

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*

“Europe – what future do we want?” XXIXth Conference “Mut zur Ethik” from 2–4 September 2022

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller, Switzerland*



“Human beings are capable of using their reason and compassion to recognise the necessary basic orientations of moral and political action and to think, feel and act in a compassionate manner. This is as it were written in the human heart as a disposition.”

From 2–4 September 2022, around 150 participants and more than 20 speakers from Europe, Africa, Asia and the USA met for this year's “Mut zur Ethik” conference in Thurgau, Switzerland. The invitation was extended by the working group “Mut zur Ethik”. Since 1993, guests from various European countries and numerous speakers have come together once a year for three days of equal dialogue to discuss urgent issues of our time. As last year, the discussions were again held in hybrid format, so that speakers and participants from different countries could be tuned in alongside those present.

At the beginning of the conference, a memorial was held for Bishop Dr Elmar Fischer from Feldkirch in Vorarlberg, Austria, who deceased in January of this year at the age of 85 after a short serious illness. Elmar Fischer was an honorary member of the working group “Mut zur Ethik” and had never missed a confer-

ence. For him, they were a matter close to his heart. He understood how to fruitfully combine his core themes of marriage and family, youth, love, human education, being human with a view to world events and Christian faith contents.

Reflecting on one's own substance

The topic of this year's conference was: “Europe – what future do we want?”

By Europe – this did not mean the EU – and the question was not about a wish list. The choice of topic was based on the consideration that the peoples and states of Europe must find their own way in world politics, not least because decades of being too closely tied to the policies of the USA are now endangering Europe's existence. The states and peoples of Europe must reflect on their own substance.

In June of this year, *Current Concerns* wrote: “The path towards an independent Europe, a Europe that recalls its historical roots, its human-oriented cultural and political substance and thus contributes to peace in Europe, will not be easy. Christianity, humanism and enlightenment certainly belong to this substance. But culture always also means cultural development.

“Mut zur Ethik”



ef. Since 1993, the “Mut zur Ethik” working group has organised annual conferences with scientists and experts from various disciplines and countries. With the conferences and through the continuous exchange during the year, a network has been created in the meantime that brings people from all over the world together in a fruitful, constructive dialogue, from which concrete projects and activities also emerge time and again.

Europe has always made progress when it has opened its doors to other cultures and their achievements for the benefit of the people, i.e., when it has been open to the world. The exchange, the dialogue of cultures is indispensable”. Accordingly, speakers from non-European cultural circles were invited again this year.

Inhuman hate mongering against Russia

Since 24 February 2022, as the words introducing the conference put it, an information and propaganda war has been raging that is unprecedented in its ferocity – a fact that is also noted with consternation by long-standing, renowned investigative journalists such as the Australian *John Pilger*. The media wave that sweeps over us in the West every day, and even before, is reminiscent of totalitarian systems and is completely inhuman. This radical outburst of hate mongering against Russia, its president, the persecution of Russian citizens in other European countries, was prepared over years.

After the USA and its allies have practically undermined international law as laid down in the United Nations Charter through numerous breaches of international law and through their behaviour in the

* Introductory remarks at the annual conference of the working group “Mut zur Ethik” (“Europe – what future do we want?”) from 2–4 September 2022 – slightly amended.

“Europe – what future do we want?”

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United Nations Security Council, they are trying to impose their rules on the world. They call it “rules based order” or “rules based international order” and want to disguise the fact that the rules are set by the power that still believes in its “Manifest Destiny”. What hubris! And we obey just like that?

Looking beyond the European horizon

Looking beyond the European horizon, the following picture emerges: many countries have experienced war and crisis situations on their own bodies – caught in the grip of the colonial and neo-imperial powers – and they continue to experience it today. They are not so easily impressed by the “Western posturing”, are even disgusted by it. They counter the Western “charm offensives”, serving the sole purpose of making these countries a war party as well, with self-confident, polite refusals. They have learned from the past and drawn their consequences: They are going their own way and accomplishing tremendous things in terms of building their countries and establishing new, equal ways of international cooperation. We could learn a lot from them.

What is wrong with the Western world?

The question is what is actually going on with us in Europe, one could also say with the Western world. Do we know what situation we are in? It is well known from Germany that more and more people are leaving the country because they can't stand it anymore. Many small and medium-sized companies are leaving because they no longer see a future in the country. How do our governing elites come to take such a suicidal path? To throw our rich heritage of 2500 years to the wind like this?

Switzerland has yielded to the pressure and broken with its perpetual armed neutrality, and it did so very quickly. Only a few intellectuals, with their acquired intellectual gifts, take a critical and logical position in the public debate.

“The era of the unipolar world is becoming a thing of the past,” said *Vladimir Putin* in his speech at the “10th Moscow International Security Conference” of 15–17 August, which was attended by 700 delegates from 70 countries. At the same time, according to Putin, the “Western globalist elites [...] are doing all they can to keep hold onto the hegemony and power that are slipping from their hands; they are attempting to retain countries and peoples in the

grip of what is essentially a neocolonial order. Their hegemony means stagnation for the rest of the world and for the entire civilisation; it means obscurantism, cancellation of culture, and neoliberal totalitarianism.”

At present, our Western countries are rapidly breaking with numerous institutions (neutrality) that have stood the test of time for decades and, in some cases, centuries. Relationships developed over many years (international understanding) were and are simply broken off. Dialogue, reason and common sense have fallen by the wayside. In international relations, the West has lost the last vestige of decency. The geopolitical power struggle in the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world is fierce and affects all areas of life. We are living in war – not only since 24 February.

As well a history of overcoming injustice and violence

The introduction concluded by recalling what the “Mut zur Ethik” conference in 2015, seven years ago, had set out in our manifesto “We want a Europe of peace and justice” out of concern for a life of political freedom, cultural diversity and democracy based on the rule of law:

“Europe’s history is a history of injustice and violence, but it is as well a history of overcoming the latter evils from its own moral insight and political strength. The Western and Christian humanist tradition has developed viable foundations for equality before the law, humaneness and respect for human dignity. Whenever in history these basics could wield their influence, the coexistence of people and peoples human has become more peaceful, just and secure.”

Legal evolution

And further:

“Europe is characterised by a rich diversity of cultures and nations in a small area, from Crete to the North Cape, from Lisbon to Yekaterinburg. Over more than 2500 years, people all over Europe have contributed a great deal to this in all areas. For living together in peace and freedom, the legal evolution towards more and more justice has been of fundamental importance for Europe and the world.”

Bona fide (good faith)

The congress participants also noted:

“Good faith must be the basis of all human coexistence and political activity again. Without this principle, there is no confidence in agreements within and between the states, and the floodgates are open to arbitrariness. Control mechanisms (such as «governance») and ma-

nipulation techniques of all kinds, which aim at influencing people by the abuse of psychological methods without full and open information, deprive the citizens of the possibility of independently forming their opinion. Thus they violate the dignity of the person and destroy the basis of political dialogue and the legal system.”

Reason and human compassion

By contrast, it holds true:

“Human beings are capable of using their reason and compassion to recognise the necessary basic orientations of moral and political action and to think, feel and act in a compassionate manner. This is as it were written in the human heart as a disposition. Guided by reason and conscience, these orientations are intended to lay the foundation for the totality of moral, legal and political determinations that guide the life of man and society. They guarantee the dignity of the human person in the face of transient ideologies.”

In this issue we publish a first selection of conference contributions. Further contributions will be published in subsequent issues of Current Concerns.

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When, Europe, I think of thee at night ...

by Karin Leukefeld, Bonn and Damascus*



ef. Independent journalist *Karin Leukefeld* has been reporting from the Extended Middle East for daily and weekly journals as well as German state sponsored radio programmes since the year 2000. Since the beginning of the war in 2011 she moves back and forth between Damascus, Beirut, other places in the Arab world and her hometown Bonn. She has published several books, such as "Syrien zwischen Schatten und Licht – Geschichte und Geschichten von 1916–2016. Menschen erzählen von ihrem zerrissenen Land" (Syria Between Light and Shadow – History and Stories 1916–2016. People Narrate about their War-torn Country.) (2016, *Rotpunkt edition* Zurich); "Flächenbrand Syrien, Irak, die Arabische Welt und der Islamische Staat" (Surface Fire Syria, Iraq, the Arab World and the Islamic State.) (2015, 3rd edition 2017, *PapyRossa edition*, Cologne). Her new book will be released soon: "Im Auge des Orkans: Syrien, der Nahe Osten und die Entstehung einer neuen Weltordnung" (In the Eye of the Hurricane: Syria, the Middle East and the Rise of a New World Order).

Thank you for inviting me to speak here.

I'm reporting from Syria, from another world.

A few hours ago, I returned from a trip lasting several days through the provinces of Hama, Idlib and Aleppo and would like to briefly report on them.

Morek

In Morek, a small town in the province of Idlib, I was informed about the status of this year's pistachio harvest. Morek is the centre of the cultivation of "Fistiq Halabi", the Aleppo pistachios.

There is a lack of rain, the costs of cultivation have risen massively because of the sanctions. Fertiliser cannot be imported because it could also be used to make explosives and because Syria does not have the foreign currency it needs to buy on the world market. Transport is expensive because there is hardly any diesel. Syria's na-



One chimney smokes again in Aleppo's power station. (picture Karin Leukefeld)

tional oil resources in the north-east are occupied by US troops, who are now bringing oil from the country to Iraq in convoys almost every day. They steal the oil that belongs to Syria, they plunder Syrian resources. The loss was recently put at \$107.1 billion by the Syrian Foreign Ministry.

