

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

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Cross-party committee launches Federal Popular Initiative to preserve Swiss neutrality

On Tuesday, 8 November 2022, a cross-party committee headed by National Councillor Walter Wobmann launched the neutrality initiative at a press conference in Bern. Together with other members of the committee, he explained the objective and the purpose of the initiative.

Why is the neutrality initiative needed?

During its first three hundred years, Swiss neutrality was primarily used to support domestic policy. By contrast over the last two hundred years, it has acted in the service of foreign policy. Switzerland did not invent neutrality, but it has given it a unique character in many respects. Switzerland's neutral status is fundamentally different from the neutrality of other states. Swiss neutrality is armed and permanent. It does not involve the membership of any alliances. In neutral Switzerland, defence or military alliances with other states are not permitted. Swiss neutrality is freely chosen and has not been imposed by foreign powers. In the 1815 Treaty of Paris, neutrality lasting several centuries was reconfirmed at the request of the Swiss. Finally, Swiss neutrality was integral, at least until recently, and all-embracing. As a result of our armed neutrality, we emerged largely unscathed from two dreadful world wars.

The concept of "cooperative neutrality" recently invented by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, which is accompanied by the unconditional adoption of EU sanctions, is the regrettable result of these developments. They have brought an end to Swiss neutrality as the world has known it up until this point.

If the political elite loses its bearings, the electorate must put it back on the correct course. The neutrality initiative indicates the way back to permanent, comprehensive, armed neutrality for Switzerland.

The fundamental requirements of the initiative

- "Swiss neutrality" must be preserved.
- "Swiss neutrality" must apply permanently and without exception.
- "Swiss neutrality" must be armed and must include an army that is capable of defending the country and its people in case of attack.



The representatives of the initiative committee at the media conference on 8 November 2022 at the Federal Palace Media Centre in Bern: Dr Matthias Buob, Stephanie Gartenmann, National Councillor Walter Wobmann (President), Florence Sager-Koenig, Dr René Roca (from left). (picture ev)

Swiss Federal Popular Initiative

"Preservation of Swiss Neutrality (Neutrality Initiative)"

The Federal Constitution will be amended as follows:

Art. 54a Swiss neutrality

- 1 Switzerland is neutral. Its neutrality is permanent and armed.
- 2 Switzerland does not join any military or defence alliances. The exception is the cooperation with these alliances in the event of a direct military attack on Switzerland or of preparations for an attack of this kind.
- 3 Switzerland does not take part in military conflicts between third countries and does not impose non-military sanctions on warring states. The exceptions are obligations to the United Nations (UN) and measures to prevent the circumvention of non-military sanctions by other states.
- 4 Switzerland makes use of its permanent neutrality to prevent and resolve conflicts. It acts as a mediator.

- Switzerland must not become a member of any military or defence alliance. The only exception is in the event of a direct military attack against Switzerland.
- Switzerland must not become involved in military conflicts and must not take non-military coercive measures, in other words, "sanctions" against the warring states.
- Switzerland will use its permanent neutrality for good offices with the aim of preventing and resolving conflicts.

With its neutral stance, Switzerland is the unconditional advocate of peace throughout the world, working to ensure that people in conflict regions are freed from the risk of violence. Swiss neutrality is of service to all the countries in the world.

Contact: President of the initiative committee – Walter Wobmann – w.wobmann@vtxmail.ch – +41 79 435 45 61 – neutralitaet-ja.ch

Swiss neutrality – a project for peace

by Dr phil. René Roca, *Forschungsinstitut direkte Demokratie (www.fidd.ch)**

First of all, I would like to say something about the history of the initiative. Until today, the press has repeatedly claimed that the initiative is a “Blocher initiative”. That is not true. I, for example, am not a party member. Christoph Blocher was the idea generator and, so to speak, caused the initial spark for the initiative. I also thought about launching an initiative. That’s why I was in the preparatory group. This group was politically mixed, interdisciplinary and wrestled for months over the initiative text (10 versions). Everyone was able to contribute on an equal footing, including myself. In addition, two independent legal opinions were obtained. Thus, this process was broadly supported politically and in terms of content. For me, this process was exemplary if you want to launch a popular initiative. The initiative text is accordingly balanced and a good compromise. The text was not hatched in some back room. The initiative is, therefore, neither a Blocher initiative nor an SVP initiative. The fact that other party representatives have now partly backed out because they had reservations about the proximity to Christoph Blocher is not the initiative’s problem. I would ask the press to take note of this history. If you have any further questions, I will be happy to answer them.

Now I would like to add a few words about the history of neutrality in Switzerland. (If you would like to study the history of Swiss neutrality in more detail, I refer you to my text in the press kit). Why is this initiative necessary? It is urgently needed, because Switzerland must return to integral neutrality. The text of the initiative shows you what “integral neutrality” means. Integral neutrality takes into account the law of neutrality and is governed by a neutrality policy that promotes an active role by Switzer-

land in the search for peace. In addition, the work of the ICRC is supported and Switzerland’s good offices are taken seriously. In other words, Switzerland is anything but passive, but uses all diplomatic channels to defuse a conflict, achieve a ceasefire and initiate peace talks. Integral neutrality in particular does not mean that Switzerland is “neutral in terms of opinion”. Its foundation is general and humanitarian international law as well as the human rights based on it, as enshrined in two UN human rights covenants. Switzerland has not lived up to this integral neutrality for 30 years. Since Switzerland supported the economic sanctions against Iraq in the First Gulf War in 1991, there has been a steady erosion of Swiss neutrality. Today, it can no longer even be called differential neutrality. Today, Switzerland is no longer neutral, neutrality has been abolished, as the USA, Russia and other states confirm.

Let me conclude: Swiss neutrality was a project for peace, history shows us that.

With the initiative, Switzerland regains its integral neutrality and thus the room for manoeuvre it needs in order to be able to have a beneficial effect in conflicts again. It strengthens the back of the Federal Council and the Parliament to formulate and push for a peace policy with self-confidence that does not bow to any power, neither to a great or world power nor to the economy.

I am glad that we can now discuss the future direction of Switzerland in terms of neutrality with the population. In Switzerland, with its direct democracy, the people have the final say and thus determine the direction they want to take and do not submit to the dictates of the Federal Council or Parliament. Ladies and gentlemen, I hope for an open and fair discussion and look forward to future debates.

Thank you very much for your attention.

* Contribution by Dr René Roca to the media conference on the Neutrality Initiative on 8 November 2022 in Berne



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The last corner of Swiss neutrality remains!

Absurdities surrounding the Swiss arms export ban

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Under pressure from outside and the complacency of the Nato turbos at home, the Federal Council has shockingly quickly and radically dismantled the status of Swiss neutrality that was carefully built up over centuries. Few remnants of the law of neutrality have been left standing: No right of passage or overflight for war transports, no delivery of Swiss weapons to warring parties. In order to undermine this last shred of Swiss neutrality, absurdities are being outdone. But the Federal Council remains steadfast.

The first trial balloon was a Canadian transport plane loaded with weapons that wanted to fly over little Switzerland at the end of March if it was to save one's life. Shortly before, on 11 March, the Federal Council, in accordance with the law of neutrality, had banned overflights for military purposes by the parties to the conflict and their supporters. Quickly, an overflight request was organised by NATO member Canada and then – with the support of the Swiss mainstream media – a huge fuss was made about the authorisation rejected by the Federal Council. But at least this time the Federal Council stood firm.

The current issue is Switzerland's obligation under neutrality law not to supply weapons to a country at war. Some time

ago, Switzerland sold Germany 12,400 rounds of ammunition for the Gepard anti-aircraft tank and, as usual, demanded a non-re-export declaration. Germany wants to supply this ammunition to the warring party Ukraine. The Federal Council had already rejected the request from Berlin in June because it contradicted the law of neutrality. Instead of respecting the clear answer from Bern, the German Minister of War, *Christine Lambrecht*, tried to wear down the Federal Council with another letter dated 21 October. In doing so, she got the second rebuff she deserved from the Federal Council.

Delivery of lethal tank munitions “for humanitarian reasons”?

At the end of October, politicians and the media on both sides of the border outdid themselves with adventurous “justifications” for Switzerland's having to allow the transfer of lethal ammunition “for humanitarian reasons”.

According to Minister Lambrecht, Ukraine needs the ammunition “to protect its grain deliveries to developing countries from Russian attacks”. The chair of the defence committee of the German Bundestag, *Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann*: “If Switzerland doesn't help protect grain exports, then it is indirectly helping Russia to starve the poorest countries.” (*Radio*

SRF, Echo der Zeit of 31 October 2022) On the same day, the “Blick”: The deployment of the Gepard in Ukraine was “so to speak a humanitarian action” (!). Such cynicism culminates in the statement of the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, *Pavlo Klimkin*: “... this ammunition could save human lives in Ukraine” (“*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 7 November 2022).

Are our heads completely twisted? Everyone knows that weapons for Ukraine prolong the war and prevent a negotiated solution. Switzerland must not take part in this, fortunately the Federal Council remains steadfast here.

Who is starving the poorest countries?

A large part of the grain ships does not even sail to Africa or the Middle East, but deliver their cargo in European ports – according to an AFP report of 7 September 2022, 85 out of 87 ships. So those who “starve the poorest countries” are us solvent Europeans! It is more than shameful that Russia has now agreed to send the urgently needed grain to the poor countries itself free of charge instead.

The Federal Council explains the Swiss way: right of neutrality and humanitarian aid

In its press release of 3 November, the Federal Council explains why Switzerland cannot allow the transfer of Swiss war material: “In the Russia-Ukraine relationship, Switzerland applies the law of neutrality, which is part of customary international law. On the basis of the principle of equal treatment under the law of neutrality, Switzerland cannot agree to a request for the transfer of war material of Swiss origin to Ukraine as long as the latter is involved in an international armed conflict.” On the other hand, the Federal Council will expand its humanitarian aid to Ukraine in addition to its existing commitment: On 2 November, it approved a “Winter Aid Action Plan” in the amount of CHF 100 million “to support the people of Ukraine”.

It is good that the Federal Council is standing up for Swiss neutrality here. The federal popular initiative “Preservation of Swiss neutrality (neutrality initiative)”, launched on 8 November, will once again pave the way for our country to fully respect Swiss neutrality, without any ifs or buts.

Transfer of Swiss weapons to countries at war: “The core of the right of neutrality is at stake here” (Professor of International Law Marco Sassòli, University of Geneva)

“International neutrality law obliges Switzerland not to supply weapons to a country at war. But Switzerland is not obliged to prevent another country from transferring Swiss munitions. However, it has required a non-re-export declaration from Germany. If Switzerland now lifts this so that a warring party like Ukraine can receive weapons, it is circumventing the law of neutrality. Because what is at stake here is the core of the law of neutrality.”

Has the Federal Council recourse to emergency law to enable the delivery of ammunition?

“For emergency law, there needs to be an emergency situation. I don't see what that would be for Switzerland. Nor, by the way, for Ukraine: the 12,000

rounds of ammunition from Switzerland hardly make a decisive difference.”

Should certain countries be allowed to pass on Swiss weapons in future? A corresponding amendment to the law is being discussed in parliament.

“The non-re-export declarations are something that makes sense. Without them, Swiss weapons would end up in all wars. To demand declarations only from certain countries and not from others is delicate [...]. It could lead, for example, to India not being allowed to supply Swiss weapons to Saudi Arabia for use in the Yemen war, but the UK would.”

Source: “Ammunition for Ukraine: ‘This is about the core of the right of neutrality’”. Tages-Anzeiger, 29 October 2022.

Interview: Charlotte Walser

Switzerland's good offices offer far more meaningful possibilities than sanctions

Swiss Federal Council does not adopt new EU sanctions against Iran

mw. Since the death of the young Iranian woman *Mahsa Amini* on 16 September after her arrest by the Iranian police, protest demonstrations have taken place which have been broken up violently by the police on several occasions. How far the demonstrations are to be expanded into a “colour revolution” with the help of foreign secret services, is anyone’s guess. Just one hint: At an election rally in California, President *Joe Biden* told participants who held mobile phones in the air with slogans such as “Free Iran”: “Don’t worry, we’re gonna free Iran.” Refreshingly, the response of Iranian President *Ibrahim Raisi* to demonstrators in Tehran: “Mr. President (Biden), Iran became free 43 years ago and determined not to be your prisoner. And we will never be a cash cow.” (*RT* of 4 November 2022).

Solidarity rallies are now being organised in European cities, including in Bern on 5 November, where the protesters are demanded the adoption of EU sanctions by the Federal Council. On 17 and 20 October, Brussels had sanctioned several persons and organisations in connection with the death of *Mahsa Amini*. On 2 November, the Federal Council decided “not to apply the EU sanctions against Iran imposed in connection with the current protests. The decision was taken with due regard for all inner and foreign policy interests of Switzerland, including the good offices of Switzerland in Iran”. (Media release of the Federal Council of 2 November 2022)

An important reason for this decision are the “five protecting power mandates (USA in Iran, Iran in Saudi Arabia/Saudi Arabia Iran, Iran in Canada, Iran in Egypt), which Switzerland maintains in connection with Iran”. In its media release, the Federal Council shows that it is well aware of how Switzerland operates best in international conflicts: “Switzerland is one of the few countries that maintains regular bilateral dialogue on human rights and justice issues with Iran. The dialogue offers Switzerland the opportunity to express its expectations and demands on freedom of expression, abolition of the death penalty, fight off torture, the protection of minorities and women’s rights in direct talks with the Iranian authorities.” This opportunity

would be lost if Iran would be covered with new sanctions.

Mediation is much more valuable than sanctions

In this sense, two members of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Swiss National Council also took a stand in this regard on *Radio SRF*. *Roland Büchel*, SVP National Councillor, states that Switzerland was to back the UN sanctions, but it should not undertake any sanctions beyond that. *Hanspeter Portmann*, National Councillor FDP, reminds us of the basic of Swiss foreign policy: “Such sanctions against individuals or against individual companies in most cases do not really achieve anything and it is much more valuable that Switzerland with its [protecting power] mandate tries to protest and also to mediate this way so that human rights are respected.” (*Radio SRF, Echo der Zeit* of 5 November 2022)

It’s good that some politicians are returning to Switzerland’s core foreign policy tasks, which must apply to all countries in the world. Incidentally, our country could have assumed a protecting power

mandate to represent mutual interests between Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine had asked Switzerland to do so in the summer, but Russia understandably refused: “The Swiss government is no longer neutral by adopting the sanctions against Russia,” wrote the Russian embassy in Bern, according to *swissinfo.ch*. (“Ukraine wants to give Switzerland a protective power mandate – Moscow is slowing down”. *Keystone SDA* of 11 August 2022).

