

Current Concerns

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“The world cannot be that eurocentric as it used to be in the past”

**Indian Minister of External Affairs
Subrahmanyam Jaishankar explains the positions of his country**

ev. “You just don’t get it,” Kishore Mahbubani, a political scientist, diplomat, and professor at the National University of Singapore, put it in “Die Zeit” a few years ago: The West does not understand that the world is fundamentally changing in the 21st century – and has already changed. Washington and its transatlantic supporters still cleave to the idea of maintaining their hegemony. According to Mahbubani – by all means also a friend of the West – a wise policy would be to take note of the reality, to adapt to it and to shape the transition to a multipolar world in such a way that it does not become traumatic for the West’s own people, but is as beneficial as possible.

At present, the West seems to be far from doing so. We are not really taking note of developments. The arrogance of hegemonic claims seems to obscure the view of the reality, the processes and developments in other regions of the world.

Take India, for example. The following excerpt from a conversation with the Indian foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, gives a small impression of what is going on. Here one encounters a new, self-confident India that does not want to let anyone dictate how it positions itself in the world. An India that rejects the Western construct of “the West and the Rest”, of the “garden” versus the “jungle” (Josep Borrell), “democracy” versus » autocracy» as the hegemonic claim of the West to have to place itself on its, on the “right side”, and wants to and does go its own way.

As part of a multi-day trip to Central and Eastern European countries, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar fielded questions from the moderator and audience at GLOBSEC 2022 in Bratislava on June 3 (see box page 3). Below are the statements, slightly shortened and edited for readability.

In response to the moderator’s introductory question to sketch a picture of India’s current situation – she mentions the Ukraine war, which is now not only preoccupying Europe and the West, but is also “seeping into the rest of the world”; she also mentions the keywords Covid, India’s relationship with China, the economic situation in difficult times – the Indian Foreign Minister comments as follows, first on Covid:

Enormous developmental steps

“Yes, we are largely out of Covid, with a strong sense of economic recovery. There’s a lot of optimism, not just about rebuilding, but actually leapfrogging [economically leap across several developmental steps] in many areas, particularly digital.

I think we handled it [Covid], very prudently. I’m almost tempted to say smartly in terms of the financial responses, which was that we didn’t blow up [meaning that we haven’t destroyed] the [central] bank [the RBI Reserve Bank of India] in responding, we intervened where we had to, and very effectively. At the moment, the Modi government has just completed eight years in office, and what we have done in those eight years is really to build, I would say, a social welfare society at a speed and to a scale that the world has not seen.

In some ways, Covid has actually hastened that. For example, we are giving food support to 800 million people, and we’ve been doing this for more than two years – that’s as much as for the population of the US and the EU together.

We have a publicly supported house ownership program which covers about 115 million beneficiaries, which is almost like building houses for Japan.

Or even if you look at the program to replace cooking with firewood with cooking with gas, that impacts 80 million people, that’s like changing Germany’s kitchens in the space of a few years.

So there’s a lot going on there, and why I mentioned that is because many of the global developments today have the po-



Subrahmanyam Jaishankar
(Bild Screenshot)

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, *9 January 1955, first obtained a degree in Chemistry, then a Masters in Political Science, an MA and PH.D. in International Relations. In 1977, he joined the diplomatic service. Third, then Second Secretary of the Indian Embassy in Moscow/USSR in 1979–1981, he became First Secretary of the Embassy in Washington/USA in 1985; served as First Secretary and Political Adviser to the Indian Peacekeeping Force in Sri Lanka from 1988–1990. From 1990–1993, he was Counsellor to the Indian Embassy in Budapest/Hungary; in 1991, he was Director for East-

ern Europe in the Ministry of External Affairs and Press Secretary and Speechwriter for President Shankar Dayal Sharma. In 1996–2000 he served as Deputy Ambassador in Tokyo, in 2000 he became Ambassador to the Czech Republic, in 2004–2007 he served as Secretary (Americas) in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi, was High Commissioner of India to Singapore from 2007–2009, Ambassador with the longest tenure in China, during which he played a pivotal role in strengthening economic, trade and cultural ties between the two countries. He also played an important role in negotiating the 2006 India–US civil nuclear deal. In 2013, he became ambassador to Washington, and was finally appointed *Foreign Secretary*, the administrative head of the Ministry of External Affairs, on 29 January 2015. He has been serving as the Foreign Secretary of India since 30 May 2019.

He was awarded the *Padma Shri* in 2019 and has written a bestselling book, *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*, which was published in 2020.

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India is a huge country (about 3,287,200 km² and about 1,42 billion inhabitants) with a rich diversity (28 states, 2 Union languages (Hindi and English), another 21 official languages and more than 100 different languages from four different language families). The diversity is also evident in the landscapes. At the top right you can see Kangchendzönga, the country’s highest mountain in the Himalayas, at the top left the Thaar desert in the state of Rajasthan and at the bottom left a waterway in Kerala. (pictures and graphic Wikipedia and www.mapsofindia.com)

tential of actually put that [development] under stress.

Things are happening in the world that Europe pays too little attention to

Your second reference was to China. Yes, we are going through a particularly difficult patch in our relationship with China. We’ve had differences in the past, but we’ve never had a situation since 1962 where agreements on not bringing forces to the border have been disregarded.¹

We have had a clash in which people have died. However, this has not happened now, it happened two years ago. So, in a sense [addressing those events today] is a bit a diversion. But it’s also a useful reminder to Europe that there are other things happening in the rest of the world which Europe perhaps sometimes doesn’t pay enough attention to.

And there has also been Afghanistan, you know, what happened there, the circumstances in which the Western, particularly American military forces, left finally.

And now we have Ukraine. And coming into this region [the Central and Eastern

European countries], it’s a region which I know well, I have lived here – in Budapest and Prague. It’s a region that has been very helpful to us when we wanted 20,000 students out of Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, even Moldova.

But I think it’s also important for people in this region to realise how this [the war in Ukraine] is playing out to the rest of the world, that it is creating a huge fuel crisis, a food crisis, a fertiliser crisis, and it’s pushing inflation in low-income societies which don’t have the margins to absorb that development. And so it can very quickly become political in many societies.»