Sanctions, occupation, and the US *Caesar Act* have created a ring of bans around Syria that is choking the country. The result is the lack of important resources. Scarcity drives up prices and encourages corruption. The people pay the price. They work at two or more jobs and still barely manage to feed themselves and their families.

Inflation and rising prices make life so expensive that people can no longer afford it.

You may remember that during one of my lectures I showed pictures of the pistachio farmers I first met two years ago, in September 2020. They cried when they presented me with their first harvest after eight years of war.

Two brothers, *Jasser Kazem* and his younger brother *Mohammad* gave me an appeal to take with me. They wanted to say something to people in Europe and especially in Germany:

"Please do something to lift European sanctions against Syria. This punishment hurts the people, not the government. All Syrians must suffer. We want to live and work, rebuild our homes. Help get the sanctions lifted."

As *Mohammad Kazem* spoke, his brother *Jasser* fell silent and put his head in his hands. When he looked up again, he had tears in his eyes.

In their distress, these people – like so many of my interlocutors over the past 11 years in Syria – turned to "the people of

Europe and Germany in particular". Nothing has happened. Germany and Europe are not prepared to lift the unilateral economic coercive measures, as the sanctions against Syria are officially called.

On the contrary. At the so-called "EU donor conference in mid-May 2022" entitled "Support the future of Syria and the region", the EU foreign policy chief *Josep Borrell* said that one should "not forget Syria". But before that, *Borrell* had repeatedly made it clear that the EU would stick to its "three No's" on Syria until a "political solution in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 was firmly underway". The "three No's" mean: no resumption of relations with Syria, no aid for reconstruction and no lifting of sanctions.

This is a slap in the face to the pistachio farmers and to all Syrians who want to rebuild their country and cannot because the EU and the USA are preventing this with their "unilateral economic sanctions".

Aleppo

Yesterday, east of Aleppo, I visited Syria's largest power station, which was occupied by *Islamic State* fighters from October 2015 to February 2016. Tank farms were burned down, turbines and control centres were destroyed.

The plant was built in 1994 and went into operation in 1997. During the interview, the manager of the plant estimated the cost of the destruction at 123'450,000 euros. For six years, the power plant could not be repaired and put back into operation because almost everything that was needed in terms of spare parts had to be brought

* Presentation at the annual conference of the working group "Mut zur Ethik" ("Europe – what future do we want?") from 2–4 September 2022

"When, Europe, I think ..."

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from abroad. This was and will continue to be prevented by EU and US sanctions.

"No one helped us," said the manager. No state, no government, no international aid organisation.

Nevertheless, it has now been possible to put one of the five turbines back into operation. The manager of the facility showed me the destruction and how the repairs are being made. "Friends" would help with the repairs; the spare parts had travelled through many countries until they somehow circumvented the sanctions and arrived in Syria.

I was able to speak to some of the technicians responsible for controlling and monitoring the restored fifth turbine. "We all belong to the first generation of this facility," said the manager. The power station was built in 1994 and went into operation in 1997. Some had gotten grey hair in almost 30 years, some had no hair at all, he said and everyone laughed.

"We are so proud to be able to work here again and help bring power to the people," said one of the technicians. Everyone was sparkling, and jasmine blossoms lay on one of the workstations.

"We are not down on the Germans or the people of Europe," said the manager in parting. "But we see that the governments there are doing everything to harm us."

The evening

I have been a correspondent in this region for more than 20 years.

It often gets late. Especially in the hot season with up to 45 degrees, you only meet people in the evening or at night. On Wednesday evening I was in Aleppo talking to an independent politician, member of the Aleppo City Council, when suddenly there were two loud cracks in a row and the house shook slightly.

I automatically looked at the clock and thought, an attack? It was 8 a.m. and the conversation continued. A little later we learned that the Israeli Air Force had attacked Aleppo airport. Shortly thereafter, rockets also hit Damascus airport, according to Syrian news. It's a side note in the European media. In the UN Security Council, Israel's ongoing, unprovoked attacks on Syria are not worth discussing.

Syria seems forgotten in the official media and in politics. This becomes particularly clear to me in the evenings and at night when I reflect on my daily work. Reading my notes, listening to my recordings, looking at the photos I've taken during daytime conversations.

Sorting. This also includes examining press statements by Western and other politicians – especially with a view to the Near and Middle East. At least skim the state-



At the Aleppo power station, all five turbines were destroyed bei ISIL. Now they are repaired by hand. Turbine 5 was put back into operation in summer 2022. (picture Karin Leukefeld)

ments of the foreign ministries, check what is planned in the UN Security Council, what has been discussed. Statements by UN ambassadors must at least be skimmed over.

German and English-language media on the Internet must also be sorted.

What does the media deal with? What are the topics? The topic is the war in Ukraine. To put it more precisely, "Russia's war of aggression". The news is obviously trying to place this term, this "framing", as often as possible in the reports.

The Ukraine war also takes precedence in statements by politicians: *Annalena Baerbock* described "Russian pipelines as weapons in a hybrid war". On another occasion, she said Russia must fail strategically, no matter what her constituents might think.

Olaf Scholz's speechwriters recently used a dictum of many protest movements for his speech at Charles University: When, if not now, who, if not us – sang *Rio Reiser* in 1987. It became the slogan of the peace movement in Germany and most recently climate activists from "Fridays for Future" also wrote this slogan on their banners.

Olaf Scholz used this call from many protest movements to announce a militaristic perspective. He says: "When, if not now, will we create a sovereign Europe that can hold its own in a multipolar world? And who, if not us, could protect and defend Europe's values, both internally and externally? Europe is our future, and that future lies in our hands." *Josep Borrell*, EU foreign policy representative, reported to journalists a few days ago about a meeting of EU foreign ministers. It was also about Ukraine, arms deliveries, sup-

port and training of Ukrainian soldiers were the topic. Of course, "NATO is part of the discussion," *Borrell* said. "Our political unity is steady as a rock." The EU and NATO "were standing united from the first day of the Russian invasion." The "transatlantic unity" is the "most important asset". Together with Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen*, *Borrell* supports an increase in defence spending. The "defence industry" will have to increase its capacity to supply the European armies.

In English there is the term "insult to somebody's intelligence". When news, politicians, fool the listeners or viewers, it's called an "insult to somebody's intelligence."

If only that were the case.

These politicians of the EU, in the transatlantic alliance with NATO, are about war in word and deed. Corporate media applaud.

They have held Europe, a whole continent, hostage for a policy of dominance designed in and with Washington.

In countries like Syria or Lebanon, people understand this better than in European countries. "We are not down on the Germans or the people of Europe," said the manager of the Aleppo power plant. "But we see that the governments there are doing everything to harm us."

This difference is important.

The European Commission and the institutions of the economic, political and military power centres that want to impose transatlantic dominance mean war.

The Europe of nations and its people has a chance for good development. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Consequences of the Ukraine-Conflict for Europe and the USA

by William Scott Ritter, USA*



Scott Ritter is a former US Marine Corps intelligence officer whose career spans more than 20 years and includes positions in the former Soviet Union implementing arms control agreements, on US General Norman Schwarzkopf's staff during the Gulf War, and later as the UN Chief Weapons Inspector in Iraq from 1991–1998.

It's an honour and privilege to have the opportunity to speak with you today.

The Prussian military strategist Clausewitz has said: "War is an extension of politics by other means." And the reason why I bring that up is when we speak of the conflict that's ongoing in Ukraine, I think we have to understand that this is much more than just a military conflict. This is much more than simply the Russian Army aligning itself up against the Ukrainian Military.

The consequences of this conflict to Europe and the United States hinge on the outcome of this war, this fighting. Let me just cut to the chase. Russia is winning and Russia will win the military conflict. There is nothing NATO or the United States can do to prevent this outcome. They can weaken the process; they can make the human cost to Ukraine and Russia higher but they will not change the outcome. And I think, the West is starting to wake up to this reality. We just recently had the French ambassador to the United Nations to acknowledge that it's a pipedream to think of Ukraine liberating the Donbas, liberating Crimea. More and more Western politicians are waking up to the cost of this conflict on Europe, on the United States, on the world. And recognising that the outcome is not going to be what they had hoped for.

The USA and NATO did not believe that the conflict would turn out this way

Let me start by saying I don't believe that either United States, NATO or Ukraine

"It [the rules based international order] is collapsing in a phase of growing recognition in the world that there is a need for multipolarity, that other nations matter. That the world cannot revolve solely around the United States."

believed that this conflict would turn out the way it has. I believe that NATO, Europe and Ukraine had been since 2015 preparing for a decisive conflict in the Donbass where the Ukrainian military built up by NATO, trained, equipped would be able to launch a decisive attack that would be able to overcome the Donetsk and Lugansk militias and whatever forces Russia could bring to bear on the problem. In terms of a larger conflict, I believe that the United States and Europe were firm in their belief that the threat of economic sanctions and the reality of economic sanctions would either deter Russia from engaging decisively with Ukraine over the Donbass or if Russia decided to do so would lead to the rapid collapse of the Russia economy, severe political consequences for the Russian leadership and a swift and decisive defeat of the Russian military in Ukraine.

No preparation, no realistic assessment of the consequences

Why do I believe this? As a military person myself who has gone to war and who has prepared to go to war, I know that if you are planning for decisive engagement with an enemy, it requires mobilisation. It requires the accumulation of military power; it requires logistical preparation. In short, it requires everything that NATO, Europe and the United States failed to do. There was no military preparation by NATO, by the United States, by Europe for this conflict. Which tells me that they didn't believe that this conflict was going to be won on the battlefield but rather won in the banks, in the businesses, in the economy. I don't mean to be too facetious here, but if you are going to belittle Russia as nothing more than a gas station disguised as a nation it's best that you not be an automobile that's out of gas, in need of refuelling. And that in short is what the Europeans and American economies are.