Swissinfo (Switzerland’s public news and information platform owned by *Swiss Television SRF*) adds: “Switzerland has a long tradition as a protecting power. For the first time, it represented the interests of the Kingdom of Bavaria and the Grand Duchy of Baden during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 in France. As a protecting power, it is, for example, the contact point for nationals who live in the other country but no longer have an embassy there if the home and host countries have broken off ties. She can also deliver diplomatic cables if necessary and act as an intermediary in negotiations.” There is nothing to add to that, except: Let’s stick to it! •

Is Switzerland being blackmailed?

ds. What are we to make of *Teodor Winkler*, who “worked for many years as a high-ranking advisor in the Swiss Military and Foreign Affairs Departments”, recommending in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 31 October that Switzerland should “not be stingy” in its support for Ukraine? The international community expects Switzerland to make “contributions of a magnitude that go far beyond the cohesion billion”. In addition, the Swiss financial centre would be required to cooperate closely.

What Bern offers Ukraine will determine “the tone that the West adopts towards Switzerland”. It was therefore important that, in addition to all the practical things that had been thought of so far, the support package signalled a willingness to take the lead on selected strategic issues and to secure generous funding. Switzerland must signal that it is ready to assume responsibility.

You have to savour that slowly: The tone the West takes towards Switzerland

depends on how much Switzerland is willing to pay. Isn’t that what is called blackmail?

“Some of the expected demands,” warns *Winkler*, “are likely to pose considerable problems for the Federal Council – for example, the demand not only to freeze Russian oligarch funds, but to confiscate them in order to finance the aid to the *Zelensky* government”. He also said that the pressure on the DDPS to “provide military aid to Ukraine” would increase in the coming months. He therefore advises Switzerland to “proactively anticipate these inevitable demands with a balanced and convincing concept of its own”. This concept must recognise and take up the strategic interests on the Ukrainian side. Thus, Switzerland should determine the priorities it wants to set within the framework of the Western aid strategy.

What do you think: Should Switzerland, in anticipatory obedience, offer its “own concept” in order to forestall blackmail and make the “West” friendly? •

What do media which actually work for peace look like?

Conference of the “Geneva International Peace Research Institute” (GIPRI) in Solothurn (Switzerland)

by Peter Küpfer

“Media play an important role in the ongoing wars. This conference focuses on disinformation by corporate media, serving the interests of corporate elites against countries who oppose the foreign policies of the governments of the globalist North and the hegemonial claims of NATO. It shows how media terrorism functions and how independent, community-based media may be established that serve the people and peace”.

With these calm but meaningful words *Gabriel Galice* outlined the aim at the start of the conference, who is the president of the “Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI)”, which participated in the organisation of the event. It took place on 15/16 October 2022 in Solothurn, supported also by the Swiss Peace Council and two other organisers, “ALBA Suiza” and the “Committee Switzerland-Cuba”. It demonstrated as a matter of fact that a majority of the Western media establishment do promote war rather than peace.

On Saturday, all seats were taken in the spacious conference hall in the traditional venue of the meeting (co-operative Kreuz) and on Sunday additional chairs had to be provided. The theme of the threatened peace in this one world of

ours and the media’s great share of the responsibility for this was right in the air. It is commonplace that the great media corporations play a key role for the question of war and peace in today’s world. Also, that this role is not played in a way so that the cause of peace is strengthened. Many aspects of the question posed by the conference – which mechanisms drive the great paradox of war – were answered, and the term “media terrorism” was not introduced by some rabble-rousers but by sincere professionals with years of experience in the field. GIPRI president *Gabriel Galice* made it clear in his opening remarks that media actors, who apply their cognitive potentials towards disinformation rather than information of the people, to direct their basic instincts towards a fabricated image of the Enemy and towards destruction of the inherent strive for solidarity with their fellow human beings (which is based on compassion rather than hatred), so that they are eager to attack “the enemy” – those actors are actively engaged in sabotaging a human right.

The right to live in peace is a human right which may, or even must be called for especially in today’s world of media-driven fear – and warmongering, as *Galice* emphasised. It is a special blend of terror

that destroys people’s cognitive capabilities by intimidation. This makes sense even with mere logic. When they illustrated their point in more detail though, the speakers, who had various different backgrounds, could no longer maintain their cool distance. Once demonstrated, those professional mechanisms of constantly swamping our minds lead to justified outrage. Step by step the picture got sharper. With each intervention the problem became more urgent: What should peace-promoting media look like, how should they function and what kind of people should run them? And promoting peace is what they need to do. Only that way they can fulfil the one thing that citizens rightfully demand from their states (which justifies the states’ existence in the first place): to secure the lives of their citizens in peace in liberty. Active warmongering as it is pursued by many big Swiss media outlets, even those owned by the public hand, is unconstitutional even though the Swiss federal government seems to encourage it by their public statements. Their main actors in politics and public-service broadcasting should be surveyed by the domestic intelligence agency, if not jailed for protection (protection of us citizens from their activities, that is). Alternatively, they should be taken to court as

Christian Müller explained in his speech later. For that to happen we would have to establish this court though, for right now there is none which will deal with crimes against the internationally recognised common prohibition of war (as laid down in the United Nations Charter) under all circumstances. Not only if it pleases the so-called winners.

Bullying people into absolute solidarity with power blocs

The very first speaker, *Alan MacLeod* (UK) who is working with “Mint Press News” today, mentioned an important factor contributing to the unlimited power of today’s media corporations. Their front actors like *Rupert Murdoch* in the

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Dr Gabriel Galice, President of the Geneva Institute for Peace Research (GIPRI), opens the conference: “The right to undistorted information is a human right!” (picture cm/globalbridge.ch)

"What do media which ..."

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USA and Axel Springer in Germany are still mistakenly perceived by many to impersonate the "self-made-man" narrative. However, today's heavily interconnected key industries, such as the energy sector and mainly the arms manufacturers in the Western world, keep their worldview on a programmed track towards neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism. And their influence has long ceased to be concentrated on money alone. The oligarchs (note: not all oligarchs are Russian) have learned a lot from the left (when they still deserved the name): citing Noam Chomsky and Antonio Gramsci MacLeod put the mechanisms in the centre of his talk by which our opinions are directed not only by financial means but by a manipulative consciousness industry. This may at first be achieved by rather unsophisticated coercion, as the speaker explained. All 15,000 employees of the German Axel Springer consortium for-instance, with its more than 150 publishing houses, must have signed a memorandum which obliges them never to write anything critical of either the European Union or the state of Israel in their journalistic career. MacLeod is not so optimistic about the common argument that the decline in the number of print media costumers meant more autonomy in the use of internet media via the personal mobile phone. This has been and still is mistakenly imagined by many as a "liberating stroke" to free the minds of the people. Be cautious, says MacLeod. The top few have everything under control in this area too and the so-called independent information is channelled by algorithms and news filters. The aim is no longer to cash in money with information as a commodity. It's all about access to people's minds. This is by definition a totalitarian approach. Once the subjects do indeed think as it pleases their masters then their hegemony is secured for generations to come, inherently so-to-speak. Wikipedia is anything but a "free encyclopaedia". In the background legions of so-called correctors are busy restricting the amount of accessible information, mainly the meaningful of-course, in an ideologically "correct" way, in most instances by suppressing important facts or deleting them from the internet. One can lie by omission, MacLeod says. What can be done? MacLeod spells out at least the goal: strengthening media competence in the "users". Considering the decade-long systematic Americanisation of our schools

and universities, pursued against all warnings of competent teachers and professors worldwide, one might ask how this could ever succeed.

Stirring up support for a total war, unimaginable even a few years ago!

Thoughtfully but strictly fact-based the Swiss journalist Christian Müller took the stage in this commendable conference. With the content of his platform *globalbridge.ch* which is entirely edited by him personally he testifies for his independence and uncorrupted judgement. His career represents a whole era. Like his francophone colleague Guy Mettan who is quite similar to him Christian Müller has worked in various Swiss press outlets, learned the business from bottom up and practiced it to the best of his knowledge and abilities. Truthfulness, objectivity and listening-to-the-other-side are no mere words for him but standards that need to be fulfilled for the sake of professionalism. He still maintains the idea that good journalism is dedicated to the truth rather than entertainment, mere effects and the piped-up "ultimate story". With this guideline Müller advanced in the hierarchy up to the post of chief editor of the "Luzerner Neuesten Nachrichten". However, the anxieties of journalists due to increasing competition in a shrinking press environment as well as their ever-stronger instrumentalization by neo-liberal agendas has changed the media landscape completely. Together with the technological development (fast sequences of pictures and texts, instant video reporting by users via mobile phone etc.) all this has contributed to more superficiality and streamlining. Serious journalism as Müller understood it was less and less appreciated. Therefore, Müller dedicates all his efforts to his own independent internet platform with authentic information content only (www.globalbridge.ch).

Catastrophic consequences of decreasing intimacy with historical facts

Having a PhD in history himself Müller notes a deleterious ignorance about historical facts in many of his younger colleagues. Especially in politics events cannot be understood without knowledge of their history. Müller insists on this and provides evidence of historical ignorance in otherwise well-trained journalists leading to misjudgements today. One needs to know its genesis in-order to understand the true meaning of anything. Together with their financial dependence (need to

sell your story!) and the strive for "coolness" among young journalists this inevitably promotes a rather superficial contact to people and circumstances which in turn leads to superficial judgements, which get broadcast as wrong information and are systematically exploited for propaganda in the end, as in the case of warmongering. One example is the alleged but to this day unproven claim, Putin had uttered threats of using nuclear weapons against the West. Müller is enraged by the russophobic onslaught in Western media (practiced as a new kind of racism in our "high-quality media" by legions of self-declared anti-racists) since 24 February 2022. As an example, he quotes the lead article of the current chief editor of the "Neuen Zürcher Zeitung". On page 1 of its Saturday issue, the very day of the conference start, this was the lead article of a once well-respected newspaper that used to uphold the democratic ideals of our diverse Switzerland as their programme. On this Saturday chief editor Eric Gujer was all but frantically beating the war drum. This included a whole array of unproven allegations such as the above-mentioned claim of Putin's nuclear threat to the West or his plan to illegally conquer the former Czarist provinces. Although never backed up by a single verifiable citation all big media outlets in the Western world keep hammering this message home. Why this distortion? In Gujer's case, too, this comes with an appeal for "total war", reminiscent of Goebbels in his infamous hate speech which had been greeted with cheers by the well-organised enthusiasm of his fellow warmongers at the Berlin sports palace. It's the battle field cry and Müller puts it bluntly – it's a war crime in that it incites war and violence. What has become of neutral Switzerland whose army serves strictly defence purposes only but never a warmongering superpower? Müller is right: such unconstitutional behaviour should be liable under law. Before which court, though? As Müller admits, the *International Criminal Court* which is recognised by Switzerland should be the one – should be, but unfortunately is not. This court has put up with the USA and NATO dictating to them whom to prosecute for war crimes and crimes against humanity and whom to let go free, to this day. This is an invitation for more war and more war crimes around the world – actively supported by Switzerland? Perpetrators acting from their desks are still perpetrators, only more cowardly ones! If chief editors

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"What do media which ..."

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of lead media outlets keep hammering home to their readers that this war can and should be won on the battle field – in the still neutral Switzerland with their strictly defensive army and the attitude to serve as reliable mediators in international conflicts – the final goal to militarily and politically weaken Russia, then a lot is out of balance. Normal human behaviour would be to call for a cease-fire to avoid further suffering – on both side, that is.

"I have heard a good metaphor from different private sides: Picture two boys, 16 and 8 years old in a fight. In comes their mother– what will she do? She approaches them, tries to separate them and says: 'Stop fighting!' No mother and in fact nobody else wither would provide a knife or even an axe to the smaller boy to enable him to beat or even kill the bigger and stronger boy. But this is exactly what the Western countries are busy doing right now: They ship weapons – and how deadly ones! – and ammunition to the weaker one, Ukraine, for them to be able to inflict more damage and suffering to the stronger one! They call for war with tens or even hundreds of thousands of victims, in the military and also civilians. This is an absolutely inhumane behaviour!" (quote from Christian Müller's talk at Solothurn, see <https://globalbridge.ch/so-rufen-schweiz-er-medien-zu-noch-mehrkrieg-auff>)

All this has detrimental consequences for our mental health. Müller puts it bluntly. Paying attention to those warmongering media products non-stop will blur people's natural reactions so that they no longer respond with the normal empathic outcry: The killing has to stop immediately! – but their artificially manufactured hatred will be directed against the alleged solitary "perpetrator", pleasing the Western arms producers.

**Firm support for the truth
and the people who lost
their roots due to the war**

The German Middle East reporter *Karin Leukefeld* gave an impressive example. Modestly, almost restrained in her demeanour she nailed the problems of today's journalism in her talk. All her arguments were backed up by personal experience. Leukefeld, too, painted a grim picture of the professionalism of her young colleagues who like to be referred to as "specialists" for the countries they happen to be assigned to by their "quality media" employers. Often they spend their time in Westernised hotel resorts where they collect Western media prod-

ucts about "their" respective country. Usually, these articles contain the content provided by Western intelligence and distributed by the dominating news agencies (AFP, AP, *Reuters* und *dpa*) for worldwide consumption – while differing content from *Al-Jazeera* or similar "untrustworthy" sources get ignored by the "specialists". It is for a reason that Karin Leukefeld, who started as a young and hopeful correspondent specialising in the Middle East, eager to get acquainted with the lives and cultures of people in these countries, had to develop into a war correspondent instead. Libanon, Iraq, Syria – all these centres of amazing cultural wealth were turned into battlegrounds and heaps of rubble in recent years, where the surviving inhabitants try to make a living for their families in increasing desperation. It is mainly the cold indifference of "the world" which causes them to despair rather than their own suffering.¹ One of Leukefeld's examples was the narrative of a chemical weapons attack on the Syrian city of Duma in 2018, allegedly carried out by the Syrian government. The UN commission who investigated the incident concluded that there was no evidence supporting this narrative. However, this report was rejected as "untrustworthy" and replaced by a manipulated substitute. Apparently, the US administration was instrumental in this correction. Two members of the commission who insisted on the original findings were replaced as well. The global public swallowed the lies thanks to their dominant news networks. Similar examples can be found in Iraq and Afghanistan, where 20 years of horrific wars just ended recently with no obvious result whatsoever.

Leukefeld presented her own codex of journalistic conduct, which is informed by "outdated" rules which serious journalists like Guy Mettan and Christian Müller adhere to as well, such as: Always report on both sides of a conflict. Always investigate the sources of a "story" carefully. Separate content from commentaries. And so on. Karin Leukefeld's talk at the conference can be uploaded on <https://globalbridge.ch>.

