoidance of a thorough reflection on this issue. It should perhaps be said that this reform school produces not only losers but the winners as well. Compliant agents of this system, because the children no longer grow up as a class community, which strengthens an emotional attachment with everyone and fosters a social conscience.

continued on page 4

Those who negotiate with the EU should know to what they are committing themselves

ds. Since the Federal Council broke off negotiations on the framework agreement with the EU, not a day goes by without the Swiss media making the relationship between Switzerland and the EU a topic of discussion. In the process, Switzerland and especially the Federal Council are often criticised, while the EU's demands are given wide space without criticism. The tone is often obsequious. Instead of honestly informing, which would be their task, they engage in politics: they urge the Federal Council to act more quickly and warn that the EU could lose patience with Switzerland.

In fact, however, Switzerland is being massively pressured and blackmailed by the EU's demands and sanctions, and it would be time to educate the population about this and give them a realistic picture of this EU.

From the EEC to the EU with US support

The merger of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg to form the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 was largely initiated by the USA and had a politi-

cal goal from the beginning – the United States of Europe.

Jean Monnet, who is considered the spiritual father of the European community, worked in the USA for 20 years in the financial and war economy. He maintained close contacts with the economic and political leadership of the USA, and his close friendship with the American Secretary of State *John Forster Dulles* made him the representative of American foreign policy in Europe.

The USA did not want a free association of European countries, which would have preserved their sovereignty. And they got their way. (See Wüthrich, Werner. *Economy and Direct Democracy in Switzerland*, pp. 293; in German)

With the Juncker-Method ...

“We decide something, float it in the room and wait a while to see what happens. If there is no big hue and cry and no uprisings because most people don't understand what has been decided, then we continue – step by step, until there is no turning back. (Jean-Claude Juncker in “Der Spiegel” 52/1999)

Exactly according to the Juncker method, the EU has developed into a bureau-

cratic juggernaut over the last 30 years, which is seizing more and more power and which no one can oversee, let alone control. More and more directives and regulations that have to be transposed into national law in the countries are made in Brussels.

... to the Nato-EU

With the war in Ukraine, the EU's ties to the USA and NATO have reached a new level. The US has made the EU act against its own interests and implement the American sanctions against Russia; much to the delight of the American oil, gas and arms industries, which profit from the high prices and forced armament. It looks like EU policy has essentially become NATO policy controlled by the United States.

The fact that Switzerland has adopted the EU sanctions against Russia, and that individual Federal Councillors are now even seeking a rapid rapprochement with the EU, is disconcerting, because the Federal Council and ultimately the citizens would have every reason to carefully weigh up which agreements they want to conclude with this NATO-EU. •

“What is wrong with our schools?”

continued from page 3

The reasons for this have not been independently investigated to this day. This article is intended as a contribution to that.

Education instead of classroom management

I still think that I have chosen the finest profession I can imagine as a teacher. I would also grant this insight to young teachers or those who have been in the profession for some time and sometimes doubt it. And of course, I wish all children and young people a school time in which they can build up and maintain joy in learning. They only have this chance once and carry the experience with them throughout their lives. Of course, parents also play an important role in making this happen, because through their upbringing they introduce their child to the world and prepare him or her for how to meet the demands of school. If they can form

a working alliance with the teacher, the chances for their child are best. However, as parents you must demand (!) that your child can attend a school that is based on a pedagogical-psychological foundation as it has developed in the European educational tradition and is constantly being continued. Today, scientific findings are available on how to design child-centred teaching.⁶ These have been largely neglected in recent decades because the thrust of the reforms was not pedagogically justified. Now everyone is challenged and must get in the way if we want to regain the formerly good level of education, an important substance of our country. Let's get started! •

¹ In the following, I will focus on the schools in the Canton of Zurich whereas the development in the other cantons has been similar.

² In 1984, the USA, Great Britain and Singapore withdrew from *UNESCO* after the latter had passed a resolution that should reduce the dependence on the four major news organisations AP, UPI, AFP and *Reuters*.

³ cf. Langer, Roman. “Warum haben die Pisa gemacht?” (“Why did they do Pisa?”) In: < id> (2008). “Warum tun die das?” (“Why do they do that?”) Governance analyses on the steering action in school development. Wiesbaden: vs Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften (Publisher for Social Sciences); also: Martens, Kerstin/Wolf, Klaus-Dieter. “Paradoxien der Neuen Staatsräson” (“Paradoxes of the New State reason”). In: *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* (Journal of International Relations), issues 13 (2006) number 2, pp. 145-176. Cited in: Buchser, Sandra. «Ein Kick gegen Schrott». (“A kick against junk”). In: *Zeit-Fragen* (*Current Concerns*) No. 25, 11 of June 2012.

⁴ Bieber, T. (2010). Sanfte Steuerungsmechanismen in der Bildungspolitik. *Die PISA-Studie und der Bologna Prozess in der Schweiz* (Soft steering mechanisms in education policy. The PISA study and the Bologna process in Switzerland). University of Bremen: TranState Working Papers No. 117. SRA Sfb597.

⁵ cf. Bonfranchi, Riccardo/Perret, Eliane. *Heilpädagogik im Dialog. Praktische Erfahrungen, theoretische Grundlagen und aktuelle Diskurse* (Curative Pedagogy in dialogue. Practical experiences, theoretical foundations and current discourses). Bielefeld: Athena-Verlag, 2021, pp. 141.

⁶ cf. Kissling, Beat. *Sind Inklusion und Integration in der Schule gescheitert? Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung* (Have inclusion and integration in schools failed?). Bern: Hogrefe-Verlag, 2022, pp. 109.

The Ukraine conflict – a proxy war?

Swiss Federal Councillor Maurer's analysis is shared worldwide outside the Anglo-Saxon propaganda bubble

ts. What Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer recently said about the Ukraine crisis in Bühler, a municipality in the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden, was strongly echoed in the press and under the dome of the Federal Palace. Since there is no speech manuscript, it is best to fall back on local reporting that has not yet been "framed" by a central editorial office.¹ According to this, the SVP magistrate is said to have commented on two questions: When the war is likely to end and how long its effects are likely to be felt in Switzerland and the world? As far as the flow of refugees is concerned, Maurer is said to have predicted increased tensions, since Ukrainian refugees are better off than other refugees due to their protected status S. The fact that there is a rumbling in the population can easily be seen all over the country. Maurer classified the Ukraine conflict as a proxy war between West and East. NATO on one side, Russia on the other: a power struggle on Ukraine's back. Once again, the world was threatened with division as in the Cold War. Once again, we are in an arms spiral, once again we are sitting on a powder barrel. Although the world and Switzerland had benefited from Switzerland's protection mandates up to now, these and one of the most important pillars of our country, neutrality, were up for grabs. The Federal Council was also concerned about the energy and food issues as well as the lack of will to defend the country militarily. While in Appenzell Inner- and Ausserrhoden, 80 per cent of conscripts were still doing military service, about one third of the Swiss preferred civilian service. Maurer recalled the insight of our ancestors to set the price of entry as high as possible, to achieve a strength that it was not even worth attacking Switzerland. Without an army, however, we would become a victim. In conclusion, Maurer did not want to rule out the possibility that we could be confronted with a nuclear war in Europe in a few weeks.

The Ukraine war as a proxy war? It was this statement that earned the Feder-

Kissinger: "Issues which we partly created"

ts. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, *Henry Kissinger*, the 99-year-old former US Secretary of State, expressed concern about the "disequilibrium" in the world. He said: "We are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it's supposed to lead to."

Washington's foreign policy finds no mercy before Kissinger: Washington no longer has a great leader, rejects traditional diplomacy, and US foreign policy dangerously lacks strategic purpose. Kissinger criticised politicians who, like their constituents, could no longer separate "personal relationships with the enemy" from maintaining stable diplomatic talks. One is very responsive to the "emotion of the moment".

As for the Ukraine crisis, Kissinger stresses that Ukraine is a collection of territories that once belonged to Russia. Peace, he says, is only possible if Ukraine acts as a buffer between Russia and the West. "I was in favour of full independence of Ukraine, but I thought its best role was something like Finland."

Kissinger had already pointed to the West's complicity before the war began

in January: A careless policy by the US and NATO had helped trigger the conflict in Ukraine. Now he sees "no choice but to take *Vladimir Putin's* stated security concerns seriously and believes that it was a mistake for NATO to signal to Ukraine that it might eventually join the alliance".

How the war will end? Kissinger foresees a settlement in which Russia will retain its 2014 conquests in Crimea and parts of the Donbass region.