The arrogance of the West leads to economic chaos

There was literally no realistic appreciation of the energy aspects of sanctioning

Russia. I think there was a level of arrogance on the part of the United States and Europe that they could control the energy security, they could control the energy supplies of the world and that they could shut down the Russian economy by sanctioning Russian energy. The exact opposite has happened. Russia has shown that it knows the global energy market far better than either the United States or Europe. And I don't mean to laugh because this is not a funny situation but sometimes when you are confronted with absurdities and ridiculousness of such a magnitude, you have no choice but to chuckle in dismay. And that's the situation that I'm facing when I take a look at Europe today.

The arrogance of the G7, the arrogance of NATO, the arrogance of the European Union to believe that they could dictate a solution through economic means to Russia and not expect that having telegraphed this for more than a year that Russia would not be able to come up with a counter strategy. A plan to absorb the sanctions of the West and turn them against the West. And this is exactly what Russia has done and the West has shown that they don't have a plan B. One of the first things you learn in the military profession is that no plan survives initial contact with the enemy; that the enemy always has a vote. And so, the arrogance to come in with one plan, one concept, one method of thinking, one method of operation and not be able to adapt to changing circumstances has led Europe to the situation they face today: total economic chaos and the potential for total economic collapse.

The idea of European unity exposed as a fraud

What are the consequences of this beyond the obvious, beyond the suffering that the European people will have this winter, beyond the damage done to European industry? The notion of European unity has been exposed as a fraud. We can hear NATO leaders and European Union leaders speak about how Eu-

* Presentation at the annual conference of the working group "Mut zur Ethik" ("Europe – what future do we want?") from 2–4 September 2022

"Consequences of the Ukraine-Conflict ..."

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Europe has rallied. Europe has not rallied. There are deep fractures in Europe as we speak, and the fractures are going to grow even more severe over time. You see, Europe I believe made a fatal mistake in embracing Ukrainian nationalism because by embracing Ukrainian nationalism, Europe has unleashed the forces that the European Union was designed to suppress and that is the forces of European nationalism, Polish nationalism, German nationalism, French nationalism. It's all coming to the forefront.

Nations, as Europe is impacted economically, instead of coming together in a unified fashion, Europe will fracture. We have seen this. Hungary already has separated itself engaging its own energy contract with Russia for survival and as the reality of the coming winter hits home, you are going to see more and more European countries compelled by the force of their populations, compelled to break away from the policies being promulgated by the European Union and NATO and pursue individual policies that are designed to preserve the lives and the infrastructure of their own nation. The war in Ukraine is going to transform the face of Europe in a manner that Europe sought to avoid since the end of the Second World War.

The map of Europe is being redrawn

You know one of the things that came out of the Second World War was a desire on the part of Europe that borders were permanent. There would be no more redrawing of the map of Europe. This was finished. It is not finished ladies and gentlemen one only has to take a look at Ukraine right now. It's not just that Crimea will be forever Russia, it's not just the Donbass will be forever Russia. I believe this war will not end until Novorossiia is forever Russia. The territory that extends from Transnistria and Moldavia across southern Ukraine but will become Novorossiia. Odessa, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkov, Dnipro-petrovsk. All of this will never again be Ukraine. They will be permanently forever Russia. The map of Europe is being redrawn as we speak and with it comes the allure of other nations saying maybe we can redraw the maps in our favour. Already there's talk in Poland about redrawing the map of Ukraine so that Western Ukraine could become Polish. That territory that was taken away from Poland end of the Second World War. And now you hear whispers in Germany that maybe the territories that were taken away from Germany at the end of the Second World War should once again become German. And on, and on it will go. The things that were supposed will

"Fortunately for the United States and Europe, Russia does not have the kind of global dominance desires that the United States and NATO do. Russia is simply seeking a new European security framework that respects what Russia deems to be its legitimate national security interests. And this is going to be the future."

never happen again we start seeing them brewing up.

Europe exposed as a paper tiger

Some other things.

The militarisation of Europe. At the end of the Cold War, I think there was a recognition on the part of Europe that the likelihood of a large-scale ground war in Europe was slim to none. And that's why Europe basically disarmed itself. They stopped building modern weapons. They stopped training; their military stayed in the barracks. When NATO a couple of years ago decided that they were going to create these battlegroups to send to the Baltic regions and to Poland to deter Russian aggression there was difficulty on the part of Europe to come up with the forces to man this reinforcement battalion sized battlegroups – we are talking about 1,500 men. Germany, which during the Cold War had a massive military, had this capability, had to cannibalise its armoured forces to bring one battalion to Lithuania.

Now first of all, think about this. The Germans were sending an armoured battalion to Lithuania. That alone should cause the people to pull their hair out. That's never a good thing. But the Germans sent an armoured battalion to Lithuania only because they cannibalised everything else. Now we have *Jens Stoltenberg* speaking of the need to create a 300,000 men force. And one of the parts of that force would be to reinforce these battalion sized battlegroups to brigade sized battlegroups. Where are they going to get the men? Where are they going to get the material? How are they going to do this? The short answer is: they can't. Europe has been exposed as a paper tiger. That's one of the consequences of this conflict.

NATO failed

Except, Europe is not only a failed economic union, NATO is a failed military alliance with no capacity to engage in meaningful military conflict with an enemy or a potential foe of the capabilities of Russia. The other thing that's happening here, the United States have yet again shown it is perhaps the worst ally Europe could ever have. At one time the

United States was a good ally, at the one time the United States was the heart and soul of the NATO defensive alliance but once the Cold War ended and NATO lost its reason to exist, instead of the United States looking for a way to dismember this relic of the Cold War, United States took the lead in turning NATO into an offensive alliance.

One only has to take a look at the War in Kosovo to understand that NATO was not a defensive alliance. There, there was an offense of action, one only has to take a look at the intervention in Libya to know the same. And what was NATO a transatlantic security organisation doing in Afghanistan for nearly two decades? So – you know – NATO lost its reason to exist. The United States abandoned NATO in Afghanistan. I don't know if Europe has woken up to that fact, but we abandoned NATO, we abandoned Europe, we left NATO in Europe to its own devices, and it prompted many in NATO to question: what is the relevance, what is our mission? Why are we here?

USA has abandoned NATO

Then the United States turned around because we had a change in leadership and we said "no, now you're relevant, but we need you now to focus on Russia." And NATO did, but not militarily, NATO never built the military capacity to confront Russia. So, the United States has led NATO down this path toward a decisive proxy war with Russia in Ukraine where NATO is further depleting its military resources transferring equipment money material to Ukraine only to watch it be destroyed ground up on the battle field by Russia with no industrial capacity to replace it. The United States abandoned NATO.

Collapse of the US Empire

Now for the United States the consequences of this conflict are that we are hastening the demise of the rules based international order, that is that club that the United States put together at the end of the Second World War. It is collapsing. It is collapsing in a phase of growing recognition in the world that there is a need

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What will it take to liberate the UN from the yoke of geopolitics?

by Hans-Christof von Sponeck, Germany*



(Screenshot mze)

Hans-Christof von Sponeck served at the UN for 32 years. During this time, he worked in New York, Ghana, Pakistan, Botswana, India. He was Director of the European Office of the UNDP Development Programme in Geneva. From 1998 to 2000, as UN Coordinator and Assistant UN Secretary-General, he was responsible for the humanitarian programme "Oil for Food" in Iraq. In February 2000, he resigned in protest against the sanctions policy against Iraq. Hans-Christof von Sponeck has received several awards, including the Coventry Peace Prize of the Church of England, the Peacemaker Award of the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Bremen Peace Prize. He is currently working with Richard Falk on a book on UN reform, which will be published in 2022.

* Presentation at the annual conference of the working group "Mut zur Ethik" ("Europe – what future do we want?") from 2–4 September 2022

There is much to be said about liberating the UN from the yoke of its geopolitical oppression. It is all about liberation. But first, let me put down a few brief notes on the origin of this yoke.

That origin includes the historic meeting of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at Yalta in Crimea, February 1945. In preparation for the founding of the United Nations as the successor to the failed League of Nations, three old men – one communist and two capitalists – wanted to create an institution that would ensure peace and global welfare.

Their individual power interests, they agreed, had to be guaranteed by the right of veto in the Security Council. Each of them needed the others for individual power. This was a Faustian bargain, a Machiavellian conspiracy! It was probably the weightiest part of the emerging UN yoke.

Western claim to leadership in the UN

This did not bode well! It meant a clash of ideologies and national self-interest, greatly exacerbated by the awakening of the world of colonies. Just two years after the creation of the UN, the harsh faces of the Cold War, which still accompanies our world today, became apparent.

In this Cold War, the West was politically much more powerful, economically and financially much stronger, and also well prepared to claim leadership in the new organisation.

To this day, the entire UN system is firmly anchored in the West:

- The UN political headquarters is in New York;
- UN entities, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have their offices in Washington;
- the International Court of Justice is in The Hague;
 - the specialised agencies are mainly located in Western Europe and North America;
 - three of the permanent members of the Security Council are Western countries.

A conclusion: The dream of the possible of the UN has remained the nightmare of the impossible for over 77 years! The geopolitical yoke has largely deprived the UN of the freedom of action assigned to it by the UN Charter and which it also needs to fulfil its mandate for global human progress.