**Only true independence
will recover journalism**

This and other top-class speakers, among them *Jacques Baud* and the former editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Maurice Lemoine* (he highlighted the shameful role played by the Western media in the propaganda war against Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela), led to the question of how

the media should be structured in order to be able to disseminate authentic, truthful and thus reliable news.

This was demonstrated on Saturday evening with a film from the work of committed journalists in an emerging country like Venezuela ("Nostalgic Women of the Future") and further deepened on Sunday afternoon with more examples (*Thierry Deronne* on the "terra tv" project in Venezuela). The work of journalists engaged in this field reverses the usual focus. Here, the population is not the addressee to whom the media instance communicates "news" and how it is to be classified. Here, the population itself addresses its fellow human beings "out in the world" via the medium (videos or entire television programmes).

The journalists involved here are not concerned with planting filtered and processed snippets of consciousness into the audience, but that they (and with them the audience) listen to the people and understand what is bothering them. This includes the work of the team to empower them to communicate their concerns in their own language and to handle the communication technology needed for dissemination themselves. This is very different from mass propaganda. It is the amplification, through technical means, of voices that would otherwise go unheard.

It also involves a way of working that makes itself independent and thus uncorruptible. This starts with technology (paper printing is less susceptible to manipulation than internet technology), legal form (cooperative structures are more transparent than private companies) and distribution (door-to-door advertising and distribution is more personal, sustainable and cheaper). How such insights can be put into practice was shown by the example of the "Women's Press Collective" in New York, where dedicated professionals have been providing news, language lessons, education, participation in self-help groups and thus, above all, hope and perspectives to people with an emigration background in the less advantaged neighbourhoods of the big city for many years.

The conference gave strong impetus. In a world war with the aim of an American-style globalisation (of a part of Americans), media play a decisive role. They are handled by human beings. They only serve humanity if they also work humanly. This includes not only the mind (and the wallet), but also the heart. •

¹ This feeling is shared by brave Westerners like *Julian Assange* who would have loved to join the conference in Solothurn but had to stay in his 2 times 3m² cell in Belmarsh prison instead.

Soon Weimar Conditions in Switzerland?

Criminal lawyer Marcel Niggli is warning of the erosion of the rule of law.

ts. Criminal and punishable, or civil disobedience in the wake of a *Gandhi* and *Martin Luther King*? We are talking about activists for climate protection, who are sticking themselves out on streets and elsewhere. But what happens if an ambulance arrives too late at the site of an accident because of this and the person involved in the accident dies? This happened recently in Berlin and was mostly glossed over in the media.

Marcel Niggli, Professor of Criminal Law and Philosophy of Law at the University of Fribourg and, among others, author of the commentary on the Swiss criminal law on racism, speaks out clearly. Niggli firmly rejects the idea that the climate issue constitutes a state of emergency that justifies such action, as the activists claim: "A state of emergency refers to a situation that entitles me to intervene in the legal interests of another person in order to save myself from an imminent danger. According to the law, this danger must be 'immediate and not otherwise avertable.'" In the case of the climate activists, both is lacking. Under current law, climate change is not an imminent danger. Moreover, especially in direct-democratic Switzerland, it "can very well be averted in other ways than by blocking the streets. For example, by launching a popular initiative."

Niggli also clarifies the common misunderstanding that the actions are "civil disobedience", i.e., something legitimate, even "good", forward-looking. "Civil disobedience" is a term from legal philosophy: "The American *Henry David Thoreau* coined that phrase in the 19th century. He said the US was an unjust state as long as it recognised slavery." Thoreau therefore refused to pay his taxes and became a journalist, with late influence on Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Niggli points out, "Importantly, Thoreau's norm-breaking was not directed against uninvolved third parties, but against what he saw as a state that fails. And it was non-violent. Neither a blockade nor a trespass fulfils that. Both are encroachments on the freedom of another, and that is, in the criminal law sense: violence." Moreover, Thoreau had not justified himself and accepted the punishment for his breach of norms.

Niggli points out that the term is being used completely wrongly, since one can

only be disobedient to someone whom one has to obey. "If I take away your snack or smear pictures in a museum so that the state notices that something is wrong, that is not disobedience. That's more like extortion in terms of its basic structure."

Niggli counters the often-voiced statement of the activists that in the face of climate change there is not enough time for democratic means: "If there is not enough time to comply with the law, then we can give up anyway!"

Niggli neither allows the media shirk their responsibility. In the age of attention scarcity, the media are the real addressees. Criminal offenses are reinterpreted as political manifestations: "If someone openly parks his car in a no-parking zone, he is fined – and that's it. But [...] if he turns it into a form of protest against the green traffic policy, then it's just annoying."

Requests should be submitted politically according to the rules of direct democracy. But if one interferes with the sphere of other people, then the right is at its end. "That is precisely what the law should prevent."

Niggli also warns of the erosion on the rule of law or even a breach of the dam – with historically known consequences: "It is not possible for someone to say they are fighting for the good – and then be allowed to do anything. If someone commits trespass because they want to check whether all the appliances are turned off in someone else's private home, there is certainly a good purpose, and trespassing is not the most serious offence. "But is that what you want? If someone can break rules for the sake of the climate, why can't right-wing extremists do the same for the sake of their goals? We need rules about who can enter which sphere and when. And we have them at present. They are called law."

Unfortunately, these rules, and thus our constitutional state, have become fragile. Niggli warns against continuing down this path, which can only lead to the abyss. He does not like saying this because it sounds pathetic, and in doing so he opens his eyes beyond the Helvetic horizon: this is precisely why the Weimar Republic failed, "that no terrain was found on which one could negotiate with each other rationally and without judgement". Everyone thought that the only

thing that was useful was to shout at the other person or to use violence against him. "If we go down this path, things will get really bad."

It is to be hoped that the climate activists and the journalists involved will take Niggli's words seriously and go back to their civics lessons – after all, the latter at least still went through schools at a time when lessons were held on Fridays. The second wish would be that they listened well in history and civics lessons – or is this also just a pious wish, because history and civics have been cut back for years and/or were taught by teachers who have lost their sense of the concept of peace in direct democracy, for example, because of their enthusiasm for the EU? The all the more important for all of us, therefore, are lessons in civics and law such as those given by Professor Marcel Niggli. •

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“Europe – what future do we want?”

XXIXth Conference “Mut zur Ethik” from 2–4 September 2022

ef. 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.

In *Current Concerns* No 23 of 8 November 2022 we published a first part of the conference presentations, today and in the coming issues more presentations will follow.

Media and War

by Patrick Lawrence, USA*



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

For those present, it has been my delight to be welcomed into the pages of *Zeit-Fragen* and its English and French translations for some time now, and it’s equally my honour to be invited among you today to spend a little time with you.

I want to begin by mentioning the German anarchist and writer *Rudolf Rocker* and his noted book *Culture and Nationalism*. I imagine you know of him and his 1937 work already. I have no idea what you think of him, but I imagine you know the book. I don’t accept everything Rocker had to say, but I find him a very fascinating figure. He was a person of singular dedication. He was of a Roman Catholic family, but he learned Yiddish. The Yiddish-speaking communities on the Continent and in England and eventually in United States had been an important part

of his *milieu* for most of his life. Culture and power are antagonists: This was Rocker’s argument, if I don’t oversimplify. As a state accumulates and projects its power it will require all cultural institutions in one or another way to serve it. In other words, the state insists that culture must be national. To me, museums and universities are excellent examples of the cultural institutions Rocker was talking about.

Media are forced to serve power

But I’m talking about journalism, as, I would say, we can consider journalism among our cultural institutions. The institutions of journalism, the press and broadcasters, will be increasingly forced to reflect the perspectives of their nations. In our time they will be required to serve power if they are to survive, just as Rocker suggested. American media, and I mean corporate-owned, “mainstream” media, have been a case in point for a very long time. This is what I am going to talk about.

And the first thing to say is that today didn’t happen yesterday. By “our time” I mean more or less the whole of the post-World War II era. Anyone who knows the history of the Cold War is likely to have an idea of how subserviently the American press and broadcasters supported the new national security state, which began to accumulate extraordinary degrees of power soon after it took shape in the late 1940s.

No integrity in reporting on the Ukraine conflict

This problem is much worse now, in my view. The Ukraine conflict brings not only our media but our public discourse altogether and our polity to a point of crisis. In its coverage of this conflict what we call the mainstream press seems to me close to the point when the damage it inflicts upon itself by betraying the principles of democratic media maybe irreparable.

We Americans like to think propaganda is a problem that besets other, supposedly lesser societies than ours. This is one little corner of our exceptionalist ideology.

The word is simply not permitted in any conventional discussion of the American press. But the reality is the Ukraine crisis has tipped over the correspondents purporting to cover it into what is in my estimation – strong language here – out and out propaganda with no shred of integrity to be found in it.

I look at this two ways. I think it’s important to understand the broader context here. In one dimension it reflects a larger domestic American crisis.

9/11 – consequences for the press and broadcasters

I have long argued that the events of 11 September 2001 marked the abrupt end of the so-called American Century. There was a psychological collapse on that day. As we watched over and over the footage of the falling towers in New York, they seemed to me an objective correlative – I am borrowing a literary term *T.S. Eliot* and others have used – an external manifestation of an internal phenomenon, in this case a fatal disintegration of America’s conventional beliefs about itself. America assumed a defensive crouch on this day. I wonder if those of you who have visited here might have been able to detect this. America became an anxious, uncertain nation. And as we know, those suffering from anxiety and uncertainty are typically inclined to an insecure and often aggressive insistence on their righteousness.

Media are important instruments in this post-2001 national condition. If reality did not suit America’s leadership after 2001, and it has not, the press and broad-

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pl. I distinguish between *powerful* nations and *strong* nations. In this nomenclature America is a very powerful nation, but let’s not be mistaken: It’s also rather a very weak nation. Social fabric, the integrity of institutions, self-confidence, and so on: These determine whether a nation is weak or strong, and in all such respects America is very weak.

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

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casters would have to set about making up an alternative reality.

Consequences of defeats in Indochina

Another way to look at this question is by way of April 1975 and the defeats in Indochina. The Vietnamese won the Vietnam war, but the American press, along with the antiwar movement, did its part. The lesson in Washington ever since is that a domestic consensus is absolutely mandatory to wage wars. And to achieve this, the press would have to be more thoroughly controlled and act with more dedication in the state's interest than it was and did in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. That's the first way I look at our topic today – in its historical context.

The second way to look at this is by way of the crisis in Western liberalism altogether as we Americans use this term. I again relate this to 2001, but it also has to do with the rise of non-Western powers such as Russia, China, and India. Half a millennium of unchallenged supremacy is coming to an end, taking my date from *Vasco da Gama's* arrival in Calicut

in 1498. Once again, we find anxiety and uncertainty to be prevalent.

Only one officially approved perspective

And in consequence we confront a vigorous insistence that a single, officially approved perspective on any given question is all that is permitted. There can be only one way to look at events. One version of what purports to be the truth. All other ways of seeing things acquire derogatory, dismissive labels. I take this as a sign of weakness, not strength.

These various factors as I outline them much too briefly combine to make Western media conduct themselves so poorly and corruptly as they purport to cover the Ukraine crisis. They deliver us to the grave and, as I say, possibly irreparable mess we find as we try to understand events. The liberal West cannot lose this war. It would be too serious a blow to its ideology of supremacy. And would mark too consequential a turn in human history. The problem here is that – so far as I can make out – Ukraine and its Western sponsors appear indeed to be losing this conflict, gradually but inexorably. In con-

sequence, Western correspondents cannot cover this war as other wars have by tradition been covered.

This may be the first war in modern history when there is virtually no sound reporting to tell us what is going on. Correspondents, with few exceptions here and there, do not go anywhere near the front lines. They witness very little, taking the words of Ukrainian officials for the progress of the war – without, time and time again, telling us they are taking the words of Ukrainian officials and reporting the accounts of those officials as objective truth.

The "imaginary war"

We get instead two things.

We are fed a series of images permitting of no context, no causality, no comprehensive day-to-day accounting of things, so that we may truly understand this crisis and the direction of the fighting. Images, written or photographic, are infinitely manipulable and are used to give the appearance of telling a story without actually telling us anything. *Hannah Arendt* was very good on this topic in the years

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On the question of censorship

pl. We can't look at this crisis in the media – and I assume we are all in agreement that we are in one – we can't look at it without reference to the larger context – that's the point I wanted to convey. It reflects a social, political, and ideological crisis. The censorship question here as it has begun to emerge: I think this is among those things I count as post-2001 phenomena. I can't stress enough how much I think those events changed the complexion of this country and have driven events since.

And the *Russiagate* fable made this all the worse. In 2016, as those present may know already, it was absolutely a given that *Hillary Clinton* was going to win the election. There was no debate about it whatsoever. I don't think even the *Trump* people expected to win. And I think they were as shocked as anyone else when *Trump* did win. What happened then?

We have to go back to the 1990s, what we call the triumphalist 90s, encapsulated in that noted book *The End of History* by *Francis Fukuyama*, who argued that post-Berlin Wall liberal ideology, market economics, and so on would thenceforth face no challenge, it was the only alternative for human society to proceed.

Well, 2016 was supposed to be the inauguration of a more or less eternal liberal supremacy in America. Politically, ideologically, in the economic sphere, etc. And so, *Clinton's* loss was not simply the loss of one rather odious politi-

cian. It was the collapse of a whole system of beliefs held by liberal Americans. And at that moment they aggressed very vigorously to fight their corner on this question. And I think the censorship... and it is then, well, *Russiagate* goes to this point: It was in those moments that we entered this time when only one version of events would be permitted in public discourse. Those advancing alternative versions of events, as I said in my remarks, were labelled Russian assets or extremists or what have you.

We all know what labels do. If you label something – at least in this country – you preclude all discussions of it. And I think the censorship phenomenon grew out of that, and with the simultaneous emergence of independent publications, which have grown very rapidly and in visibility and influence: I don't want to overstate the case, but it is quite plain that Americans are losing faith in corporate owned media. The most recent polls from the *Gallup* organisation just in July – some shocking numbers here: The percentage of Americans who believe what they read in mainstream newspapers is 16%. The percentage of Americans who believe what they hear on broadcast news is 11%.

So, there is a war going on between these traditional media and independent publications. And censoring the latter is a major strategy of these companies, of the media, of the government. As some of you may know, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Reddit*, all these so-

cial media platforms have been hiring former CIA agents, former National Security Agency officials, former FBI operatives to serve in their censorship programs. In their censorship programs it's called "content moderation," but let's not be mistaken – content moderation means censorship. They "moderated" my *Twitter* account, claiming that I broke their rules. What are the rules? Well, you can't advocate violence and so on and so forth. But I never did that. You can't impersonate other people; I am not an impersonator. So, they have algorithms that pull out social media entries with certain words in them, "Ukraine," "Putin," "Syria," and so on. Then these *Twitter* notes are inspected by human beings and judgements are made. They are being made by former CIA agents among others.