On behalf of an online viewer, the question follows to what extent the population is interested in the war in Ukraine – apart from gasoline and food shortages.

S. Jaishankar: „I think it’s a major concern, a major concern, for two reasons. Look, today our existence is very connected, and everybody sees things on TV, on their phones, on the net, wherever you are. And bear in mind that India today is a very digital society, even people at lower levels of income – the one thing

they do have is connectivity [i.e., Internet access]. So there is a lot of awareness.

I think everybody is, to put it mildly, disturbed at the conflict. I think you see the pictures, they see that happening. But the other part is, that it has begun to impact people’s daily lives: either it is impacting the petrol cost or at the bank, it’s impacting your wheat cost or your shopping. It impacts farmers to get along with sowing. And when it impacts businesses, which it affects in multiple ways – I mean you know, there’s a container problem, there’s an insurance problem, you don’t get certain commodities or if you do, the prices are up – so it is disrupting life. And it [the situation in Ukraine] is not unique causal of disruption. At the same time, I think some of the lockdowns in China also have an economic impact. But when you disrupt the the economy, it shows up in employment – so I think it does trouble people.»

All countries have a right to provide for the welfare of their people

The next question revolves around criticism of the increase in Indian oil imports

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from Russia at cheap prices and how India could reconcile nine times higher oil imports between 2021 and 2022 with non-alignment in foreign policy.

S. Jaishankar: „Well, first of all, honestly, I don't see a non-alignment oil connection at all. I mean, today Europe is buying oil, Europe is buying gas. I just read the new lot of the new package of [EU] sanctions. Now the package is designed in a way in which consideration has been given to the welfare of the [European] population. So the pipelines have a certain *carve-out* [where parts of companies are outsourced], and timelines have been given. It's not like tomorrow morning everything is going to be cut off. People need to understand that if you can be considerate of yourself, surely you can be considerate of other people.

So if Europe says, we have to manage it in a way, in which the impact on my economy is not traumatic, then that freedom or that choice should exist for other people as well. Now, in terms of our oil purchases: We don't send people out there saying ‚go buy Russian oil', we send people out saying ‚go buy oil'. Now you buy the best oil you can in the market. – I don't think I would attach a political messaging to that.»

At this point, the moderator interrupts with the objection of how this is supposed to work, not to bring the two as-

GLOBSEC

ev. GLOBSEC (an abbreviation of Global and Security.) considers itself a global think tank with offices in Bratislava, Brussels, Kiev, Vienna and Washington D.C.

According to its own website, GLOBSEC is an “independent, non-partisan, non-governmental organisation that builds on the successful work of the Slovak Atlantic Commission”.¹ The *GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum* has partnerships with, among others, NATO, the *National Endowment for Democracy*, *Brookings* and the *Atlantic Council*, the *Open Society*.² GLOBSEC is also funded by the *GLOBSEC US Foundation*, based in Washington D. C.³

Annually, the organisation hosts the *GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum*, which it describes as one of the leading security conferences in the world.

¹ <https://www.globsec.org/who-we-are/about-us> (GLOBSEC is an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental organisation that builds on the successful work done by the Slovak Atlantic Commission.)

² <https://forum2022.globsec.org/partners/>

³ <https://www.globsecusfoundation.org/>

pects into a context. India has strong relations with Russia, but also problems with China, and then literally: “How do you then sit back and define Indian foreign policy at this point where the West seems to be quite vociferous in trying to curtail the funding for the the war [on the part of Russia] in Ukraine, whereas purchasing this oil for national interest, India is being asked: ‘Are you funding this war?’” S. Jaishankar: „I don't want to sound argumentative, but then tell me: buying Russian gas does not finance the war? Why is it only Indian money and oil coming to India that is financing [the war], but not gas coming to Europe? I mean, let's be a little even-handed out here.

And you know, the whole narrative of [oil imports] that have gone nine times up. That's gone nine times up from a very low base, and it was a very low base because at that time the markets were more open. You know why. If countries in Europe and the West and the United States are so concerned, why don't they allow Iranian oil to come into the market? Why don't they allow Venezuelan oil to come into the market? I mean, they have squeezed every other source of oil we have, and then they say, ‘Okay, guys, you must not go to the market and guess the best deal for your people.’ I don't think that's a very fair approach.»

Wheat export bans: measures against price speculation at the expense of the poor

Addressing India's export bans on wheat and food as another Western criticism of India's foreign policy – whether that doesn't put pressure on the most vulnerable in the global South and East, and whether India sees that as supporting Russia[a], or whether [b] „it is a completely different element, that we in the West don't understand that your perspective is different?»

S. Jaishankar: „I think the answer is b: You don't understand in the West. But it isn't just the West, okay? I think people don't understand because they are not actually tracking the trade. We have been exporting wheat, okay. Typically we export about two to three million tons. Last year – last fiscal year was a better year – we exported about 7 million tons. This year, before the heat wave hit us very badly, the expectation was that we would do substantial exports, and we were open. In fact, the prime minister himself said on various occasions, we see that there is a food crisis in the world, and we would like to be of help. But what we then saw was a kind of run on our wheat, a large part of it done by international traders based out of Singapore and, I think, to some degree maybe Dubai. The result was that the low-in-

come countries, many of whom were our traditional buyers, like our neighbors Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, [were pushed out]. Interestingly, the Gulf region buys regularly from us. Yemen buys from us, Sudan buys from us. Now what we saw was that the low-income buyers were being squeezed out. The wheat was being stocked for being traded, so in a way our good will was being used for speculation. So we had to do something to stop that because it was also affecting us at home. Our prices went up. I want to be very clear about what we did: We actually said that we would not give speculators open access to the Indian market, which would leave the Indian customer and the least developed countries in the world with the short end of that. What we are still open to doing is: where we see a kind of a ‚deserving' country wanting wheat we are very glad to supply it within the realm of our means. And just for the record: I think we have done this year wheat export to about 23 countries. The rate of export this year – if I were to take the same period as last year – my rough sense is that it is about 4x. So actually it's gone up. I know of many cases where foreign ministers of some countries have called and we have assured them that they would have access to our market.»