The yoke

Let us take a closer look at this yoke and then try to answer the following question: What will it take to liberate the UN from this yoke, and what would such a yoke-liberation entail?

First of all, the world of the 21st century is now more deeply divided than ever. The main responsibility for this lies with the world powers, especially the United States and the unilateralism it has enforced, but of course also with the other four members of the Security Council.

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"Consequences of the Ukraine-Conflict ..."

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for multipolarity, that other nations matter. That the world cannot revolve solely around the United States. And this charge against multipolarity is being led by Russia and China, with India, Brazil, South Africa and other nations coming to the forefront.

This was going to happen no matter what; the history of the world shows that there is an evolutionary process and empires fade. But what we are seeing here is not the fading of the American empire but the collapse of the American empire. And one of the consequences of this conflict is that the United States are finding that its role in the world is collapsing as we speak. How do we get out of this, as we are looking at the situation – both the United States and Europe have failed strategically on every level, politically, economically, militarily. The winner is Russia.

What is possible: Peaceful coexistence between Europe and Russia

Fortunately for the United States and Europe, Russia does not have the kind of global dominance desires that the United States and NATO do. Russia is simply seeking a new European security framework that respects what Russia deems to be its legitimate national security interests. And this is going to be the future. A decisive Russian victory will ultimately compel Europe to forego its suicidal embrace of NATO and its perpetual role as an extension of American national security policy, and instead seek a responsible realistic understanding with Russia about how Europe and Russia can peacefully coexist, not as friends. Europe, I believe has forever, at least for the foreseeable future, lost the opportunity to be the friend of Russia. Russia will never again trust Europe – nor should Russia ever trust Europe.

Europe will never again be partner with Russia. You don't become a partner with nations that stab you in the back like Europe has stabbed Russia in the back. But you can peacefully coexist.

Rule of law instead of Rules-based international order

And I believe that is the goal of Russia, and I believe this is going to be the goal of Europe. The loser in all of this in the long term will be the United States, the winner of all of this in the long term will be the rest of the world. Because the sooner the United States can be compelled to step down from its role, self-selected role as global hegemon, the sooner the world will be able to rise up invite the United States to the table of a multipolarity where the rule of law supersedes the rules based international order.

Thank you very much, it was a pleasure talking to you. •

"What will it take ..."

continued from page 7

All five powers of the Security Council (P5) are frightened; they are frightened of the majority of nations in the General Assembly, who no longer want to accept "the yoke of the five".

This angst explains the yoke:

- The P5 behaviour has prevented nuclear and general disarmament, which has long been demanded by the vast majority of the General Assembly.

- As the UNCTAD Doha trade round has shown, the creation of a new and fairer world economic order, a so-called New International Economic Order (NIEO), has been blocked time and again by the permanent members and other OECD countries.

- Decolonisation remains an important UN issue because independence for territories in Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and Africa is not granted by the owners of the colonies.

- World powers such as China and the USA are among the biggest polluters, but have been slow and hesitant in pledging their support in the fight against global warming in Paris, Copenhagen and Glasgow (2021).

- Cooperation between the political UN (General Assembly and Security Council) and civil society and NGOs has been slow, despite progress in recent years. Powerful countries, not only the P5 countries, but also countries like India and Brazil, have put the brakes on such cooperation for fear of restricting the sovereignty of governments.

- International law has so far mainly applied only to the weak. The powerful of this world continue to claim impunity for their actions in violation of international law. Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Ukraine are just a few but serious examples. The UN's International Court of Justice can issue judgments, but these do not include any obligation to comply. It has thus remained powerless. It remains a stag-

"As thoughtful citizens, we must feel obliged, especially in these days of renewed war in Europe, to continue to strengthen our commitment to a peaceful world with the courage of conviction. It means keeping our feet on the ground, but always looking to the stars. There is more to all of us than we think!"

gering fact that the International Criminal Court (which is not a UN institution) has largely remained a court for Africa.

- The yoke of the UN system's financial dependence on donor countries has become heavier over the years, although the compulsory contributions are embarrassingly few. The budget of the Secretary General of the world organisation is less than the budget of the Chief of Police in New York! Compared to the per capita contributions of the USA and Germany, the small Kingdom of Bhutan pays a higher contribution. In addition, there is an increasing politicisation of voluntary contributions through conditions imposed by donor countries on how these contributions are to be used. This deprives the UN system of the freedom to carry out its own priorities.

- Attempts by member states to abolish a permanent international foreign service of the UN, as all nation states have, have so far failed, but have left a climate of uncertainty among UN staff and those interested in a career in the UN.

These eight examples are indicative of the weighty yoke that has so significantly hampered the work of the UN to date.

Liberation from the yoke

It would be naïve to believe that the understanding of the normative, structural and substantive obstacles in the UN system and the call for appropriate reforms will be the majority of UN member states will be

enough to liberate the UN from the yoke of oppression.

As mentioned, there have been attempts at reform at all times. They have all been unsuccessful and will remain unsuccessful as long as – and this is crucial for the future of the UN – the great powers are not prepared to recognise that the world of the 21st century has not remained the same as the world of 1945, and to accept that the change from a non-community to a genuine community of nations, as referred to in the preamble of the Charter, is inevitable. This will not be possible without the P5 countries turning from Might makes right to the power of Right!

This includes replacing geopolitical egoism, unilateralism and impunity with a willingness to compromise and converge as well as accountability for all.

The conflict and crisis map of the world today makes it clear that the time for fundamental rethinking and the liberation of the UN from its yoke is truly not just around the corner. But the time will come. Without rethinking, the world has no future.

"There is more potential in all of us than we think"

As thoughtful citizens, we must feel obliged, especially in these days of renewed war in Europe, to continue to strengthen our commitment to a peaceful world with the courage of conviction.

It means keeping our feet on the ground, but always looking to the stars. There is more to all of us than we think! •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Peace in the South Caucasus: Next Victim of Western Geopolitics?

by Ralph Bosshard

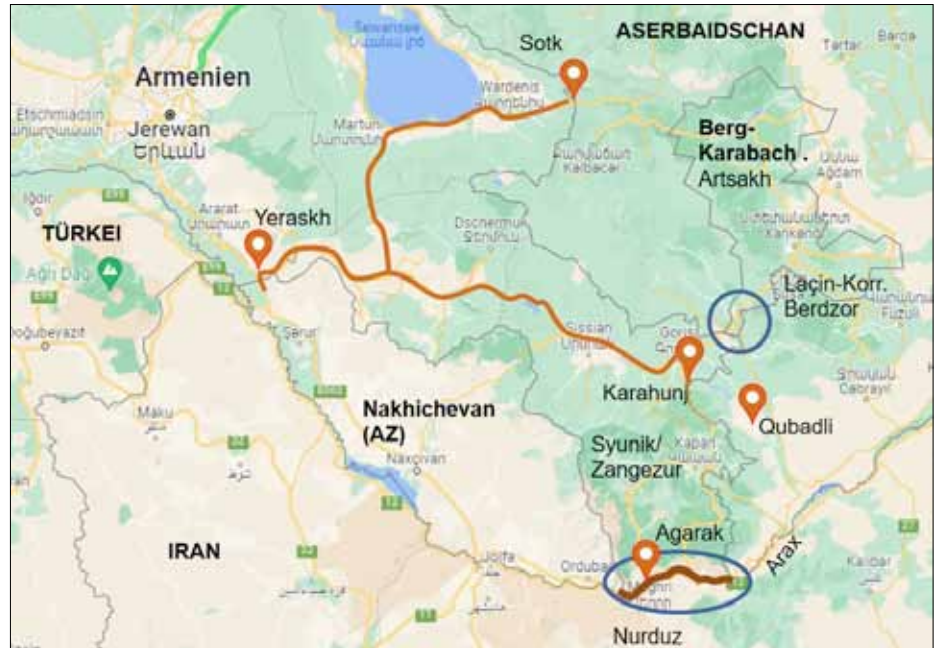
In recent days, news has been circulating that a peace agreement could be in sight in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, putting an end not only to the decades-old conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, but to the old conflict between the two states in the South Caucasus.¹ However, this agreement is not yet wrapped-up: The war in Ukraine and geopolitical concepts could still derail the project.

On 9 November 2020, a ceasefire agreement came into force through Russian mediation, putting a temporary end to the six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The bone of contention in the peace negotiations was the so-called Zangezur corridor, which is supposed to connect the Azerbaijani motherland with the exclave of Nakhichevan, which lies to the west of Armenia. The Azerbaijani leadership has always been adept at exerting political pressure by military means. To this end, Baku has not shied away in recent months from shelling Armenian territory and occupying parts of the terrain that cannot be doubted as belonging to Armenia. Apart from words, however, the West has so far had little to offer the Armenians.²

A chequered history

In Armenia's chequered history, the historical region of Zangezur was part of the Syunik region, which was considerably larger than today's province of the same name in southern Armenia. After the October Revolution of 1917, disputes arose between the newly independent republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan over the ownership of some areas with mixed populations, including Zangezur. After fierce Armenian-Azerbaijani disputes, most of the region was annexed to the Armenian SSR in 1924, which had become part of the Soviet Union in the meantime. As a result, ethnic Azerbaijanis migrated from this area.³ The discussions about Zangezur now arouse fears that Azerbaijan could lay claim to these territories as well.

The ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020 includes not only military-style ceasefire provisions but also those aimed at settling political disputes. In particular, the lifting of all traffic blockades in the region is one of them.⁴ This would be tantamount to a major step forward, as the borders between Armenia on the one side and Turkey and Azerbaijan on the other had been hermetically sealed since the end of the war in 1994 and were not even permeable to diplomats and OSCE cease-



Transport routes in Southern Armenia. (graphic Ralph Bosshard)

fire monitors. An agreement on the end of the blockade between Turkey and Armenia had been negotiated in Zurich on 10 October 2009, but had never been implemented.⁵

However, opinions differ on exactly what the provision for the lifting of all blockades in the ceasefire agreement means: Armenia has proposed the reopening of border crossings with the Azerbaijani motherland in Karahunj and Sotk, as well as one with the Azerbaijani province of Nakhichevan in Yeraskh. The one in Karahunj in particular would be important in several respects, as it would not only open the road from Goris in Armenia to Qubadli in Azerbaijan, but also facilitate travel on the road to Syunik in Armenia, that runs along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for long stretches. There had already been disputes over the use of this road last year when the Azerbaijani authorities suddenly demanded customs duties from Iranian transport companies.

Azerbaijan, on the other hand, insists on opening the road and rail link along the Arax River, which forms the border between Iran and Armenia. But Baku wants more than that: it wants to carry out transports on this route without Armenian control.⁶ In the ceasefire agreement of November 2020, it had been agreed that the transport routes between Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan should be under the control of the Russian border troops.⁷

The very name "Zangezur Corridor" arouses suspicion in Armenia, because the

comparison with the Lachin Corridor (Armenian Berdzor) is not far off. This corridor connects Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and represents a piece of territory, originally belonging to Azerbaijan, that remained under the control of the Republic of Artsakh under the ceasefire of November 2020.⁸ Yerevan fears that the Azerbaijani side has a similar solution in mind for the region along the Arax River and that it will lose control over the border region as a result. But this would mean that the most important border crossing between Agarak in Armenia and Nurduz in Iran would be under Azerbaijani control. And this, in turn, reawakens the old mistrust that Azerbaijan and Turkey are ultimately not concerned with the opening of transport routes in the region, but with the total isolation of Armenia.⁹ There was never any mention of a cession of Armenian territory to Azerbaijan in the ceasefire agreement, and such a cession on the Armenian-Iranian border would be exactly the opposite of what was actually intended.

From the Armenian point of view, it is a question of the existence or non-existence of the Armenian state and its people, including those of Nagorno-Karabakh. Recent reports of NATO courses in Azerbaijan and joint exercises by the Azerbaijani, Turkish and Georgian armies reinforce Armenians' fears of being wedged between the arch-enemy and NATO state Turkey,

"Peace in the South Caucasus ..."

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an increasingly hostile Georgia and Azerbaijan, which can get away with anything thanks to its importance as a supplier of natural gas to Europe.¹⁰ At the same time, Armenia is threatened with isolation from Iran, with which it had previously maintained good relations, and its ally Russia.

Role of Pan-Turkism

But this struggle is about much more than the South Caucasus region. In recent years, Turkish President *Recep Erdoğan* in particular has been pushing his vision of the Turkic-speaking world, which finds its political-diplomatic expression in the organisation of the Turkic States. In this hitherto rather loose group of states, which in addition to Azerbaijan also includes the Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, Turkey, as the most populous country, lays claim to leadership.¹¹ The supporters of Pan-Turkism are only too happy to seize on such aspirations and remind us that Turkic-speaking minorities also live in Greece, Bulgaria, Crimea, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, China, Moldova and Russia. With the Zangezur Corridor, Azerbaijan would create a land link between the Turks on the Mediterranean and the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. The country would then play a key role within the group of states. With the natural gas supply contract that Azerbaijan recently concluded with the EU, the country has already realised the economic aspect of this claim, namely that of being a hub for the trade in oil and gas from the Caspian Sea region.¹²

Of course, the Central Asian member countries do not want to snub Turkey, but they have different historical experiences, socio-cultural norms and political systems.¹³ These countries had ambivalent experiences with Russia and the Soviet Union, but they were not involved in the arch-enmity that separated the Russian Tsarist Empire and the Ottoman Empire. On the contrary, the Soviet Union and Russia in particular played a major role in the development of the Central Asian region in the 20th century. The Turkish claim to leadership meets with a certain scepticism there. The self-confidence of these nations with their rich cultural and historical heritage is too strongly developed for that.

Armenia's Allies and Neighbours

However, several Central Asian states are also members of the *Collective Security Treaty Organisation* (CSTO) and thus

military allies of Armenia.¹⁴ By virtue of its size and military strength, Russia naturally has a leading role in the CSTO, while the armed forces of the Central Asian republics – with the exception of Kazakhstan – are probably not as strong as the publicly available figures suggest. The fact that Russia is currently militarily tied up in Ukraine may have encouraged President *Aliyev* to adopt a somewhat bolder approach towards Armenia. Ukraine and the West could try to motivate him to demand even more far-reaching concessions. Alone, it would be enough for the Central Asian states to signal to Baku that nothing will come of the desired ties with Central Asia if Azerbaijan continues to lay a military hand on its ally.

For many Armenians, the behaviour of Georgia, whose history has significant parallels with Armenia's, may be particularly disappointing. As a small, predominantly Christian country on the border between two great empires and surrounded by Muslim-majority areas, Georgia would actually be considered a natural ally of Armenia. In Yerevan, however, nothing good is expected from the Georgian leadership's flirtations with the EU, NATO and its Turkish neighbour.

Western geopolitics

In the last few days, Russian diplomacy has apparently brought the adversaries in the South Caucasus to the negotiating table once again.¹⁵ But Western geopoliticians already see their chance here in the fight against Iran and, in a broader sense, in the struggle for supremacy in the Middle East¹⁶ and could try to thwart peace efforts. In this competition, the West has recently been losing ground since Turkey and, in recent months, Saudi Arabia have increasingly resisted Western influence. Interference by geopoliticians from Washington and Brussels, who believe that the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh will gain them a toehold in the region, would be the last thing the people in the region need.

¹ See Orkhan Nabiye: "Baku, Yerevan agree on main points of peace treaty – Turkish FM", in: *Trend News Agency* of 11 October 2022, online at <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3655527.html> and "Armen Grigoryan: Peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan to be signed by the end of the year", in: *Arka News Agency* of 14 October 2022, online at http://arka.am/en/news/politics/armen_grigoryan_there_is_agreement_to_sign_peace_treaty_between_armenia_and_azerbaijan_by_end_of_year/

² See "PACE president calls on Armenia and Azerbaijan to step up efforts to resolve conflict", in *News.am* of 11 October 2022, online at <https://news.am/eng/news/724499.html>, "Ombudswom-

an briefs French OSCE Minsk Group co-chair on consequences of Azerbaijani attack on Armenia", in *News.am*, 11 October 2022, online at <https://news.am/eng/news/724505.html>, and "Azerbaijan must withdraw its forces from Armenia's sovereign territory: PACE lawmaker haunted by Azeri war crimes", in: *Armenpress* of 11 October 2022, online at <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1094605.html>

³ See "Zangezur, now part of southern Armenia, has been a disputed territory since World War I", in: *TRT World* of 29 June 2022, online at <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/what-is-the-zangezur-corridor-and-why-does-it-matter-to-eurasia-58405>

⁴ See Article 9 of the ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020, online at <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-54886782> in Russian and <https://web.archive.org/web/2020111212431/http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384> (English).

⁵ See "Switzerland as mediator between Armenia and Turkey", in: *Human Rights* of 29 October 2009, online at <https://www.humanrights.ch/de/ipf/menschenrechte/ausussenpolitik/schweiz-vermittlerin-tuerkei-armenien>

⁶ See "Yerevan, Baku agree to most of 'Zangezur corridor', Russian newspaper reports", in: *Civilnet* of 29 June 2022, online at <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/666581/yerevan-baku-agree-to-most-of-zangezur-corridor-russian-newspaper-reports/>

⁷ See Article 9 of the ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020, op. cit.

⁸ See Article 6 of the ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020, op. cit.

⁹ See Arshaluis Mgdiesyan: "Attacks on Armenia highlight ongoing disputes over 'corridor' for Azerbaijan", in: *Eurasianet* of 14 September 2022, online at <https://eurasianet.org/attacks-on-armenia-highlight-ongoing-disputes-over-corridor-for-azerbaijan>

¹⁰ See "Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey share experience on Caucasus Eagle defence exercises", in: *Agenda.ge*, 11 October 2022, online at <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/3944>, and Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan: Baku host NATO training course, 10 October 2022, online at <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/baku-hosts-nato-training-course-43145.html>. On the natural gas supply agreement between Azerbaijan and the EU, see "EU signs deal with Azerbaijan to double gas imports by 2027", in: *Reuters* from 18 July 2022, online at <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/eu-signs-deal-with-azerbaijan-double-gas-imports-by-2027-2022-07-18/>

¹¹ cf. the organisation's homepage at <https://www.turkkon.org/en/uye-ulkeler>. Hungary (!) and Turkmenistan have observer status in this organisation.

¹² See "EU signs deal with Azerbaijan to double gas imports by 2027", in: *Reuters*, op. cit.

¹³ On this aspect, see in particular Matthias Wolf: "Zwischen Osmanismus, Lenin und Turan – Warum die Türkvolker Zentralasiens 'auf andere Art türkisch' sind" (Between Ottomanism, Lenin and Turan – Why the Turkic Peoples of Central Asia are "Turkish in a Different Way."), in: *German Centre for South Caucasus* of 27 February 2021, online at <https://sudkaukasus.de/zwischen-osmanismus-lenin-und-turan-warum-die-turkvolker-zentralasiens-auf-andere-art-turkisch-sind/>

¹⁴ see the official homepage of the CSTO: <https://en.odkb-csto.org/>

¹⁵ See "As a result of the Russian side's mediation activities, military clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia ended – President Ilham Aliyev", in: *Trend News Agency* of 14 October 2022, online at <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3657048.html>

¹⁶ Symptomatic of this is the article by Cavid Veliyev: "Iran's Frustrations With the Zangezur Corridor", in: *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, 23 September 2022, online at <https://jamestown.org/program/irans-frustrations-with-the-zangezur-corridor/>.