That's the story over here, and it's getting very critical. My own case is rather minor but the worry at the moment is that we are going beyond just singling out one or another person, one or another publication such as myself or *Consortium News*, and they are going to instituting a sort of across-the-board digital censorship by way of wholesale websites, e-mail-systems operating systems, and so forth. It will become totalised. That's the front edge of it now. We are heading toward a totalisation of censorship. Who can predict how quickly it will come? But events are moving forward far more swiftly than one would wish already.

Greetings from Volgograd

by Yury Fyodorovich Starovatykh, Volgograd*



(picture ma)

Yury Fyodorovich Starovatykh, born in Stalingrad in 1937, was the Lord Mayor of the city of Volgograd from 1986 to 1990. He was evacuated during the Battle of Stalingrad from August 1942 to February 1943. He trained as a civil engineer and worked in the construction sector for 21 years. He helped build the "Panorama Museum of the Battle of Stalingrad"; the metro and several objects of the social sphere.

He was Vice-President of the international organisation "Mayors for Peace", a member of the Executive Bureau of numerous international organisations such as "The International Association of Peace Messenger Cities", the Federation of Twin Cities, etc. To this day, he is involved in twinning Volgograd cities all over the world.

During his term as Lord Mayor of Volgograd, 40 twinning agreements were concluded with Chemnitz and Cologne, Toronto (Canada) and Cleveland (USA), among others.

Yury Starovatykh is the chairman of the board of the Volgograd representation of the international public foundation "Russian Peace Foundation".

He holds numerous honorary titles, including Honorary Citizen of the City of Hiroshima and recipient of the Medal of Honour "For the Consolidation of Peace and Understanding between Peoples".

Because the thing that matters most is that we are all human being (and not violent beasts), and the "Manifesto for Europe" adopted at the "Mut zur Ethik" Conference in 2015 proclaims that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". [Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1]

Because the German military surgeon *Kurt Reuber*, surrounded in Stalingrad and sitting in a frozen fox-hole at the light of a single candle, used the backside of a geographic map to draw the Madonna and Child – an image known today as "The Stalingrad Madonna" – and write the words "Licht, Leben, Liebe" ("Light, life, love"). These are the most important formulas in our life.

There is another example. On 21 August 2022, Volgograd welcomed participants of a motor rally for "Peace and Friendship with Russia" – the rally about which our city newspapers wrote a lot. Sixteen German citizens of different ages, ways of life and worldviews, were brought together by a single purpose – calling for peace and cooperation.

The rally's organiser, *Mr. Reinhold Groß*, told our journalists that their group is the group "...of the Germans who do not support Russophobia and who understand

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Dear friends!

Accept the most heartfelt greetings from Volgograd, the former Stalingrad.

First of all, there are the most respectful human regards to be paid to the organisers of this Forum – the best citizen-to-citizen Forum, as I see it. Thank you very much!

I would also like to thank you – those who gave the Forum their physical or vir-

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

tual presence – for keeping your soundness of mind during these difficult times, when the world itself has gone insane, when the most violent Russophobia has morphed into the genocide of everything Russian, and even the names of *Tchaikovsky*, *Mussorgsky*, *Shostakovich* are being erased from poster boards.

Believe me, my friends – as an 80-year-old man who spent 60 years serving the cause of world peace, there is a lot I have to say about this situation. And yet, today I will limit myself solely to the words of gratitude.

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before her death. Along with the manipulated images we get what I have called "The imaginary war." Russian plundering, atrocities, incompetence, failures. Ukrainian valour, Ukrainian victories, and so on. If you make up things up out of whole cloth – a Russian effort to take Kiev, – e.g. – you can write all about Russia's defeat when it does not do so. We are getting this over and over.

I offer you a grim picture. It is as if we are at a historic turning point when we in the post-democracies – as I prefer to call our nations – no longer have anything even resembling a free press dedicated to the ideal of objectivity. No healthy society can survive if it insists on keeping its citizens in a state of ignorance.

Independent journalism and independent media – the antithesis of power

But if we look out ahead, things do not look so grim as all that – not to me, anyway. There is the unmistakable emergence of independent journalism and an independent

press such as *Zeit-Fragen* [Current Concerns], an excellent example, and independent broadcasters, webcasters, and what have you. I have great faith in these media and I hope not too much. To me they are where the dynamism in my profession is to be found. This confers on them responsibilities far outsized to their resources.

But I have confidence that over time they will rise to the occasion, as we say. They are implicitly a reply to Rudolf Rocker in that they are antagonistic to power and hold themselves apart from the powers they report upon. They are under attack, which demonstrates the pertinence of Rocker's thesis plainly enough. But the new digital technologies available to these media permit the independent press, at least so far, to maintain themselves as an independent pole of power. The term "Fourth Estate," dating to eighteenth-century England, has fallen so far out of favour it resembles a neglected antique accumulating dust, or in an object of a museum. But the posture of independent media is precisely to stand in this fashion. It is in part

their work that has prompted the mainstream's resort to outright propaganda, in my estimation. They, too, are fighting for their power of information – the narrative as we call it – in a way they never previously had to do.

I said "so far" just now, because our independent media rely on the powers that control the digital platforms they use. And it has been evident for some time that access to these platforms can be denied at any moment. I don't know whether you are aware of the battle royal going on over here about censorship. A few months ago, my *Twitter* account was permanently censored by their "content moderators" – a case in point. So, there is vulnerability and we have to watch how this war – an information war – is waged.

But in closing I would say the spirit of integrity and independence these new media display, the human commitment, is to me far more important than any clever use of this or that technology. This is where the strength of independent media truly lies, as I understand them.

Thank you.

Ukraine and the Foreign Policy Crisis of the West

by Ralph Bosshard*



Ralph Bosshard studied General History, Eastern European History and Military History, graduated from the Army Higher Cadre Training at the Military Academy at ETH Zurich as well as from the General Staff Training of the Swiss Army. This was followed by Russian language training at Moscow State University and training at the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Russian Army. He is familiar with the situation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia from his six years at the OSCE, where he served, among other things, as Special Advisor to the Swiss Permanent Representative.

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

No return to "business as usual" was the motto of Western foreign policy after the 2014 integration – annexation, in Western terms – of Crimea into the Russian Federation. Since 24 February 2022, this has changed to "no business at all", and the West has been threatening with sanctions every state and individual still maintaining relations with Russia. The events of the past few months, however, raise doubts as to whether the West will succeed in imposing its views on the world. The importance of Western Europe, in particular, is dwindling; it will have to learn to live with its unloved neighbour in the east.

The West's economic combat instruments as well as those concerning its foreign policy diplomacy have proved too ineffective in the fight against Russia. In addition, many states reject the claim to leadership raised precisely by US President Joe Biden during his election campaign. After three decades, resistance is rising against the Western belief that it can declare every unpopular state a "rogue state" and punish it in consequence. The call for a multipolar world is the answer to the dominance the West has been wielding since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The West lacks arguments

The West's indignation over the Russian intervention in Ukraine may have been expedited by the fact that the Russian side put forward the same arguments in the case of Crimea and the Donbass that the West had used to justify its various interventions over the past three decades: part of this argumentation is the reference to the right to secession of the Russian-speaking population in the south and east of Ukraine versus that of the Kosovo Albanians in former Yugoslavia.¹ In addition, there is the concept of the *Responsibility to Protect*, or respectively of humanitarian intervention, which was made use of in connection with Kosovo and also with the Western intervention in Libya.²

The weakness of the West's argumentation is further enhanced by the fact that in the cases of Serbia in 1999 and Iraq in 2003, the justifications put forward for military intervention subsequently proved to be unfounded. The existence of "Operation Horseshoe" is and remains disputed, and also the thesis of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction proved to be a lie.³ A mirror was also held up to the West in the area of security. Since February of this

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what exactly is happening now in Germany and in Europe as a whole. Of course, it will be dangerous for us to return, because the mission that brought us here goes against the liking of the official German Government, and so we might be subject to repression. We might have our bank accounts closed; we might be fired from our jobs. But we do not let it concern us, because it is the friendship between nations that matters most, and so we will continue down our road with an open heart".

Another thing that Reinhold Groß was totally right about is that "We are building up people's diplomacy – grassroots diplomacy. We are demonstrating that we have hearts and that we support peace. We have always been warmly welcomed in Russia, despite the very difficult past between Germany and Russia. To my Russian and German friends alike, I keep saying – don't look back. We must only look ahead, towards what the future holds for us. And what happened in 1941 will and must never happen again."

On 21 August 2022, I, together with my colleagues, welcomed the rally participants at Volgograd Peace Foundation's office and told them, "Our today's meeting is a remarkable occasion. It is like a single blade of grass that has found its way

through the paving asphalt, and from this sprout, reason and peace must spread back all over the planet."

Not so long ago, the Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen declared that "This is more than the war for territories and borders. This is a war for what we believe in. This is the war against the values on which Europe and the free world are built."

The problem, though, is that the things which they are talking about – the tyranny and the oppression – are nowhere to be found in Russia, and for a very long time. Same goes for what they are calling their values: both freedom and democracy are nowhere to be found in Europe. The words are still there; the values themselves are gone.

And so, in consideration of those two facts from the life of the Russian and the Germans, I am now thinking a lot about my participation in the Nuremberg Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1985. This Congress was held by the never-to-be-forgotten Willy Brandt under the motto "40 years later: East – West". Both my participation in the Congress and my discussions with Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr were about the fact that only through reconciliation can we bring peace to Europe. So, isn't it the time for Olaf Scholz to halt, come to

his senses and start working for the benefit of the German citizens – instead of catering to Biden, against the common sense?

But stop!

Forgive me, my friends, for breaking my earlier promise to limit myself solely to the words of gratitude.

Let us be reminded of the year 1950, when the *International Congress of the Friends of Peace* took place in Warsaw, the Congress that resolved to establish the *World Peace Council*. 226 delegates were elected to the first panel of the Council, with the Nobel Prize winner Frédéric Joliot-Curie as its Chair. Much has been done in 72 years, and yet, lately, this most important Council has played very little role whatsoever, – despite the nations' will for peace being a powerful factor in the de-escalation of international tensions.

Let us dedicate our hearts to finding the ways and means for making this organisation active again, so that the International Movement of the Friends of Peace and its battle body, the World Peace Council, would be searching again for the various modes of action and uniting those who cherish Peace. In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that everything is not as bleak as it seems, and that we will continue our fight for the right to live!

From Volgograd with love. •

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year, Russia has been arguing that a preemptive attack on Ukraine was made necessary by the imminent Ukrainian strikes against the breakaway Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. The term "preemptive attack" was first used before the US Congress in 2002 by then President *George W. Bush*. Moscow has always justified its opposition to NATO's eastward expansion with reference to the indivisibility of security, which is anchored in the *Helsinki Final Act*.⁴ The West, of course, rejects all Russia's arguments: it does not reckon the respective events comparable.

This may be enough for some observers in the West. Representatives of an egalitarian view of international law, however, are more inclined to subscribe to the Russian view. This includes in particular those countries that have already been victims of Western interventions or feel threatened. Here it is not a question of commenting on or even evaluating the argumentation chains of the parties to the dispute. Who believes whom today is often the result of ideologically coloured convictions rather than a sober analysis of the facts.

For the tenth time already, the Russian government held its traditional security conference in Moscow in mid-August, and this was of course overshadowed by the war in Ukraine. A map of the origin of the speakers at this conference speaks volumes: The majority of Asian and Latin American countries participated, as well as half the countries of Africa.⁵ It is interesting to note that some Western European countries also took part, although surely all possible measures were taken on the American side to prevent this, as in previous years. All the more remarkable is the lively attendance of representatives from all over the world at a time when Russia is actively engaged in war. Russia is and remains relevant to world politics, and even countries that do not in every respect approve of Russia's actions in Ukraine want to remain in contact with Moscow. The West and Europe in particular, on the other hand, are losing relevance. This raises the fundamental question for Russia of why it should subordinate itself to the will of a Europe whose importance is dwindling.

Economy and geoeconomics

In 2015, at a seminar at the *George C. Marshall Center* in Germany, the then German defence attaché in Russia, Brigadier-General *Schwalb*, showed a picture of a bearskin on the wall and remarked that the West would be able to nail Russia to the wall by means of economic measures in no time.⁶ Seven years later, his prediction has still not come true. It was probably also the same belief in the absolute economic superiority of the West that led

to the prediction believed in until February of this year that Russia would not attack Ukraine. In terms of the effectiveness of geoeconomics, the West has massively overestimated itself in recent years.

In view of the enormous economic costs and the political risk of war, according to the theories of *Edward N. Luttwak*, geoeconomics was to replace classical warfare.⁷ The implementation of a promising geoeconomic strategy requires a strong and relevant economy as a basis. Russia's economy so far appears to have had the size and relevance to withstand Western geoeconomics. A player's desire to expand its economic base can lead to the involvement of states previously uninvolved in a conflict – including Switzerland as one of the more important participants in the global economy. Western commentators were only briefly able to rejoice at the collapse in value of the Russian rouble last March.⁸ Apparently, the Russian central bank intervened very effectively and quickly stabilised the rouble. Even the alleged economic nuclear bomb, i. e., Russia's exclusion from the SWIFT system, did not lead to the collapse of the Russian economic and financial system.

In the case of Russia, the means of economic and political sanctions did not bring about the desired success. Should there be further conflicts in the future with countries that enjoy the support of Russia, China or other "underdogs" of world politics, the West will have to resort to military means sooner than before. The West's descent will be accompanied by violence.

Crisis in Russia in the 1990s

One often hears the assumption that *Vladimir Putin* wants to restore the Soviet Union. Yet for broad circles of Russian society, a return to communism is certainly not an option. The Russian Communist Party is failing to win majorities and its electorate is ageing. But a return to predatory capitalism, as practised in the days of the liberal experiment under *Boris Yeltsin's* leadership, is not an option either. The memory of the rouble crisis is still too vivid, when the dramatic devaluation of the rouble deprived many people of their lifetime's savings. This happened not only to many people in Russia, but also in Ukraine and other republics of the former Soviet Union. The figureheads of the liberal experiment, who became known as the "Young Reformers", are unpopular in Russia today. They included *Yegor Gaidar*, *Boris Nemtsov*, *Sergei Kiriyenko*, *Anatoly Chubais* and others.⁹

Those who are not aware of what happened in Russia in the 1990s will not understand Russia today. A generation that remembers the catastrophic nineties will offer every possible resistance to Russia

being turned back into what it was in the nineties: a country that gives away its raw materials for a ridiculous price, along with the corresponding production plants, but which otherwise has no say in international politics. That is why it was the most inapposite thing the former commander-in-chief of the US forces in Europe, General *Ben Hodges*, could say when he declared at an OSCE event in Vienna that he would like to see cooperation with Russia as it was in the 1990s.¹⁰ This form of cooperation is no longer acceptable.

