

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Ukraine is the latest neocon disaster

by Jeffrey D. Sachs



Jeffrey Sachs
(picture <https://commons.wikimedia.org>)

Jeffrey David Sachs (* 5 November 1954 in Detroit) is an American economist. He is Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. He was Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University from 2002 to 2016 and Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the Millennium Development Goals from 2002 to 2006, advisor to the IMF, World Bank, OECD, WTO and UNDP.

In the 1980s and 1990s, he was active in an advisory capacity for several states: from 1985 in Bolivia, from 1989 in Poland, from 1991 in Russia. Above all, the policy of rapid privatisation that he recommended earned him criticism.

Together with the academics Heiner Flassbeck, Thomas Piketty, Dani Rodrik and Simon Wren-Lewis, Sachs published an open letter to Angela Merkel during the Greek sovereign debt crisis in July 2015, calling on her to reduce Greece's debt and give the government there a long period of time to repay the remaining debt.

Sachs is committed to extensive debt relief for extremely poor states and in the fight against diseases, especially HIV/Aids in developing countries. He criticises the WTO and the IMF because the donors of these organisations are not prepared to provide effective aid for the extreme poor.

In September 2020, Sachs and others founded the *Regenerative Society Foundation* in Parma, Italy. The aim of the foundation is to "to promote a new regenerative socio-economic model with the objective of generating environmental and social benefits."

Source: Wikipedia

“The main message of the neocons is that the US must predominate in military power in every region of the world, and must confront rising regional powers that could someday challenge US global or regional dominance, most importantly Russia and China.”

The war in Ukraine is the culmination of a 30-year project of the American neoconservative movement. The Biden Administration is packed with the same neocons who championed the US wars of choice in Serbia (1999), Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Syria (2011), Libya (2011), and who did so much to provoke Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The neocon track record is one of unmitigated disaster, yet Biden has staffed his team with neocons. As a result, Biden is steering Ukraine, the US, and the European Union towards yet another geopolitical debacle. If Europe has any insight, it will separate itself from these US foreign policy debacles.

The neocon movement emerged in the 1970s around a group of public intellectuals, several of whom were influenced by University of Chicago political scientist Leo Strauss and Yale University classicist Donald Kagan. Neocon leaders included Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, Paul Wolfowitz, Robert Kagan (son of Donald), Frederick Kagan (son of Donald), Victoria Nuland (wife of Robert), Elliott Abrams, and Kimberley Allen Kagan (wife of Frederick).

Main message of the neocons: US military domination everywhere

The main message of the neocons is that the US must predominate in military power in every region of the world, and must confront rising regional powers that could someday challenge US global or regional dominance, most importantly Russia and China. For this purpose, US military force should be pre-positioned in hundreds of military bases around the world and the US should be prepared to lead wars of choice as necessary. The United Nations is to be used

by the US only when useful for US purposes.

This approach was spelled out first by Paul Wolfowitz in his draft *Defense Policy Guidance* (DPG)¹ written for the Department of Defense in 2002. The draft called for extending the US-led security network to the Central and Eastern Europe despite the explicit promise by German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher in 1990 that German unification would not be followed by NATO's eastward enlargement.² Wolfowitz also made the case for American wars of choice, defending America's right to act independently, even alone, in response to crises of concern to the US. According to General Wesley Clark, Wolfowitz already made clear to Clark in May 1991 that the US would lead regime-change operations in Iraq, Syria, and other former Soviet allies.³

Aware of fatal consequences

The neocons championed NATO enlargement to Ukraine even before that became official US policy under George W. Bush, Jr. in 2008. They viewed Ukraine's NATO membership as key to US regional and global dominance. Robert Kagan spelled out the neocon case for NATO enlargement in April 2006:

“[T]he Russians and Chinese see nothing natural in [the “colour revolutions” of the former Soviet Union], only Western-backed coups designed to advance Western influence in strategically vital parts of the world. Are they so wrong? Might not the successful liberalization of Ukraine, urged and supported by the Western democracies, be but the prelude to the incorporation of that nation into NATO and the

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European Union – in short, the expansion of Western liberal hegemony?”⁴

Kagan acknowledged the dire implication of NATO enlargement. He quotes one expert as saying, “The Kremlin is getting ready for the ‘battle for Ukraine’ in all seriousness.” After the fall of the Soviet Union, both the US and Russia should have sought a neutral Ukraine, as a prudent buffer and safety valve. Instead, the neocons wanted US “hegemony” while the Russians took up the battle partly in defence and partly out of their own imperial pretensions as well. Shades of the Crimean War (1853–1856), when Britain and France sought to weaken Russia in the Black Sea following Russian pressures on the Ottoman empire.

Kagan penned the article as a private citizen while his wife Victoria Nuland was the US Ambassador to NATO under George W. Bush, Jr. Nuland has been the neocon operative par excellence. In addition to serving as Bush’s Ambassador to NATO, Nuland was *Barack Obama’s* Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs during 2013–2017, where she participated in the overthrow of Ukraine’s pro-Russian president *Viktor Yanukovich*, and now serves as Biden’s Undersecretary of State guiding US policy vis-à-vis the war in Ukraine.

False premises and disregard for reality

The neocon outlook is based on an overriding false premise: that the US military, financial, technological, and economic superiority enables it to dictate terms in all regions of the world. It is a position of both remarkable hubris and remarkable disdain of evidence. Since the 1950s, the US has been stymied or defeated in nearly every regional conflict in which it has participated. Yet in the “battle for Ukraine,” the neocons were ready to provoke a mili-

“The neocon track record is one of unmitigated disaster, yet Biden has staffed his team with neocons. As a result, Biden is steering Ukraine, the US, and the European Union towards yet another geopolitical debacle.”

tary confrontation with Russia by expanding NATO over Russia’s vehement objections because they fervently believe that Russia will be defeated by US financial sanctions and NATO weaponry.

The *Institute for the Study of War* (ISW), a neocon think-tank led by Kimberley Allen Kagan (and backed by a who’s who of defence contractors such as *General Dynamics* and *Raytheon*), continues to promise a Ukrainian victory. Regarding Russia’s advances, the ISW offered a typical comment: “[R]egardless of which side holds the city [of Sievierodonetsk], the Russian offensive at the operational and strategic levels will probably have culminated, giving Ukraine the chance to restart its operational-level counteroffensives to push Russian forces back.”

The facts on the ground, however, suggest otherwise. The West’s economic sanctions have had little adverse impact on Russia, while their “boomerang” effect on the rest of the world has been large. Moreover, the US capacity to resupply Ukraine with ammunition and weaponry is seriously hamstrung by America’s limited production capacity and broken supply chains. Russia’s industrial capacity of course dwarfs that of Ukraine’s. Russia’s GDP was roughly 10X that of Ukraine before war, and Ukraine has now lost much of its industrial capacity in the war.

The most likely outcome of the current fighting is that Russia will conquer a large swath of Ukraine, perhaps leaving Ukraine landlocked or nearly so. Frustra-

tion will rise in Europe and the US with the military losses and the stagflationary⁵ consequences of war and sanctions. The knock-on effects could be devastating, if a right-wing demagogue in the US rises to power (or in the case of *Trump*, returns to power) promising to restore America’s faded military glory through dangerous escalation.

Instead of risking this disaster, the real solution is to end the neocon fantasies of the past 30 years and for Ukraine and Russia to return to the negotiating table, with NATO committing to end its commitment to the eastward enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia in return for a viable peace that respects and protects Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. •

¹ cf. <https://www.archives.gov/files/declassification/iscap/pdf/2008-003-docs1-12.pdf>. Paul Wolfowitz was Undersecretary of Defense from 1989–1993. The partially released document “Defense Planning Guidance, FY 1994–1999” dates from spring 1992.

² Cf. e. g., Shiffrinon, Joshua R. Itzkowitz. *Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion*. In it, he cites various official documents and minutes of the diplomatic talks at the time, which have since been declassified, as well as official statements. https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/003-ISEC_a_00236-Shiffrinon.pdf

³ see, for example, the statement by General Wesley Clark at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8ityb0lps4>

⁴ Kagan, Robert. “League of Dictators?” In: *The Washington Post* of 30 April 2006

⁵ Stagflation is when economic stagnation (high unemployment and inflation) occurs simultaneously. (Editor’s note).

Source: <https://www.jeffsachs.org/newspaper-articles/m6rb2a5tskpcxzsjk8hhz96z7h7of27> June 2022

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Washington's proxy war against Russia

Responsibilities and consequences, also for Germany

Interview by Maike Hickson (LifeSiteNews) with Colonel Douglas Macgregor



Douglas Macgregor
(picture realclearpolitics.com)

Douglas Macgregor is a retired US Army Colonel, political scientist, military theorist, consultant, renowned author and television commentator. PhD in international relations. Frequent military commentator on Fox News, CNN, RT and BBC.

LifeSite: Who in your eyes is the main guilty force behind the escalation of the Ukraine conflict?

Douglas Macgregor: Washington's proxy war with Russia is the result of a carefully constructed plan to embroil Russia in conflict with its Ukrainian neighbour. From the moment that President Putin indicated that his government would not tolerate a NATO military presence on Russia's doorstep in Ukraine, Washington sought to expedite Ukraine's development into a regional military power hostile to Russia. The Maidan coup allowed Washington's agents in Kiev to install a government that would cooperate with this project. PM Merkel's recent admission that she and her European colleagues sought to exploit the Minsk Accords to buy time for the military

"For most of the last 300 years, Berlin has been Moscow's natural partner in commercial trade and regional security matters. The two world wars were destructive episodes that should never have occurred. There is no reason to repeat past mistakes. Berlin must now confront the reality that Washington's strategic interests and the strategic interests of the German nation are not identical and adjust its relations with Washington and Moscow appropriately."

building in Ukraine confirms the tragic truth of this matter.

How could the conflict be resolved peacefully and diplomatically, what would be aspects of an agreement between the conflict parties?