Looking also at the conflict over Taiwan, Kissinger said, "In my thinking, equilibrium has two components. A kind of balance of power, with an acceptance of the legitimacy of sometimes opposing values. Because if you believe that the final outcome of your effort has to be the imposition of your values, then I think equilibrium is not possible. So one sort is a kind of absolute equilibrium," he said. The other one, he said, is "behavioural equilibrium, meaning there are limitations to the exercise of your own capabilities and power in relation to what is needed for the overall equilibrium".

Source: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/henry-kissinger-is-worried-about-disequilibrium-11660325251>

al Councillor scorn, among others from exponents of the Greens, the SP and the FDP. A statement and assessment that admittedly contradicts the NATO and EU language rules and the accepted definitional sovereignty, but is in best agreement with voices from the non-Western world. And that is where about 80% of the world's population lives. Those who try to break through the Europe-centric narrow view of the world, distance themselves from the Anglo-Saxon narrative and take note of voices from Africa, Latin America, India, Pakistan, Singapore, etc., but also from the USA, realise one thing: they see things quite differently. And for the most part, they do not support the sanctions of the USA and the EU. And they see the problem in NATO's eastward expan-

sion, i.e. in the USA. This is also the case of the US-American political science professor at the University of Chicago, *John Mearsheimer*, or the once neoliberal US economist *Jeffrey Sachs*. For not all USAs are the same, and there too are voices that describe the prevailing narrative as monstrous propaganda and reject it as dangerous. Not to mention the "grand old man" of US foreign policy, *Henry Kissinger* (see box). In Asia, for example, *Kishore Mahbubani* should be mentioned. Years ago, he wrote a book against the West-centred, narrow ideological view of the world with the provocative title "Can Asians Think?" And isn't he right, still? Are we in the West listening to the voices of the "rest" of the world? Doesn't the rhetoric of the struggle of democracies against autocracies drown out the old Western arrogance of knowing better than the formerly colonised peoples? Irony or tears? A federal councillor from the party that is accused of ignoring the world has to come and tell us what large parts of the rest of the world also see, while the Greens and the Left, who promote post-colonial studies, uncritically propagate the Western narrative. The statement of the South African

"A 99-year-old educating a 79-year-old"

How did China react to the *Kissinger* interview in the "Wall Street Journal"? "This is a 99-year-old educating a 79-year-old," *Lü Xiang*, research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the *Global Times* on Sunday, alluding to the ages of *Kissinger* and *Joe Biden*. "Apparently, the current US government has no idea about

what the equilibrium is, as first, you have to admit the legitimacy of your counterpart. If you challenge the legitimacy including the sovereignty of your counterpart, it's impossible to reach an equilibrium," he said.

Source: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202208/1272970.shtml>

Swiss Foreign Ministry: Incredible arrogance or total loss of reality?

by Christian Müller

With its decision to adopt the EU's sanctions against Russia across-the-board (!), the current Swiss government has dramatically violated and perhaps even irretrievably destroyed Switzerland's historically and politically consolidated neutrality. Geneva, the second most important UN location, will also increasingly lose its function as an international conference venue. And with the "Ukraine Recovery Conference" in Lugano, Switzerland has additionally confirmed that it no longer wants to adopt a neutral stance. Nevertheless, the Foreign Ministry has positively received Volodymyr Zelenski's absurd idea that Switzerland should be deployed as a representative of Ukraine's interests in Moscow and has in the meantime discussed it in detail with Kiev. But the receipt is already on the table: Russia is no longer interested in Switzerland's alleged good offices.

Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis is known to be constantly on the lookout for "opportunities". And apparently he considered Zelenski's proposal to be such an "opportunity". It is no coincidence that at the WEF in Davos he proposed to change Swiss neutrality into a "cooperative neutrality": to remain neutral but to "cooperate" with one side of a conflict. And he received prominent praise for this, especially from the pro-NATO NZZ editor Georg Häsler, who is himself a colonel in the Swiss army.

Since the end of February, Switzerland has adopted all the sanctions against Russia decided by the EU across the board, i.e.

without any deviation or even clarification. In such a situation, how can one even hope to be accepted by Russia as a representative of Ukraine's interests? Is this massive overconfidence on the part of our foreign minister? Or is it simply a total loss of reality? Or, once again, simply an "opportunity" that should be seized? The "no" from Moscow was anything but surprising.

More and more hatred of all Russians and everything Russian is being promoted

The whole story is also quite embarrassing for the major Swiss media. They almost unanimously plead for a continuation of the war in Ukraine and against negotiations, but have prominently welcomed Ignazio Cassis' plans – see, for example, the front page of the "Aargauer Zeitung" of 10 August 2022. And wherever authorities or organisations do something to fuel the already widespread Russophobia, there's praise or at least polite silence. In St. Gallen, for example, the opera "The Maid of Orleans" by the Russian composer Tchaikovsky was cancelled for the festival and replaced by Verdi's opera "Giovanna d'Arco". Reason: A public performance of compositions by Tchaikovsky could not be expected of the Ukrainian refugees here to put up with this. Note: The Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky lived from 1840 to 1893 ...

And in Birmenstorf in the canton of Aargau, the now also traditional "Convoy to Remember", where a good 700 historic war vehicles from all over Europe are

gathering this weekend and 20,000 visitors are expected, has also been reprogrammed: In consultation with top representatives of the Swiss army, as one could read, it was decided to hold the event despite the war in Ukraine, but this time not to show any Russian tanks. About this the "Aargauer Zeitung" literally: "The 'Convoy' commemorates D-Day – the day in 1944 when the liberation of Europe by the Allies in World War II started, according to organisers." The CH media newspapers, of which the "Aargauer Zeitung" is one, never miss an opportunity to claim that Europe was liberated by the Allies on D-Day in 1944, when anyone who has ever read a book knows that Hitler's military decline began with the gigantic – and just lost! – battles of Stalingrad (1942/43) and Kursk (1943). The fact that at a "Convoy to Remember" – a parade in memory! – in which Russian tanks and vehicles of all things are not allowed to be displayed is a particularly disgusting decision on the part of the organisers – and this in consultation with the Swiss army!

It is simply unbelievable: neutral Switzerland has become a vassal of the USA – Swiss banks, for example, comply with US sanctions against Cuba – and now also of the EU, which it never wanted to join. One can only be ashamed of the decisions of the Federal Council and the attitude of the major Swiss media. •

Source: <https://globalbridge.ch/schweizer-aussenministerium-unglaubliche-arroganz-oder-totaler-realitaetsverlust/>

(Translation Current Concerns)

"The Ukraine conflict ..."

continued from page 5

Foreign Minister, who does not want to be coerced by the US Secretary of State into condemning Russia – worthless? Because she is a woman or an African? Or is the Federal Council's attempted "cancellation" because someone from the "wrong" party called the elephant in the room? It can't be due to a possible lack of English skills of his critics, who couldn't follow a South African foreign minister or a Mahabani or Kissinger.

Wouldn't it be time for the various Swiss parties to open up to the voices of the world and look beyond their own horizons? If only to better understand propaganda? How do socially committed voices from the non-aligned countries react? And is the voice of John Pilger no long-

er worth anything to the veteran anti-imperialists who says that he has never seen such war propaganda as that of the West in his entire eventful life as a war reporter? Not even during the Vietnam or Iraq wars?

The future orientation of Switzerland, not only in Europe but also in the world, requires a calmly conducted debate with a diverse spectrum of opinions. "Cancelling" opinions is not conducive to achieving the goal. After all, the Swiss sovereign should make a broadly informed decision on whether or not to join military blocs. NATO, which is always led by a US general, the SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe), and the EU, which continues to suffer from a democratic deficit, may be an option for some. But wouldn't there be others? Just as EFTA is an alternative to the EU, in which Switzerland successfully participates, there are also al-

ternatives to rapprochement with the military alliance NATO. There is a need to discuss this. Federal Councillor Maurer is not alone in warning against nuclear war in Europe. It was the life theme of Robert S. McNamara, the US Secretary of Defense during the Cuban Missile Crisis. It is the theme of Henry Kissinger. McNamara's conclusion of the Cuban missile crisis: We "just lucked out". And his lesson for life in the nuclear age: there is no alternative to diplomacy. And that requires empathy. You have to empathise with your counterpart, understand him. That does not mean that you approve of what they are doing. If you don't do that and don't try to end the conflict diplomatically, you risk nuclear annihilation. But who can want that? •

¹ See, for example, Seraina Hess in the Thurgauer Zeitung of 15 August 2022

Swiss energy supply put to the test

Why is the Federal Council's policy so hesitant?