Today, it pains many people in the former Soviet Union that Russians are now fighting against Ukrainians, Azerbaijanis against Armenians, Tajiks against Kyrgyz, and so on. It was precisely with a view to unresolved conflicts in this region that the *Commonwealth of Independent States* was founded in 1991, but today it unfortunately leads a wallflower existence as a side-lines for veteran diplomats. However, Europe has plunged into a conflict with a country that is determined not to submit ever again. A new *modus vivendi* must be found.

Europe as a divided community of values

Europe sees itself as a community of values, but this community is divided, and the EU will have a hard time maintaining unity. Especially in questions of *gender mainstreaming*, there is a pronounced East-West divide: Some Eastern European states are not readily prepared to go along with this trend.¹¹ This reverses the ideological conditions of the Cold War: If Soviet-style communism was not an option for Western European countries at the time, now the public of several Western countries is leaning more towards the ideology of its alleged enemy Russia. In fact, in several Eastern European countries, the "new values" are no more an issue than they are in Russia. By aggressively promoting their LGBTI+ ideology, zealots from Western and Northern Europe could force governments in Eastern Europe to take a clear stand and divide their own community of values.

Europe has thrown down the gauntlet to a society determined to preserve its own *way of life*. On top of that, in Russia Europeans are considered incapable of defending their values. At the same time Russia is no longer a GULAG, as it was under *Stalin's* repression. Russian citizens can freely enter and leave the country. Every year, one million more people immigrate to Russia than emigrate.¹² On the one hand, this creates a social outlet, and on the other, it shows that life in Russia is not as terrible as we are sometimes led to believe.

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Russia's geostrategic disadvantage

The global importance of Russian agriculture has become clear in the course of the Ukraine conflict. In Russia, the triangle St. Petersburg – Irkutsk – Rostov-on-Don can be used for agriculture. The distribution of the population in Russia also coincides with this: More than 80% of Russia's population lives in the European part of the country, namely in the St. Petersburg – Ekaterinburg – Chelyabinsk – Rostov-on-Don quadrangle.¹³ Most of the population of Siberia lives on its southern edge.

And it is precisely in the Eastern European plain that the open door to Russian territory lies. Most other border regions are not suitable for the deployment of strong conventional force groupings. Russian territory is really only accessible in the Baltic States region and the Eastern European Plain. A second open door lies in the Far East: east of the so-called *Hei-he-Tengchong line* in China, the resources would be available for an attack on Russian territory. And who would help Russia defend its Far East if it were to go on a confrontational course with China? Russia is well aware that it is at a geostrategic disadvantage. The latent sense of threat harboured by Russia's political elite stems from this disadvantage.

Reorganisation in Eastern Europe

After 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of its constituent republics, millions of people suddenly found themselves living in a country whose official language they did not speak; they were given passports of a state they did not have much time for. This problem remains unsolved to this day. Kazakhstan and Belarus have at least managed to recognise two official languages. Russia and Kazakhstan are the only countries of the former Soviet Union that consider themselves a multi-ethnic state. All the others pursue a more or less pronounced policy of nationalism. The Ukraine conflict could easily be repeated elsewhere.

In the case of Ukraine, it would probably not have been an unacceptable demand to introduce Russian as a second official language. Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Switzerland also use several official languages without endangering state unity. A majority of EU member states are, however, monolingual, and many of them have struggled with their national minorities in the past.¹⁴ Thus far, the EU has done precious little to protect the rights of the Russian minority in the Baltic republics.¹⁵ The linguistic self-determination of the Russian-speaking areas in eastern Ukraine,

as formulated in the Minsk package of measures, has, in eight years, never been implemented.

Another provision of the Minsk agreements on which the implementation failed was the article on the federalisation of the country. This term was interpreted by Ukrainian politicians and oligarchs as a free pass for the establishment of petty kingdoms. In the set around the oligarch *Rinat Akhmetov*, people may have rejoiced that the Donbass would now become such an empire, and *Ihor Kolomoysky* probably had similar intentions for his hometown of Dnipro/Dnipropetrovsk. In Dnipro, he and his governor *Genadiy Korban* are possible candidates for the throne, in Kharkov *Evgeniy Muraev* and *Vadim Rabinovich*. These personalities might put the Dnipro and Kharkov oblasts on a secessionist course in the medium term.

Overall, Ukraine will emerge from the current war as a financially, economically, demographically and infrastructurally weakened state. This was probably one of the objectives of the war as a whole and the background to Russian President *Putin's* statement that the aim was to guarantee Russia's military security over a period of two to three generations.

Arms Trade and Stability

As far as corruption and the arms trade are concerned, the reports that 60–70% of the arms supplied from the West disappear in the swamp of Ukrainian corruption may probably be believed. In September 2014, the then Minister of the Interior, *Arsen Avakov*, literally "gave the runaround" to an OSCE delegation in Kiev.¹⁶ At the time, the OSCE was concerned about the uncontrolled transfer of weapons from all kinds of depots to Ukraine's newly formed volunteer formations and offered the Ukrainian government software to register these weapons. This had already proved successful in other countries, but the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior showed no interest in it. Their reasons are open to speculation. The volunteer battalions that were established at that time "bought" their equipment. The numerous western uniforms that could be observed in eastern Ukraine in those years were only part of this. The lack of arms control may not have been unintentional at the time. Now, in recent months, weapons and ammunition have been pouring into Ukraine on an unprecedented scale, and it is to be feared that there will be little control over their whereabouts. Today, however, it is no longer just a question of small arms, but of heavy weapons against tanks and aircraft. Europe may very soon see assassination attempts carried out with Western weapons of war. Political extremists and

organised crime will be able to use such weapons for their purposes in the near future, and thus destabilise the entire eastern half of Europe. The price of this negligent policy will be paid by the Eastern European countries.

Conclusion

Today, the West can no longer convince other countries, and probably no longer force them to adopt its views. At present, the bloc can only maintain its unity by mongering fear of Russia. In Russia, on the other hand, there is a certain consensus not to again accept a subordinate role to the West, which does not enjoy great prestige anyway. A turnaround in Russian policy is currently not in sight. Whether the EU will be able to finance the reconstruction of Ukraine, the development of Eastern Europe and a wave of rearmament is still uncertain. In view of the current economic situation, it may well be doubted.

Western geopolitics will force Russia to destabilise its neighbours in Eastern Europe in the coming years, perhaps decades, in order to prevent a solid base for an attack on Russia from developing there. With corruption still rampant, the conditions in Eastern Europe would be favourable for such an attack, and the means exist in the form of the numerous weapons available. Russia is well enough networked in the international community of states to be able to afford an aggressive policy towards Europe and it will hardly be possible to deter it by sanctions. At the same time, Western foreign policy will be handled in a more aggressive, almost militaristic manner.

Ukraine and the hardliners in the West will hinder the search for a *modus vivendi* with Russia. But the West will not be able to dictate the form this will take. •

¹ cf. Führer, Hans Rudolf. What was the trigger for the Russian "special operation"? Ukrainian plan of attack or Russian imperialism? in: *Current Concerns* of 27 September 2022, online at [https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/archiv/2022/EN/No.19/20/What was the trigger for the Russian "special operation"? Ukrainian plan of attack or Russian imperialism?](https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/archiv/2022/EN/No.19/20/What%20was%20the%20trigger%20for%20the%20Russian%20special%20operation%20Ukrainian%20plan%20of%20attack%20or%20Russian%20imperialism%20)

² see the homepage of the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, online at <https://www.globalr2p.org/what-is-r2p/#:~:text=The%20Responsibility%20to%20Protect%20%E2%80%93%20known,cleansing%20and%20crimes%20against%20humanity.> On the topic in general, see Schaller, Christian. "Gibt es eine 'Responsibility to Protect' – "Is there a 'responsibility to protect'?"", at Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 31 October 2008, online at [https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/30862/gibt-es-eine-responsibility-to-protect/.](https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/30862/gibt-es-eine-responsibility-to-protect/) (in German)

³ See, as representative of the numerous publications on this subject, in particular Halimi, Serge; Rimbart, Pierre. "The fairy tale of the 'Operation Horseshoe'", in: *Le Monde diplomatique* of 11 April 2019, online at <https://monde-diplomatique.de/artikel/15584546>, and "20 years of NATO attack on Serbia, bombed locally"; in: *TAZ* of

Use of DU weapons in Yugoslavia – State of the lawsuit against NATO

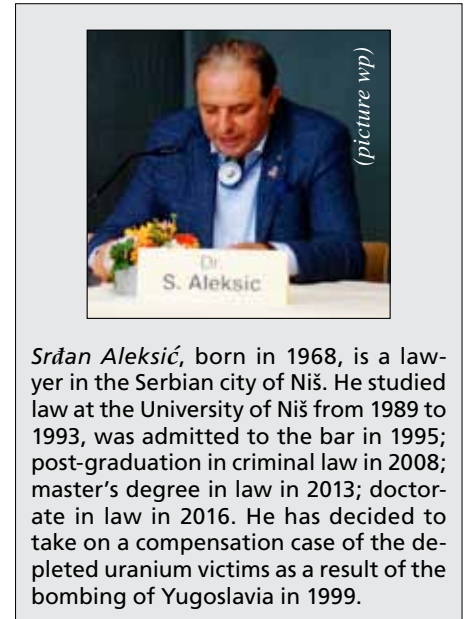
by Dr Srđan Aleksić, Serbia*

ef. NATO's attack against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the Kosovo war, which was against international law, began on 24 March 1999 and ended on 10 June 1999. According to NATO, its pilots flew 38,000 sorties during the 78-day operation, 10,000 of which were air strikes. An estimated 3,500 to 4,000 people were killed and about 10,000 injured in the attacks, two-thirds of whom were civilians. NATO attacks also dropped 10 to 15 tonnes of depleted uranium on Serbian territory. As a result, about 5500 cases of cancer per million inhabitants were registered. Today, Serbia has the highest number of cancer deaths in Europe: According to statistics, 33,000 people in Serbia were diagnosed with cancer. Among them, one child a day. Even today, after 23 years, the population suffers from the consequences of the use of depleted uranium ammunition (see Current Concerns No 3 of 16 February 2021).

Because he could not bear it any longer, the lawyer Professor Srđan Aleksić from Niš, Serbia, with strong support of his friend Professor Velimir Nedeljković, began to act decisively: He began to collect the cases of victims of the depleted uranium bombings. Countless victims and family members of victims had contacted him – over 3300. His goal: a claim for compen-

sation against NATO. After two international conferences in 2018 and 2019 and countless expert reports, he, together with a team of international lawyers, had enough evidence to file a first lawsuit with the Supreme Court in Belgrade on 20 January 2021. NATO responded with a diplomatic note on 18 March 2022. It states, among other things: “[...] It is recalled that NATO, including the NATO Military Liaison Office in Belgrade, enjoys in the Republic of Serbia full immunity from jurisdiction and from enforcement. [...] Nato has not waived any of those immunities in relation to these proceedings or any other proceedings. [...] In view of the above, NATO will not participate in the proceedings and expects that the status, the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the Organization will be fully upheld by the Serbian authorities, including courts and tribunals. NATO expects that the Government of the Republic of Serbia will take all necessary measures for the status enjoyed by the Organization to be recognised and given effect by the High Court of Belgrade. [...]”

The essence of the above-mentioned Note Verbale of the NATO mission is the emphasis on immunity, in particular the limitation of the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia with regard to the conduct of legal proceedings against NATO officers and soldiers, all of which relate to the agreement on “Transit Arrangements for Peace Support Operations of NATO Forces through Serbia and Monte-



Srđan Aleksić, born in 1968, is a lawyer in the Serbian city of Niš. He studied law at the University of Niš from 1989 to 1993, was admitted to the bar in 1995; post-graduation in criminal law in 2008; master's degree in law in 2013; doctorate in law in 2016. He has decided to take on a compensation case of the depleted uranium victims as a result of the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

negro” signed on 18 July 2005, as well as the 2006 agreements establishing the Military Liaison Office in Belgrade.

I would like to thank you for being here today, the same you who believed in us from the very beginning, and supported us when no one else did, I want you to know that you are a large part of this journey. As many of you know, we sued NATO in Serbia and received a response in which they invoked immunity, i.e., the limitation of the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia in the

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

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24 March 2019, online at <https://taz.de/20-Jahre-Nato-Angriff-auf-Serbien/!5579713/>. On the lie of the then US Secretary of State Colin Powell in the UN Security Council: Burgmer, Christoph. “Built on lies”; in: *Deutschlandfunk* of 5 February 2013, online at <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/auf-luegen-gebaut-100.html>, Havertz, Rieke. “This one moment”, in: *Zeit online* of 18 October 2021, online at <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2021-10/colin-powell-tod-ehemaliger-us-aussenminister-nachruf-weisses-haekchen-angen-erhobene-haende>, Kottra, Katta. “Lies in the Iraq War, The Long Noses of Powell & Co”; in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 18 March 2008, online at <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/luegen-im-irakkrieg-die-langen-nasen-von-powell-co-1.264076>

⁴ The Final Act of the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is available online at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/6/e/39503.pdf>.

⁵ cf. the list of speakers on the homepage of the Russian Ministry of Defence at <https://eng.mil.ru/en/mcis/speeches.htm>

⁶ The author participated in that seminar.

⁷ on Luttwak and geo-economics see: “From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics, Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce”, 1990, in: THE NATION-

AL INTEREST 20, 1990, pp. 17–23, limited preview at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42894676>

⁸ cf. the illustration at https://www.finanzen.ch/devisen/chart/us_dollar-russischer_rubel-kurs

⁹ cf. representative of the numerous publications Steiner, Christian. “Als Russland die schwerste Krise seit dem Ende der Sowjetunion erlebte - When Russia experienced the most serious crisis since the end of the Soviet Union”; in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 17 August 2018, online at <https://www.nzz.ch/wirtschaft/als-der-rubel-nicht-mehr-rolle-ld.1412034?reduced=true> (in German)

¹⁰ The author was present at this.