In the current gas chaos, people are being cheated twice over

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



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

In the state propaganda disseminated by the public media, it is claimed several times a day that *Putin* alone is to blame for our gas chaos. In fact, it is not Putin who has cancelled gas supplies; but the EU, with the help of our own government, has

imposed gas sanctions against Russia and does not want to receive any more oil from Russia even at the end of this year.

Ms *Wagenknecht* rightly claims that we would be rid of any gas problems within a week if we withdrew the sanctions, and this has been confirmed by Putin. But she is accused of betraying the gas narrative in saying so. The fact remains: The existing gas crisis and the coming gas emergency have been caused by our own government and are their fault, and out of an erroneous liege loyalty to the EU and the USA, they are even upholding it against the interests of their own population.

On the other hand, the same media that attribute the German gas shortage to Putin confirm daily – if debatably – that there is enough gas in the world and that German storage facilities are sufficiently filled with gas (over 90 %). So, the population is led to believe that the worst will not come to the worst this winter. Yet people have the justified feeling that they are facing a gas freeze and have bought electric heaters by the tens of thousands. This shows that the people do not believe the government's second lie, either.

Minister *Habeck* is trying to placate us by assuring us that “all measures will be taken to prevent a gas disaster for the population”.

Gas industry expects a gas catastrophe this winter

The fact is, however, that even the gas industry is reckoning with a gas catastrophe this winter. On the basis of the government's emergency plan of 23 June 2022, an alert state can be declared, which will make possible the ordering of extraordinary measures primarily affecting customers in the so-called “non-protected” area.

If these measures are not sufficient to stabilise the situation, it may be necessary to also impose restrictions in the “protected” customer area, due to the falling supply pressure; in emergencies, the gas supply will have to be reduced even until the supply fails.

One gas supplier has already informed gas fitters in a circular that they should prepare for a gas emergency. In the event of a drop in supply pressure in the supply lines, private individuals would not be able to restart the failed gas boilers, heaters and other gas-consuming appliances themselves. The gas supplier therefore asks the gas fitters to close the main shut-off valve and the gas appliance valve in these cases until gas is available again, and only to carry out the reopening of the main gas line and appliances themselves as soon as the supply area can be supplied again and the gas supplier has given gas fitter companies notice to put the systems back into operation. Private individuals would not be able to unjam most appliances on their own. “Please be prepared for many customers to approach you (the gas fitters) as the professionals skilled to recommission their gas installations.”

Reconditioning can take months

Gas fitter companies usually have between 300 and 1000 customers. But as there are fewer and fewer firms and fewer staff in the installation companies, the number of customers who no longer have a gas fitter is growing every month.

In concrete terms: if the gas supply has once failed, households can be left out in the cold for days, weeks or even months even though there might be enough gas again, because they cannot get their appliances going again themselves but have to rely on a specialist, and there are too few of these specialists; so there is a dependence on the previously neglected fitter/installation trade, and this has much more serious consequences for the consumer than our earlier “dependence on Putin”.

The upshot is: The government expects gas supplies to stop in winter, but does not say so. The gas industry expects gas supplies to stop and is preparing gas installation companies for this eventuality. These companies already know that they have only limited possibilities to help after a gas supply stop, i.e., that they will not be able to serve millions of households in days or even weeks. They have to keep this fact confidential, they are not yet allowed to tell their customers, “so as not to worry them”. We, the customers are to remain ignorant so that we will not protest.

There is also a risk of blackout

So, for days or weeks, it will not be possible for many households to recondition their gas pressure after the collapse anticipated by the gas supply companies, due to a lack

of skilled fitters. Thus, households will be forced to take emergency measures. Then the millions of already purchased electric heaters will come into use. That circumstance in turn may well lead to a blackout of the electricity grid. Then people would have neither gas nor electricity; and concerning electricity there would be no prospect of short-term help either, because according to what electricity suppliers say, after a nationwide blackout of the electricity supply it would take about 14 days to make the system functional again, i.e., to bring the grids back up.

Then there would be a breakdown of traffic (no traffic lights), water supply, the end of refrigerators, shopping (no more cash registers), there would be no television, no mobile phone charging as well as no mobile phone network and no charging of electric cars.

To top all this off, the government has now also cancelled oil supplies from Russia at the end of the year, thus conjuring up a possible oil crisis, petrol crisis (at least in prices) – of course out of hatred against Putin instead of for good reason.

An eco-goal of the Greens: The deindustrialisation of Germany

So, when gas, oil and electricity supplies break down in Germany and even the substitute energy of coal and nuclear power plants has been banned, we are getting closer and closer to the eco-goals of the Greens. These include Germany's de-industrialisation. If all energy consumption were stopped in this way, about 2% of the world's CO2 emissions would be avoided. However, 8% alone are newly created annually by the deforestation of the Amazon jungle, which the Greens have not prevented. 30% of this deforestation is caused by the USA and China and 25% by India. This whole energy crisis in Germany is therefore not worth it in quantitative terms either; it can cause great damage in Germany, but it cannot save the world.

Mrs. *Baerbock* has confirmed that our government does not care about its population and us voters, but it does care about the international corporations, and is using more than 60 billion to save mostly foreign energy traders, for which actions every household is supposed to “haemorrhage” to the amount of 2000 to 3000 Euros. But for itself, the government has found a way out. It plans to make 3000 euros tax- and social security-free if companies reimburse their employees for these additional gas costs.

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“Deepest concern regarding the worsening of the global confrontation” Belgrade Forum Appeal



The *Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals* expresses its deepest concern regarding the worsening of the global confrontation which is accompanied by a deep-seated economic and social crisis in Europe as well as worldwide. This crisis which is worsening on a daily basis, constitutes a threat to global life, peace and security.

This concern is of critical significance given the fact that no meaningful and honest initiatives advocate turning from the track of confrontation to essential dialogue, diplomacy and detente.

The lessons of history cannot be ignored. Such a state of inertia and lack of understanding of the unfolding dangers

potentially affects the very foundation of humanities existence. The conflict in Ukraine has to be resolved by addressing to its roots. Peace efforts must not be obstructed, new iron curtains must be removed, unilateral sanctions have to be excluded from the international practice.

Starting from the Serbia's historical experience, including those from the recent past, the experiences of Europe, *Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals* makes an appeal to all peace associations, governments, as well as international organisations, particularly to the UN, to endorse dialogue, diplomacy and detente as the only possible path for preventing a glob-

al conflict that threatens the future of humanity.

We appeal for the immediate dialogue and diplomatic action at the highest levels between Washington, Moscow, Beijing and Brussels. The underlying focus can only be on “peaceful coexistence” between sovereign nations determined to prevent further worsening of the conflict which could lead to a World War III scenario, without exclude nuclear incinerations.

Recognition of equality, interdependence and partnership in preserving peace, security and development, as indivisible civilisational values, is the only way for the survival and secure future of humanity. •

“In the current gas chaos ...”

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So, in the end, the companies employing these workers will not only have to pay multiplied gas prices due to inflation, but will also have to pay dearly for corporate gifts bestowed by the government.

Millions of small and medium-sized businesses on the line

This is why there is justifiable unrest among small and medium-sized businesses. After all, small and medium-sized businesses employ three-quarters of all commercial enterprises' employees. Ultimately, therefore, small and medium-sized businesses are to pay for the government's mistakes by means of special burdens and, if they can no longer do so, “not go bankrupt first, but simply close down” (Habeck).

The *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen* fears that in the course of the coming year more than one million small and medium-sized businesses will perish as a result of this government policy. This would mean three to four million unemployed, several billion in additional social costs, and also a decline of several billion in taxes and social contributions.

The population will not accept this development as passively as before. Anger is already rising. What actions may arise from this was shown by the first world economic crisis.

Stop sanctions against Russia!

In this context, the AfD and Wagenknecht are right in pointing out that this whole energy chaos would be immediately avoidable if Germany ended the US and EU sanctions against Russia, i.e., did not participate, if it reopened the *Nord Stream 2* gas pipeline and, according to credible promises made by Putin and *Gazprom*, immediately be re-supplied with sufficient gas and oil.

This solution to the problem is still possible, it can, however, not be reached with

our bellicose government, which is vengeful against Putin and puts ideology and vassal loyalty before the interests and even the existence of its German electorate. But even a change of government would not help because the largest opposition party (CDU) also wants war and stirs up hatred against Russia.

So, we will have to face the energy emergency with our eyes open and pay for it and for all its consequences. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) says: “The substance of industry is being threatened.”

A current study of the *Federation of German Industry* has concluded that the increasing prices for energy and raw materials threaten the existence of a good third of the small and middle-sized enterprises in Germany. The high energy prices and the weakening economy is having a great impact on the German economy. A survey conducted by the BDI about the small and middle-sized enterprises showed that a great majority of enterprises are faced with severe (58%) or even existential (34%) challenges.

BDI President *Siegfried Russwurm* warns: “The substance of the industry is under threat. The situation is already toxic for many companies or will be soon. The federal government is watching as one factory after another closes

its production. Ten per cent of German small and medium-sized enterprises see themselves on the verge of collapse. Meanwhile, German industry is paying a wholesale gas price for 2023 that is eight times higher than in the US.”