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

For years the Swiss Federal Electricity Commission *ElCom*¹ has been pointing out the fact that sooner or later Switzerland will be heading for an electricity shortage in winter. According to *ElCom* President Werner Luginbühl, it presently looks as if this might be sooner, namely in the upcoming winter. As early as at the beginning of July, the president of *Swissgas*, André Dosé, also warned of an impending gas shortage. The latter in particular voiced clear criticism of the Federal Council's policy.

Federal Councillor *Simonetta Sommaruga*, head of the *Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications* (DETEC), would like to hush up the unsuitability of the Federal Council's energy strategy by blaming "Russia" for causing a possible supply shortage. Indeed, in a recent incendiary speech she even used the Ukraine war as a lever for the integration of Switzerland into the EU/NATO.

Politics has taken

ElCom's warnings too little seriously

The statement by *Werner Luginbühl*, President of the *Electricity Commission* (*ElCom*), that it would be advisable to have enough candles in the house, and also enough firewood if you have a wood-burning stove, spread like wildfire through Switzerland. In a newspaper interview, *Luginbühl* went on to say: "In today's situation, it is not possible to completely rule out shutdowns by the hour. That's why it's important to take the necessary precautions." This is a worst-case scenario, *Luginbühl* said. But it makes sense to think about what you would do if you were without power for a few hours.²

To be sure, according to the *ElCom* president, Switzerland is in a better situation than many other countries as far as electricity supply is concerned. "We can produce 60 per cent of our consumption domestically with hydropower. Around one third of electricity consumption comes from nuclear power plants. And then there is indeed a remainder of 5 to 10 per cent that we have to import. That is where our greatest risks are: that we might not be able to procure that part of our electricity supply in Europe next winter."

It is the task of the Federal Council and parliament to initiate and promote the production of this "remainder". Because even an electricity agreement with the EU would not provide us with electricity and gas next winter if our neighbouring countries were short themselves.

Werner Luginbühl criticises politicians for "not having taken seriously enough the warnings *ElCom* has been issuing for years about an electricity shortage in winter. Switzerland must address the issue of supply security much more decisively and resolutely".³

This is mild criticism by the current head of *ElCom*: We may recall far more trenchant comments by his predecessor *Carlo Schmid-Sutter* from Appenzell-Innerrhoden.

"Federal Council's energy strategy is turning out to be yesterday's news"

The clear statement by NZZ economics editor *Christoph Eisenring* on the Federal Council's "Energy Strategy 2050" is all the more surprising. *ElCom* President *Luginbühl*'s recommendation that the population buy candles and firewood is, he claims, "the declaration of bankruptcy regarding the energy strategy". For the federal government admits "that it cannot protect the Swiss from precisely that danger that it itself sees as the greatest risk for the country: a shortage of electricity", says *Christoph Eisenring*.⁴ And he continues: "The Federal Council's energy strategy is turning out to be yesterday's news. There was talk of increasing efficiency, which would ensure that there would be hardly any increase in consumption. And the fact that wind and solar power need back-up power plants to make ends meet in winter was ignored for far too long." *Eisenring* asks, whether we must not make allowance to the government for the fact that the war in Ukraine was unforeseeable, and answers his question himself: "Anyone arguing in this way is taking the easy way out. The present threat corresponds with what would happen as of 2025 anyway, according to an earlier analysis by *Luginbühl*'s office."

DETEC head *Sommaruga* makes it as easy for herself: "Why do we have a problem today? Because Russia is turning off the gas tap and Switzerland is completely dependent on foreign countries for oil and gas."⁵ So once again the blame is put on Russia! And yet the Swiss "Energy Strategy 2050" concerns only the electricity supply.

On the other hand, until 2021 the security of gas supply was in no way considered to be at risk, because Russia had and has been a reliable partner for Switzerland and the other European countries for decades. Today, we Europeans have to fear a gas shortage simply because our governments have taken such massive sanctions against Russia that they cannot even

"Glencore turns huge profit thanks to high commodity prices"

"In the first half of the year 2022, *Glencore* has benefited from the high level of commodity prices and the trading business, which has recently flourished to an exceptional extent. This is reflected in a half-year profit of \$12.1 billion. Compared to the previous year, the result of this commodity trading and mining group has thus increased almost tenfold."

sda news of 4 August 2022

(or do not want to) guarantee payment to the Russian gas companies. No company would deliver under these circumstances. Instead of making sure that Russian gas flows again through *Nord Stream 1* and *Nord Stream 2*, our leaders prefer to contribute to the astronomical profits of the oil and gas industry (see box on "Glencore"). They make a lot of noise in the Gulf states in order to grab expensive fossil energies, and they build liquid gas storage facilities for dirty and even more expensive US fracking gas. Are all these really suppliers with impeccable human rights records? And we citizens have to pay for it!

"This crisis in Switzerland is largely self-inflicted"

Also *André Dosé*, former *Swiss Airlines* chief and currently president of "Swissgas", is sharply critical of the Federal Council's energy policy: "We are dependent on year-round gas imports and electricity imports in winter. This crisis in Switzerland is largely self-inflicted. Our Energy Strategy 2050 was built on sand. It was assumed that there would be no population growth and that the population would reduce electricity consumption. Likewise, electromobility was not included in the scenarios at the time of the vote. It was a pipe dream that would never have worked anyway. The war in Ukraine is now forcing us to rethink dramatically."⁶ A note for Swiss voters: As they were cheated and short-changed by the wrong forecasts in their voting booklet, the majority of voters approved the "Energy Strategy 2050" at the ballot box in May 2017!

André Dosé accuses the Federal Council of not acting adequately both in the current crisis situation and in their longer-term planning: "[...] In crises you have to move forward quickly, set priorities and make decisions". In order to guaran-

"Swiss energy supply ..."

continued from page 7

tee energy security in the long term, there is "no short-term solution. The expansion of photovoltaics is right and good – but it won't get us through the winter."

In contradiction to this, Federal Councillor Sommaruga asserts that she is doing everything possible to prevent a shortage: The Federal Council has "set up a rescue package for large electricity companies and prepared a hydropower reserve for the critical winter period. Because of the war in Ukraine, we have also instructed the gas industry to procure additional gas."⁷ In addition, the federal government has called on large companies that can work with oil instead of gas to fill their oil stocks. Well, well: A few years ago, the Swiss population was urged to replace their oil heating systems with gas heating systems. We dutifully did so – and now 300,000 flats are heated with gas, including those in the apartment building where I live. In affluent Switzerland, many still functioning oil-fired heating systems have even been ripped out! What a waste of energy! Today we no longer have an oil tank and will probably have to pay for it. But according to "*SonntagsBlick*", our energy minister has her recipes for that, too: Switzerland should "take the EU as a model" and save 15 % energy in the time till spring. The corresponding campaign (turn down the heating, take showers instead of baths, etc.) will be launched soon.

Concerning gas storage, most of the Federal Council's measures came too late, wrote *Swissgas* chief Dosé in the "*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*" in July. Today, the regional companies are busy filling the federally mandated storage facilities abroad, but, "whether the gas will really, physically flow in a European situation of shortage is anything but certain." Switzerland had missed the opportunity to act in time: "We should have secured gas for one or two billion francs three months ago. But this did not happen. *Now the acquisition will cost three times as much.*" [Emphasis *mw*] Compared to 2019, the gas price is even 25 times higher, according to Dosé! Some energy companies are earning money hand over fist, and we pay – or freeze.

The Federal Council's cutting-edge activism shows precisely just how justified Dosé's criticism is. According to its media release of 17 August 2022, it wants to use gas-fired power plants to bridge the expected winter gap. Interestingly, an "efficient, private gas-fired power plant" in Birr (Canton of Aargau) is now suddenly being conjured up out of the blue, which may "help out" in the short term ("How an Aargau reserve power plant is to bridge electricity gaps". *SRF News*, 18 August 2022). Two critical questions: Firstly, how much

will this emergency aid cost the taxpayer? Anyone who organises an emergency reserve for the winter only just before the autumn will have to pay disproportionately more! Secondly, why does the Federal Council not admit openly that so-called gas-fired power plants will almost certainly have to be run on oil, because gas is also known to be in short supply? In an aside, one learns of the Federal Council's stipulation that "due to the uncertain gas supply situation, such plants should also function with oil (dual-fuel plants), if possible." How embarrassing for the climate protectionists ...