¹¹ Cf. Pew Research Center. “European Public Opinion Three Decades After the Fall of Communism”, 15 October 2019, p. 5, online at http://docs.dpaq.de/15433-pew_research_center_europe_report_embargoed.pdf

¹² See the figure at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1009483/emigration-and-immigration-russia/>

¹³ Rosinfostat: Плотность населения России по регионам и городам на квадратный километр, online at <https://rosinfostat.ru/plotnost-naseleniya/>. See the map that Aklexej Glushkov (Алексе́й Глушков) created for Wikipedia Russia.: https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C_%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F_%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B1%D1%8A%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B2_%D0%A

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¹⁴ cf. <https://arbeit.studiumineuropa.eu/s/3704/75716-Europaischen-Landern-Amtssprachen-Einwohnerzahl-Hauptstadt-Waerung-Telefonvorwahl-Internet.htm> (German)

¹⁵ cf. Wissenschaftliche Dienste des Deutschen Bundestags: Die russischen Minderheiten in den baltischen Staaten, Sachstand (the Russian minorities in the Baltic states, facts of the matter), WD 2 - 3000 - 02/17, 24 February 2017, online at <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/502250/4a724a7d34d30c84baed59a7046500f/wd-2-010-17-pdf-data.pdf>. One of the numerous publications on this: “Aufstand der ‘Nichtbürger’ in Lettland – Uprising of the ‘non-citizens’ in Latvia”; in: *Deutschlandfunk Kultur* of 25 April 2014, online at <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/baltikum-aufstand-der-nichtbuergler-in-lettland-100.html> (in German) and “‘Non-citizens’ in Estonia and Latvia, fear of the Russian minority”; in: *Spiegel Ausland* of 3 October 2017, online at <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/estland-und-lettland-das-problem-mit-der-russischen-minderheit-a-1169422.html> (German)

¹⁶ The author was part of the OSCE delegation at the time.

Keep in mind that things can be seen differently

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

Everything needed to characterise the Western war drums has been said in the past nine months. Also, that much that was once very important to Europe has been dropped: not only freedom and justice, but also humanity and international understanding. When an openly racist writer receives the “Peace Prize” of the German Book Trade, alarm bells should ring everywhere. With only a few exceptions, they have not been heard. That can't be all Europe has to offer.

In the summer of 1947, John Steinbeck and Robert Capa, two US-Americans, travelled for several weeks through the war-torn Soviet Union on behalf of the “New York Herald Tribune”. They wanted to report on the people in the country and record their lives in pictures. The result was a book that was first published in English in 1948 and in German in 2010. The title of the book: “A Russian Journal”.

John Steinbeck and Robert Capa were already world famous in 1947. Capa was a famous photographer. Even today, a street and a house in Leipzig are named after him. Steinbeck was a journalist and writer. In 1940 he was awarded the *Pulitzer Prize* for his journalistic work, and in 1962 he was to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novel “Grapes of Wrath”.

Only the last sentences of the book should be quoted here: “We found, as we had suspected, that the Russian people are people, and, as with other people, that they are very nice. The ones we met had a hatred of war, they wanted the same things all people want—good lives, increased comfort, security, and peace. [...] We have

no conclusions to draw, except that Russian people are like all other people in the world. Some bad ones there are surely, but by far the greater number are very good.”

Have you been able to read, hear or see anything like this in our official Western media for the past nine months? Instead, the Russians have become barbarians and the country's political leadership demons threatening the world.

“Revaluation of all values” ...

Many convictions that shaped the generations of many European states in the years after 1945 have been declared obsolete or have been forgotten. How often in the past weeks and months I have had to think of the past 30 years, the plan of US “full-spectrum dominance”, which ultimately also led to the war in Ukraine, and of the old wisdom that the pursuit of power and war do not only mean death and destruction, but also the “revaluation of all values”.

Today I would like to recall not only the “A Russian Journal”, but also two texts from a whole treasure trove of valuable documents that point to another Europe, another Germany.

The first is an essay by *Adolf Süsterhenn* from the German *Rheinischer Merkur* of 12 April 1946.¹ The title of the essay: “Freedom and Justice”. Adolf Süsterhenn was a German expert in constitutional law and politician and is considered the “spiritual father” of the state constitution for Rhineland-Palatinate. He was a minister in Rhineland-Palatinate, a member of the German *Parliamentary Council* that formulated the German Grundgesetz, Presi-

dent of the Oberverwaltungsgericht (Higher Administrative Court), Chairman of the Constitutional Court of Rhineland-Palatinate, and member of the German Bundestag. In 1945, he was one of the founders of the *Christian Democratic Union* of Germany (CDU) in his adopted home town of Rheingönheim.

... or “freedom and justice”?

According to Süsterhenn, the most accurate way to characterise National Socialist rule in Germany is as a “system of unfreedom and lawlessness”. The lack of freedom and law “was the worst ordeal from a spiritual point of view, worse than physical torment and material damage, for the system of National Socialism, founded on servitude and arbitrariness, touched the core of the human personality, the general human dignity”.

With striking sentences, Süsterhenn defined what freedom and law mean and that law is an indispensable part of freedom.

“Freedom”, he wrote, “is a natural good to which every human being as such is entitled. It consists in the fundamentally unrestricted possibility of man, independent of external coercion, to develop and shape his physical and mental capacities, powers, and abilities independently and on his own responsibility. As a rational being, man cannot indulge in unreasonable licentiousness without thereby endangering his true humanity. In the words of *Goethe* to Chancellor *von Müller*, the essence of freedom is ‘to be able to do what is reasonable under

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case of prosecuting NATO soldiers and officers, which was provided in the agreements with NATO, from 2005 and 2006, which established the Military Office in Belgrade. These agreements are inapplicable to this situation for several reasons:

First. When we talk about agreements between two international entities, which are undoubtedly NATO and the Republic of Serbia, we have to start with the Vienna Convention on Contract Law, which confirms the principle of international law – the principle of non-retroactivity. The Vienna Convention states that, unless otherwise intended by the contracting parties, the provisions of the agreement do not oblige any of the parties with regard to events and facts that preceded the moment the agreement entered into force.

Second. The immunity invoked by NATO in the Republic of Serbia cannot be enjoyed even according to the United Nations Convention on Privileges and Immunities, primarily because the immunity was given to experts exclusively in the interest of the United Nations Organization, and the crime against peace and the crime against humanity, carried out in 1999 with the bombing of Yugoslavia. They certainly do not represent the interests of the OUN.

Third. Not a single NATO official has been passively legitimised in this dispute, but the lawsuit has been directed against NATO, as an international organisation, and in that context, invoking immunity has no effect or legal basis. The trial is scheduled for October 16¹, where we will present all our arguments why immunity could not be granted to the NATO organisation in Serbia. We also performed the expert opinion of Professor Rita Celi

from the University of Turin determined the presence of heavy metals and depleted uranium in two of our clients, a military person who was in Kosovo and Metohija and a woman who lived across the street at the time of the bombing of the General Staff in Belgrade. Professor Celi proved the presence of 21 types of heavy metals and depleted uranium is 500 times higher than normal, which has not been recorded until now.

Thank you for the great support you give me and I hope we will continue to cooperate in the future. •

¹ The trial could not take place on 16 October because the claimant, Colonel *Dragan Stojčić* from Belgrade, passed away. His wife, *Dragana Stojčić*, will continue the lawsuit against Nato. As soon as the evidentiary proceedings have been completed, the court proceedings will continue. It is expected that the court will schedule the first trial date by the end of the year.

"Keep in mind that things ..."

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all conditions'. Only the free use of reason and the self-decision and self-confirmation accruing from a reasonable cognition of moral norms leads man beyond the spheres of vegetative and animal life subject to natural compulsion [...] and raises him to the status of real man, to a moral personality." (Translation of all quotes *Current Concerns*)

And law? "But the ordering of the social coexistence of free individual personalities in the community, as well as the ordering of the relationship between the various human communities, is the task of law. [...] Only law is in a position to guarantee freedom. Where there is no law [...], arbitrariness and violence rule, the so-called law of the strongest triumphs."

A new totalitarianism threatens

He also warned that if state power should once again by itself presume to define freedom and law, a new totalitarianism was be imminent. This danger existed particularly under the rule of legal positivism, where only what is decided as law is taken as law. In 1932 and 1933, this had led to the National Socialist dictatorship. Thus, at the end of Süsterhenn's essay, one can read: "Any reorganisation of the situation in Germany in terms of constitutional law must take the events of 1933 as a lesson since the danger of totalitarian movements persists, despite the elimination of National Socialism. No matter how the reorganisation may look in detail, there must never again be such a far-reaching constitutional and actual concentration of power at a central institution [...], otherwise freedom and justice will again be endangered in the future. Above all, however, we must overcome the spirit of legal positivism and the resulting idea of state

omnipotence which is still haunting the minds of many who otherwise want to be good democrats. The supreme principle of all politics must be the recognition of the principle that the individual and the communities incorporated into the state did not receive their freedoms and rights from the state, but that these freedoms and rights are of pre-state origin and therefore also have pre-state rights rooted in human nature [...].

The state, which is not the creator of all law, but is subject to natural law itself, must not interfere with the development of the individual's personality and may not usurp the natural spheres of activity of the pre-state communities. On the contrary, it has the task of providing protection and assistance to the individual and the communities subordinated to him and of guaranteeing them free opportunities for development. [...] The common good, i.e., the realisation of social justice as the purpose of the state, constitutes both the natural-law justification and the natural-law limitation of state power. A state that rapes the freedoms and rights of the individual and of natural community formations such as the family, the profession, the community, or the homeland thereby deprives itself of the natural law basis of its existence, turning into an all-devouring juggernaut [...]."

Remembering that things can be done differently "A free people shall resurge"

The second document is a party programme of only a few pages.² At the end of June 1945, a programme commission of the Christian Democrats in Cologne adopted this draft for a party programme for the German CDU. "A call to rally the German people" is the headline, and the text consists of an analysis of the German catastrophe and 20 brief programme points for the future shaping (constitution)

of the country. Only a few sentences shall be quoted here:

"Thus, all too many succumbed to the National Socialist demagoguery that promised every German a paradise on earth. Without any moral hold of their own, they fell prey to racial arrogance and a nationalistic intoxication with power. The megalomania of National Socialism was combined with the ambitious imperiousness of militarism and the big capitalist armaments magnates. The end result was war, which plunged everyone into ruin.

What alone can save us in this hour of need is an honest reflection on the Christian and occidental values of life [...]. Therefore, away with dictatorship and tyranny, with master race and militarism! A free people shall arise again, whose basic law is respect for human dignity. A new Germany is to be created, based on law and peace. Our youth should learn again that it is not power but spirit that makes Germany honourable before the world. Truth, honesty and fidelity to the given word shall guide our public life. Lies, dissimulation and hypocrisy, the plague of Hitlerism, should never return. Social justice and social love shall protect a new national community which knows how to combine the God-given freedom of the individual and the demands of the community with the requirements of the common good."

Point 20 as the last of the "Guiding Principles for the Reconstruction of our Fatherland" reads: "The basis of German foreign policy is respect for foreign nationality and faithful adherence to the treaties. It must become common knowledge of the entire people that the policy of violence and war is not only a sin against one's own fatherland, but also a crime against humanity. Germany must be

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Cross was removed by German Foreign Ministry at G-7 meeting in Münster

km. On November 5, 2022, *vaticannews.va/en* read: "The diocese of Münster has criticised as 'incomprehensible' the hanging of a historic cross in the Peace Hall of the City Hall. [...]"

The diocese refers to a request by the German Foreign Ministry that the city of Münster had to remove the historic council cross in the peace hall on the occasion of the G-7 meeting. The reason given, according to the city of Münster, was that people with different religious backgrounds were attending the meeting.

The measure 'unfortunately expresses a reduced understanding of tolerance', comments the diocese of Münster. 'The cross stands – even if this was and is not always observed – for tolerance, peace-ability and humanity. The cross stands

for overcoming violence and death. The cross therefore stands precisely for the objectives that the foreign ministers are striving for with their meeting in Münster.'

The fact that the foreign ministers had deliberately chosen the Peace Hall in Münster for their deliberations, thus linking up with history, was very welcome, they said. 'Traditions and associated symbols that are expressions of values, attitudes and religious convictions cannot simply be 'taken down,' the diocesan statement continues. 'Rather, it can be helpful to engage with them and come to terms with them. That is what we would have liked.' [...]"

A speaker of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had justified the measure on Friday according to protocol. Explicitly, the

spokesman stressed that Foreign Minister *Annalena Baerbock* had not been involved with the removal of the cross. Baerbock herself has since regretted the decision to remove a cross that was part of the inventory for the meeting of the G-7 foreign ministers in the Peace Hall in Münster. This was exclusively an organisational measure, not a political one, she said at the final press conference in Münster on Friday evening. She herself had only learned about it in the morning. Even if the Historic Peace Hall in the town hall had to be converted into a conference room, the cross would have belonged there. 'It would have been good if it had not been moved away,' Baerbock said."

How credible is Ms Baerbock's subsequent explanation?

“Hey Diddle Diddle, the cat and the fiddle ...”¹

Why language is more than just some language skills

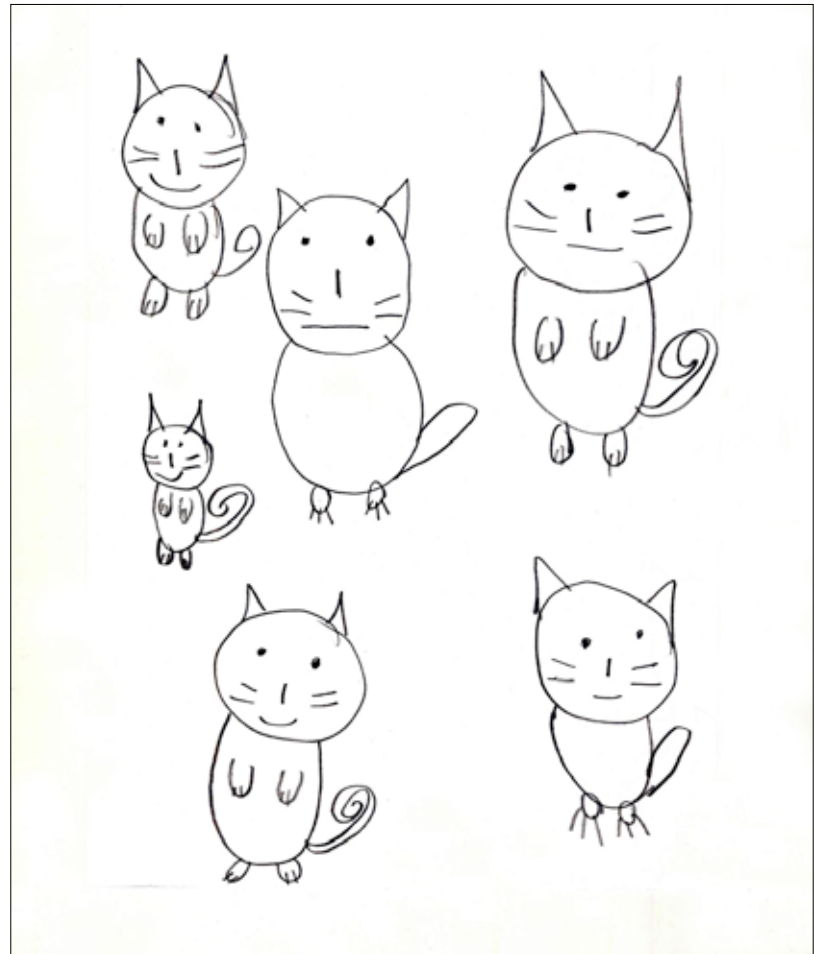
by Dr Eliane Perret, psychologist and curative teacher

If young people have only a poor command of the German language after completing their schooling – especially in writing – this is not only a problem for the national economy and for future employers, as is rightly complained about today. The young people concerned are also restricted in their personal development and later life, and not only in their professional field of activity. In all other areas of life, too, it is important to be competent in language, to be able to express oneself in a differentiated manner, to understand the other person, to sensitively grasp the meaning of what is read and heard, and to effortlessly see-through sophisticated language manipulative techniques in advertising and politics. It is a developmental task on the way to becoming a self-determined, socially competent fellow human being.