The moderator asks, „So it's all about stopping and curtailing speculation et the end.»

S. Jaishankar: „That's right – and preventing a diversion to high-income countries with a greater possibility to buy. Because what we saw happen with the vaccines, we don't want to see happen with the wheat – which was the rich people got vaccinated and the poor were left to God.»

Question from the Online-audience: “According to the ‘Wall Street Journal’ India is becoming a key point for transshipment for Russian oil to bypass sanctions from the US. How does that serve India's foreign policy interests?”

S. Jaishankar: “I don't know if whoever wrote that knows what transshipment means. I mean, transshipment is when you get something and then you sell it to somebody else. I have not even heard of anybody in India thinking along those lines. So, yes, we do buy...”

The moderator interjects: “Saying, the ‘Wall Street Journal’ report is inaccurate that they are quoting.”

S. Jaishankar: “Politely, yes. I can say it less politely, but ...”

The moderator: “Not a conduit to any Russian oil transaction ...”

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S. Jaishankar: “No. Listen – please understand the oil markets. There is an enormous shortage of oil. There is a physical shortage of oil. Getting access to oil is difficult. A country like India would be crazy to get oil from somebody and sell it to somebody else. I mean, this is nonsense.”

A freelance journalist from Lithuania wants to know how India can count on global support in the conflict with China and believe others will still trust India after it did not condemn Russia and did not take sanctions.

S. Jaishankar: “You know, that’s an interesting question that maybe, I don’t mean you personally, but people should ask themselves. When I look at Europe as a whole, which has been extraordinarily silent on many things that have happened in Asia, for example, one might ask why anyone in Asia should trust Europe at all.

So here is the take. First of all, I think you are mischaracterising our position. For example, when Bucha happened, we condemned Bucha and we actually asked for an investigation into Bucha. In terms of what is happening with the Ukraine conflict, our position is very clear that we favour an immediate cessation of hostilities – it is not that we have ignored it, unless you call phone calls with *Putin* and *Selensky* ignoring something. So first I would urge you, to get the factual position accurately.

Secondly, in terms of the connection you are making, you know we have a difficult relationship with China. We are perfectly capable of managing it. If I get global understanding and support, obviously, it is of help to me. But this idea that I do a transaction [make a deal], that I come in a conflict because it will help me in a conflict too – that’s not how the world works. A lot of our problems in China have nothing to do with Ukraine, they have nothing to do with Russia, they are predated. And if we are getting into who is silent on what issue at what point of time, I could point to a whole lot of issues on which Europe has a sort of held its space. So, I mean, it is a great polemical point you made. I take it in that spirit.”

The moderator goes on to say that a key question in Western political and financial circles is which side India will take in the conflict between the United States and China, should such a decision one day have to be made.

S. Jaishankar: “First, and I am partly reacting to the previous observation, somewhere Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems – [along

the lines of] if it’s you (the rest of the world), it’s yours. If it’s me (Europe), it’s ours. I see reflections of that also in the linkage which is being made today between China and India and what’s happening in Ukraine. So come on, guys, China and India happen way before anything happen in Ukraine. So, the Chinese don’t need anybody anywhere in the world to tell them how to engage us or not engage us, or to be difficult with us or not difficult with us. I see that as a frankly, not a very clever argument, as a very self-serving one. And to this idea that your grand strategy must be about how you will choose: I (India) will do what all of us do. I’m going to weigh the situation, as everybody does. After all: how do countries eventually make decisions?”

India does not join any “axis” – it goes its own way

The moderator responded again, “There will always be two axes at this point. It’s an understood accepted fact that you have the West, U.S.–led and you have China as the next potential access. Where does India fit into this. Are you planning to not do this ...”

S. Jaishankar: “No, I’m sorry, that’s exactly where I disagree with you, this is the construct you are trying to impose on me, and I don’t accept it. I don’t think it’s necessary for me to join this axis or not, and if I am not joining this I must be with the other one. I don’t accept that. I mean, I am one fifth of the world’s population. I [and here he is speaking, of course, for India, with which he identifies] am the fifth or sixth largest economy in the world today, I mean, forget the history of civilization, everybody knows that, but I think I am entitled to have my own side, I am entitled to weigh my own interests, to make my own choices – and my choices will not be cynical and transactional², but they will be a balance between my values and my interests. There is no country in the world that disregards its interests.”

Not block thinking – Solutions the world needs

As the moderator again follows up that India has to position itself after all if it wants to play a role in the world, non-alignment is “not plausible if you want to take a position on the world stage”, standing aside, “sitting on the fence” is not an option to play a leading role in the world, the Indian foreign minister elaborates:

“Look, I don’t think we are sitting on the fence. Just because I don’t agree with you doesn’t make me sitting on the fence; it means I’m sitting on my ground. And that is, what are the big challenges of the world? One of them is climate change: I think India is very critical to the solution, I can be an example, I can actually

be an arena for an enormous leapfrogging of green technologies. Look at terrorism, look at the emergence of a world order, look at security, look at sustainable development goals – if you take any of the world’s big challenges, part of the answer can either come from India, or India can contribute to it. I hate to say it – it is a bit like a broken record: a lot of things are happening outside Europe. We have – partly because of climate change – for a lot of humanitarian natural disasters humanitarian responses, today, in our part of the world. A lot of people look to us to help out. The days when they expected Europe to come – which Europe did at the time of the tsunami in 2004 – are over. The difference is that today nobody is even thinking about it. The world is changing, new players are coming, new capabilities are coming, but a new agenda must come, the world cannot be as Eurocentric as it used to be in the past.” •

¹ For decades, there has been disagreement between China and India over the border between India’s high mountain territory of Ladakh and the Chinese-controlled Tibet Autonomous Region. In June 2020, a bloody clash occurred there, the worst incident since the border war of 20 October 1962–20 November 1962.

² thus not in the sense of a business cost–benefit calculation

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APOFAsaxWSc>

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Russia and China take steps to usher in a multipolar world and provide a partial road map

by Chris Devonshire-Ellis*

zf. In an extensive analysis *China Briefing** has reproduced in English and commented in detail on one of the two agreements reached between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, the "Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination in the New Era". We document the summary of this analysis, but also recommend reading the entire text.