Washington and its allies in Western Europe badly miscalculated. They believed that Russia's economic weakness made an effective Russian military campaign to destroy Ukrainian military strength impossible. Russia's initial performance assumed that Washington and its allies would recognize the seriousness of the matter and acknowledge Russia's legitimate security interests in Ukraine. Once it became clear that Washington was determined to not only preserve its strategic military control of Ukraine with the goal of utterly destroying Russia, Moscow changed course. Moscow now treats Ukraine as a theatre of war, not as a brother Slavic Country. The war will only end on terms that Moscow creates. As President Putin says repeatedly, 'Only

Moscow is the guarantor of Ukrainian territory.'

Who is the driving force that tries to prevent a peaceful resolution of the conflict? The names of the members of the World Economic Forum is a good place to start in your search for the answer to this question.

You seem to argue that the US-pushed escalation of the conflict in Ukraine is harming the United States' relations with Europe. Could you explain your position? When imposing sanctions, it is always important to avoid sanctioning yourself. Russia is not isolated. In fact, Russia enjoys an unassailable geographical position with access to markets, goods and services that the United States cannot obstruct. Thus, Washington's allies, as well as, Americans, are now the victims of Washington's thoughtless and arrogant financial and economic policies.

There are some voices who claim that the Ukraine war actually has helped the U.S. economy by increasing weapons production and gasoline sales to Europe. Would you agree with this assessment or what would you say about who benefits most from this war in Ukraine?

Military sales do not enhance the economic health and well-being of any economy. Investments in military power are sunken costs. The resulting equipment has little salvage value. Whenever a Nation-State builds more military power than is necessary for its own defence, it deprives other economic sectors of the capital they need to grow and prosper. This was President Eisenhower's argument in 1953 when he said, "Security cannot exist without prosperity. Americans deserve both."

"Help" that destroys and kills

km. If it is true that the US government is waging a provoked proxy war against Russia in Ukraine on the basis of its own power-political goals – and there is now a great deal of evidence and eyewitnesses to this – then the "help" and "support" that this government is giving the Ukrainian president and his army appears in a different light. Thus, the visit of Volodymyr Zelensky to Washington a few days ago, celebrated with all showiness, became a grotesque spectacle aimed at deceiving the public once again, at least those on the home front. In this proxy war, the warring party, the US, publicly poses as noble, helpful and good, but in fact sacrifices Ukraine and the Ukrainians – and

in principle all of Europe – to its power-political plans. Perhaps US President Joe Biden was not aware of the ambiguity of his statement in the joint press conference with Ukraine President Zelensky – that the struggle in Ukraine was "part of something much bigger". The fact that Volodymyr Zelensky plays the role assigned to him to the bitter end and loudly "thanks" Washington for the sacrifice of his country and its people is particularly shocking.

"Negotiations", which many called for again before Christmas – certainly also with honest motives – will only make sense if they are conducted honestly. Unfortunately, we are still miles away from that – at least on the Western side.

When scientists commit to politics

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

I became aware of the book through a review in the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” of 5 December 2022, reading: “Anyone who wants to quickly acquire a good basis of knowledge in order to be able to range in the news about Russia’s war against Ukraine should pick up Gwendolyn Sasse’s book ‘Krieg gegen die Ukraine’ (War against Ukraine).”

The German publisher C. H. Beck has published it in its “Wissen” (knowledge) series. In full, the title is “The War on Ukraine. Backgrounds, Events, Consequences”. The book has just over 120 pages and has been published only a few weeks ago. The work on the content of the book was completed in August 2022.

My first doubts regarding the scientific objectivity came when I read the dedication: “For my friends and colleagues in and from Ukraine”. There is not a single footnote or endnote. The bibliography lists only three speeches by Russian President *Putin* and four speeches by Ukrainian President *Zelensky* as primary sources. There are defacingly selective quotations from the Russian President’s speeches. Four surveys are listed in the bibliography: one sponsored by the UK and the German Research Foundation DFG, and three by the International Institute of Sociology in Kiev. The core statements on various opinion patterns in Ukraine are based on the figures of this one Ukrainian institute for opinion research. The secondary literature consists exclusively of German and English-language texts from the West.

In contrast to many current media products on the war in Ukraine, Gwendolyn Sasse also deals with the period before

24 February 2022. But only to make the claim that Russia has actually been at war with Ukraine since 2014. Otherwise, there is not much else in this book than what the attentive user of our media has been able to consume almost daily since 24 February at the latest: the assertion that an autocratically ruled and neo-imperialist Russia has the goal of destroying a Ukraine striving for freedom and democracy and above all for the West. Ukraine’s fight against Russia is therefore also a fight for European freedom and deserves full support. In doing so, the events are interpreted and judged in the same way as they are by Western politics and the Western media. Contradicting facts remain unmentioned or are only casually alluded to. For example, the 14,000 dead in the Donbass between 2014 and 2022 – without, however, taking up the question of who is responsible for this. Ms Sasse’s research was not open and unbiased. Her result was a foregone conclusion: a condemnation of Russia and a partisanship for the current Ukrainian policy and especially that of its president.

On the back cover of the book, Gwendolyn Sasse is introduced as “Director of Eastern European and International Studies (ZOiS) and Einstein Professor at the Humboldt University in Berlin”. At *Wikipedia*, her ties to the Anglo-Saxon world become clearer. There one learns that Ms. Sasse, born in 1972, studied and earned her doctorate at the *London School of Economics* and taught there as assistant professor before moving to Oxford University in 2007, where she has held a professorship in comparative politics since 2013.

Science, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is “knowledge arranged in an orderly manner, esp. knowledge obtained by observation and testing of facts”. Gwendolyn Sasse’s book has little to do with this. Instead, it fits Western politics very well. This is no longer a surprise to anyone. Ms Sasse is not an isolated case. But why is there hardly any protest? After all, this turns upside down the idea of freedom of science, research, and teaching – in Germany, for example, in 1949 incorporated into the Basic Law as an anti-totalitarian element –, the reputation of the sciences is politically abused, and the cultural achievement of serious scientific thought and work is called into question.

Scientists and academics striving for objectivity and the establishment of truth would be a blessing, especially in times of emotionalizing propaganda and widespread lack of understanding. The fact that we have been far from this for some time now is not a good sign. •

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Do you consider Russia to be a military threat to Europe, or do you think the German-Russian economic collaboration was beneficial for Europe?

Russia was not a threat to Europe when the war in Ukraine began. Washington’s proxy war has compelled Moscow to re-examine its assumptions about Russian security. From now on, Russia will maintain larger and more robust high-end conventional forces with the goal of securing itself from future Western attacks. For most of the last 300 years, Berlin has been Moscow’s natural partner in commercial trade and regional se-

curity matters. The two world wars were destructive episodes that should never have occurred. There is no reason to repeat past mistakes. Berlin must now confront the reality that Washington’s strategic interests and the strategic interests of the German nation are not identical and adjust its relations with Washington and Moscow appropriately. If Berlin adjusts its foreign policy along these lines, Berlin can once again restore stability and prosperity to Europe. •

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/exclusive-us-colonel-explains-americas-role-in-provoking-russia-ukraine-conflict/> of 19 December 2022; reprinted with kind permission of Colonel Douglas Macgregor

Kant, Fukuyama, Makei and the war in Ukraine

by Ralph Bosshard, senior advisor for military and political strategic analysis



Vladimir Makei (*5 August 1958, †26 November 2022), late Foreign Minister of Belarus.
(picture Wikipedia)

globalbridge.ch/cc. On 26 November 2022, the foreign minister of the Republic of Belarus, 64-year-old Vladimir Makei, died unexpectedly of a heart attack, according to official reports.¹ Immediately, speculations about an unnatural death of Makei shot up.² In those days, Makei should have attended the annual Ministerial Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE. – Ralph Bosshard, who is very familiar with both the OSCE and Belarus, takes a closer look at Vladimir Makei's last extensive publication and this extremely important personality for Eastern Europe.

After serving as head of the presidential administration of the Republic of Belarus from 2008 to 2012, Vladimir Makei was appointed his country's foreign minister in 2012. Under the slogan of "multivectoral foreign policy", Makei initiated a period of thaw in relations between Minsk and the West, in the course of which he was able to secure the lifting of the bulk of Western sanctions against his country. He himself stated at regular intervals that this rapprochement had to take place without dictates or pressure.³

In 2013, Vladimir Makei even held out the prospect of a 180-degree turn in his country's foreign policy: Belarus could initiate integration into the European Union, but without leaving the alliance with Russia.⁴ This happened at a time when Kiev still believed that it could play the role of a bridge builder between East and West while maintaining good relations with Brussels and Moscow. The upheaval in Ukraine following the protests on the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* in Kiev in 2014 also put an end to these dreams.

In the face of nationwide protests following Belarus's August 2020 presidential election, Makei declared that the country needed change, but not through revolutions. In the aftermath of the upheavals, Makei initiated a purge at the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs when he called on the ministry's staff to either agree with government policy or else vacate their seats.⁵ He went even further in November 2020, when he threatened to cease cooperation with the Council of Europe and sever diplomatic relations with the European Union if sanctions were reimposed.⁶

In his speech to the annual United Nations General Assembly in New York last September, Makei held the collective West partly responsible for the war in Ukraine and rejected its claim to leadership in world politics.⁷

Change of policy?

But how can we explain Vladimir Makei's supposed change of course after 2020? In the article "Liberal International Order: Can It Be Saved in Today's Non-Hegemonic World?"⁸ published shortly before his death, Makei proved to be a connoisseur of European intellectual history and gave us a deep insight into his mindset, which might not be untypical for wide circles in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Knowledge of this mindset allows us to understand certain behaviours of the countries of the East in the past and, to a certain extent, to anticipate their actions in the future. How to evaluate these actions is another question. Therefore, the point here is not to decide whether Makei was right or wrong, but to recognise that the Eastern side, which is in conflict with the West, also bases its actions on rational considerations with which one should become familiar before plunging into a nuclear war.

The "Democratic Peace" – War for the sake of peace?