A small consolation is the transit gas pipeline from Germany to Italy through Switzerland. André Dosé: "This is important for Switzerland's security of supply. It is specified in the concession that Switzerland can declare a shortage and that some of the gas could then flow into Switzerland." However, he warns, if no more Russian natural gas flows through the pipeline, the entire European supply would suffer. As I said, our governments are called upon to resume talks with Russia and to create a sustainable solution, not just an overpriced patches policy for the next few months.

Close the energy gap and reduce dependence on foreign countries

ElCom President Werner Luginbühl and *Swissgas* President André Dosé both see a variety of possibilities for achieving a sufficient energy supply, and *NZZ* editor Christoph Eisenring as well as many other thinking contemporaries also have their own ideas on that point. To present these here would go beyond the scope of this article. The call from Bern: "We must expand the production of renewable energies!" is to be supported, and after all, Switzerland's greatest means of electricity supply, i.e. hydropower, is being promoted more today than in the past. However, parliament should move forward with the planned "Federal Act on a Secure Electricity Supply with Renewable Energies", which has been pending in the relevant committees of the Council of States for about a year.⁸ On the first reading, one misses the urgently needed streamlined procedure for planning applications for power plants, so that the expansion of a dam will no longer be put on hold for years or even decades. But the draft law has not yet been debated in the National Council or the Council of States, so there is still hope!

"We will find comprehensive security in and with Europe" – do you really believe this, Madam Federal Councillor?

When giving a speech at an event organised by the "Association of Swiss Media" in Locarno, Ms Sommaruga apparently

forgot that the Swiss Federal Council is a collegial authority whose members should exercise some restraint in voicing their private opinions. It is particularly tasteless to misuse the war in Ukraine as a vehicle for an appeal for Switzerland's integration into the EU: "The war in Ukraine is not only a wake-up call for many in terms of energy policy. It is also a foreign policy wake-up call."⁹ It is time, she said, for a "rapprochement with Europe. We will not find comprehensive security just by spending more money on our army. We will find comprehensive security in and with Europe."

It looks as if the lady not only wants to join the EU, but also NATO – will Switzerland find "comprehensive security" there? How absurd! NATO is a war alliance, the EU is now a war party. Switzerland, on the other hand, is a neutral country, and the Federal Council is obliged under Art. 185 para. 1 of the Federal Constitution to "take measures to safeguard external security, independence and neutrality of Switzerland". It is currently not fulfilling this duty in any way, and has not been doing so for some time. Only Sommaruga's colleague in the Council, *Ueli Maurer*, recently reminded us in a speech that Switzerland must adhere to the principle of neutrality also in the Ukraine conflict.

"A stable political majority" was needed for the next step "towards Europe", said Sommaruga, i.e. a "clear majority of the parties and the economy".

The electorate is not included in this "stable political majority". Many an EU turbo would prefer the people to not "forever" have the last word in direct-democratic Switzerland. But the citizens *have had* the last word for a long, long time. And that is how it should stay. •

¹ The *Federal Electricity Commission* (ElCom) is responsible for monitoring the security of electricity supply.

² Humbel, Georg. "Politicians have taken our warnings too little seriously for too long". Interview with Werner Luginbühl. In: *NZZ am Sonntag* of 7 August 2022

³ Keystone-SDA. "ElCom head Luginbühl on electricity shortage: 'Situation could be managed'". In: *Swissinfo* of 7 August 2022

⁴ "Declaration of bankruptcy for Swiss energy strategy". In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 8 August 2022

⁵ Alabor, Camilla and Marti, Simon. "Sommaruga's electricity saving plan. 'Heating down in public buildings'". In: *SonntagsBlick* of 14 August 2022.

⁶ Vonplon, David; Hosp, Gerald. "André Dosé on the energy crisis: 'People in Switzerland are not aware of how dangerous the situation is'". In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 6 July 2022

⁷ Alabor, Camilla and Marti, Simon. "Sommaruga's electricity saving plan. 'Heating down in public buildings'". In: *SonntagsBlick* of 14 August 2022.

⁸ <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20210047>

⁹ "Soirée Medias. Speech by Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga at an event organised by the Association of Swiss Media in Locarno. In: *Federal Council media release* of 6 August 2022, (not available in English)

Multipolarity versus neo-imperialism and the misguided left

by Augusto Zamora Rodríguez



(picture ma)

Augusto Zamora Rodríguez was a professor of international law and international relations at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid as well as a lecturer at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua and a visiting professor at various universities in Europe and Latin America. Zamora was Nicaragua's ambassador to Spain. From 1979 to 1990, he was legal director of the Nicaraguan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He represented Nicaragua in the case against the USA before the *International Court of Justice* for the Contra War and participated in numerous diplomatic missions. He is the author of "Malditos libertadores", "Política y geopolítica para rebeldes, irreverentes y escépticos" and "Réquiem polifónico por Occidente" and writes regularly for various newspapers, such as *Público*.

It is not easy – it is fair to say – to abandon ideological approaches, paradigms and concepts that have been hard-won over a century in order to understand and embrace the new realities of this fast-changing and dizzying 21st century. The inertia is huge, and finally there is the human factor that leads one to remain attached to the old and out of this inertial attachment to interpret the new with the frame of reference of the old, especially if one lives, as we do now, in a hard and complex transition process between the past and the future.

New realities in the 21st century

First of all, we should bear in mind that the end of the Cold War was more than three decades ago; that, as a result, there is no longer a Soviet Union; but that there are such remarkable realities as the rise of China as a great power; the reconstruction of Russia, which, by virtue of its geography alone, is a major player in Eurasia; the rise of India as an economic and technological power; the remarkable strengthening of Iran despite the war with Iraq and draconian US sanctions; the grow-

ing autonomy of Latin America and Africa, which, albeit haltingly, are forging paths against their chronic backwardness. A world, then, that has little or nothing to do with the world of the 20th century, so near and yet so far away.

Issues such as anti-colonialism, the Non-Aligned Movement, North-South relations or the new international economic order that were on the agenda in the second half of the 20th century are now issues that no one remembers or few can remember. It is so, it must be so, because realities are different and priorities and agendas are different. New priorities and agendas require new theoretical and practical frameworks that respond to the great challenges of the 21st century, including wars.

The multipolar order comes quietly

Let us start with the essential issue of the new world order. The world of the Cold War world was bipolar. You were either on the side of the USA or the USSR, whether you wanted to be or not, and in the face of this bipolarity, Yugoslavia, India and Indonesia fostered the *Non-Aligned Movement*, which was decisive between 1960 and 1988. This world disappeared with the USSR and gave way to a multiplicity of forces suppressed by the superpowers, giving rise to a multipolar society. Like so much of human history, this multipolar order was quietly established. Between 1992 and 2014, the US declared itself a global hyper-power and attempted to reorder the world according to its ideas of unipolarity through a series of wars of aggression—Yugoslavia, Iraq I, Afghanistan, Iraq II, Libya, Syria. The plan failed, and in the meantime China and Russia re-entered the world stage with the will to fight the US unipolar project. Both powers, to the panic of the USA, denied unipolarity and created a new global dynamic. A dynamic that, unlike the bipolar world, has no ideological undertones, as was the case in the Cold War. This is a world that is about pure power dynamics, something that some do not want to understand or accept. In this real world, the strategic alliance between China and Russia is a case in point. The People's Republic of China is a country that, believe it or not, is steeped in communist ideology, and its president, *Xi Jinping*, has ordered the study of Marxism-Leninism with Chinese characteristics to be intensified. The Russian president, the demonised *Vladimir Putin*, is portrayed as far-right in this Atlanticist and Orwellian Europe, but he is not. He is a Russian patriot who is rather conservative on sexual is-

sues (like the USSR, let us not forget, and like revolutionary Cuba) and whose goal is to rebuild Russia, ensure its security and regain its status as a global power.

Vital sectors remain under state control in Russia

In other areas, particularly in the economic and strategic spheres, the Russian state retains control over its vital sectors. The companies that control hydrocarbons, the aerospace industry and infrastructure, among others, are state-owned. This statist trend intensified with the sanctions over Crimea in 2014 and has received a huge boost with the brutal sanctions imposed by the war in Ukraine. Interestingly, the flood of Atlantic sanctions is reviving Soviet economic models to promote Russia's economic independence. Incidentally, Putin announced on 18 April that the economic "blitzkrieg" against Russia had failed and that a new industrial era was beginning.

Dogma-free world of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Russia and China did not ally for ideological reasons, but for geopolitical, energy, trade and strategic reasons. For similar reasons, the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* (SCO), almost unknown in the West, was founded in June 2001 and is the most vibrant expression of this pluralistic 21st century.