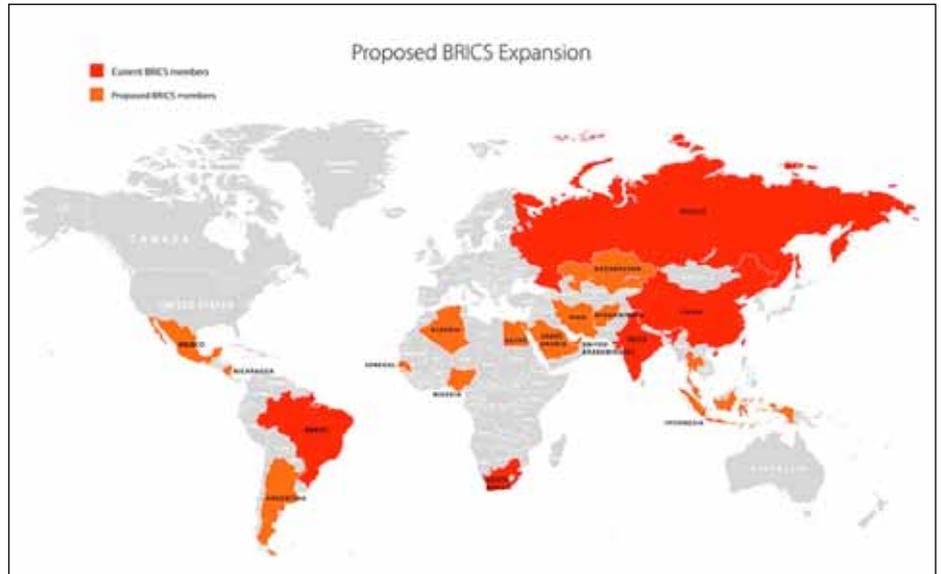
On the basic level, China and Russia have laid out a basic platform for the creation of a new World Order and have stated in part, their push to see this succeed. Much is already underway, with the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* already discussing mutual cooperation and development with the *Eurasian Economic Union*. Add in a BRICS+ and the *Belt and Road Initiative* and the world starts to look rather different than it did pre-Covid. At that time, President *Putin* stated that the world would never be as it was. It appears that President *Xi* agrees. He was heard stating that 'Great changes are coming' to Vladimir Putin as he departed back to Beijing on Tuesday evening, indicating that China and Russia do have the basis for enacting reforms. That means we can expect:

- Increased China and Russian diplomatic and trade efforts in Africa, the Middle East and South America;
- The gradual emergence of a mutual trade bloc to accommodate these;
- Increasing diplomatic and political pressure being put on existing global institutions, backed up by developing nation support in terms of reforms;
- The emergence of various types of financial settlement systems to act as an alternative to SWIFT;

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Dezan Shira & Associates has offices in Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, United States, Germany, Italy, India, and Russia, in addition to our trade research facilities along the *Belt & Road Initiative*.



The BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China und South Africa as well as the accession candidates. (grafic © Asia Briefing Ltd.)



Countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. (grafic © Asia Briefing Ltd.)

- Continuing development of Russian energy resources flowing east and south east to ASEAN and India;
 - Increasing trade and aid being directed at influential yet poorer nations in Asia and Africa.
 - Increasing coordination with the Middle East energy plays in their role as a regional energy hub, with special attention on Africa supplies;
- Not all has been revealed at this summit of course. However, the key points appear to have been made, what China likes to

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“On the basic level, China and Russia have laid out a basic platform for the creation of a new World Order and have stated in part, their push to see this succeed. Much is already underway.”

China-Russia: The end of US hegemony?

Editorial from „La Jornada“ on March 21st, 2023

Chinese president *Xi Jinping* started his three-day visit to Russia, his first since the beginning of his third time in office, as well as since the beginning of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Although all eyes are on Beijing's intention to mediate in the conflict in Eastern Europe, the duration of Xi's visit as well as the context in which it takes place indicates that it far about more than that.

It is about nothing less than the confirmation of a rapprochement that goes back more than a decade and in which declarations of mutual friendship and common ground have been made again and again. For example, in 2019, Xi called his host *Vladimir Putin* "best friend" and in 2021 talked about "relations on a whole new level". These relations on the one

hand stem from the necessity to pool forces, facing the increasing resentment from the block led by Washington, on the other hand from the growing economic trade which is pushed forward mainly by China's strategy to strengthen their relations to all countries (including the western countries) with the gigantic common development plan named "Belt and Road Initiative", better known as the "New Silk Road".

Under this label, unprecedented investments into infrastructure are taking place, a symbol for the Chinese dragons' commitment to a different way to global domination than his predecessors like the United States and the European empires, being reached by economy and mutual benefit rather than by weapons and depredation. Prior to their meeting, both chiefs of state released articles in which they emphasised on the strength of their bilateral relations and on their determination to expedite their common goals. China confirmed its willingness to stand firm alongside Russia in the interests of "real multilateralism" and "global multipolarity", whilst the Kremlin signalled its willingness to take into account the peace proposal laid out by Beijing one month ago, and expressed its gratitude about the balanced and neutral position of his southern neighbour regarding the war in Ukraine.

This position is very important to Russia, as it is facing an inrush of the USA, their allies and satellites (categories which seem to blend into each other nowadays), which is targeting to destroy Russia mili-

tarly, economically, financially, political-ly and propagandistically. Practically since the beginning of the still so-called "Special Military Operation" by Russia against Kiev, western governments and media are wavering between pillorying China's "complicity" with Russia and sowing seeds of discord between these strategical allies, pointing to a Chinese dissatisfaction about Russia's "rashness". The meeting of the chiefs of state and government from these two nuclear powers debunks these allegations and sends a clear message: the chiefs of state and government are totally aware of the fact that they are facing a common enemy, namely the dangerous tenacity of the USA to preserve their hegemonial role, which they possess since the ending of the second World War and especially since the crumbling of the Soviet Union in 1991.