On occasion of the above-mentioned speech to the UN General Assembly, Makei located the real causes of the current war in Ukraine in the geopolitical chaos that arose during the disintegration of the Soviet Union 30 years ago. Today, we must ask ourselves whether the West was lacking ideas in 1991 for shaping the future after the disintegration of the communist bloc.

In saying that history has no end, as was still thought in the 1990s, Makei referred to the theories of the US political scientist *Francis Fukuyama*, who in his article "The End of History" and in his book "The End of History and the Last Man"



Ralph Bosshard studied General History, Eastern European History and Military History, graduated from the Military Command School of the ETH Zurich as well as from the General Staff Training of the Swiss Army. This was followed by language training in Russian 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.

had prophesied the end of history insofar as it consisted of a succession of wars, rivalry and confrontation. Fukuyama's theories already met with criticism at that time.⁹ Even Fukuyama himself has since had to admit that the rapid economic rise of the authoritarian-led People's Republic of China contradicts his theories.¹⁰ The belief in the end of history is based on ideological convictions of liberals. In this respect, a new ideological opposition has emerged that is not primarily economic – i. e., the opposition between market and planned economies – but political.

Despite all the criticism of Fukuyama's theses, the West set out to implement them, seeing the collapse of the communist bloc as the culmination of the "American Century"¹¹ and an opportunity to put the theory of "democratic peace" into practice. This theory is essentially based on *Immanuel Kant's* writing "On Perpetual Peace" and states that political entities in which the will of the people is relevant are more peaceful than monarchies in which the rulers do not need to justify themselves for war and the resulting loss of life and property. This theory is not entirely uncontroversial, however.¹²

Lacking democratic legitimacy, autocrats today often justify their rule in terms of the successes their policies achieve. In today's information society, the loss of human life and national wealth on a large scale can neither be kept secret nor pro-

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moted as a success. This is a limiting factor that sometimes makes autocrats shy away from taking up arms at the slightest provocation. In this respect, one cannot but agree with Makei when he says that the image generated by Kant of the confrontation of democracies with autocracies does not do justice to the complexity of today's world.¹³ In particular, the attempt to justify the numerous conflicts in the territory of the former Soviet Union with the incomplete democratisation of the majority of its former constituent republics does not seem to go far enough.

Not to be forgotten is the different attitude towards the use of military force then and now. In Kant's time, this was a legal positivist one: the monarch, as the holder of the highest legal authority in the country, had the freedom to choose between negotiation and the use of military force in conflicts. After the devastation of World War I, contemporaries no longer shared this view, as the 1928 *Briand-Kellogg Pact* showed.¹⁴ After the even more devastating Second World War and the Cold War, in which the very survival of humanity as a whole was at stake, we today utterly reject such freedom of choice.

It is certainly going too far to use Kant's theories as a justification for the spread of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights with fire and sword, especially since Kant saw monarchies as the most likely aggressors. Even interventions cloaked in democracy have recently encountered resistance in non-democratic societies, as, for example, the war in Afghanistan showed. Furthermore, with such interventions there always remains the suspicion that the choice of objects of aggression against which the collective West each wants to take action follows geopolitical or geoeconomic criteria rather than criteria of democracy, human rights, or constitutionality. Afterwards the whole thing should appear as the fight of the good against the evil.

According to the various democracy indices, by no means all countries in the world are full democracies. Actually, this group comprises a minority of countries around the world, and even the US is not always considered fully democratic.¹⁵ This alone shows that the USA's claim to leadership, which just the *Biden* administration raised again, is based more on the country's resources than on the quality of the democracy there. If the about 30 fully democratic states of the world permanently fight the rest, then a global catch-as-catch-can results: a struggle without rules. It would go against Kant's spirit for the self-appointed guardians of democracy to arbitrarily attack those perceived as slightly less democratic.

Claim to leadership of the West

In his article, Makei defined his vision of an international order, which he sees as an informal mechanism rather than a set of rules created by self-proclaimed leaders. Indeed, at the end of World War II, the *Liberal International Order* LIO was built on the basis of US values and interests. The term "American Century" does not exist by chance.

However, Makei particularly sees the *Peace of Westphalia* of 1648, which put an end to the *Thirty Years' War*, as the origin of today's world order. In this, the warring parties refrained from interfering in the internal affairs of their former opponents. At that time, it was of course primarily about the religious affiliation of the subjects.

Makei's reference to the *Congress of Vienna* in 1815, which succeeded in integrating the former opponents into a system of international security that has endured for decades, is also significant. In fact, the Congress of Vienna went well beyond undoing the conquests of revolutionary and Napoleonic France, reinstating France in the Concert of European great powers and creating the balanced system of pentarchy [Russia, Austria, Prussia, France, and Britain].

According to Makei, an unjust peace that is humiliating for one party carries the seeds for new conflicts. After 1990, however, the self-proclaimed winners of the Cold War would have chosen the 1919 mechanism. The negative consequences of the 1919 Peace of Versailles hardly need to be expressly pointed out. After 1991, the newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union would have had no choice but to become the new satellites of the West. Today, irreconcilable ideas of a concentric, westernised and a polycentric world without a control centre encountered each other.¹⁶

Especially those countries that in the past were able to rely on the support of the Soviet Union in their struggle for independence from the colonial powers today are not inclined to submit to the will of Washington or Brussels for the sake of democracy, constitutionality, and human rights. And the independent republics that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union are unwilling to take directions from Brussels after they were able to break away from Moscow's paternalism in 1991. All these countries can be seen as potential supporters of Russia and China as they attempt to present themselves as advocates of a multipolar world. The Republic of Belarus also is one of these countries – regardless of whether its President is called *Alexander Lukashenko* or otherwise. The Biden administration may not have taken into account that the less democratic countries of the world would react to western bloc formation with bloc

formation themselves. This shows that the self-proclaimed winners of the Cold War did not learn enough from the past.¹⁷

And the West did not learn in a quarter of a century: In 2016, at the OSCE Foreign Ministers Council in Hamburg, Makei offered to create a platform in Minsk for open talks between representatives of Western countries, Russia and China on the causes of the crisis in international relations.¹⁸ The proposal was accepted just as little as Russia's proposal for a European security treaty in 2009 and the Belarusian proposal for a global security treaty.¹⁹

In New York, Makei called for a comprehensive peace agreement in the spirit of San Francisco (i.e., the founding of the United Nations in 1945), in which the States of the *Non-Aligned Movement* and the BRICS would have to find a proper place.²⁰ This is remarkable, because it is hardly likely that Russian Foreign Minister *Sergey Lavrov* would have demanded such a thing against the backdrop of the actual proxy war that is currently underway in Ukraine. In an atmosphere in which negotiation offers are interpreted as signs of weakness, this would have been immediately interpreted as capitulation. Apparently, however, the Belarusian side is quite prepared to preserve the San Francisco order of 1945, while many Western experts already regard it as irredeemable. However, such a reissue should not be uncontested on the terms of the West, but should take into account the interests of a majority of states that do not want to be assigned to the West, Makei demanded: order yes, but no obedience.²¹

Liberal economic order and economic sanctions

In economic terms, Makei conceded, the *liberal international order* had indeed brought an advantage to developing countries because globally active business enterprises had largely transferred the production of goods to countries where the labour factor was cheaper than in the industrialised nations. Communism had tried to overcome the problem of social inequality inherent in the liberal economic order. Today, the West is pursuing a strategy of economic sanctions that relies on hunger revolts in the target countries. Cuba, however, has resisted six decades of Western sanctions.²²

Such a strategy is tantamount to humiliating the population in all those countries where "colour revolutions" are combined with economic sanctions. We are reminded of the liberal world economic order whenever it is to the advantage of Western countries. On the other hand, the West, with its inflationary economic sanc-

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"Kant, Fukuyama, Makei and ..."

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tions, reduces the attractiveness of the liberal economic order itself.

Makei's Legacy

Makei's criticism of the West in his speech in New York and in his last article contains hints of a possible order for the future.

Politically and economically, the "Chinese way" seems more attractive to many of the world's non-democratic governments than the Russian way of the 1990s, when communist officials quickly turned into businessmen and plundered the Soviet and Russian economies at will. The rouble and economic crises in Russia in 1998 were certainly as vividly remembered by Vladimir Makei as by many of his compatriots. This clientele is likely to prefer a certain political and economic stagnation to a Ukrainian-style experiment.

Since 2020, Belarus in particular has been at a crossroads: should it liberalise its economy at the risk that, as in Russia in the 1990s, all still profitable state-owned enterprises are sold off for a ridiculous price to foreign investors who have already invested enough in the country's "democracy"? Or should it remain at the current level? A development like that in Ukraine will probably be a model for very few people in Belarus.

Very few countries of the former Soviet Union have a tradition of Western democracy, and they have made varying degrees of progress towards democracy and the rule of law. It is understandable that these countries do not want to have their democratic deficit constantly pointed out to them. In this respect, each country is entitled to its own path. The West will have to learn to deal adequately with somewhat less democratic countries in the world.

The question today is whether Biden's entourage and the *Democratic Party* caucus in the USA are prepared to surrender the empire they built up after 1991 as non-violently as *Mikhail Gorbachev* did with the Soviet empire. •

¹ Belarusian Uladzimir Makei. His curriculum vitae can be found on the homepage of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry https://mfa.gov.by/en/ministry/senior_staff/. See «СМИ: причиной смерти Макея стал инфаркт», bei *Argu-*

menti i Fakti AIF.ru, 26 November 2022, online https://aif.ru/politics/smi_prichinoy_smeriti_makeya_stal_infarkt

² cf. "Смерть Макея: рука Масквы, помста Лукашэнкі ці проста інфаркт?", *Nasha Niva*, 26 November 2022, online <https://nashaniva.com/304053>. The advisor to the Ukrainian Interior Minister Anton Gerashchenko tweeted that Makei had been poisoned. Gerashchenko considered him one of the few Belarusian officials not under Russian influence and already saw him as a possible successor to President Lukashenko. See *Twitter*: https://twitter.com/gerashchenko_en/status/1596524311275503616.