The SCO brings together a wide range of countries and governments: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan and, from September 2022, Iran. China points out that "the SCO follows the principle of non-alignment and does not direct its activities against any other country or organisation. It does not seek to divide the world into different camps or incite ideological prejudice or hatred against third parties." The SCO could be a foretaste of the multipolar, dogma-free world that is emerging. In the SCO, marxist, social democratic, islamic, nationalist and undefined ideas coexist, driven by the desire to have a forum for equitable dialogue.

Important forums without USA and Europe

To the SCO should be added the BRICS forum (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the RIC format (Russia, India, China) to get a better idea of what exists and moves in forums without a US or European presence, forums that

continued on page 10



You do not read about it in Western media. For example: Roundtable discussion at the Secretariat of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on the constitutional reform in Uzbekistan on 5 August 2022. (Picture eng.sectsc.org)

"Multipolarity versus neo-imperialism ..."
continued from page 9

nevertheless bring together countries representing 50% of the world's population and 30% of the world's GDP. From these three forums, the non-Western countries have worked to create a multipolar order.

Opposing the SCO countries are the US and its NATO partners, determined to maintain a world system based on US maritime and military hegemony. To achieve this goal, the US has been working for years to build a network of military alliances that will enable it to impose its hegemony to the detriment of China, Russia and Iran. Almost all US foreign policy from 2014 to the present, with particular emphasis since 2018, has been aimed at building a military wall around Russia and China. Against Russia it has NATO and against China the US-Japan-Australia axis, with smaller partners such as the UK, South Korea and the Philippines (though the role of the Philippines is dubious). Against Iran, it has promoted the Saudi Arabia-Israel axis, which has more pricks than real stings, because no one knows what would really happen if Israel went to war against Islam again.

Atlantic front of the USA and encirclement of China

It is the bellicose reaction of the USA to the efforts of the Eurasian powers to create a new model of international society that has led to the situation we are witnessing

today. Anyone who tries to interpret or understand the situation in Ukraine without this framework will not understand what is at stake. The war in Ukraine is a reaction to the US and NATO plan to encircle Russia and suffocate it in its territory, what we have called the US Atlantic Front. It is now known that the US has invested more than \$500 million in training the Ukrainian army as an Atlantic force against Russia.

A more dangerous process is being pursued by the US against China, with the arming of Japan and the constant supply of weapons to Taiwan, as well as maintaining a permanent naval presence off China. So much so that China criticised the US for conducting more than 100 military manoeuvres in the China Sea in 2021, an average of nine military manoeuvres per month. US military doctrine envisages establishing a maritime encirclement against China in the event of a conflict (similar to the military encirclement established by NATO against Russia) in order to damage the Chinese economy as much as possible (even more radical than NATO's strategy against the Russian economy). All this can be read in official US documents. China has responded by building a navy of 350 ships, the most powerful in the world, and plans to expand it to more than 400 ships by 2030.

The majority of the left is rooted in the 20th century

Faced with the realities of today's world, there are no clear ideas on the left, since it is a world that confronts us with absolutely

new challenges, completely different from the framework created with the Bolshevik Revolution and the Cold War. There are no clear ideas, above all because the majority of the left is rooted in the 20th century and, from that anchoring in the past, has problems dealing with the present.

The crisis in Ukraine, in this sense, is quite a test. Not a few have understood the Russian invasion as that of a 20th century model "imperialist" country against a poor "natural brother" of Afghanistan. A simplistic and unfortunate view that seeks to explain a 21st century geopolitical episode in terms of 20th century parameters. We have called the war in Ukraine the first geopolitical war of the 21st century because we understand it as such. Russia is not trying to grab minerals, energy resources or anything like that. Russia is seeking security, in the oldest understanding of that term. Security from NATO advancing on its borders; security from the threat of an Atlanticist Ukraine; security from being forced into a nuclear attack. For thirty years, Russia has demanded security guarantees, that were always denied. What was known has come to pass. If NATO did not give security guarantees, Russia would take them. A war could have been avoided, and NATO did not want that.

(If you have any doubts about Ukraine, consider the possibility that Ukraine is a country held hostage by an alliance between the corrupt ruling caste and the US

continued on page 12

The coming autumn and winter in Germany

How to deal with the home-made energy debacle

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

In two important aspects, the German power elites are currently reminiscent of the Ancien Régime before the French and the Tsarist rule before the Russian Revolution: arrogance and denial of reality. This cannot be in the interests of the country's citizens. Protests are expected in autumn.

Germany is not facing a “revolution”. But already now various German politicians¹, offices for the protection of the constitution of the federal states² and “scientists” from foundations close to the government³ are warning that the continuing price increases of many products of daily life, the enormous price increases for gas and electricity and the expected further consequences of the energy shortage would very likely lead to a hot autumn with massive protests. Indeed, surveys (see box) speak of a great willingness to protest. The German power elites are already publicly counteracting. They claim that the coming protests will be abused by “right-wing populist” and “right-wing extremist” forces for subversive goals. That is meant to be the inducement to react, most likely not in a manner that is open for talks.

But now that a prominent East German member of parliament from the *Die Linke* has called for protests, the classification as “right-wing” is losing its argumentative force. The current approach seems to be to minimise the possibility of significant protests, also by avoiding to talk about them at all (see box). “Security experts” recommending precisely that are quoted – as in *Der Spiegel* of 20 August 2022.

The citizens' displeasure is justified

What can be done in this situation?

Should there really be politically significant protests in Germany in the coming autumn and winter, the resentment underlying such protests would be justified. For, unlike the German government which is doing everything it can to blame Russia for the enormous inflation, energy price and energy volume problems – once again in a press release of 4 August on the so-called “Gasumlage” (gas levy) for all gas customers⁴ decided for 1 October 2022 – many citizens realise that the problems mentioned are largely home-made or owing to the submission to the “ally” USA.

The expected gas shortage⁵ as well as the already exorbitantly increased and further rising gas and electricity prices are, among other things, the result of German and EU-European energy and energy price policies of the past years. Added to this is

Demonstrating against high energy prices? – What is fiction? What is truth?

“Almost every second German citizen wants to take to the streets when it comes to demonstrations because of high energy prices. According to a recent survey by the opinion research institute INSA, 44 percent of all respondents said they would ‘certainly or very probably take part in demonstrations against the high energy prices’. [...] However, of all respondents overall, 50 per cent also rejected taking part in demonstrations. [...]”

In other countries, protests against rising food and energy prices have already begun. Most recently, there were clashes between police and demonstrators close to the yellow vest movement in France. [...]

In the Netherlands, farmers have been protesting the government for weeks, and there have been repeated violent clashes with the police. The authorities are cracking down. [...]

Meanwhile, farmers in Spain, Italy and Poland have also joined the mass protests. [...]

In Italy, farmers recently blocked traffic in Milan with a convoy of tractors. People also took to the streets in other Italian cities including the capital Rome. ‘We are not slaves, we are farmers’, the demonstrators chanted. Many Italian farmers are struggling to make ends meet.”

www.berliner-zeitung.de of 20 July 2022

“For the time being, Scholz is not worried that Germany could really face an escalation due to the energy crisis and the associated rising prices: ‘I do not believe that there will be unrest [...] in this country, and that is because Germany is a welfare state,’ said the chancellor. ‘In this situation the welfare state must be effective by clearly stating that nobody will be left alone.’”

www.fr.de of 11 August 2022

the German and EU-European sanctions policy against Russia. *Jens Berger* from the German *Nachdenkseiten* has written an article on this that is worth reading.⁶ But also on the website of *Thomas Röper* (*Anti-Spiegel*), a German living in Russia, there are some articles presenting important facts and easily comprehensible arguments.⁷ Official Russian statements on the subject, such as those of the Russian embassy in Berlin, should not be immediately dismissed as propaganda.⁸ Last but not least, some responsible persons in EU states, not only in Hungary⁹, but also East German politicians like the Prime Minister of Saxony, *Michael Kretschmer*¹⁰, are realising that the current sanctions policy is a dead end which creates serious damage on the EU states themselves. Even German television magazines such as the business magazine *Plusminus* have broadcast programmes questioning the claim that Russia is solely to blame for the whole electricity and gas misery: Germany, for example, is still supplying some EU states with a large amount of electricity produced in German gas-fired power plants, despite insufficiently filled gas storage facilities.¹¹

Therefore, it would be fully understandable, even desirable, for millions of Germans to publicly voice their opinion next autumn. Not only protest against the massive financial burdens, but also express what many of them want: an end to the war in Ukraine as soon as possible; an

immediate end to all war crimes there; an end to German arms deliveries to Ukraine; German pressure on the government of Ukraine to resume serious negotiations with Russia; a peace settlement respecting the security interests of all European countries, including those of Russia; an end to German sanctions against Russia; an opening of *North Stream 2* so that sufficient gas can flow to Germany and Europe as quickly as possible.¹²

Political realism and political ethics

Protesters should exercise political realism. Can we expect the German power elites to respond to the demands of the citizens? Hardly in the short term. Is the protest therefore pointless? No, it is not! If the protest is more than an “event”, a “happening”, a gathering of “angry citizens”; if it is preceded by intensive reflection and thorough discussions, if the protests themselves testify to an upright walk and serious debate, to an orientation towards the common good, then they can also radiate to the citizens who have so far remained on the side lines.