What is at stake is nothing less than the possibility of building a multipolar world, which will undoubtedly be capable of improvement (as the numerous internal fault lines and indefensible practices of Moscow and Beijing show). But this is in every way preferable to the crass US unilateralism that uses democracy, human rights and the heritage of the Enlightenment as hollow phrases to impose the interests of its big corporations on the rest of the world. •

Source: *La Jornada* of 21 March 2023; <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2023/03/21/opinion/china-rusia-fin-de-la-hegemonia-de-eu/?from=page&block=opinion&opt=articlelink> (Translation *Current Concerns*)

gl. "La Jornada" is one of the most prestigious newspapers in Latin America. Since 1984 it is published in Mexico City with an array of regional editions in eight states. Its freely accessible online edition is available via the UNAM, the Federal Autonomic National University of Mexico. Various authors stem from the academic sector and have relations to the UNAM. Coverage and commentaries from "La Jornada" on global political developments as well as the situation in Europe are oftentimes reflecting a point of view which is hard to find these days in german-speaking media – a view from Latin America, a continent far removed from the Western and European world, which is going its own way.

"Russia and China take steps ..."

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call 'pillars' of reform. I expect Western commentary to be either remarkably silent, or shrill in its condemnation. However, the geopolitical reality that a combined China-Russia axis can now instigate global reforms appears to be making itself felt. We will have to be patient and wait for further signs that this course of action is being followed through. With a revised combination of Russia's *Eurasian Economic Union*, the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*, the BRICS+ and countries outside with China's *Belt and Road Initiative*, the world may start moving away

from a US-EU axis and towards a more evenly spread, truly globally effective regime – with both Beijing and Moscow retaining their position as key players. Such a map would resemble the following:

This shows countries that have signed up to China's *Belt & Road Initiative*, but there are some anomalies, Brazil and India are both part of BRICS and have extensive trade interests with Russia for example. If anything, the grouping of countries prepared to take part and contribute towards a China-Russia proposed global bloc could potentially be larger than shown. That is a challenge to the West.

Finally, Western analysts enjoy preparing reports suggesting Vladimir Putin is

obsolete – the China-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership suggests that is not actually the case. Further developments, diplomatic pushes and the promoting of economic attractiveness can all be expected to be part of a common China-Russia strategic plan for the coming few years, with adjustments as necessary being made on the way. The next Xi-Putin Summit, to be held in Beijing probably in Autumn, promises to be an interesting yardstick as concerns progression and what is yet to come in terms of global realignment. •

Source: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/the-putin-xi-summit-their-joint-statement-and-analysis/> of 22 March 2023

“We are heading for a major clean-up crisis”

Interview by *ÖkologiePolitik* with Professor Christian Kreiß*



Christian Kreiß
(picture *ÖkologiePolitik*)

The COVID pandemic and the Ukraine war show how fragile our economy is. The real problem, however, is not global supply chains, but the compulsion to grow and excessive debt, says an economics professor. Because both cannot be increased

endlessly, a big crash is looming.

ÖkologiePolitik: Professor Kreiß, what influence does our financial system have on the common good?

Christian Kreiß: A very great influence. Listed stock corporations are constantly driven to generate ever higher profits, otherwise the share price falls and the company is in danger of being taken over.

Letter to the Editor

Neutrality

With our letter to the editor, we would very much like to support the statements made by Dr iur. *Marianne Wüthrich* in *Current Concerns* No. 6 of 28 March 2023.

It is hard to believe how we should be distracted from what President (of the Swiss Federal Council) *Alain Berset* is really saying, when he declares on behalf of the Federal Council that Switzerland's neutrality law prohibits neighbouring countries from transferring weapons purchased from us to countries at war. A. Berset emphasises that Switzerland's position is based on our commitment to peace, peace talks and humanitarian law. We are the seat of the Geneva Convention, the ICRC and the UN. This role of Switzerland is reflected in our laws. But instead of supporting this statement, we are distracted by the notion of “war frenzy”, which A. Berset observed out of concern about the prevailing mood in many countries and which apparently, he had expressed to the newspaper “Le Temps”.

If weapons were passed on, Switzerland would also become a participant in the war. This would be the end of our neutrality and our credibility as a mediator between multipolar world powers. It is all the more urgent to sign the people's federal initiative to “maintain Swiss neutrality”!

*Matthias Elmiger and Gertrud Pfändler,
Ebnat-Kappel*

“A look at history shows that our financial system is anything but resilient. And today it is worse than ever. There has never been such a mountain of debt and such an overhang of money – the US Federal Reserve has increased the central bank money supply by a factor of eleven since 2008, the ECB by a factor of nine.”

Driving up profits is almost always at the expense of the environment, because it is usually available for free. Furthermore, as much as possible is extracted from the workforce. The term “human resources”, as many personnel departments call themselves today, says it all: a non-word that expresses that working people should be treated like mines. Our financial system is responsible for most of the damage to the common good through the forced implementation of the principle of profit maximisation. It ensures a structurally increasing inequality of distribution, because the profits flow for the most part without benefits to the relatively small group of owners of company shares, land and money securities. In essence, our financial system serves the interests of the rich, not the general public and certainly not the needs of animals or an intact nature.

Is our current financial system resilient?

No. All institutions – banks, insurance companies, stock exchanges – basically work according to their individual profit maximisation. Although there are national banking-, stock exchange- and insurance supervisors and the BIS (Bank for International Settlements) in Basel, which prescribes international regulations, they have not prevented the world debt level, including financial companies, from exceeding 350% of the world's social product today. Without financial companies it is about 250 % – in 1970 it was 100 %. This mountain of debt can probably not

be repaid in full. The system is based on the creditors' illusion that their claims are still fully recoverable. But they have not been for a long time, because they are no longer backed by the real economy nearly as much as they were, say, in 1970. This illusion can quickly burst, as past financial crises have shown: for example, in September 2008 after the *Lehman* bankruptcy, the Asian financial crisis at the end of the 1990s or the global stock market and financial crisis from 1929 onwards. A look at history shows that our financial system is anything but resilient. And today it is worse than ever. There has never been such a mountain of debt and such an overhang of money – the US Federal Reserve has increased the central bank money supply by a factor of eleven since 2008, the ECB by a factor of nine. This is dangerous. We are dancing on a volcano. And we are probably heading for a major purge crisis.