The number of insolvencies is already rising noticeably. The *Leibniz Institute for Economic Research* in Halle, for example, predicts that an increase of 12 to 14 percent can be expected for 2022 compared to the previous year.

Sources: <https://www.business-leaders.net/deindustrialisierung-in-deutschland-angriff-auf-die-substanz-der-deutschen-industrie/>; <https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/mittelstand/insolvenzen-was-tun-wenn-ihnen-die-zahlung-sunfaehigkeit-droht/28761516.html>

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Can Germany recover?

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

Born and raised in the country, having lived and worked there for decades, I am not indifferent to what happens to Germany. I still feel connected to the country and am concerned about its decline. Even though I have been able to live in Switzerland for 15 years, I am still concerned about what is going on in Germany and what is becoming of the country. But this is not only for personal reasons: Germany's fate was and is closely linked to the fate of the whole of Europe.

The fact that Germany, against its post-war intentions, is again deeply involved in a war and that the German army, the Bundeswehr, is also to be tuned for war in Europe¹ has been a recurring theme not only in this newspaper in recent weeks and months. This disastrous German foreign policy corresponds with worrying internal developments – not only in the field of economy and finance, but also in social and cultural life. The awarding of this year's "Peace [!] Award of the German Book Trade" to a racist literary propagandist of the Ukrainian war party² showed how closely the German war and feuilleton operations are intertwined. There is more at stake than subordination to the dictates of "diversity", "cancel culture" and *political correctness*. Three other examples from the past two weeks of the state of the country show this.

Cannabis legalised ...

Following its coalition agreement, the German government adopted a "key points paper on the introduction of controlled distribution of cannabis to adults for consumption purposes [!]"³ on 26 October. It states: "Cannabis and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) [the ingredient in cannabis that is particularly harmful to the brain and other fatty tissue] will no longer be classified as narcotics. Recreational cannabis, medicinal cannabis and commercial hemp will be completely excluded from the scope of the Narcotics Act. [...] The production, supply and distribution of pleasure cannabis will be permitted within a licensed and state-controlled framework [the government is thinking of trading places such as "coffee-shops" and pharmacies, although pharmacists' associations have clearly distanced themselves from the government's plans]. The purchase and possession of up to a maximum of 20 to 30 grams of cannabis [which is quite a lot] for personal consumption in private and public spaces [!] will be allowed without penalty; private cultivation will be allowed to a limited extent [there is talk of three plants per person].

"History does not repeat itself; the Germans of today cannot be like the Germans of yesteryear. But there are still people, personalities in Germany, who are not concerned with power and wealth, but with their fellow citizens, their fellow human beings. People who are not indifferent to the fate of their country. If these personalities set to work, perhaps a little more than they have done so far and also a little more in cooperation – overcoming their differences and concentrating on what they have in common – then Germany can recover and the spook can come to an end."

[...] The minimum age for the sale and purchase of cannabis for personal enjoyment is set at 18 years of age. [...] Turnover from the sale of cannabis for human consumption is to be subject to turnover tax. In addition, the introduction of a special consumption tax ('cannabis tax') is planned." These few sentences alone give an insight into a brave new red-yellow-green drug world full of Orwellian neospeak. The fact that the narcotic cannabis is to become "cannabis for enjoyment" is just one example.

The logic of trying to solve drug problems by making narcotics more accessible and removing legal sanctions is still not clear. The mere fact that the federal government's plans have become known will inspire the habitual pot-head mentality and will certainly result in even more drug victims. What this means particularly for young people does not need to be elaborated here. It is certainly not a contribution to the promotion of community-oriented young people's relationships and young people's willingness and ability to perform. The formulation in the key points paper that "the goal is to contribute to improved youth protection and health protection for consumers [...]" sounds like mockery.

... and education on the decline

On 19 October, it was reported that 20 percent of fourth graders in Germany do not even reach the minimum requirements in reading, spelling, and mathematics. The primary school pupils were tested in 2021, and the results are once again significantly worse than those of 2016, which in turn were significantly worse than those of 2011. *Heike Schmoll* of the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" rightly commented on 19 October: "Already at the end of primary school these children are deprived

of their future." She thus expressed that this poor state of education is the result of active educational policy failures and wrong decisions.

Not too shabby to misuse the name of Hannah Arendt's name

On 14 October, the German Foreign Ministry announced in a press release: "Foreign Minister *Baerbock* and Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media *Roth* are launching the *Hannah Arendt Initiative*, a programme supporting journalists at risk". The surprise about something being done for independently thinking journalists who have fallen victim to the Gleichschaltung in the German media world, the increasing restrictions on freedom of opinion in Germany⁴ and exclusion in recent years, however, lasts only briefly. After all, the initiative is not concerned with these persons, who are mentioned in detail in *Hannes Hofbauer's* book "Zensur"⁵.

Instead, this initiative is part of the German warfare and the information war against Russia and other unpleasant states, and Mrs *Baerbock* and Mrs *Roth*, both from *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, do not even refrain from misusing a personality like *Hannah Arendt* for their own purposes. Where is the protest of all those who have appreciated the life and work of *Hannah Arendt* and her commitment against totalitarian thinking? A totalitarian way of thinking and acting that is unfortunately also rampant in today's Germany.

Can Germany still recover?

The German resistance in the years from 1933 onwards failed in preventing the totalitarian expansion of power and the unjust state of the National Socialists. Nor

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A new political format for Europe The “European Political Community” EPC

ds. On 6 October, 43 European countries founded the “European Political Community” EPC in Prague. Not only the heads of state and government of the EU, but also the top representatives from 17 other countries, from Iceland to Turkey, from Albania to Armenia, met in Prague to discuss new possibilities for cooperation. Switzerland was represented by its President for the Swiss Confederation *Ignazio Cassis*.

“A European summit in a class of its own”, writes the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” on 7 October. And in the following interview, German political scientist *Daniela Schwarzer* of the *Open Society Foundations* – a group of foundations of American billionaire *George Soros* based in New York – explains what the EPC is all about. Ms Schwarzer has been Managing Director for Europe and Eurasia since May last year.

She speaks of a platform that is open to all states in Europe. Countries that do not want to join the EU could also participate. It is not about economic integration, but about areas such as collective security and energy. “We have the opportunity,”

she continues, “to create a geopolitical dialogue forum for the whole continent that does not yet exist”. The challenge is “to find a common basic political orientation. Especially in the conflict with Russia”. For them, the EPC is both a bridge and an alternative to the EU.

For the organisation, informal cooperation between states would suffice in the beginning, as long as there was no hard legal basis. But the further this community actually takes concrete political decisions, the more important it becomes either to create a secretariat or to borrow capacities from existing organisations. This is where the EU would come into play, as it already provides services to “non-EU states” within the framework of its neighbourhood policy.

In order to move forward at all, the community had to be built flexibly. For her, this means working in sub-groups and deciding by qualified majority, so that no single state could prevent the others from going ahead. Cooperation would have to be structured in such a way that groups of willing states could precede.

Where is the journey going to go? •

“You cannot fool all the people all the time”

You cannot fool all the people all the time, the American *Abraham Lincoln* is supposed to have said.

That the USA has expanded its power ruthlessly since its existence is palpably undisputed.

The difference between the “West” and the rest of the world lies in the different assessment of this fact.

This can be seen in the behaviour of governments that do not act in the interests of their peoples.

The “Western world” sticks to the USA not out of friendship, but because and as long as its elites submit to this leadership and cannot escape its extortionate violence.

In other words, this “alliance” – as it calls itself – is a *latrocinium*, a gang, because the law of the jungle applies.

This shows a serious lack of democracy: as long as the official media – as the fourth power in the state – do not fulfil their task properly, there can be no question of informed consent by the citizens.

Abraham Lincoln’s insight has long since become common knowledge.

Urs Graf

“Can Germany recover?”

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did it prevent Germany’s crimes and the tens of millions of war victims. Germany had to be defeated militarily. A tragedy! But the various resistance groups did something for the time after the nightmare. They were moral role models, laid spiritual and moral foundations for a new Germany after the war.

In 1990, *Peter Bucher* compiled voices and documents from post-war Germany in the years 1945–1949 on almost 500 book pages as part of the source collection of the *Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Darmstadt*. It is worth reading these texts again today. Personalities and associations have their say who did not only start thinking at the end of the war but had numerous references to the German resistance in the years 1933–1945. The world views and political positions were very different and controversial. But what shows through from almost all the texts is a reflection on

sound political ethics, a turning away from a thinking along the lines of power and a respect for human dignity.