Of course, it is to be expected that protests will be abused: by political hotheads, but also by the power elites and their services. However, this will be all the less effective the more everyone who takes part in such protests with an honest concern is aware of his or her responsibility. The

continued on page 12

"Multipolarity versus neo-imperialism ..."

continued from page 10

– something we know all too well in Latin America – and that the real liberation of that country would be to adopt a neutral status and to demilitarise. It would lose nothing: it would gain. Austria and Finland have been neutral and have done very well. Not spending on armaments has the great advantage that the money can be spent on social investment and development. Guns or butter. And one must not forget that it is in the interest of the USA to prolong the war. Not in the interest of Europe: then it is a ruin).

Washington has tasted blood

Similarly, the US is eager to undermine China's security and, with its attitude, is pushing the country towards war. For this reason, China has approved the largest military budget in its history to counter the US plan to build a Pacific front that will enable them to suffocate and ruin China. This is to point out that there is a US plan for global hegemony stretching from Alaska to the Indian Ocean, from the Middle East to the Arctic Ocean, and

that the EU/NATO is fully committed to this plan for global hegemony.

In case anyone doubts what we have written here, please refer to the following paragraph from the Chinese Communist Party's Global Times entitled "Washington's geopolitical appetite has been growing", published in its 18 April 2022 issue.

"More dangerously, Washington, which has tasted blood in the Ukraine crisis, has an urge to take this approach global. People see that Washington is trying to make the most of the Russia-Ukraine conflict by linking it to the Indo-Pacific situation. On one hand, the US is proactively making NATO look eastward. On the other hand, it is sparing no efforts to make waves in the Asia-Pacific. The US has invited, for the first time, Japanese and South Korean foreign ministers to NATO foreign ministers' meetings, tried to rope Japan into AUKUS and intensified its political manipulation on the Taiwan question. Indulging in extreme geopolitical games, Washington is increasingly becoming the origin of chaos and wars – this should be watched and guarded against by all."

Left whereto?

Faced with such a plan, how should the left position itself? NATO yes? War against China? Given that the EU/NATO has agreed to actively integrate itself into the hegemonic policy of the USA, does everyone stand idly by? No one to confront governments and hold them accountable for policies that could lead us directly into a terrible global conflict? Should Europe die for the USA? Is anyone out there in the left universe who even understands what is going on and what is at stake? Or is it easier to join the herd and get back at Putin, evil Russia, kill the Russians and we, the good little boys, parrot the slogans from the Pentagon? That, that's all? To let the world die for an outdated and impossible imperial dream leading to World War III? No one for a new European—not American—security order? Or all are servants of *Uncle Sam* waving stars and stripes?

Nothing else? •

Source: <https://blogs.publico.es/otrasmiradas/58947/multipolaridad-vs-neoimperialismo-y-la-izquierda-extraviada/> of 21 April 2022

(Translation Current Concerns)

"The coming autumn ..."

continued from page 11

experience of many years has shown that there are many forms of successful protests, that people can successfully defend themselves against excessive power politics. With a sense of responsibility and community, creativity also grows.

Germany deserves a change in politics – and it is to be wished for the country that the citizens of the country take their fate more into their own hands. So that the country can be better off in the foreseeable future.

¹ for example: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/faeser-warnt-vor-protesten-wegen-hoher-energiepreise-18179489.html#void> of 17 July 2022; in an article of 9 August 2022, however, the German Minister of the Interior *Faeser* (SPD) relativised her statements of July: <https://www.nau.ch/>

[news/europa/innenministerin-faeser-glaube-nicht-an-wutburger-66239615](https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/faeser-warnt-vor-protesten-wegen-hoher-energiepreise-18179489.html#void). The German Minister of Foreign Affairs *Annalena Baerbock* had already warned of a German "popular uprising", but later also relativised this.

² for example: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/brandenburgs-verfassungsschutz-warnt-vor-extremisten-100.html> of 6 August 2022.

³ for example: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/interview-mit-dieter-rucht-protestforscher-zu-droht-ein-heisser-herbst-dlf-b56e1536-100.html> of 10 August 2022

⁴ <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/klimaschutz/gaspreisanpassung-umlage-2068832> of 4 August 2022

⁵ cf. <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=86817> of 11 August 2022

⁶ <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=86619> of 5 August 2022

⁷ for example: <https://www.anti-spiegel.ru/2022/der-medienhype-um-die-selbst-verursachte-gaskrise/> of 26 July 2022 or <https://www.anti-spiegel.ru/2022/kosten-hintergruende-profiteure-was-bedeutet-die-gasumlage/> of 9 August 2022

⁸ <https://russische-botschaft.ru/de/2022/08/11/kommentar-der-botschaft-zu-gasliefierungen-aus-russland/> of 11 August 2022

⁹ <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/viktor-orban-eu-hat-sich-mit-russland-sanktionen-in-die-eigene-lunge-geschossen-li.247156> of 15 July 2022

¹⁰ <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2022-07/michael-kretschmer-ukraine-sanktionen-inflation> of 27 July 2022

¹¹ <https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/plusminus/teurer-strom-wieso-kraftwerksbetreiber-gerade-kein-gas-sparen/das-erste/Y3JpZDovL2Rhc2Vyc3RlLmRlL3BsdXNtaW51cy-8lZWl1NGFlZi1mNTYwLTRhOTYtYTFhZC02Zm-JjZjc3ZmY4MWE> of 20 July 2022

¹² Current poll figures from the research institute *Forsa* indicate that a large proportion of respondents in Germany are in favour of opening *Nord Stream 2*. However, the various figures available vary between 39 and 63 percent in favour of such an opening. However, anyone who publicly advocates an opening of *Nord Stream 2*, such as the FDP politician *Wolfgang Kubicki* or the left-wing politician *Sarah Wagenknecht*, is put in the media pillory.

“So far as I can make out ...”

On the truthfulness of Western media coverage of the Ukraine conflict – a critical analysis

by Patrick Lawrence



(picture ma)

Patrick Lawrence is a writer, commentator, a longtime newspaper and magazine correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the “International Herald Tribune”. He is a columnist, essayist, author and lecturer and writes often on Europe and Asia. Patrick Lawrence has published five books; his most recent book is *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century*. His Twitter account @thefloutist has been permanently censored without explanation. His web site is patricklawrence.us. Support his work via his [Patreon](https://www.patreon.com/patricklawrence) site.

So far as I can make out, the Armed Forces of Ukraine are losing their war against the Russian intervention. So far as I can make out, the AFU has been losing it more or less from the start of hostilities on February 24. So far as I can make out, the Ukrainian forces are heading toward a decisive defeat with ever mounting momentum. So far as I can make out, they grow increasingly desperate as this outcome becomes more evident, their conduct increasingly condemnable.

I should not have to begin my sentences on this topic with “so far as I can make out.” But so far as I can make out, I must – as must all who make the effort to understand events on the ground in Ukraine as they are.

Ukraine conflict: Irreparable damage to media and public discourse

If the Ukraine conflict has plunged the world into a geopolitical crisis, as I think it fair to say, it is not the only crisis it has precipitated. American media were in crisis well before Russian troops and artillery crossed Ukraine’s eastern frontier, but the war that has since proceeded has caused our newspapers and broadcasters to inflict damage on themselves that I begin to think is irreparable.

It is somewhat the same in the matter of our public discourse altogether.

“I simply cannot recognise the profession I had made mine, back when it was worthy of the effort, dedication, occasional heartache, and all the rest it required of those in it.”

The volume of foul litter now lying on America’s village green sends those still walking through it into a state of “head-spinning disorientation” – a phrase I just read in a piece by the estimable Alistair Crooke.¹ There is at least a chance, the optimist in me insists, that this damage can be undone – the media problem being of another order.