What could that look like?

There could either be several years of double-digit inflation – which I don't think will happen, because the US Federal Reserve is currently breaking inflation in the US with success. Or there will be – and I think this is much more likely – a financial and economic crash: with rising interest rates, a great many companies worldwide with too much debt are likely to go bankrupt. In addition, there are more than 60 countries worldwide that will probably no longer be able to service their debts: not only developing countries, but also Italy, Greece or Japan, for example. Such a wave of bankruptcies is likely to trigger a financial and banking crisis and thus a severe economic downturn or an economic depression with very high unemployment, similar to 1929 to 1932. A third solution would be war: The escalation of the Ukraine war into a NATO war could also enable a “reset” as in 1945 via destruction processes – with all the horror that goes with it. A big war can solve the economic problems. Especially countries whose territories are not affected by such a war

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* Professor Dr *Christian Kreiß*, born in 1962, studied economics and did his doctorate on the Great Depression 1929–1932. He then worked professionally for nine years in various commercial banks, seven of them as an investment banker. Since 2002, he has taught finance and economic policy as a professor at the *Aalen University of Applied Sciences*. He has published several books in which he criticises neoliberal economic theory and warns of its environmental and socio-political consequences. His books include “Profitwahn. Warum sich eine menschengerechtere Wirtschaft lohnt” (Profit mania. Why a more humane economy is worthwhile), Tecum, 2013, and “Das Mephisto-Prinzip in unserer Wirtschaft” (The Mephisto principle in our economy), Tredition, 2019.

“We are heading for ...”

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would benefit from such a solution and could therefore strive for it.

What are the causes of this vulnerability to crises?

The main cause is the compulsion for growth through the monetary, debt and stock market system. Our debt-money system forces growth. Without growth, you can't pay back the interest. The stock markets force growth, otherwise profits cannot be increased. Furthermore, our textbooks and economics professors preach gluttony, selfishness and growth. This steers us every two to three generations into an over-indebtedness system, which – if you look at history – is usually solved with financial crises or with wars.

What measures could make our financial system more resilient?

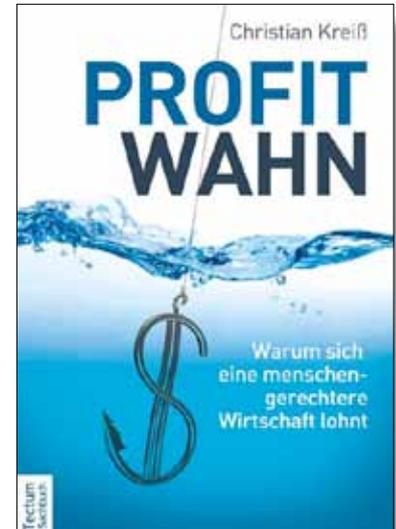
Banks and insurance companies on a cooperative or public-law basis could be strongly favoured in terms of taxation, and in return large listed financial companies could be imposed with a levy or

additional tax. This would allow us to shift most of the financial sector back to smaller, locally active institutions over perhaps two generations, along the lines of the *Raiffeisen banks* and savings banks. Money creation and monetary policy could be determined by consensus and discourse by cooperative bank and savings bank representatives, because they know best what local customers need. The futures markets should be severely restricted, e.g., via a strong transaction tax. The main driver of the ever-growing mountains of debt and money is the greedy predatory culture that constantly demands high returns for the benefit of a small layer of wealthy people. One could therefore consider a progressive wealth tax starting at perhaps two million euros per natural person. Especially in the case of land ownership, this could be done immediately without any problems, since land cannot migrate abroad. By shifting financial transactions back to small, decentralised institutions, a transaction tax and a progressive wealth tax, the main drivers of excesses in the financial markets would

largely disappear and thus the financial system as a whole would become much more resilient.

Professor Kreiß, thank you very much for the interesting interview.

Source: https://www.oekologiepolitik.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/OeP190_Online.pdf
(Translation *Current Concerns*)



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War to solve economic problems?

“Before the First World War, there was a similar economic imbalance as today: an overcapacity. Purchasing power was too low to sell all the products. The First World War destroyed production capacities in Europe. The Second World War did the same. After that, there was a short phase of underproduction and then a long phase of equilibrium. Today we have overcapacities again. Since the 1980s, mass consumption has actually not been able to keep up with the increase in production due to the increasing inequality of wealth – and has therefore been artificially boosted by more and more new debts. But growing mountains of debt are not a sustainable solution strategy, as this development cannot be maintained in the long term. [...] For those who are directly af-

ected by it, war is of course always a disaster. But not for those who are not directly affected. Especially not if they benefit from it. During the Second World War, for example, first the arms industry flourished in the USA and then subsequently the rest of the economy. We are experiencing something similar again right now: not despite, but because of the Ukraine war, certain industries and corporations are celebrating record profits. And indirectly, certain national economies are also profiting from this.”

Source: “Krieg um ökonomische Probleme zu lösen?” (*War to solve economic problems?*) Interview by *ÖkologiePolitik* with Prof. Dr. Christian Kreiß
(Translation *Current Concerns*)



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“Our country is small and slow, and for that reason stable”

Important voices from Switzerland on the deep-sixing of CS

by Marianne and Werner Wüthrich

The disposal of the 167-year-old traditional bank *Credit Suisse* (*Schweizerische Kreditanstalt*) took place in a cloak-and-dagger operation on Sunday, 19 March. A few days earlier, on 8 March, the attentive reader had been struck by the news in various Swiss newspapers: “CS obtains asset management licence in China”. The very next day this was no longer a topic. Instead, as could later be learned, secret negotiations with US and UK participation were taking place on an abolition of *Credit Suisse* at the earliest possible moment. Although it was not insolvent, CS will not be kept alive and kept afloat with state money as *UBS* was in 2008, but will be incorporated into the latter bank - with three times as much federal and national bank guarantees as were given at that time – with catastrophic consequences for the employees, the shareholders and, above all, for Switzerland.