History does not repeat itself; the Germans of today cannot be like the Germans of yesteryear. But there are still people, personalities in Germany, who are not concerned with power and wealth, but with their fellow citizens, their fellow human beings. People who are not indifferent to the fate of their country. If these personalities set to work, perhaps a little more than they have done so far and also a little more in cooperation – overcoming their differences and concentrating on what they have in common – then Germany can recover and the spook can come to an end. •

¹ cf. “Zeitenwende in den Köpfen” (Zeitenwende in the minds); <https://www.german-foreign-policy.com/news/detail/9060> of 21 October 2022

² cf. “Die Russen sind ‘Unrat’: Pamphlet erhält den ‘Friedenspreis’ des Buchhandels” (The Russians are ‘filth’: Pamphlet receives the ‘Peace Prize’ of the book trade); <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=89603> of 24 October 2022

³ https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/3_Downloads/Gesetze_und_Verordnungen/GuV/C/Kabinetttvorlage_Eckpunkt Papier_Abgabe_Cannabis.pdf

⁴ cf. also various links on the current tightening of German criminal law (section 130, paragraph 5 StGB) with the resolution of the German Bundestag of 20 October 2022: <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2022/kw42-de-bundeszentralregister-915600>; <https://www.antispiegel.ru/2022/still-und-heimlich-eingefuehrt-das-ende-der-meinungsfreiheit-in-deutschland/>; <https://www.jungwelt.de/artikel/437430.justiz-und-grundrechte-enger-meinungskorridor.html>; <https://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/volksverhetzung-voelkermord-kriegsverbrechen-groeblich-verharmlosen-billigen-leugnen-130-stgb-holocaust/>; <https://www.nzz.ch/international/leugnung-von-kriegsverbrechen-deutschland-ver-schaerft-das-strafrecht-ld.1709118?reduced=true>; <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/aufregung-um-verscharften-volksverhetzung-sparagrafen-weitreichender-eingriff-oder-blosse-formalie-8805754.html>; <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=89655>; <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=89732>; https://rtde.live/kurzclips/video/152733-hannes-hofbauer-zur-anderung-von/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Email

⁵ cf. book review in *Current Concerns* No. 14 of 5 July 2022

On the book “Integration, Separation, Cooperation. A contribution from the perspective of curative education”

by Marianne Wüthrich



Whether integration into a regular class is the best solution for every child from a human and educational point of view has been the subject of controversial debate for years. It is pleasant to get an insight from a curative education perspective with this book by *Riccardo Bonfranchi, Renate Dünki* and *Eliane Perret*, which puts the child and its right to education and social participation at the centre. It is not only aimed at parents and trained or future curative teachers, but also at teachers in mainstream schools as well as interested citizens, and last but not least, those responsible for education.

A look at the history of special and remedial education reveals that initially individuals campaigned for education for all and also set up schools for children and young people for whom the education system of the time did not see itself as responsible (e.g. schools for the blind). This historical introduction, which also addresses the change in perspective of today's education, is followed by a brief legal classification. It takes up international conventions, their interpretation and legal implementation. Building on this, the reader gets to know children with different cognitive impairments through many illustrative case studies and gets an impression of the demanding daily work of special education professionals. A “stopover” at the end of each chapter facilitates understanding of the educational and social contexts presented.

Two important legal aspects

As a lawyer, I would like to single out two important legal aspects:

- “School for all” in the sense of the relevant international conventions does not mean that all children must be educated together, but that every disabled child has the right to an education according to his or her possibilities – which unfortunately is often not the rule in poorer countries (p. 22f.).
- According to Swiss law and the school laws of most cantons, the establishment of small classes is possible and should not be rejected for dogmatic or financial reasons if it would be useful for the adequate education of children with disabilities or severe behavioural problems (p. 23f.).

The authors state that the support of a cognitively impaired child or adolescent in a small class or a special education school is often “more professional and therefore more targeted”. They also firmly reject the frequently cited argument of a better sense

of social belonging for the disabled child in the mainstream class, because the constant comparison rather has a weakening effect on the child's personality, trivialises its problems and violates its dignity (stopover, p. 33).

Using very appealing learning situations, it is shown how in curative education practice “the topics are carefully structured, vivid, action-oriented and linked to the respective background of experience” (stopover, p. 42). The class teacher in a regular class does not have the necessary time for this.

Enabling children to lead a life that is a self-determined as possible – a common task for parents and school

Chapter 5 deals with the great importance of common cooperation between parents and curative teachers for a positive development of the child. Using the example of a child with Down's Syndrome, the difficult situation of parents who have to decide between a mainstream school or a curative education school is addressed. The authors show great understanding for the fact that many parents hope for a more “normal” development of their child from integration into the mainstream school. For this reason, some decide to transfer to a curative education school only after several years, which can complicate or delay successful development in individual cases.

In this case, the child was treated very lovingly in the regular kindergarten, but did not receive the necessary support, but got used to the fact that the kindergarten teacher and his friends took a lot from him. In the curative education school, the child then received an “education designed to respect his special needs” and soon made his first progress.

An essential goal of education – as for all young people – is also for cognitively impaired young people the ability to lead their lives as adults as self-determined as possible. The authors use differentiated case examples to show how young people are guided to find their way in everyday life, for example on public transport, and how demanding vocational preparation and placement can be. If it is not possible to find something suitable on the regular apprenticeship market, there are also many apprenticeships in Switzerland in a sheltered setting. However, in order for the transition to a self-determined adult life to succeed, an early start to adequate schooling is essential.

In the “stopover” on page 76/77, the authors criticise the fact that there are more



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and more special support programmes for so-called “highly gifted” children, while – especially at the primary school level – small classes and specialised remedial schools for children with disabilities are being closed. Where is the respect for the “equality” of all children?

Cooperation or partial integration instead of inclusion

Finally, the authors also take up other types of schools that can be enriching for all the children involved: “The question arises whether there might not be opportunities for joint activities and encounters. Because the concern to bring people with and without disabilities into contact with each other is meaningful and must be promoted.” (p. 79) The two case studies show that joint projects or the hourly presence of a child with special needs in a regular class in his or her residence can be a joyful experience. It goes without saying that the success of joint projects depends primarily on the commitment of the teacher teams involved. “Cooperation and partial integration projects demand a great deal of human effort. Therefore, they cannot be prescribed!” So say the authors (p. 82). In any case, it is worthwhile to think further about such goal-oriented approaches.

Better understand children with behavioural or learning problems

Under this title, the team of authors also takes up this large group of children who are often perceived as the main culprits

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When the essential degenerates into a minor matter

The heart of the school is at risk

by Carl Bossard



Carl Bossard is the founding Director of the University of Teacher Education Zug. Before that, he was headmaster of the Cantonal Secondary School Nidwalden and director of the Cantonal School Lucerne. Today he accompanies schools and leads continuing education courses. He deals with questions of school history and education policy. www.carlbossard.ch

Every young person has only one educational biography. That is why it is so important who is in the classroom – and how this person acts. *Peter Bichsel*, who later became a teacher himself, also experienced this. He says: “I had a wonderful primary school teacher in the 5th and 6th grade in the city of Olten: he convinced me of myself and made me a writer. Because he discovered, among all the mess of spelling mistakes, that I write good essays. I loved him.”

To lead young people to themselves and to lead them out of themselves to their

potential, for example to write, as Bichsel’s teacher did. Therein lies the central task of the school. If you zoom in here, you discover a pedagogical triangle. It is the heart of every school: the triad between teacher – schoolchildren – teaching content. It is in this triangle that individual and social learning and educational processes take place.

The French Nobel Prize winner for literature *Albert Camus* reminds us of this resonance space in his book “*Le Premier Homme*”. With the character “The First Man”, he means his primary school teacher. He owes everything to him. Camus grew up in what was then French Algeria. In poor living conditions. School leads him into another world. Camus says of his teacher: he was “constantly interesting for the simple reason that he loved his profession passionately”. In his class, the children “felt for the first time that they existed and were the object of the highest respect: They were considered worthy of discovering the world.”

Camus outlines the pedagogical triangle of everyday school life. This is where the be-all and end-all of school and teaching take place, basic education as the basis for all further learning. Here, for example, the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic are built up. This includes understanding and consolidating, consolidating and practising knowledge and skills, applying what has been learned and the interaction of these sub-processes with all

the diverse links in the activated memory. These are the key processes of learning.

But the essence of school is endangered by the educational policy flight from the pedagogical triangle to structural reforms. The school has experienced a cascade of top-down innovations: additional subjects with the two foreign languages early English and early French in primary school, the whole quality management, mixed-age or cross-grade learning, *Curriculum 21* with the narrowly gridded competencies and their controls, the Integrative School with the goal of inclusion and the many agreements between the responsible persons. All this needs more guidelines and regulations from above, more directives from the education bureaucracy.

Some things have been added – little has been taken away. The consequences are noticeable: Pressure and hectic pace increase, staying and deepening decrease. Many things can only be touched on briefly. Contents quickly replace each other. They do not deeply memorise themselves, hardly become experience and remain fragments. Too much has to be learned in too short a time – in fact by the children themselves. Self-responsibly and self-directed. Pupils with learning difficulties and mediocre pupils are at a disadvantage. This is what classroom research shows. It is therefore not surprising that even intelligent children often have large gaps in the basic skills of arithmetic and writing at the end of primary school. When they do master these basics, it is not uncommon for dedicated parents or private tutoring institutes to be behind them.

Albert Camus takes us to the heart of school, to the micro-processes of learning. His life story illustrates how central they are for children. On the day he was awarded the Nobel Prize, he writes to his teacher, “Without you, without your loving hand extended to the poor little child that I was, without your instruction and example, none of this would have happened.” This sounds like a return to the pedagogical triangle.

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“On the book ...”

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for disrupting the needs of “normal” pupils. The authors, on the other hand, look at the problems from the point of view of the so-called “troublemakers”, who often get a raw deal in the integration classes because they are not supported according to their needs.

This is because they need a calm learning environment and clearly structured lessons, but above all a “close, supportive relationship with their teacher” (p. 87). For these children, too, adequate support in a

small class can be the better way. However, it must never be a matter of separating so-called troublemakers in order to “get rid of the problem”. The authors cite the cooperation between a special school and a regular class in the same school building as a model for the future (p. 89ff.).

“Integration, Separation, Cooperation” is a scientifically based textbook committed to curative education ethics, which is also very informative for non-specialists. The authors do not shy away from naming common prejudices and undesirable developments of school reforms. In doing so, they always set out from the child. •