“This is the thumb”

The language of every country is a work of art in which history, spiritual life and the respective conditions of nature are reflected and thus the heritage is passed on from generation to generation. For every child, language acquisition begins in the first years of life, always embedded in the network of relationships in its social environment: I was sitting in a doctor’s waiting room when I suddenly heard a mother and her child quietly reciting a verse. It was a finger verse, a funny language game in which each finger is assigned a sentence. The two of them were having a great time:

*This is the thumb,
Which shakes the plums on the tree,
This one picks them all up,
This one carries them all home
And this little one here eats them all.*²



“Dot, dot, comma, dash, finished is the face, ...” (picture ma)

After a few repetitions, the little girl knew the verse on her own and repeated it again and again. And then it was already time for the doctor’s visit.

Such finger verses – actually little stories – have a playful, humorous character and are characterised by sound painting,

rhythm and catchy rhymes. They are integrated – and this is crucial – in the loving attention between the adult and the child, i.e., the cornerstone of a secure relationship.

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“Keep in mind that things ...”

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a leader in the realisation of the longing of the peoples for eternal peace.”

We were already further ahead once

John Steinbeck and Robert Capa, Adolf Süsterhenn and the “Cologne Guidelines”, all this was 75 years and more ago. The great worries in the Soviet Union and the USA about nuclear war were drowned out soon after 1947 by the drums of the Cold War. Natural law thinking, which actually enjoyed a renaissance in Germany after 1945, was already suppressed again in the 1960s.³

However, if we look at today’s Germany and today’s Europe of the West, we can

also say: we were already further ahead once – even if the choice of words from back then would have to be translated to some extent today! The experience with a totalitarian dictatorship and its horrors had made many come to their senses for a while in the post-war years. Our present-day Europe could learn something from these experiences and attitudes – to prevent another catastrophe.

Last but not least, the question arises as to why convictions that have been recognised as correct are suppressed or abandoned. This is also a psychological and social question: With all our good ideas – what is our inner attitude towards power? And what does it take not to get down on one’s knees in front of power or to strive for

power oneself? What does it take to actually live what has been recognised as right?•

¹ Bucher, Peter (ed.). *Nachkriegsdeutschland 1945–1949 (Germany after War). Sources on the Political Thought of Germans in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Freiherr-vom-Stein Memorial Edition, Vol. X, Darmstadt 1990, special edition 2011, pp. 165ff.*

² *ibid.* p. 27ff.

³ cf. Nestor, Moritz. “Die Renaissance des Naturrechts nach 1945” (The Renaissance of Natural Law after 1945); <https://naturrecht.ch/wp-content/uploads/02-Renaissance-des-Naturrechts-nach-1945.pdf>; and Künnecke, Arndt. “Die Naturrechtsrenaissance in Deutschland nach 1945 in ihrem Historischen Kontext – mehr als nur eine Rechtsphilosophische Randnotiz?” (The Natural Law Renaissance in Germany after 1945 in its Historical Context – More than a Marginal Note on Legal Philosophy?); <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/7071>

“Hey Diddle Diddle ...”

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“We are looking for old children’s verses ...”

It was fifty years ago when a Swiss parents’ magazine launched a children’s verse competition with this appeal, asking parents and grandparents to send in verses, games and songs with which they entertained their young children. The result was a rich collection of familiar and less familiar verses in a wide variety of forms, a treasure that has been preserved from generation to generation. *Susanne Stöcklin-Meier*, a kindergarten teacher from the canton of Basel-Country, who had taken on this task, created verse sheets from the extremely rich and varied fund, which met with a lively response and ultimately led to her first book, which is unique in its kind and was in great demand. It has therefore been reprinted again and again until very recently and is still available in German.³

Language as a connecting element

When a child begins to formulate its first words and to call daddy, mummy, bow-wow and others by their names, it is met with enthusiastic goodwill by those around it. And rightly so, because in this way the child actively strengthens its “bridge to its fellow human being”, as *Alfred Adler*, the founder of individual psychology, described the meaning of language and described it as an important human achievement. It is a connecting element between people that has its roots in the first years of a child’s life. During this time, a child begins to collect words and sentences that enable him to formulate his thoughts, ex-

press feelings and desires, recount experiences and, in the process, engage in a back-and-forth with those around him. Scientists from the different perspectives of their fields have been dealing with this amazing process in the development of a child for a long time. Today it is clear that language acquisition is an important formative factor in the process of a child’s personality development. It takes place in the reciprocal relationship between the child and its fellow human beings and can never be replaced by a medium. “Language can only be practised and a vocabulary can only be acquired in a social environment where the child has connections and also takes up the connections”, *Alfred Adler* already stated in the first half of the last century; a thesis that today is substantiated by developmental psychology and anthropological findings.

On the way to the ability to speak

In the course of their development, children gradually increase their vocabulary and expand their ability to express themselves. They learn to grasp the meaning of what is said and to echo it with an increasingly differentiated vocabulary. For what can be put into words becomes clearer, more understandable and more conscious. In interpersonal dialogue, thinking is stimulated and the children learn to process and structure their experiences so that they are available to them later in their memories. However, there is a long way to go from small verses to a mature ability to speak! The mother in the doctor’s waiting room had taken an important step towards this with her daughter.

“Hop, hop, rider”

Surely it is no coincidence that many adults remember verses and sayings that were common in their family. For example, when the father put the child on his knees and said ““Hop, hop, rider””; an affectionate question and answer game in which he let the child plop down carefully on his outstretched legs at the end – an amusing gives and take on both sides. Or as *Stöcklin-Meier* puts it: “This ‘cheap’ pleasure of being allowed to ride on father’s knee makes the smallest chap ‘rich’. Let us not deny our children this pleasure! Everything has its time. To dandle the child too. The feeling of security that this rocking triggers in the child cannot be made up for later.”⁵ Having such verses, rhymes and songs available for different situations is very valuable for parents and educators. They help to relax a situation, to give comfort or to express the common joy of what has been seen, heard or experienced. *Susanne Stöcklin-Meier* was rightly honoured by the Swiss Unesco Commission for her outstanding, lifelong achievement, stating: “For decades, *Susanne Stöcklin-Meier* has ensured that the intangible cultural heritage of the community ‘children’ is preserved and lives on.”⁶

With fun to language skills

Not only young children enjoy such language games. Often, they are connected with movements or serve as drawing aids, for example for a cat:

*“Dot, dot, comma, dash, (face).
finished is the face, (head)
and two pointed ears,
so it is born. (belly)
Ritze, ratze, ritze, ratze (muzzle
hair) – ready is the pussycat (tail)”.*

Or have you also tried to say really quickly:

“Peter Piper picked a pack of pepper, where’s the pack of pepper Peter Piper picked?”

Many such “tongue twisters” also found their way into the aforementioned collection. We learnt these tongue twisters at school when we were ten years old and apparently practised it for so long that it still haunts my memory today. Or we would try to say our names backwards. And of course, the introductory ritual for a game of catch or hide-and-seek was always a counting rhyme with which we determined the starting child.

Not only cultural techniques

Obviously, the value of such games lies not only in stimulating children’s language skills (as we would say today), but also in strengthening the feeling of

Susanne Stöcklin-Meier

ep. *Susanne Stöcklin-Meier* was born in Wangen an der Aare, Switzerland in 1940. She trained as a kindergarten teacher and later became known as a game educationalist and author of numerous other children’s books and radio and television programmes. Throughout her life she has collected rhymes, verses and games that at first glance seem



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trivial and irrelevant, but on closer inspection are a valuable cultural asset that would have been largely lost without her work. It is a cultural asset that is peculiar to each people and testi-

fies their identity, into which a child must grow and, in this way, can also connect with people beyond the immediate family environment. *Susanne Stöcklin-Meier*’s life’s work was honoured in 2008 by the Swiss UNESCO Commission as an outstanding, lifelong achievement. Today, at a more mature age, she

is still active and passes on her knowledge with great commitment and enthusiasm on her *YouTube* channel and website: www.stoecklin-meier.ch

“Hey Diddle Diddle ...”

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interpersonal solidarity. Because that is where these verses, rhymes and games came from, and that is where they are passed on and played! It is no coincidence that many of these verses, rhymes and sayings are spoken in dialect, the language in which a child feels emotionally “at home” and practices its mother tongue in many ways, an area of learning that is always underestimated. “By learning the mother tongue, the child acquires not only the words, their compounds and variations, but the infinite variety of concepts, conceptions about objects, the multiplicity of thoughts and feelings, artistic forms, the logic and philosophy of language – and he quickly and easily acquires in two or three years as much as he could not acquire half in twenty years of diligent and methodical learning,” wrote the Russian-Ukrainian educator and writer *Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinsky*.⁷

Christian Friedrich Hebbel: “Autumn Picture”



(Bild <https://swisscows.com/en/images?query=Scherenschnitt+Baum+Ernte>)

This is an autumn day like none I have seen!
The air is still, as if one scarcely breathes,
And yet rustling, far and near,
The fairest fruits fall from every tree.

O disturb them not, Nature's celebration!
This is the harvest she herself holds,
For today from the branches only loosens,
What falls from the sun's mild ray.

(1852)

wp. *Christian Friedrich Hebbel* (1813–1863) was above all a dramatist of poetic realism who developed his own theory of drama and implemented it in his plays. In addition, he emerged as a lyric poet with his love poems, ballads and nature poems; the poem *Autumn Picture* is probably his most famous.

For later learning success and learning to read and write, these linguistic forms of play are fundamental in the first years of life. This learning success begins with the acquisition of the mother tongue and is by no means exhausted by simple cultural techniques, because mastering the language is much more comprehensive. Ushinsky again: “In the language we find much deep philosophical spirit, truly poetic feeling, a distinguished, astonishingly sure taste, traces of a strongly concentrated thought, an immensity of unusually fine sense for the most delicate transitions in natural phenomena, great powers of observation, much strict logic, many noble spiritual impulses and germs of ideas, to which a great poet and profound philosopher would later only penetrate with difficulty [...]”⁸

Valuable cultural assets withheld?

These first language plays belong to the cultural assets of every people, just as they are found in literature, theatre, the fine arts, architecture and music. This cultural asset is always unique and must not give way to an all-levelling mass culture (a process that has unfortunately been going on for some time). It must be passed on to future generations and should be given a high priority in lessons and curricula. Of course, grammatical and orthographical tasks, exercises in style, etc. have their place in the language lessons of older children and young people. But we must not deprive them of the works created by poets and thinkers with high linguistic art. Who can remember “Nis Randers”, the dramatic ballad by *Otto Ernst*, which vividly depicts the dramatic rescue of a shipwrecked man, the humorously painted

Sunday excursion “Mit dem Auto über Land” (In the car over land) by *Erich Kästner* or how *Eduard Mörike* quietly and poetically conjures up a spring mood with his poem “It is spring”? Knowing such works not only promotes rooting in one's own culture, but it also strengthens social bonding and respect for what other peoples have achieved. Isn't it a bit poor and an underestimation, even neglect of our upcoming generation, when in the *Curriculum 21* for upper school students, under the search term “poem”, one of the competence levels to be achieved is limited to: “... can discover aesthetic design means in texts and describe them in German (for example, word play in a prose text, slang in a comic, rhyme in a poem)”?

¹ The complete children's poem reads: “Hey Diddle Diddle, The cat and the fiddle, The cow jumped over the moon. The little dog laughed, To see such fun, And the dish ran away with the spoon.”

² “This is the thumb (pointing to the thumb), Which shakes the plums (index finger), This one picks them all up (middle finger), This one carries them all home (ring finger), and this little one here eats them all (little finger)!”

³ Stöcklin-Meier, Susanne. (1974). *Verse, Sprüche und Reime für Kinder*. (Verses, sayings and rhymes for children). Zurich: Wir Eltern-Verlag

⁴ Adler, Alfred. (1924). *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology 2 – The soul of the difficult-to-educate schoolchild*.

⁵ Stöcklin-Meier. (1974). p. 9

⁶ Address by Madeleine Viviani, Secretary General of the Swiss UNESCO Commission, quoted from Stöcklin-Meier, Susanne. (2009). p. 4

⁷ Ushinsky, Konstantin Dmitrievich. (1963). *Die Muttersprache. Aus: Gesammelte Werke, Bd. II. S. 554–574*. In: Ushinsky, Konstantin Dmitrievich. *Ausgewählte Pädagogische Schriften*. Berlin: Volk und Wissen, Volkseigener Verlag. S. 101 (The Mother Tongue. From: Collected Works, Bd. II. pp. 554–574. In: Ushinsky, Konstantin Dmitrievich. Selected Pedagogical Writings) p.101

⁸ Ushinsky, Konstantin Dmitrievich. (1963). p. 96

Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinsky

ep. Even though his name and work are little known in Europe, the Russian-Ukrainian educator *Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinsky* can certainly be ranked with the classics of pedagogy such as *Comenius, Diesterweg, Froebel, Locke, Makarenko, Montessori, Pestalozzi, Rousseau* and others. He was born in 1823 in Tula, a town south of Moscow, died in 1871 in Kiev and is considered one of the most important educators and founders of scientific pedagogy in Russia in the 19th century. He was also called the teacher of Russian teachers, the friend of Russian children, the founder of the Russian elementary school, the father of Russian scientific education and the promoter of equal education for women. On the basis of pedagogical anthropology, he

wrote textbooks that were widely distributed. During a stay of several years in Western Europe, especially in Switzerland and Germany, he studied the educational system there and prepared a basic book on the significance of the mother tongue, which was subsequently reprinted again and again. He also wrote numerous children's books. In addition to these practically oriented works, Ushinsky worked on a large theoretical work that had the human being as the subject of education as its theme. The first part appeared after his return to Russia in 1867, the second part was published two years later. The third part remained unfinished because Ushinsky died in 1871 as a result of an insidious illness.