³ see "Налаживал отношения с Западом, устраивал праздники вышиванки и оправдывал репрессии. Чем запомнится глава МИД Владимир Макей" at *Зеркало*, 26 November 2022, online <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/27011.html>. The article at *Wikipedia*.ru is essentially based on this contribution.

⁴ *ibid*.

⁵ see "Два сотрудника МИД Белоруссии поддержали протестующих", at *Lenta.ru*, 17 August 2020, online https://lenta.ru/news/2020/08/17/bel_mid/

⁶ see "Макей: Беларусь готова прекратить любое сотрудничество с Советом Европы", at *Nasha Niva*, 26 November 2020, online <https://nashaniva.com/?c=ar&i=263728&lang=ru> and "Макей пригрозил разрывом дипотношений в качестве крайней меры при введении Евросоюзом санкций", at *Tut.by*, 18 September 2020, online <https://web.archive.org/web/20201128093449/https://news.tut.by/economics/701019.html>

⁷ see *Statement by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly* (September, 2022), online <https://mfa.gov.by/en/press/video/e7217c2af0410e89.html> (English), <https://mfa.gov.by/press/video/ff8e9cf64af0339d0.html> (Russian)

⁸ see Vladimir Makei: "Liberal International Order: Can It Be Saved in Today's Non-Hegemonic World?", bei *Russia in Global Affairs*, 10 November 2022, online <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/liberal-international-order/>, a German translation is available at *GlobalBridge*: "Vladimir Makei, der weisrussische Aussenminister, wusste, wovon er sprach", 27 November 2022, online <https://globalbridge.ch/vladimir-makei-der-weisrussische-aussenminister-wusste-wovon-er-sprach/>

⁹ A summary of the critique by Stefan Jordan: "Francis Fukuyama und das 'Ende der Geschichte'" (Francis Fukuyama and "The end of history"), Version 1.0, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 6 (2009), H. 1, p. 159–163, online (in German) https://docupedia.de/images/fffd/Fukuyama,_Ende_der_Geschichte.pdf

¹⁰ see the interview by *Michael Thumann* and *Thomas Assheuer* with *Francis Fukuyama*: "'Demokratie stiftet keine Identität', ist das Modell des Westens am Ende? Ein Gespräch mit dem amerikanischen Politikwissenschaftler Francis Fukuyama" ("Democracy does not create identity", is the model of the West at an end? A conversation with the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama), at *Zeit Online*, 17 March 2016, online <https://www.zeit.de/2016/13/francis-fukuyama-politikwissenschaftler-populismus-usa/komplettansicht>

¹¹ see Paul Kennedy, "Das Jahrhundert der Imperien, 1. Supermacht USA" (The century of empires, 1st Superpower USA), in: *Der Spiegel* 46/1998, 08.11.1998, online <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/supermacht-usa-a-87618b7b-0002-0001-0000-000008030968?context=issue>

¹² For a critique of this, see Matthew White, *Democracies Do Not Make War on One Another ... or Do They?* online <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/demowar.htm>.

¹³ see *Statement by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly*, op. cit.

¹⁴ Yale-University's website https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kbpact.asp

¹⁵ According to the "Demokratie-Ranking der Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg", online <https://www.demokratiematrix.de/ranking>, there are 35 functioning democracies. cf. René Bocksch: *Der Stand der Demokratie, basierend auf dem Economist Democracy Index* (State of democracy based on the Economist Democracy Index), 11 February 2022, online <https://de.statista.com/infografik/20599/economist-democracy-index/>. According to *Economist Intelligence Unit* even only 20 of them. Cf. *Economist Intelligence Unit: Democracy Index 2021: The China challenge*, online under <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/>. *The Freedom Index of the World*, online under <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>. To democracy indices overall cf. *DemokratieBarometer: Die Ratingagenturen politischer Systeme* (The rating-agencies of political systems), at: *Addendum*, 18 October 2017, online <https://www.addendum.org/demokratie/demokratie-barometer/>. Cf. also Hauke Hartmann, Peter Thiery: *BTI Transformation Index, Globale Ergebnisse, Abnehmende Resilienz*, (Transformation Index, Global Outcome, Declining Resilience) at: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 2022, online https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/de/downloads/BTI_2022_Globale_Ergebnisse_DE.pdf. A certain carefulness with such indices is thus advisable.

¹⁶ cf. *Statement by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei*, loc. cit.

¹⁷ cf. *Statement by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei*, loc. cit., minutes 3–5.

¹⁸ see "Налаживал отношения с Западом, устраивал праздники вышиванки и оправдывал репрессии. Чем запомнится глава МИД Владимир Макей" at *Зеркало*, 26 November 2022, online <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/27011.html>

¹⁹ see *Statement by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei*, op. cit.

²⁰ See Makei: "Liberal International Order", op. cit.

²¹ Actually, the security policy activity of a supranational organisation like the EU contradicts one of Kant's main demands, according to which international law should be founded on a federalism of free states. Cf. Immanuel Kant: *Zum ewigen Frieden. Mit den Passagen zum Völkerrecht und Weltbürgerrecht aus Kants Rechtslehre. Kommentar von Oliver Eberl und Peter Niesen*, Frankfurt/M. 2011, p. 237.

²² See *Statement by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei*, op. cit., at minutes 10f.

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Germany's crash will result in EU failure

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



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

Ever since proclaiming his election slogan "America first", Donald Trump has wanted to stop the increasing US debt, which is due to constantly growing trade deficits especially with China and Germany. To achieve this, he was willing

to use all the unfair means of an economic war: sanctions, bans, discrimination, criminal proceedings, plundering, controls. The focus of his fight was on the successful, qualitatively leading German automobile industry.

Also, the sanctions against Russia were likewise aimed at the German economy. With the help of the EU and the German government itself, the cheap Russian energy supply to the German economy was cut, even the pipelines were blown up to force Germany to buy American dirty fracking gas, which is, moreover, three times as expensive. Since then, the German industry's energy costs in international competition have been eight times as high as those of the USA, and an international crash of our industry is programmed, if only because of energy costs.

The blowing up of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline at the will of Joe Biden has made the supply of cheap Russian gas impossible not only temporarily but permanently.

The sanctions against Russia ordered by the USA and enforced by the EU have cut Germany off not only from Russian gas supplies but also from a quarter of all its raw material imports, causing an inflation that will not only be temporary but permanent.

The EU politburo should actually have protected Germany against US sanctions out of self-interest alone, in order to preserve Germany as a strong payer. But by adopting the American sanctions against Russia, the EU has harmed Germany more than Russia. Russia was able to compensate for the energy boycott by raising prices, and now it has more energy revenues than before. Germany, on the other hand, has lost its cheap energy base forever. The additional energy costs are causing its economy to crash or to emigrate;

"The EU politburo should actually have protected Germany against US sanctions out of self-interest alone, in order to preserve Germany as a strong payer. But by adopting the American sanctions against Russia, the EU has harmed Germany more than Russia. Russia was able to compensate for the energy boycott by raising prices, and now it has more energy revenues than before. Germany, on the other hand, has lost its cheap energy base forever. The additional energy costs are causing its economy to crash or to emigrate; in any case, they are no longer sustainable in international competition. Thus, the EU has helped to destroy Germany's economic basis and, as a result, not only loses the main payer of all EU services, but also, due to Germany's crash, its international creditworthiness."

in any case, they are no longer sustainable in international competition. Thus, the EU has helped to destroy Germany's economic basis and, as a result, not only loses the main payer of all EU services, but also, due to Germany's crash, its international creditworthiness.

In addition, according to its statutes, the European Union does not have its own right of taxation but is dependent on membership contributions from its sovereign member states. It can therefore only carry out expenditure approved by its member states.

According to its statutes, the EU should therefore neither incur debt nor engage in state financing. Angela Merkel has helped to disregard both prohibitions. State financing was called "stabilisation aid" in an ESM fund to prevent state bankruptcies, which would at the same time have led to the bankruptcy of the Eurozone. And the debt ban was transgressed with the approval of unimaginably high debts (750 billion euros) for an unspecified "New Green Deal".

This was approved by Merkel, who thereby not only inadmissibly expanded EU competences, but also irretrievably harmed her own country, since Germany has to bear more than 26% of the liability for the payments to highly indebted

countries and for the liabilities incurred. All these Euro-benefits could not have been justified and carried out at all were it not for the basis of Germany's economic strength.

Moreover, the EU not only made permanent payments to the bankrupt Ukraine without a legal basis, but also promised its reconstruction, thus burdening the member states with the cost of more than 700 billion euros, without having any cover for these promises and debts.

All three groups of perpetrators – the US, the EU and the German government itself – have ensured that the crash of Germany, and therefore that of the EU, will not be only short-term and temporary, but permanent.

And when Germany – and thus the EU – crashes economically, the southern European countries will no longer be able to finance themselves on the market and will therefore not only become over-indebted but also insolvent. The bankruptcy of the first member states will not only tear the EU apart, but will also cause the euro to crash – probably even destroy it. The collapse of the European monetary system will not only force a monetary reform, but also a reform of the overinflated EU.

The current destruction of German prosperity will thus not only cause Germany to crash in the short term, but will also call into question the very foundations of the EU.

The "great turnaround" deliberately brought about by the "traffic light coalition" will thus not only change Germany, but also Europe. For this, the year 2023 will be the year of destiny. •

"The 'great turnaround' deliberately brought about by the 'traffic light coalition' will thus not only change Germany, but also Europe. For this, the year 2023 will be the year of destiny."

“Biovision Symposium 2022 – Nutrition moves us!” at the Community House in Zurich

by Winfried Pogorzelski

On 26 November 2022 at the community house in Zurich, the annual symposium of Biovision took place, a Swiss non-profit foundation established in 1998 by Hans Rudolf Herren using the money he won by achieving the World Nutrition Award. Together with many partner organisations, this foundation supports sufficient and healthy nutrition of mankind whilst preserving natural basics of living. By transforming the nowadays dominating industrialised production of food into an agro-economic agriculture in alignment with the “International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development” (IAASTD) published in 2008, famine and poverty shall be conquered in the long term.