To put Crooke’s remark in context, the retired British diplomat and founder of *Conflict Forum* in Beirut was commenting on a remarkably forthright opinion piece² carried in the August 1 editions of the ordinarily starchy “Daily Telegraph”, to the effect that the *Western post-democracies* (my term) are now governed by “an elite that has become unhinged from the real world.”

“Disinformation labels”

“Yes,” Crooke replies, “the Western sphere has become so prone to a ‘head-spinning’ disorientation (as was intended), through the constant rain of disinformation labels, stuck haphazardly across anything critical of the ‘uniform messaging,’ and by outrageous, obvious lying, that a majority in the Western world has begun to question their own and surrounding levels of sanity.”

I cannot but relate the dire circumstance Crooke and the Telegraph contributor depict to the accelerating spiral we see in our media and our public space since the Ukraine crisis erupted into open conflict. My head spins, indeed, at the spectacle of media coverage this poor and the extent to which it has stupefied the reading and viewing public.

Amnesty International’s report...

Let us consider a couple of the many important events that occurred last week.

On Thursday, 4 August, *Amnesty International* published a report headlined, “Ukrainian fighting tactics endanger civilians.”³ Here are its lead paragraphs. I will quote at length to avert any suggestion that I am in the take-it-out-of-context game:

“s’Ukrainian forces have put civilians in harm’s way by establishing bases and operating weapons systems in populated residential areas, including in schools

and hospitals, as they repelled the Russian invasion that began in February’, Amnesty International said today.

Such tactics violate international humanitarian law and endanger civilians, as they turn civilian objects into military targets. The ensuing Russian strikes in populated areas have killed civilians and destroyed civilian infrastructure.

‘We have documented a pattern of Ukrainian forces putting civilians at risk and violating the laws of war when they operate in populated areas,’ said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

Being in a defensive position does not exempt the Ukrainian military from respecting international humanitarian law.”

Documented: AI has documents supporting these assertions. As is evident in this opening passage, the report was also damning of some of the tactics the Russian military applies in Ukraine. I get the impression of a conscious effort to achieve balance.

... and the raging reaction of Western commentators

To say *Amnesty* belched in chapel is to put the case too mildly. A rage erupted among Western commentators and, naturally, Ukrainian officials. This report was a disgraceful breach, we read. The head of AI’s Kyiv office resigned, asserting, “This study became a tool of Russian propaganda.” *Gary Kasparov*, chair of the *Human Rights Foundation*, weighed in gracefully: “*Amnesty International* can go to hell for this garbage.” Gary did better at chess.

The caker in all this was AI’s response to the uproar on 7 August. “*Amnesty International* deeply regrets the distress and anger that our press release on the Ukrainian military’s fighting tactics has caused,” it said in an email sent to *Reuters*.

What do we have here, and what don’t we have?

We do not have an apology from AI – close but not quite. We do not have any kind of retraction, either. And we do not

continued on page 14

“So far as I can make out ...”

continued from page 13

have any substantive refutation of the AI report. Nobody went anywhere near that.

We have more or less open assertions that an organisation that operates in public space sinned when it acted with some semblance of the disinterest a sound society requires of such organisations. Most nongovernmental organisations such as AI – *Human Rights Watch* is another prominent example – long ago abandoned this principle in the service of fortifying Western orthodoxies. Such is the pollution of our public commons. At the same time, there appears to be considerable dissension in these organisations, the divide running roughly between field workers and executive-level managers concerned with ideological conformity. I count this a factor in the case at issue.

Creeping decay in the public sphere

The shock implicit in the denunciations hurled at AI derives from the fact that *Amnesty International* is, internal dissension notwithstanding, as compromised as most other Western NGOs and customarily conducts itself accordingly. To express regret for having made people mad and stressed in the course of doing, for once, its proper job was wholly inappropriate – a measure, in my view, of the creeping decay in our public sphere.

Bad to worse. Subsequent to AI’s we-regret-we-upset-you note, the organisation announced an investigation into the report to discover “what went wrong.” Inexcusable.

One other useful point here. The AI report confirms what the paying-attention among us have read of since the start of hostilities: The AFU has indeed made cynical use of civilian locations and the occupants as shields. All we have read in our corporate media reports are the Ukrainians’ incessant denials.

CBS on illegal arms sales ...

I come to the case of CBS and its report Friday, 5 August, that some 70 percent of the weaponry and matériel the U.S. and its European allies send to Ukraine never reaches the AFU. It is diverted, we can safely assume, into a vast black market for illicit arms sales.

Safely assume: I have had it since shortly after the 2014 coup, from sound Kyiv sources and international business executives with interests in Ukraine, that Ukraine, among the world’s most corrupt nations according to *Transparency International*, is the world’s largest illegal arms market by some magnitudes. A number of American legislators, nota-

bly *Victoria Spartz*, an Indiana Republican and the first Ukrainian-born legislator elected to Congress, have been for months calling for the U.S. to monitor the distribution of the weaponry it is sending across the Polish border to Ukraine.

CBS did some good leg work and brought us up to date: It is the mess Spartz and others have suspected since the flow of guns began. The network had some good sources. And, after all, we have been able to read here and there about this filthy business for many months.

... and its “updating”

No, senior Ukrainian officials protested rudely and loudly in response to Spartz’s proposal. Monitoring the distribution of Western arms will add “another layer of bureaucratization” and so cause critical delays in shipments. As to CBS, it got roughly the same treatment as AI. There was no substantive denial of the problem, only outrage that the network had reported what it found and thus served the cause badly.

Once again, the pitiful part: On Sunday, 7 August, CBS deleted the segment, explaining that it will review it and republish at a later date. It has since republished the segment, having softened it in response to complaints – this by CBS’s admission – from Ukrainian officials. This is called “updating” these days.

To be clear once again: CBS did not retract the assertions in the piece. It simply said things have got better lately – which is the Ukrainian argument.

I simply cannot recognise the profession I had made mine, back when it was worthy of the effort, dedication, occasional heartache, and all the rest it required of those in it.

Portugal 1975 – experiences of a young foreign correspondent

Speaking of which.

My first outing as a correspondent abroad was in Portugal in 1975, shortly after the Revolution of Carnations, when a group of principled army officers overthrew the 50-year dictatorship of *Marcelo Caetano*. I was filing to a small independent weekly with offices in a loft off Union Square in Manhattan. I was young, green, and reliably making a mistake a day.

But Lisbon was my classroom. And one of the lessons I came home with was how correspondents ought to conduct themselves in matters of politics when covering others.

All correspondents bring their politics with them, as I did in Portugal. This is a natural thing, a good thing, an affirmation of their engaged, civic selves not at all to be regretted. The task is to manage

your politics in accord with your professional responsibilities, the unique place correspondents occupy in public space. There can be no confusing journalism and activism. You do your best to keep your biases, political proclivities, prejudices, and what have you out of the files you send your foreign desk. It takes discipline and ordered priorities.

Serving the National Security State

We are not getting this from the Western correspondents reporting in Ukraine for mainstream media. You may associate the error of mistaking journalism for activism with independent publications, and fair enough – to a point. It happens. The truth here is that almost all mainstream journalists reporting from Ukraine are guilty of this – and I am this far from editing out my “almost.” They are effectively activists in the cause of the American national security state, its campaign against Russia, and Washington’s latter-day effort to defend its primacy.

Mainstream correspondents then ...

I made a study over many years of the notable foreign correspondents of the second half of the last century. *Martha Gellhorn* on the Spanish Civil War. *Joe Liebling* on the Second World War in Europe. *Ernie Pyle*, for heaven’s sake. *Bernard Fall* on the last days of the French in Indochina. The best of the Vietnam correspondents reporting for the American dailies and wires. The inimitable *Wilfred Burchett*, who distinguished himself as the only Western correspondent to report Vietnam from the North.

They walked to and fro behind and along front lines, these people. They got dirt under their fingernails. They showed us maps with lots of arrows on them. They reported the daily progress of the war with the names of unfamiliar towns in their pieces.

We get none of this from the mainstream correspondents in Ukraine. Why?