From the diary of the Lucerne private banker Karl Reichmuth

“19 March 2023 will go down in the Swiss history books as Black Sunday. It was the day on which *Credit Suisse* was carried to its grave by rash and ill-considered actions.” 83-year-old *Karl Reichmuth* (who calls himself the “Methuselah of Swiss bankers”) continues: “Switzerland is a country whose qualities are based on the

fact that the grassroots of the population make the decisions – that, so to speak, the decision-making process runs from the bottom up. Concerning *Credit Suisse*, this was the other way round. This decision was dictated by strong pressure from above.” According to the Swiss banker, pressure from abroad resulted in “an emergency exercise [...] in which there are practically only losers”. Reichmuth concludes: “I also classify this as a betrayal of our basic Swiss values such as freedom, legal security and democracy.”¹

Non-Swiss procedure

“With massive state force, using emergency law, the two corporate managements were brought round to a transaction made to look like a purchase. Opposing forces such as shareholders or competition supervision were blocked by the state [...]”. (*Beat Gygi*, business journalist, and *Hans Kaufmann*, former National Councillor and long-time banking expert).²

Marcel Niggli, law professor at the University of Fribourg (CH), has “strong doubts” that the Federal Council is acting in accordance with the Swiss constitution. He says that their hasty decision is an “assassination attempt” on the Swiss constitutional state. Niggli recalls: “We are a slow-going community because we thrash everything out together. That process is

essential for Swiss democracy. [...] Anyone who wants a decision quickly must honestly argue for a dictatorship.” Switzerland “is degenerating into a banana republic,” Niggli warns. “Whether things are possible or not possible, depends on the say-so of the powerful.”³

Weltwoche editor *Roger Köppel*: “The Federal Council has put foreign demands above national interests. There is a lack of will to self-assertion.” It is a misconception to believe you will get any favours by way of obedience: “The opposite is the case: If you feed the crocodile, it will work up an appetite, and in the end you will be eaten yourself.” (*Weltwoche Daily*, 23 March)

Business lawyer *Peter V. Kunz* explains: “From now on, investors in Switzerland must expect to be expropriated without any legal basis. This will cause lasting damage to the financial centre [...]”. And further: “They [the Federal Council] have probably given in to pressure from abroad. The Federal Councillors have shown themselves to be compliant.”⁴

The injured parties are well known: the expropriated shareholders, the holders of special CS bonds (a total of 16 billion Swiss francs) who will not get a centime back, we taxpayers who will foot the bill for this dubious deal – and the employees: thousands of jobs will be “rationalised away”. The biggest loser, however, is Switzerland, its rule of law and its standing in the world.

“Financial Times” well informed – in advance

While the Swiss population was presented with a fait accompli on Sunday, 19 March, the “Financial Times” already reported on a merger of *UBS* and *CS* on Wednesday, 15 March, when the Swiss stock exchange was still open (!). *Beat Gygi* and *Hans Kaufmann* write: “Whether these [reports] came from the British Treasury, with whom Federal Councillor Keller-Sutter was obviously in intensive telephone contact, can only be conjectured.” And they add: “If, as she implied, the finance minister was already in almost daily contact with her colleagues *Janet Yellen*, the American finance minister, and *Jeremy Hunt*, the British finance minister, then one has to ask why she did not then address the inadequate supervision of the fraud firms *Greensill* and *Archegos*, domiciled in the USA and the UK, because the losses

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UBS targeted by the US government

mw.lww. According to a report by the US media group *Bloomberg* on 24 March 2023, the US Department of Justice is currently hunting down banks and their employees who may have “helped Russian oligarchs evade sanctions”. These include *CS* and *UBS*. The department is looking into “which bank employees dealt with sanctioned clients and how those clients were vetted in recent years”. The employees can be personally punished if they “violated [US] laws” and the banks could be extorted billions, as *Bloomberg* threatens. All according to the “US rule of law”, i.e. in defiance of the national law of Switzerland or other states. *Bloomberg* notes that on 19 March the Federal Council issued a guarantee of up to 9 billion Swiss francs for losses incurred by *UBS* from the takeover of *CS*. So in the end, we Swiss taxpayers will foot the bill.

The outrageous coercive measures from the USA are one thing, the intolerable grovelling of the Swiss authorities another. On 30 March, the Zurich Dis-

trict Court, in anticipatory obedience, sentenced four employees of *Gazprom-bank Switzerland* to conditional fines for having “conducted a business relationship with the Russian cellist and conductor *Sergey Roldugin* from 2014 to 2016”, who is “considered a confidant of Russian President *Vladimir Putin*”. According to the district court, the bank employees “should have realised that the latter could not possibly have been the actual beneficial owner of the assets worth millions”. No wonder, fewer and fewer Russians and Chinese want to entrust their money to Swiss banks. The same applies to the Saudis, among others, whose national bank has lost 80 percent of the value of its CS shares (1.4 billion Swiss francs). Wall Street and the City of London are pleased.

Sources: “*Credit Suisse, UBS among banks in US Department of Justice Russia-sanctions probe*”. *Bloomberg*, 24 March 2023; “*Zurich district court sentences Gazprom-bank employees*”. *swissinfo* of 30 March 2023 (*Keystone-SDA*)

“Our country is small ...”

continued from page 9

from these involvements were probably the last straw that broke the camel's back at *Credit Suisse*.”

How could it come to this concerning the big Swiss banks?

This important question requires a more detailed analysis. Here is a brief summary by *Tobias Straumann*, economic historian at the University of Zurich: The negative development “began with the internationalisation of the bank in the 1980s. It focused on business in the USA and became increasingly Anglo-Saxon. This led to identity problems. The bank was simply not up to the American investment banking culture with its focus on risks and high profits. Of course, the Swiss [top managers] were happy to accept the high bonuses. But the combination of Anglo-Saxon investment banking and Swiss asset management did not work in the long run. It was a culture clash in which the Swiss got the short end of the stick. [...] Perhaps the big losses might have been avoided if people had been a little more modest, a little more realistic.”⁵

Banker Karl Reichmuth sees the downfall of *Credit Suisse* as “a late consequence of the banking crisis of 2008. Since then, more and more cheap money has been pumped into the system, prompting speculation and risky ‘bets’. There was more and more over-indebtedness. That the *Silicon Valley Bank* then went bankrupt fuelled panic in the markets and accelerated the destructive process.”