The main topic at the conference was in which way such a sustainable, health-supporting nutritional system can be achieved in the long term, facing the realities of ever-growing global warming and political crises. Staff members of the foundation led through a three-hour event where guests from Africa as well as committed volunteers got their chance to speak.

Biovision is being active to this day primarily in Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia, where over a million peasant families are educated and supported in running agriculture on their own and biologically successful – which means by saving resources and without dependencies on seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. As one of Biovision’s numerous projects



The people responsible for the information stands are introducing themselves.
(picture Peter Lüthi)

supported in Africa, the conference introduced the daily work of an Education and Research Centre for Agro-economic Agriculture situated in the southwestern African state of Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world. Two female Malawians reported that in former times, many children got sick by eating maize as their only source of nutrition, while the cultivation of maize drained the soil from its nutrients. With the help of agro-economic methods (for example by using self-produced natural fertilizers and catch

crop cultivation of legumes etc.), which were adopted by more and more peasant families, the situation has dramatically improved for many: Over 10,000 peasants are now able to feed themselves well permanently and sell surpluses on the marketplace.

More examples for agro-economics (see box) being on the rise in Eastern Africa were shown in various video reports: An entrepreneur from Nairobi runs an organic vegetable shop, where all products are grown on her farm and on the farms of regional peasants. To the north of Nairobi, vegetable and fruit gardens, which are fertilised with precious compost soil, have been laid out and furthermore, an education centre has been established, both following agro-economic principles.

All of Biovision’s achievements are the result of constant accompanying research on site – in close cooperation with the peasants – as well as of education and advanced training of the population involved.

In the second part of the programme, the Biovision initiative for a so-called “Citizen’s Council for Nutrition Policy” was introduced, which was launched this year as a novelty for Switzerland. This council has discussed the questions about future sustainable nutrition in Switzerland over several months. Eighty individuals, who represent a cross section of the Swiss population, but who had been chosen randomly, worked together with sci-

What is Agroecology?

cc. Agroecology is a comprehensive agricultural concept which is closely connected to nature, which in addition takes into consideration the production of the entire food chain up to consumption, and closely monitors the ecological, social, regional, cultural and health-promoting as well as equal consideration of the technical and economic aspects and conditions. According to the *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development* (IAASTD) from 2008, Agroecology provides a sustainable alternative way for agriculture to protect human health and environmental health as well as the social situation of the peasants and to guarantee global food security. The concrete goal is to enable the transformation of industrial agriculture and its technologically-orient-

ed production increase into a resilient, solidarity-based multifunctional circular economy. Agroecology has mainly been developed, thanks to scientific studies of diverse models of regional and local agriculture and the related knowledge based on experience. Due to the mutual respectful cooperation between local peasants and agronomists, biodiversity and soil fertility have emerged as conducive forms of regionally based agriculture (e.g., organic and regenerative farming or agroforestry and permaculture). Most important is the preservation and promoting the health of the soil i.e., building humus by protecting the soil life, as the key to enabling such development. It is important to note that with Agroecology, production doesn’t suffer which means that the food security is not compromised.

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Letter to  the Editor

European agriculture – where should the journey go?

In *Current Concerns* No. 26 of 6 December 2022, Hans Bieri formulates without ceremony one of the important tasks of a democratic constitutional state: food security! This requires an agriculture that has enough soil, that has modern equipment, that works on the basis of fossil fuels, that uses other aids such as fertilisers and pesticides. All this for the common good.

The images in Switzerland and Germany are similar. The farms described are primarily medium-sized family agricultural businesses, not farms in large-scale agro-industry. They follow other laws and have other goals than the common good. For years, we have been witnessing in Germany that farms are “decreasing”. Not because their work is unattractive, not because succession is not assured, but because green policies – think of the EU’s “New Green Deal” – are imposing ever greater restrictive measures on farmers.

Decades earlier, the EU had issued a tough economic dictate to farmers: “Grow or give up”! So bigger stables, even more animals (factory farming), even more liquid manure, even more artificial fertiliser, even more pesticides, even bigger and even heavier machines. And suddenly nature conservation – isn’t man part of this? – is being positioned specifically against farmers and, let’s not forget, against food security. Why so abruptly?

The fact that in Germany Cem Özdemir became Minister of Agriculture after hav-

ing attended relevant seminars at Klaus Schwab’s WEF as a participant in the group of “Young Global Leaders” speaks for itself.

Recultivation of production areas, expansion of border areas to waters and forests, the obligation to plant appropriate “ecological” strips of land with special seeds not intended for harvesting on the edges and in the fields reduce exactly what the farmer produces with, which is supposed to secure his and the citizens’ existence in the country. The reduction of the use of fertilisers, which cannot be paid for at present anyway, and the restriction in the application of fertilisers are also contributing to the decrease in small farms. This is not to deny that regenerative agriculture is likely to be the production method of the future. But that is not what the green agenda is about, because nothing of that is heard in its future workshops.

Where the journey is going, we have been experiencing for some time in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has its own nitrogen minister, Christiane van der Wal, who has announced a green plan to reduce nitrogen emissions by 50 % and intends to push it through even against fierce protests that lasted for months. The government wants to forcibly close or buy up 3000 farms. It has made 24.3 billion euros available for this purpose. However, the Netherlands is the second largest exporter of agricultural products.

Why do we accept the threat to our own food supply and that of the global supply?

For years it has been undisputed that Dutch dairy farmers dump slurry in the North Sea or take it out of the country. But this condition, too, is partly caused by “grow or give up” and has been driven to extremes by it.

Why is there no cooperation between government and farmers here? Why are the results of reliable scientific research not included here? Why does everything have to be done through prohibition? Of course, this creates bad blood and is in no way expedient for the preservation of food security.

Or were other undisclosed plans to be pursued here?

Perhaps a look back at the sixties will help to explain today’s conditions. Probably many of us still know the Club of Rome. The concern of this association was outlined in a bestseller of the time, “The Limits to Growth”. With the help of computer models, a wide variety of future disaster scenarios was generated.

If we foresaw this as a future scenario 60 years ago, why didn’t we do everything we could to find a sound solution to this “problem”? Why wasn’t the course set back then to prevent what awaits us today: a lack of food, and not only in developing and emerging countries?

Ewald Wetekamp, Stockach (DE)

“Biovision Symposium 2022 ...”

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entists and visited farming operations for five months to answer the question of how the future nutrition system of Switzerland could or should look like.

Two participants reported on the process and Basel-Country Councillor of State and Councillor of the *Biovision* foundation, *Maya Graf*, presented ideas on how the suggestions made by the “Citizen’s Council” may be implemented. A national congress for the nutrition system will take place in Bern in early February of 2023, on which a catalogue of recommendations, developed based on mentioned ideas, will be handed over to politics, administration and practice.

To conclude the conference, founder and president of *Biovision* as well as recipient of the alternative Nobel Prize, *Hans Rudolf Herren*, presented his speech. He reminded the audience that the globally practiced industrialised nutrition system is responsible for 30 % of global warming.

In presence of ongoing crises, in addition to sustainability the resilience, meaning the power of resistance of the nutrition system against crises must be strengthened. To accomplish this, an integral kind of thinking is needed, where production, processing and marketing of food up to the point of consumption play a role and are influencing each other. In the field of production, much progress has been made in the sense of agro-economics. The main

focus now has to lie on the field of marketing and on empowering the personal relationship between producer and consumer, so that peasants will be able to sell their products well.

During the break, information and respective brochures could be gathered at various stands. Upon the end of the conference, the audience expressed its appreciation by standing ovations. •

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Swiss spirit – essential especially today (Part 3*)

The Swiss Virtue of “Gefechtsabbruch (withdrawing from action)”: Meinrad Inglin’s novel “Der Schweizerspiegel” (“Swiss mirror”)

by Peter Küpfer

In his large-scale novel “Schweizerspiegel”, Swiss novelist and author Meinrad Inglin, who was born in Schwyz in 1893 and who died there on 4 December 1971, not only held up a mirror to Switzerland, but he also left a legacy there. Like everything else in Inglin’s work, this spiritual legacy does not leap to the eye immediately. You must search for it, it follows winding paths, similar to life itself. There is no “hero” in Inglin’s then widely read novel, who, as a protagonist, effectively proclaims the author’s philosophy. For that, Inglin is too much of a realist and too less of a doctrinaire. He does not spare each of his vividly portrayed main characters the task of discovering for themselves what is “Swiss” about them. His novel describes the hopes, the disappointments, and the regained courage of the Swiss and of Switzerland in the years 1912-1918, years that were dominated by the threatening portents of a looming world war. As the main topic Inglin’s novel brings a concept into effect, he himself calls “withdrawing from action”. He describes what he is referring to in a vivid way on almost a thousand pages.



Watercolour portrait of Meinrad Inglin.
(Picture School television Switzerland)

In the novel during his lifetime, “withdrawing from action” has both an internal and an external dimension. For Inglin, the personal, the political and thus ultimately also the military withdrawal from action is anything but a defeat. It is rather the inward triumph over egocentrism, over the tenacious pursuit of maximum particular interests, over the necessity to assert oneself at any price. The essence of his concept of withdrawing from action might be

the willingness not to pursue the maximum of the self-imposed aspiration, but to consciously withdraw from it and thus gain a lot. This idea interweaves the novel like the theme of a symphony.

Multiple threats, external and internal

The novel was published in 1938 by the German publishing house *L. Staackmann* in Leipzig.

Inglin wrote it in the 1930s of the 20th century. The author experienced these years as particularly depressing in view of the victory of National Socialism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. It reinforced the imminent threat of a world war after twenty years fragile and crisis-ridden “peace”. Looking back on Switzerland’s corresponding litmus tests, the author be-thinks of what Switzerland had been saving from internal and external collapse during the First World War. His “Schweizerspiegel” (“Swiss mirror”) (in common with *Gotthelf’s* “Bauernspiegel” [“farmers’ mirror”]) not only mirrors the era, but also the culture of the time. What was beneficial for the people and for Switzerland at that time, and what was perilous? What saved the small state in the heart of Europe from the dangers of totalitarianism?