... and now

It would be easy to say they have no guts and no commitment to the profession. This may be the case among some or many or all of them. Here is my more salient answer: They are not allowed to cover this conflict at close range. Their foreign editors do not want them to and the Ukrainians will not let them. Neither wants daily reports of a slow march to defeat. Better to keep it broad and blurry and spotty. Lots of anecdotes featuring helpless victims, and Russian atrocities by the bale – none of which the correspondents reporting them actually witnessed.

continued on page 15

“So far as I can make out”

continued from page 14

Better, most of all, to rely solely on what Ukrainian officials and military officers tell you and let you see and what Western intelligence officials pretend to confirm. This, to me, is the disgraceful abrogation of duty that makes me wonder if mainstream media can ever step back from their out-and-out embrace of the role they have assumed as propagandists. Do not pretend to shock. This has been going on a long time. Ukraine simply marks a swoon too far in my estimation.

**“Logically impossible junk”:
The detention center in Donbas
and the nuclear power plant**

A Russian detention center in the Donbas is shelled and 50 odd Ukrainian prisoners are killed. We are asked to believe that Russian forces shelled their own holding camp for reasons unexplained. When we later learn the Russians were releasing, just before the shelling began, videos of the prisoners recounting the orders of commanding officers to torture any captured Russians, raising the question of war crimes at high levels, we are told this has nothing to do with it.

As we speak, we are asked to believe Russians are shelling a nuclear power plant their own troops have guarded since March. Here I lose the plot entirely.

One day last week we read that Russian forces are cynically sheltering in the plant on the thought that the Ukrainians cannot send rockets into it – too dangerous. The next day we read that the Russians are themselves shelling the power plant they were, one day earlier, reported to be sheltering in. There is only one plausible explanation for this: The correspondents reporting this logically impossible junk are not there and rely on Ukrainian accounts; these accounts differ one day to the next, one official to the next.

So the files sent to the foreign desk are a dog’s dinner, as the English say. And we are left with “So far as I can make out ...”

I would say I feel sorry for these correspondents, but this is only partly true. It is too bad they have come of age as the mainstream of the profession collapses into propaganda and advocacy and their tours abroad have come to such an undignified business. I would weep tears of



anger had this happened to me. But the alternative is to refuse and, if it comes to it, quit an enterprise a serious correspondent should have no part in.

**Eva Bartlett: Reports from
the other side – a third alternative**

A remarkable piece of work came across last week. It suggests a third alternative.

Eva Bartlett, a Canadian correspondent, reminds me of Wilfred Burchett in a way: She reports from “the other side” and has no use for anybody’s orthodoxies. She did this to effect in Syria, and before that in the Palestinians territories. Earlier in the Ukraine conflict, she traveled to a site nine miles outside Mariupol where it was widely reported the Russians had dug and filled a mass grave with – get set for this – 9,000 Ukrainians. This is a lot of Ukrainians to bury all at once. But all the big dailies, never stopping to think things through, went with the story Ukrainian officials gave them. Nine thousand it was.

No mass grave, Bartlett found. Her piece featured interviews with local officials and witnesses, video segments, photographs. She found an orderly, undisturbed cemetery with orderly, undisturbed grave markers. She showed us pictures of same. She spoke to the gravediggers, who were mystified by the reports of a mass grave.

Two weeks ago Bartlett reported from Donetsk City on a shower of bombs that dropped thousands of tiny, lethal mines all over the city⁴. RT ran the piece. It is

another close-in, on-the-ground piece. Her report carried the headline, “The West is silent as Ukraine targets civilians in Donetsk using banned ‘butterfly’ mines.”

Bartlett was careful to say the evidence points to Ukraine while staying short of a conclusion. The Ukrainians, once again, insist the Russians are culpable: This time we are asked to believe they have mined a city under the control of their Donetsk Republic allies.

I mention *Eva Bartlett*’s piece because, apart from its immediate topic, it is a reminder of what foreign correspondents are supposed to do. They are supposed to walk around, to talk to people they meet – altogether, to be there and report what they see, not what someone else tells them they saw.

It was bittersweet to read that piece next to the other reports I mention here. All the profession could be, all that it isn’t – so far as I can make out. •

¹ <https://southfront.org/the-masque-of-pandora/>

² https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/08/01/catastrophic-energy-crisis-will-fuel-revolt-against-failed-elites/?WT.mc_id=e_DM15762&WT.tsrc=email&etype=Edi_FAM_New_ES&utm_source=email&utm_medium=Edi_FAM_New_ES20220802&utm_campaign=DM15762

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/ukraine-ukrainian-fighting-tactics-endanger-civilians/>

⁴ <https://www.rt.com/russia/560020-donetsk-butterfly-mines-geneva-conventions/>

Source: Original to *ScheerPost* of 11 August 2022. With kind permission of the author.

Pro memoria

“This was cynical, it was certainly not moral [but] it worked”

When US geostrategists divulge inside knowledge

ts. He is considered to be one of the greats in intelligence. He trained commanders in the US armed forces, worked for the *National Defence University* and the *RAND Corporation* on security and national defence issues. In 1996, he founded the private “intelligence corporation” *Stratfor* in Austin, Texas, which deals with security issues, geopolitics, and strategic forecasting, according to the entry on *George Friedman* on Wikipedia. Friedman, who came from a Jewish family that survived the Holocaust, had fled Hungary for Vienna in 1949, then to the United States. He studied at *City College of the City University of New York* and earned his doctorate at *Cornell University*, then taught and conducted research as a professor of political science in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Friedman became well-known for his unequivocal, clear statements on the world situation, which often differ disturbing-

Colour revolutions, made in USA

ts. In his Chicago lecture, George Friedman, certainly not a friend of Russia or its president, candidly admits something for which one is immediately vilified as a conspiracy theorist in the Western mainstream media: The US staged the colour revolutions in Eastern Europe in order to weaken Russia.

(Original sound oder: original quote?) Friedman: “... the United States had staged a series of coloured revolu-

tions throughout the Russian periphery one of which was in the Ukraine, the Orange Revolution, and the Russians saw in this Orange Revolution the intent of the Americans to destroy the Russian Federation. Why else would the United States be underwriting groups to demonstrate, they said?”

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeLu_yyz3tc (21:37)

ly distinct from the propagandistically veiled. This also applies to the following statements on the relationship between the USA and Russia, the USA and Germany, and Germany and Russia. Since they are not irrelevant for an understanding of today’s world situation, some of his estimates are reproduced here. They are taken from a lecture in Chicago in 2015.

In it, Friedman reveals what has “for centuries scared the hell out of the United States [!]”: the primordial fear of a merging of “German technology and German capital” with “Russian natural resources, Russian manpower.”

That is why, he says, the US goal is to create a “cordon sanitaire” around Russia. “Russia knows it. Russia believes that the United States intends to break the Russian Federation.” And by quoting a Peter Lawrie “... we don’t want to kill you, we just want to hurt you a little bit.” He continued, “... the primordial interest of the United States over which for a century we have fought war [...] has been the relationship between Germany and Russia, because united they are the only force that could threaten us.”

The US controlled all the oceans of the world like no power before had done that: “Because of that we get to invade people and they don’t get to invade us; it’s a very nice thing.”

Maintaining control of that space, he said, is the basis of US hegemony. The British, he said, led the way: to remain the unchallenged naval power, they managed to “make sure the Europeans were at each other’s throats.”

Balance of power was then euphemistically referred to in the history books. “The policy that I would recommend is

the one that *Ronald Reagan* adopted toward Iran and Iraq. He funded both sides so they would fight each other, and not fight us. This was cynical, it was certainly not moral, it worked, and this is the point. The United States cannot occupy Eurasia.”

As for Ukraine, Friedmann said in this 2015 interview, the Russians “must have at least a neutral Ukraine, not a pro-Western Ukraine.” “... whoever can tell me what the Germans are gonna do...”, he said, “... unfortunately the Germans haven’t made up their mind, and this is the problem of Germany always. Enormously economically powerful, geopolitically very fragile”.

If you search for corresponding information on the official website of NATO, you will find the following entry, supporting Friedman’s views. It should give not only the allegedly geopolitically fragile German citizens to think about. Entitled “Lord Ismay”, it says: “*Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay* was NATO’s first Secretary General, a position he was initially reluctant to accept. By the end of his tenure however, Ismay had become the biggest advocate of the organisation he had famously said earlier on in his political career, was created to ‘keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.’”

Sources:

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Friedman#cite_note-6

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeLu_yyz3tc (long version interview)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcj8xN2UDKc> (short version interview)

<https://worldview.stratfor.com/>

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_137930.htm

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility, and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

Editor: Erika Vögeli, Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

Address: Current Concerns,
P.O. Box 247 CH-9602 Bazenheid

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, , Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-

for all other countries.

Account: Postscheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters to the editor. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *Current Concerns*.

© 2022. All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.