Beat Richner, MD – Pioneer of a worldwide suitable paediatric medicine

by Kathrin Pampaluchi Küpfer

30 years ago the first children's hospital was opened by Beat Richner

27 October 2022 marked the 30th anniversary of the opening of the children's hospital in Cambodia. This anniversary was the occasion for an impressive commemorative evening in the lecture hall of the *Kunsthaus Zurich*. The founder and good spirit of the medical centre that was being established at that time was the Swiss doctor and cellist Dr. *Beat Richner*, with the artist's name *Beatocello*. As Dr. iur. *René Schwarzenbach* emphasised in his welcome address, this commemorative event was all about honouring the work and personality of Dr. Beat Richner.

Dr. iur. René Schwarzenbach is the honorary president of the *Kantha Bopha Children's Hospital Foundation* in Cambodia. His great respect for Beat Richner's lifework was palpable in all his statements. When the Corona crisis led to a lack of regular visits from experts and friends for more than two years – and this after the unexpectedly early death of Beat Richner in 2018 – many were unsure whether things could continue without Beat Richner at all. They were all the happier that everything proceeded and continued as it had during his lifetime, at the same level and with the same dedication to the sick children.

The evening also provided the setting for the premiere of the touching documentary film "Who was Beat Richner?" by

Georges Gachot about Beat Richner and his work. *Georges Gachot* was present on that evening. After winning Beat Richner's friendship, he accompanied him and his work on film since 1996. Earlier DVDs by *Gachot* about Richner's work are available from the Foundation (www.gachot.ch).

Many of the evening's audience were obviously of the same age as Beat Richner, who was born in Zurich on 13 March 1947. Many of them must have regularly attended the annual events and, at the time, learned many interesting facts about the structure of his great work from the first source through the explanations of Dr. Richner himself. Today, much of these oral accounts can be found in Richner's books published by the NZZ publishing house. The article "Paediatrician Dr. Beat Richner, Swiss of the Year 2003" in *Current Concerns* No. 15 of 25 April 2003 reported on such a fund-raising event for the *Kantha Bopha Children's Hospital Foundation*.

These annual events took place in all major cities in Switzerland. Today, many millions of donations still merge in Switzerland. However, the children's hospitals in Cambodia have developed so much, not least due to Beat Richner's personal commitment, that today one third of the necessary funds (42 million per year) are raised locally in Cambodia through donations and government contributions. In these 30 years, five children's hospitals and a ma-

ternity unit have been established. In addition to their main task of serving sick children, they have become a training centre for Cambodian doctors and specialists.

An eventful and stirring biography

Beat Richner was born in Zurich and spent his youth in a well-off family as the youngest of four children. Music and education were important to him, and he also liked to perform what was close to his heart. As a young man, he performed with his cello as *Beatocello* to please people. He played the cello well, even then he proceeded determinedly, but not good enough for a solo career, and sitting in the orchestra pit was not for him, as we heard in the film from his sister *Annaregula*.

In addition to his performances as *Beatocello*, he immersed himself in his medical studies, which he successfully completed. He worked as a doctor in Cambodia as part of a Red Cross mission and was finally forced to flee the country at the risk of his life after the *Khmer Rouge* took power. He shared this fate with the ousted Prince *Sihanouk*. It was not until the beginning of 1991 that peace was concluded between the *Khmer Rouge* and the Cambodian government after the Vietnam War. Beat Richner decided to rebuild the children's hospital in the completely destroyed country. Just one and a half years after his arrival in Cambodia, he opened the first *Kantha Bopha children's hospital* in the presence of the king, framed by his cello contribution.

Originality, energy and independence directed towards a great goal

The contemporary witnesses in the film describe Richner as a loner and rather conservative thinker. His neighbour in his youth, *Peter Spring*, a journalist, only became aware of him when Beat Richner, as a student, spoke out against the revolting students of the 1960s. It is expressed in the film that Beat Richner was not a rebel. He preferred to play music in the open air as *Beatocello* under a red umbrella, to the delight of the audience, rather than engage in rebellious verbal battles. Even then, as a student and young doctor, he focused on reconciliation and understand-



Beat Richner in the Kantha Bopha children's hospital. This is how many people in Cambodia and around the world will keep him in their memories. (picture keystone)

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"Beat Richner, MD ..."

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ing rather than provocation and violence; even then he pursued a message of peace. For him, peace work was a deed, and he asked himself how one could promote more just conditions in the world.

He later pursued his deed in Cambodia: fair and just medicine. He resolutely made clear that he would not tolerate any objections to the claim that he, as a doctor in Cambodia, could also practise the same medicine that was scientifically proven and applied in wealthy countries. He vigorously opposed two-tier medicine: "No poor medicine for poor countries!" He let Switzerland and also King Sihanouk know this. He decided how something should be built. His determination always had the background of fighting for the interests of sick children.

Beat Richner wins friends and helpers for his project

Through fundraising campaigns in Switzerland, millions of Swiss francs are raised for *Kantha Bopha* in Cambodia. Donors with small, medium and large incomes are convinced that this relief organisation is on the right track. Crucial to the donation activity is the journalist *Peter Rothenbühler*. In the paediatrician's office on the Zürichberg he and his wife learn about Richner's intention to go to Cambodia to rebuild the destroyed hospital in the country. In the "Schweizer Illustrierte", as a journalist working there, he repeatedly presents this undertaking and the further course of events to a broad readership. And these contentful reports do not fail to have an impact. Equally informative is Rothenbühler's 2019 book "Dr. Beat Richner, Paediatrician – Rebel – Visionary" ("Dr. Beat Richner, Kinderarzt – Rebell – Visionär"), published by

Verlag Schweizer Illustrierte (publisher *Schweizer Illustrierte*). The commitment of the *National Circus Knie* should also be mentioned. On the initiative of *Franco Knie Junior*, a gala event is held every year in favour of *Kantha Bopha*. In a shortened circus programme, one learns a lot of interesting facts about the development in the hospitals.

Everyone is treated for free

One can see from the film that correct medicine is practised in *Kantha Bopha*, which heals the children, also that the money collected is used to continue working in the sense of medical justice. Beat Richner speaks in this context of the "duty to make amends".

Every morning the unbelievable picture: Hundreds of mothers, some of whom have travelled from far away with their often seriously ill children and are now sitting patiently close together on the floor waiting until they can present their child to the doctor. One mother sums it up: "Everyone is treated for free. At the other medical centre, we couldn't get the medicine we needed. The toad blood we had to administer instead made our child life-threateningly ill. Now I am here and I know that I don't have to pay because I have nothing, and still my child is being helped. There is no corruption here either." This principle of justice convinces citizens in well-off Switzerland that their donation is going to the right person.

Unswervingly,**Beat Richner goes his way**

Beat Richner is considered a loner, lives his own life, retreats to the same pub at lunchtime and eats alone. Wherever you find him, he is at work. He is an organiser, a builder, and discusses everything in detail with everyone involved. This is how

large, simple, but sometimes highly modern, beautiful buildings come into being. Where walls are not necessary, they are omitted. There are large wards with simple beds standing close together, none of which is empty.

For many children, the mother sits at the bedside, sometimes the father too. It is quiet. The atmosphere is optimistic. Every Saturday afternoon, Dr Richner gives a concert with his cello. The cello is his constant companion, supporter and comforter. With these concerts he collects blood donations and money from the tourists. In addition, he trains Cambodian doctors and Cambodian medical staff together with specialists and demands a disciplined, goal-oriented approach from them. But he also inquires about the doctor's well-being, whether he is tired, and learns, for example, that the last patient admission was after midnight at half past two. Then again, you see him as the "boss" gesticulating decisively with his hand, making it clear where things are going. Another time, he moves a delicate toy with his fingers to calm a fearful child's soul so that it can confidently engage in the treatment. He also finds time for this. His humour and idiosyncrasies flash up again and again in the film. In the final shot of the film, Beat Richner ponders aloud whether it would not be more economical for Switzerland to switch to a free health care system, with fair wages, and do without health and disability insurance.

He has won over many colleagues from the children's hospital and private individuals from Switzerland for annual training courses. For him, science is not a competitive object that belongs only to the chosen few – scientific knowledge is a commodity that belongs to all equally. It is a human ability to develop solid knowledge, and this knowledge is universal and not for sale. The credo that lived humanity convinces people all over the world has once again been made clear by the new film.

The work continues

Today, the work continues, even after Dr Richner's untimely death. He led the daily rapport until his illness. His relationship with his staff, including his colleagues, was distant and friendly. He separated private matters from his work. He maintained this attitude even when he showed serious signs of illness. That is how he came to be treated in Switzerland. He was laid to rest after his death on 9 September 2018. Thousands of Cambodians accompanied his urn in deepest sorrow.

The procedure he had introduced in his daily hospital routine remains the same. In a huge auditorium, the Cambodian staff, dressed in white, sit early in the

Franz Hohler describes the deep humanity of Beat Richner

kpk. Fellow artist and musician *Franz Hohler* is deeply impressed by the personality of *Beat Richner*, alias *Beato-cello*, in *Peter Rothenbühler's* book. Of course, he, Hohler, had not failed to notice that *Beato-cello*, like him, had a cello as an accompanying instrument. However, there were two essential differences between them: Beat Richner was the significantly better cellist and, unlike him, he had successfully completed his studies alongside his musical performances.

He had decided on his main profession: "Later, I followed his reconstruction work in Cambodia with great attention. I had a great deal of respect for the way he followed his idea of giving children a better start in life in a country that had been completely de-

stroyed, even before the funding was secured in the slightest. Even the fact that he was often brusquely rejected with his request, he got through all that. The cello, I thought to myself, must have been a great help to him. He played the *Bach* suites by heart. Or should we say internally? I played the third *Bach* Suite for him at the home where he was staying in Zurich after his serious illness, on my last visit. He appeared with the wheelchair, when he heard the sounds, he conducted the piece with a smile under the door. He was happy that his *Bach* had been brought back to him. A small conversation even ensued. When I asked him if he still often thought about Cambodia, he replied: 'I don't know yet.' He waved goodbye to me."

"Beat Richner, MD ..."

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morning at a joint report led by a Cambodian chief physician. The staff have a salary that allows them to feed their families, and sound professional knowledge. Disciplined and determined, everyone leaves the rapport and works responsibly and diligently. Everyone in his or her place, be it directly at the bedside or in the environment where attention to hygiene, medication order in the pharmacy and diligence in administration is needed. There is no scramble for prestige and exaggerated recognition.

Dr Beat Richner is called "Mister God" in Cambodia. This is not an expression of exaggeration, but of the great gratitude of the Cambodians for his work.

The filmmaker and the faithful companions show how a courageous Swiss man truly works for peace in our times of destruction, famine and economic cri-

"It's a disgrace!"

gl. This is how Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador commented on the maintenance of the US blockade against Cuba in his daily press conference. It has been 30 years since the UN General Assembly voted on a resolution to lift the blockade, which has been in place since 1960, more than 60 years. This year, 185 states voted in favour of the resolution, with only two votes against (USA and Israel) and two abstentions (Brazil and Ukraine). Even the EU voted in favour of the resolution. Numerous speakers from a wide range of countries and supranational alliances condemned the blockade as contrary to international law and a blatant violation of human rights. The sanctions had even been tightened by the US government during the Covid pandemic. López Obrador described the blockade and the fact that it is not being lifted by the USA despite this overwhelming majority of votes in the UN General Assembly as "very retrograde. How can we rely on such a retrograde step at this time? These are times of change." On Ukraine's abstention, he remarked, "With all due respect, what do they have to gain by getting involved? Such little political sensitivity." However, he said, the position of the majority of countries will be heard sooner or later. •

Sources: <https://amerika21.de/2022/11/260899/un-sieg-fuer-kuba-gegen-die-us-blockade>; <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2022/11/04/politica/verguenza-mantener-bloqueo-a-cuba-pese-a-aplastante-posicion-de-naciones-amlo/>



Beat Richner, Beatocello, sings the song of the functionaries in the corridor at Kantha Bopha Hospital (picture © Georges Gachot Films, 1999)

sis. He took action and openly denounced the shortcomings of international organisations, not to weaken them, but to remedy the situation so that the "First World" does not continue to cause misery through its mistakes. A scene from an earlier DVD (1999) remains unforgettable: Beat Richner sits in the corridor of one of his hospitals and sings, with great seriousness and holy indignation, with haunting accompaniment by his cello, the "Song of the Functionaries". Functionaries and bureau-

crats let valuable time pass in their daily grind when urgent action is needed, and meanwhile children die.

His work is preserved. It is evident that he has touched and strengthened people's fellow human community-bound emotions. Where international organisations committed to the welfare of all people fail, Beat Richner acted quite independently in the spirit of compassionate, worldwide justice. Therefore, we – not only people in Cambodia – are infinitely grateful to him. •

Instead of NATO expansion, Hungarian Peace Forum demands a compromise with Russia

The *Forum for Peace*, a socio-political alliance created to preserve the peace of our country, asks the Parliament not to ratify the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO. The expansion of NATO would not serve peace, but would hinder the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the political development. According to the conviction of the cooperators in the *Forum for Peace* movement, Hungary is not interested in continuing the war, but in making peace. The government and the Parliament would do a good service to the cause of Peace if, in accordance with the will of the vast majority of our people for peace, instead of expanding to the east, they encouraged NATO to come to an agreement with Russia and fulfill Moscow's demand for security guarantees presented to Washington and Brussels on December 15, 2021. The *Forum for Peace* considers Russia's demand for security to be legitimate, and that neither NATO nor its leading power, the USA, may threaten it along its borders. The Hungarian

government must stand on its heels and demand from its allies that NATO end Ukraine's military support against Russia and prove its ability to guarantee mutual security and peaceful East-West cooperation within the framework of the proposed pan-European conference. According to the Peace Forum, Hungary could only realise its old dream in the system of pan-European cooperation: true self-determination and national development free from foreign interference.

Association for the Rule of Law, Hungarian Anti-Fascist League, Labor Party, Hungarian Community for Peace, Balog István, Bognár Tibor, Fehérvári Zsolt, Hajdú József, Hetényi Balázs, Hirschler Tamás, Kleinheincz Ferenc, Krajcsovics Gyöngyi, Nagy Zsolt József, Petráss László, Salga István, Simó Endre, Thürmer Gyula

Source: Statement of the Hungarian Peace Forum of 5 November 2022