Inglin’s national and individual self-inquiry begins with the visit of the German Emperor *Wilhelm II* to Switzerland, two years before the outbreak of World War I. The Kaiser and his generals followed a live-fire manoeuvre of the Swiss army in the lower Toggenburg which impressed them – above all due to the obvious will to defend themselves of the Swiss people’s army and its marksmanship. As events progressed, the author describes very closely how the war came nearer, its allegedly inevitability, especially facing the failure of the *Socialist International in the question of peace*. A few years earlier, at their international peace congress in Basel, delegates from all over the world had solemnly decided to avert the threat of war by means of an international general strike. In the following Inglin describes how the renewed enmity between Germany and France led to another deep split within Switzerland, this time between the German-speaking and the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

What followed were the long years of border watch by the Swiss army immediately after the outbreak of war. This led to a threatening thinning of Switzerland’s activity area and a labour shortage in the agricultural sector. In addition, in the last year of the war, the *Spanish flu* pandemic, which

was particularly devastating in Switzerland, resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, including many soldiers on active service. Finally, there were the months full of privation after the end of the war, followed by the general strike, which once again brought Switzerland to the brink of civil war. The author presents these complex external events entirely from a human perspective, from the perspective of the main characters of his novel affected by these dramatic times. His narrative thus acquires a tremendous density and tension.¹

Inglin leads his readers on the paths of a (fictitious) upper-middle-class liberal family from the city of Zurich, the *Ammann* family. *Alfred Ammann*, the father, is a colonel in the Swiss army, a national councillor (member of parliament) of the *Liberal Party*, which is easily to be recognised as the leading and dominant progressive party of the time. His wife *Barbara* originally comes from the same social class. Devotedly and vigorously, she cares of the family with her three sons *Severin*, *Paul* and *Fred* and their daughter *Gertrud*. She is a very independent personality acting on her own initiative at the side of her once in a while flaring family patriarch. The political events abroad not only split the Swiss Confederation, but also lead to tensions within the family. At the beginning of World War I, the German-speaking Swiss population, including its press, is almost without exception sympathetic to the German position.

Wilhelm II’s visit to Switzerland and the Swiss army arouses applause and even admiration for Germany’s international policy in this part of Switzerland, whereas it causes displeasure in the French-speaking part. This is aggravated by the election of *Ulrich Wille* as general of the army enlisting under wartime conditions. *Wille* came from an originally German family, traditionally pro-German and committed to Prussian ideals, which was acknowledged by indignation in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Culturally and ideologically, it was even more attached to Republican France than the German-speaking part of Switzerland to Germany.

Once again it was a Swiss writer, *Carl Spitteler*, who helped to calm the waves in his famous speech to the *Swiss Rütli Federation* (“Our Swiss Point of View”) within the first year of the war by publicly summoning, not to look at linguistic and cultural differences as dividing walls, but as an invitation to enrich and

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* cf. Niklaus von Flüe prevents an imminent Civil war in the early Confederation (Part I), *Current Concerns* No. 26 of 6 December 2022; and part II: The general who did everything not to humiliate the other side: Henri Dufour, *Current Concerns* No. 27 of 13 December 2022

“Swiss spirit – indispensable ...”

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expand one’s own horizons. This was genuine Swiss spirit and not to hone in on foreign authorities.

Growing tensions, intensified debates

The political tensions are also evident in the different development of the mentally developments of the three sons. The eldest, Severin, editor-in-chief of the strictly nationally oriented daily newspaper “Der Ostschweizer”, *Nietzsche* admirer and prone to an elitist “Herrenmenschen”-mindset, as also cultivated in circles of the Prussian aristocracy and the higher civil servant class in the German Empire, shows himself above all impatient of a rejection of the socialist worldview and movement with its “demanding mentality” towards the “ruling class”.

Paul, Ammann’s second son, deviates from his father’s liberal course in the opposite direction. He begins to take an increasing interest in the strongly Leninist organised Zurich working class², that thus according to the Bolshevik sample geared towards violent revolutionary overthrow and shows in parts at least even solidarity for it. Only when he sees that the influence of those among the socialist leaders is growing, who are bent on revolution in the Bolshevik sense without realistically assessing and considering the situation in Switzerland, he distances himself, not immediately throwing the justified concerns of the working class regarding the reduction of working hours and social help in times of need, which were common at the time, overboard.

The third son, Fred, as far as politics is concerned is standing in the middle. He is initially fascinated by the radicalism of the Zurich left but is shocked by the blindness of certain activists who, in November 1917, wanted to transfer the *modus vivendi* of the Russian revolution one-to-one to Switzerland. When a year later, during the national strike, fire is opened and dead are lamented not only in Zurich³, Severin, the elder, collects signatures for the formation of a packed nationalist party with its own security force, on the model of the German *Freikorps*. Only through an objection of his cousin *René* from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, a doctor at the cantonal hospital, who persistently clings to the Swiss democratic institutions and considers them to be matched up to the onrush of modern times, Fred lets himself being convinced and does not put his signature to founding document of his brother Severin.

The political tensions also affect the Ammanns’ family life. Paul leaves the family as a young man. Not only does the grudge his father nurses against the “renegade” play a role, but also the pride of

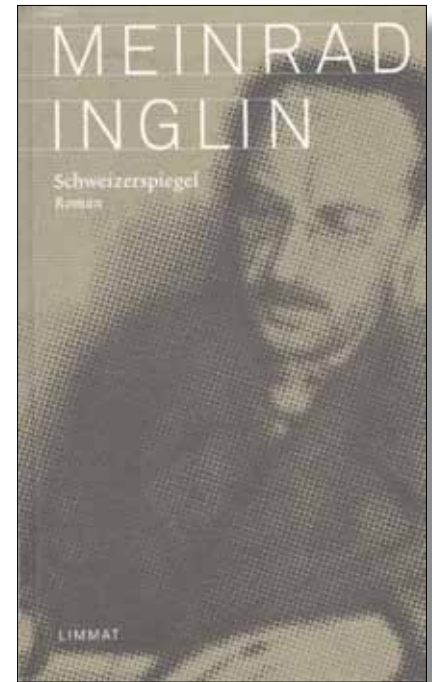
his son going his own ways. Rejecting the greed for money of certain party friends of his father, he does not want to live on “such money” himself. On the other hand, Severin’s harsh statements endanger the family peace at many gatherings.

And Ammann’s daughter Gertrud, married at an early age to a career officer who upholds General Willes’ Prussian ideals and lives them himself, feels her situation increasingly confining. Mother of two children, she falls in love with the lyricist *Albin*, a friend of Paul’s who is not entirely competent in life and cannot get involved in marriage with Gertrud, although Gertrud divorces her husband after protracted contentions, including court disputes. Her situation which is unbearably “disorderly” for the family forces her to poor conditions and above all the rift with her mother Barbara, who suffers a lot from these burdens.

A novel cannot be called novel if it does not portray the fates it tells, predominantly from the personal perspective of its main characters. With the multitude of main protagonists mentioned, the reader experiences completely different levels of perception in Inglin’s monumental novel. They present the various facets of life as the characters “experience” them. The reader thus shares their most personal emotions, that the novel, however, does not portray in a voyeuristic-obtrusive way, as has become literary fashion today, but as a tapestry of sensitively and poetically designed “original-experience”. It comes into being by seeing into and thus empathising into the inner processes of being human. Through this complex means of empathy, which is typical of the traditional novel and which creates sympathy for “other realities of life” (than one’s own), the multi-layered, dense picture of life itself emerges for the reader. Thus, these are not dry political tracts that compete with each other, but images of life in dense and thereby poetic intensity. Inglin’s main interest is not only the meticulously pursued authenticity of what is depicted, but with regard to the central theme pulling through the entire novel, the culmination of the question: What is it, that binds me to the whole, how am I related to it, and what does it have to do with the fact that I live in a free country whose community also lives from and with me? The topic of individual and political “withdrawing from action” mentioned at the beginning plays a decisive role here.

The “Withdrawing from action” helps – if done with realisation

Politically, the mentioned withdrawing from action is manifested on the one hand that in the Olten Committee which was dominated by the inhabitants of Zurich at the beginning and led the national strike



Limmat Verlag, Zürich, 2014,
ISBN 978-3-85791-744-8

from scratch in the direction of a revolution according to the Leninist model, finally those personalities prevailed who advocated breaking off the national strike – despite or even because of the ultimatum imposed by the Federal Council. If the strike had been continued, it inevitably would have led to bloodshed and in the aftermath to years of turf battles. Instead, the pacification offered by both sides led to a more sustainable consideration of the eligible claims of the strikers. But the means was the popular vote, even among the socialists, not an all-incapacitating strike, not paving stones, no armed revolution.

After the peace agreement between the strike-leading Olten Committee and the Federal Council, the introduction of proportional representation was unequivocally accepted in a referendum held shortly afterwards. The very next year saw the deliberately preponed election to the National Council (before the expiration of the term of office) according to the proportional representation system that had long been demanded. It put an end to the up to then disproportionate dominance of the Progressive Party (*Freisinnige Partei*). In these elections, the Socialists won twice the number of deputies at the first go. In 1919, a parliamentary resolution introduced the 48-hour workweek in the factories (at that time, many factories worked longer hours, in some cases up to 59 hours). And just six years later, the compulsory social security schemes of old-age and survivors’ insurance (AHV) and invalidity insurance (IV) were introduced.⁴

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On a personal level, the withdrawing from action lay in the fact that the two maximalists in their political views, Severin and Paul, had to cut back on their own demands and on their fellows. Simply by failing in founding an ultra-nationalist *Swiss party*, Severin was forced to realise by the state of facts, that the existence of Switzerland does not require a "strong" political leader, as Severin thought, but strength in the leading of the entirety. This also included the defeated parties, who were not simply "out" but in the boat, an insight that had already become a political guideline for Swiss people who took the whole into account even earlier. One of them was General *Guillaume Henri Dufour* who for these reasons of state policy led the campaign against the *Sonderbund* in such a way that the opponents were defeated militarily (they had, after all, taken up arms against the majority of the *Tagsatzung*), but their legitimate concerns as Swiss citizens were respected, even after their defeat (cf. Part II of this article, dedicated to Henri Dufour). And Paul had to recognise that in Switzerland (and not only there), despite much justified criticism of the "ruling circles", there is nevertheless no need for an armed proletarian revolution with forced expropriation and the fulfilment of a five-year plan prescribed by a Central Committee. What is needed, however, is the consideration of the justified political and social needs of all social classes, a sense of what is appropriate on the part of the decision-makers and civil courage and the courage to express one's own opinion on the part of the parties and voters.

Withdrawing from the action in personal affairs also meant that the family, parents, and the grown-up children sat down again at the common family table with new acceptance, with rediscovered respect for the straightforwardness of the path pursued by each family member in their own personal way.

This form of withdrawing from action is not born of resignation and it is far from being a rotten compromise. It is the insight that every true democrat personally and politically must go his own way. If, in doing so, he absolutizes his own path and thus stands in the way of the other's path, the danger of going astray is, however, always present.

It is the women who demonstrate the withdrawing from the action. When mother Barbara hears that Albin, her daughter's lover, has died of influenza at the border troops in the Jura, she intuitively knows that her daughter would now be there. Deciding impromptu, she follows her, meets her and reconciles with her, with the respect that comes from the awareness of

both life-experienced women that only a new beginning can create new trust.

The will for a common state – centre of Swissness ("Schweizertum")

The novel ends on the eve of 14 November 1918, when the two cousins meet down by the Sihl in the night to *that* day that had bring the decision to Zurich whether the general strike would lead to a revolutionary attempt under Leninist auspices and thus to a civil war situation: Fred as one of the commanding officers of the security troops in the Zurich barracks (the Zurich government was there during the strike days), René as a senior doctor in the makeshift infirmary set up there because of the rampant influenza. In a break, late at night, in casual conversation about the past dramatic events of wartime, they come to think of what it is for them to make them Swiss, what Switzerland means for them, but also the reverse: what they as citizens are and want to be for Switzerland.

The two cousins, each from their own experience, René as a Welshman, Fred as a German-Swiss, initially contribute what spontaneously comes to their minds. For Fred, it is first "the life of our people, [...] the homeland of our landscapes and towns, also the hay harvest, the yodel, the shooting festival" ..., for René Lake Geneva and the Escalade. It also includes the reliable craftsman, the *Sechseläuten*, an old patrician house "and what is still alive in it". The mentions seem spontaneous, but they are not random. The two cousins, the German-speaking Swiss and the French-speaking Swiss, name what their landscapes, their way of life and their traditions evoke in them as an immediate sense of home.

The conversation then develops from the primarily lived and experienced (Inglin later calls it "the natural and soulful"), the emotionally anchored, to the political will-structure. The two also mention here, complementing each other, the intentional care and consideration for what has grown, for the individual, for knowing and respecting each other: the small-scale, which also comes into effect in political decisions. Unlike our current discourses, small-scale design is not seen as constriction, (as for example in the work of *Friedrich Dürrenmatt* and *Max Frisch*), but as vitality and opportunity. The community as the most vital and lifelike cell of this organism still has its central position in this conversation (and thus in Inglin himself). "[These are] small states, which are conditioned by nature and history, but at the same time represent administrative and electoral districts, with which we have happily brought the more or less apolitical to the threshold of politics. Through its

political form, it has significance and endurance as a communal experience". This shows clearly that the cultural, the language, the neighbourhood, the customs, do not have in them what today is grafted onto them, what is detached or segregating, as supporters of political centralism often wrongly interpret them, but that within those developed what in former times was proudly called love of one's native country and homeland and which was cultivated at school. From this small-scale design, the political gets its individual colouring, it gets its "human face". For Inglin, however, from the love of one's own must also accrue an interest in and a recognition of what others hold dear. This gives rise to the often mentioned will to commonality, which does not want to suppress the other, but participates in the meaningful whole.

"The acceptance of such a manifold and often contradictory fullness of life is a spiritual principle [...]. So, our state, steward, legislator, guardian of the law, is not imposed on us by any power, but the people want it. In our case, this will for a common state obviously arises from a rational insight, whereas in the case of a single-stem people of the same language, it emanates more from natural-national impulses. Our federal state is therefore predominantly a work of reason, of insight, of tolerance, an achievement of the spirit."

As the conversation develops, it becomes clear that nothing metaphysical can be meant by this spiritual achievements, not even something purely religious. In this derivation, Swissness ("Schweizertum") is ultimately something spiritual, because it is not simply diversity (which would leave us at the level of mere folklore), but arises from the will of the citizens, as it is already stated in the Letter of Confederation of 1291. This will is forged in *Schiller's* immortal verse in his *William Tell*, the content of which is in complete agreement with the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations:

"We want to be a united people of brothers" (or in the UN version: the peoples should meet for the peaceful solution of their affairs "in the spirit of brotherhood").

One of the two friends, René, sums up the result of this reflection on the essence of the Swiss spirit as follows:

"It is now vital for us [Swiss] to acknowledge both the spiritual principle of our statehood and the natural and spiritual nature of our diverse independent existence, and it is important not to overstretch one at the expense of the other, but to maintain both in the right relationship, in a balance, as is made possible by our Federal Constitution. This balance is threatened from the ideological as well as from the

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compulsive side, but it can also disintegrate of its own accord when a one-sided lack of weight occurs; it must therefore be constantly restored and defended, it is not a state of rest, but in its interacting tension a creative-fertile situation. It guarantees the highest thing we can achieve politically, order and freedom.”

Fred only adds to this with the weighty comment that we Swiss are not only rational people, but we also have feelings, Switzerland is also our home:

“We are Swiss not only out of reason, but also out of ... yes ... emotion,” René agrees. This is the only way that their four years of service on Switzerland’s borders makes sense: “[...] because it is our highest common creation and will continue to be worth every sacrifice in the future: the fatherland, *la patrie suisse*”.

The mirror of the past questions our present

At the end of his large-scale historical and human account of one of the most acute crises of Swiss national understanding, Inglin thus names three key concepts of Swissness: homeland, fatherland and willingness to make sacrifices, (the homeland “which will continue to be worth every sacrifice in the future”).

This triad of Swissness had an unchallenged status at the time, far beyond Inglin’s own lifetime. We schoolchildren sang our Swiss songs, which varied these concepts, in two voices, with fervour and joy. Today, half a century later, Inglin’s seem to be from another world to our ears, which have been adapted by constant irrigation (they have gone through the merciless school of anti-national modernism) as if coming from another world. They have not only been banished from the songbooks for a long time to a large extent but also from current – political public discourse – having fallen victim to a precursor of the “Cancel Culture”-movement raging in the Western world today, and this without need, through a creeping process of adaptation to the “Zeitgeist”. But if the central concepts of homeland and fatherland hardly occur any more in our national consciousness, from whose content the willingness to make sacrifices furthermore necessarily results, then we are faced with disturbing emotional blanks. What, in principle, takes its place for us Swiss today? How do we Swiss fill our Swissness today, from within and with conviction? How do we imagine a Switzerland that once again, as was the case



Paradeplatz Zurich, 7 November 1918. Mass rally to commemorate the Russian October Revolution of the previous year. In response to the national strike threatened by the Olten Committee (12–14 November 1918), the Federal Council had called up federal troops in various cities. (Picture keystone)

twice for my parents’ generation, would have to fight for its very survival? Or are we at the point now, where in the event of an attack we “simply” hand Switzerland over to a “great power”? And do we cede our autonomy and sovereignty to it? Or do we hand over “the job” to paid private mercenary armies?

If it is still true that our state is a nation of wills, then this will for a common state, this firm will to overcome rifts and to assert ourselves unitedly against the outside world, what is written in our constitution as the purpose of the state, what our ancestors have exemplified to us time and again, must also be present in us heirs. Otherwise, the question arises as to whether we only want to use the advantages they won and shirk from developing the corresponding attitude.

It has once again become high time for the current Switzerland to put in the background the pure party wrangling, the corporate thinking and the exhausted fashionable sideshows such as the gender issue and other religious wars. In favour of the virtues that Inglin brings to appearance in all aspects on a thousand pages: that we, especially when we show our colours, are nevertheless genuinely interested in the “other opinion” (as long as it relates to the whole and not just insists on particular interests!), even if we do not share it or only share it in part. And that we treat their bearers with respect, provided they show evidence that their attitude corresponds to a real problem. With respect for “the other camp”, which the Tagsatzung in Stans had to accept in the early days of the Confederation; with respect for the opponent, who did not allow General Dufour’s campaign against the Sonderbund to degenerate

into a vendetta; and with respect for the whole, which saved national coherence in the form of the break of combat by the actors of the national strike at the right time, even under the continuing great social and ideological tensions.

Inglin’s stirring novel, however, provides material (or even fuel!) for the debates that are currently taking place in Switzerland and which we cannot avoid, at the latest with the neutrality initiative now under discussion. Reading the “Schweizerspiegel” is a good, simultaneously exciting and relaxing companion.⁵

¹ As a literary scholar, I therefore find it incomprehensible that *Meinrad Inglin’s* main work, which has often been underestimated by the literary-critical “guild”, has been given negative evaluations that have not been shown. It is “characterised by the spiritual defence of the country”, or by “Landgeist” (allusion to the Swiss National Exhibition of 1939 in Zurich). The successful national revival that followed the collapse of France under the influence of General *Guisan*, however, contrasts favourably with the unprincipled conformist attitude that today’s circles in “official” Switzerland adopt towards comparably threatening “absorption” efforts from outside.

² *Lenin* stayed in Zurich as an emigrant until shortly before the October Revolution in Russia and had a strong influence on leading figures in Zurich social democracy.

³ See the factual account of the national strike by Werner Wüthrich: “A hundred years ago: End of war, general strike, pandemic Switzerland in crisis – direct democracy as the way to go”, in: *Current Concerns* No. 16, 8 August 2020, as well as by the same author “The importance of direct democracy for securing social peace, Part 1: First World War and the post-war period”, in: *Current Concerns* No. 14, 2 June 2015, as well as his book “Economy and Democracy in Switzerland”, Verlag *Zeit-Fragen*, Zurich 2017, ISBN-978-3-909334-24-0.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ The author abridged his novel in the 1950s. It is advisable to look for the publisher’s note “unabridged” in the edition used.

Please do not drift into visions!

by Carl Bossard



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“Was there something?” many are asking. A teacher's shortage? An emergency situation? Those responsible for education act as if nothing had happened – and take refuge in visions. Some astonish enraged.

It has been the same picture for years: just before the summer holidays, school administrators are flustered and there is a frantic search for teachers. Nothing but loud silence from the staffs. Those responsible on site, on the other hand, are fighting for every available assistant. The schools must be able to start after the holidays, the children must have a teacher in front of them. With enormous effort, they succeed. People without training are also hired. The education officials take it in their stride. The caravan moves on.

Where is the view of the concrete?

Why this trembling again and again? Why this tragedy? One can only speculate and interpret – and ask oneself: Is education policy at all interested in the quality of our schools and the concrete teaching on site? Anyone who listened to the NZZ panel on the topic of “Achievement-oriented society – what kind of school does man need?” in mid-September has serious doubts.¹ The course of the discussion speaks volumes: there was a lot of talk about visions and about developing children's potential better and more humanely, and above all there were calls for even more funding – this in what is already the most expensive education system in the world.

The director of the Zurich Department of Education, *Silvia Steiner*, stated: “The Swiss school system is basically on a very good path. We have a huge support and promotion system; we have the

instruments to correct.” Not a (self-)critical word, no comment on the worries and hardships on the pedagogical ground floor, no transversal view of the school's deficits and the fact, for example, that even intelligent children often have large gaps in the basic skills of arithmetic and writing at the end of primary school. If they have mastered these basics, it is not uncommon due to dedicated parents or private learning institutes to be behind them – and unfortunately far too few lessons that are effective for learning. Incidentally, about 35 per cent of pupils today receive private tuition. What this means for the supposedly so important equality of opportunity is self-evident.

Scandal of an education policy that negates everyday life

There is also no mention of the consequences of integrating very different, sometimes very difficult children into the same class - with the horrendous administrative coordination effort and the sometimes-serious disruptions to teaching. The “Beobachter” even speaks of the “hullabaloo in the classroom” and of the fact that today there is rarely a class “in which one can concentrate on teaching the subject matter”.² But who is surprised about that when Silvia Steiner takes integration for granted in the sense of a human right. Steiner literally: “For me, inclusive education is not a project, but a human right.”³ For ideological reasons, any adjustment or correction is out of the question. For dogmatic reasons, there's only one thing to do: carry on as before! Collateral damage and serious learning deficits in basic cultural competencies do not matter.

And this form of teaching is one of the reasons for the noticeable flight of many teachers from the classroom. Those in charge are ignoring this too. Their motto: hear nothing, see nothing and say nothing – this is the scandal of an education policy that takes refuge in visions and negates everyday life while pretending that everything is fine – as has been the case for years with early French, for example.

Regarding certain deficits there is a system failure

What would be needed? Many people miss a critical-analytical and clear view of the current state of affairs in Swiss education policy, and that is a systemic and radically honest one. For years, schools have been restructured and reformed – in hundreds of individual steps. What has been the overall result of these innovations? And why does Switzerland constantly fall

behind in international comparative studies?

To give just one example, it is not acceptable that one in five of our 15-year-olds leaves school without the necessary basic language skills. This is simply “a systemic failure”, as *Stefan C. Wolter*, Director of the *Swiss Coordination Office for Education Research*, gets to the heart of it. He adds: “With an average class size of 19 pupils, two to three pupils per class in Switzerland can only read and write inadequately when they finish school.” Those responsible for education remain silent. The systemic failure does not seem to bother them. Hardly anyone enquires about the reasons for the failure.

The critical view on the teacher's training colleges

A second important focus would be on the question of where mistakes are made in training and why so many young teachers leave the classroom so quickly: seven percent per year, mostly in the first three to five years of the profession. We know that we don't have too few trained teachers, we have too many who leave the profession too quickly or don't even take it up. The teacher's training colleges have become a kind of quick course for people who don't want to teach at all. This raises the question: How well prepared are the new teachers for good teaching, and how specifically trained are they when they start their first position?

Recollection of pedagogical freedom

And there is something else that needs to be analysed: How burdensome are the many top-down reforms of recent years? Education has been “standardised” and “administered”. The organisational dominates the pedagogical. The burden on teachers has increased as a result of these reforms, with the increased integration and the dispersal into a multitude of subject areas.

Many teachers feel trapped in the corset of an artificially constructed complexity that they can no longer cope with. That is why fewer and fewer want to take on the important office of class leaders. Much, too much, is prescribed and imposed from above – or controlled. This minimises pedagogical freedom. And freedom is part of every teacher's DNA.

An unsparingly honest system analysis

We know: Not everything is running smoothly at our primary and secondary schools. Not at all. Unfortunately, a lot of

The outlawry of the peace option

by Dr. phil. René Roca*

In their article “Neutrality must not undermine international law” in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 14 December 2022, two members of the *Pro Militia* association call on Switzerland to review the stipulations of its perpetual neutrality. They state “after a careful analysis” that the Federal Council acted wrongly when it refused to accede to Germany’s request and waive the non-re-export declaration for procured war material. The article culminates in an attempt to bend the current law, i. e., the *Swiss Federal Act on War Material* (WMA), in such a way that “extraordinary circumstances” would apply to the Ukraine war (as if such circumstances do not apply to every war). Such “circumstances” would then allow to deliver the ammunition to Ukraine.

Apart from such legal quibbles, this statement fits seamlessly into a narrative that attempts to undermine Swiss neutrality by hook or by crook. Only one circumstance still seems to preoccupy many associations of whatever hue and political exponents of parties: How can Switzerland finally supply weapons to Ukraine? How can legal hurdles be overcome in this

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things are swept under the table or are only said behind closed doors. This does not help us. What we need, however, is neither aesthetic illusions nor visions that are far removed from practical experience; what we need is an honest system analysis, unsparing and radically reality-based. We are not getting anywhere by feigning something like we did up to now. It is always the students who suffer in the school system. •

¹ Niederberger, Matthias. “Welche Schule braucht der Mensch?” (Which school does a person need?), in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 17 September 2022, p. 15: The following discussed on the panel chaired by NZZ editor *Martin Meyer*: *Margrit Stamm*, educational scientist, *Silvia Steiner*, Zurich Education Director, *Sergio P. Ermotti*, Chairman of the Board of Directors of *Swiss Re*, and *Oliver Meier*, Building Construction Project Manager *Marti AG*.

² Hofer, Julia. “Tohuwaboju im Klassenzimmer” (Classroom mayhem), in: *Beobachter* 25/2021, p. 92f.

³ Pfändler, Nils/Schenkel, Lena. “Ich glaube nicht an Visionen für die Zukunft der Schule” (I do not believe in visions for the future of the school). Interview with *Silvia Steiner*, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 28 January 2019, p. 15.

Source: *Journal 21* of 10 October 2022



regard, treaties broken and a one-sided understanding of international law fulfilled?

No one thinks about peace

The main thing is to continue supporting the war. Nobody thinks about peace any more. As the state of political contemporary, one rubs one’s eyes: in connection with arms deliveries to Ukraine, centre-right party leaders demand emergency law, an armament of their own army and further rapprochement with NATO. Only yesterday, they were jointly responsible for the Swiss army being saved to death and degraded. Left-wing exponents (SP and Greens) including GSwA (*Group for a Switzerland without an army*), renounce pacifism („Where have all the flowers gone ...“) and outlaw any peace option. Only yesterday they wanted to abolish the army and have tightened the WMA. There seem to be only a few left who can think straight and who, in our history-forgotten times, know what an important role Switzerland has repeatedly played in conflicts and wars. For then it should be clear that Switzerland’s neutrality does not mean simply standing on the side-lines and passively watching, but actively bringing the peace option into play. Such quiet diplomacy does not make the headlines, but it does ensure the credibility of neutrality and the necessary trust. Several times already, Swiss officials and the Federal Council would have had the opportunity to bring this peace option into play, they have all failed miserably. They prefer to sit dutifully at donor conferences, even organise them and distribute funds. Money for reconstruction in the middle of a war *notabene*. So, they want to supply weapons for the destruction and are already talking about money for reconstruction, it doesn’t get more absurd than that. The destruction of Ukraine

is not being prevented, but actively promoted with a proxy war. The trenches are getting deeper and deeper, the war is getting more and more intense and the suffering of the civilian population is getting worse and worse. Meanwhile, the USA is working hard to make decisive moves on the “chessboard”. In this context, it would be worthwhile to re-read *Brzezinski’s* “The Grand Chessboard”.

Return to integral neutrality

The Swiss historian *Wolfgang von Wartburg* wrote in connection with Swiss neutrality that there must be a place in the world that exclusively serves peace. The importance of neutrality urgently needs to be appreciated again, because it has a tremendously important dimension in times of peace as well as in times of war. Why is this no longer recognised? In the current discussion, Swiss neutrality is eroding more and more, which means that the ICRC and the Good Offices cannot fully unfold their impact. On the contrary, the work of the ICRC is becoming increasingly difficult and the Good Offices are being ridiculed (Switzerland as a “postman” ...), much to the chagrin of the civilian population in numerous conflicts. In order to stop this erosion and to fill neutrality with content again, Switzerland must return to integral neutrality. That is why it is important to sign the neutrality initiative¹ and thus ensure an important debate that gives Switzerland – and also the Federal Council and Parliament – a compass and logbook again for this important state maxim. Otherwise, the Federal Council and the Swiss people will continue to be on a “ship of fools”, as *Reinhard Mey* sings in his profound ballad, heading for the reef. •

¹ www.neutralitaet-ja.ch