In our opinion, the 2008 American financial crisis, which resulted in the “rescue” of *UBS* with our tax money, should have been a stop signal for the speculative economy of the big Swiss banks. But it was not. While *UBS* at least reduced investment banking, *Credit Suisse* continued to expand it.

Professor Marcel Niggli answers to the question, what we as Swiss citizens can do to put a stop to this disturbing development: “We have to stop being ashamed of being a small, slow-acting country. Because this slowness produces stability, and stability is something not easily found in this world. We are a small, boring, slow-moving country. That is the most beautiful thing you can say. From *Oscar Wilde* comes the phrase: ‘Be yourself, everyone else is taken.’”

Swiss banks to recommit to serious banking business

With the incorporation of one globalised banking colossus into the other, another opportunity is now being missed. Many experts and citizens demand: Let us re-

turn to the core business of Swiss banks!: payment transactions, savings, mortgages, asset management. This also includes serious investment banking, for example support in setting up a company, without betting transactions and the like. Swiss banks have done well with this, says Tobias Straumann: “Historically, asset management has always been a safe business area for Swiss banks, guaranteeing large financial reserves.” Even though the breaking of bank-client confidentiality by the US-UK-EU reduced the assets managed in Switzerland, as Straumann notes, it should be marked that the worldwide good reputation of Swiss banks as a safe haven has nevertheless remained. This trust is based not only on bank-client confidentiality, but above all on Switzerland's serious business conduct, stable political system, secure franc, its independence and neutrality.

The National Council and the Council of States will deal with the issues at hand in their special session after Easter. Many Swiss citizens would welcome the *CS* Swiss business to be spun off as an independent company with the old name *Schweizerische Kreditanstalt*. Despite everything, experts did assess *CS Switzerland* as an intact Swiss bank, with a similarly large equity capital as *UBS*. “I am convinced that *Credit Suisse* would have had enough substance to recover on its own – if it had been given the time,” wrote banker Karl Reichmuth. Who could have had any objections?

The end for *CS* and its China business

On 8 March 2023, the Swiss periodical *Finance and Economy* reported that *Credit Suisse* had received various Chinese licences for its asset management business in China and would be able to start “in the first half of 2023” (!).⁶ *CS* was the first Western bank to get the green light for China. This is because it had conducted a quiet, successful policy in Asia, practically without scandals, in contrast to its business on Wall Street and in London. The classic Swiss banking business has always had a good reputation in Asia.

The newly acquired licences were described by Chinese partners as a “milestone for the big bank's China plans”. The “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 8 March judged: “In fact, full market access in China would be a significant gain for a big bank like *CS*.” This news comes at the right time for the ailing *CS*, said the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, and could “actually give it a strong boost and a positive outlook for the future”.

Since 9 March, there was not a word to be read about this possible positive

turnaround. Quite the opposite: the wiping out of *Credit Suisse* at a completely non-Swiss pace has now also finished off its China business – entirely in line with the US-UK financial, political and economic clique. Admittedly, most of us Swiss are also not very enthusiastic about the grip of our former Swiss big banks on whatever country. But geopolitical interests were at play here, as the *NZZ* editorial team warned on 8 March: “If Switzerland should one day be pushed by its Western partners to take a tougher line in this conflict [USA-China], the ground could of course quickly be taken from under the Swiss banks' China business.”⁷ Quickly indeed!

“What was actually behind the outflow of funds at *CS* and how do we know that a *UBS* could not also be exposed to these forces [...]?” asked Beat Gygi and Hans Kaufmann in their article of 23 March. “A sudden collapse of confidence took place in the autumn of 2022,” said the news anchor on 28 March on *Radio SRF*. As is well known, it is not rocket science for media editors to create such a negative mood and keep it simmering. According to *Finanz und Wirtschaft*, *CS* had been awarded a contract in China in September 2022 to continue a previous joint venture with a Chinese bank as an independent company. And on 8 March, several licences for asset management in China followed – a move away from the sinister speculative business in New York and London and towards the traditional serious asset management in the “enemy country” China. We wonder if the foreseeable success for the Swiss bank was one of the reasons for the death blow administered to it.

- ¹ Reichmuth, Karl. “Tagebuch” (journal). In: *Weltwoche* of 23. March 2023
- ² Gygi, Beat and Kaufmann, Hans. “Der Untergang” (The demise). In: *Weltwoche* of 23 March 2023
- ³ Köppl, Roger. “Die Schweiz verkommt zu einer Bananenrepublik” (Switzerland is degenerating into a banana republic). Interview with Marcel Niggli. In: *Weltwoche* of 23 March 2023
- ⁴ Burkhardt, Peter. “Der Bundesrat enteignet die Aktionäre ohne Rechtsgrundlage” (The Federal Council is expropriating shareholders without a legal basis). Interview with Peter V. Kunz. In: *Tages-Anzeiger* of 20 March 2023
- ⁵ Scherrer, Giorgio and Biswas, Chanchal. “Herr Straumann, haben die Banken aus der letzten Krise nichts gelernt?” (Mr Straumann, have the banks learned nothing from the last crisis?). Interview with Tobias Straumann. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 17 March 2023.
- ⁶ “Grossbank im Umbruch. *CS* erhält Vermögensverwaltungslizenz in China” (Big bank in upheaval. *CS* receives asset management licence in China). In: *Finanz und Wirtschaft* of 8 March 2023 (AWP*). **Swiss news agency for economic and financial news*
- ⁷ Müller, André. “Gute Nachrichten für die *Credit Suisse*: China öffnet sich weiter für die *Grossbank*” (Good news for *Credit Suisse*: China opens up further for the big bank). In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 8 March 2023

How should the West be developed?

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

The world is changing. The USA and its allies have not succeeded in isolating Russia internationally or even “ruining” it (*Annalena Baerbock*). A new world order is emerging, no longer characterised by US-Western dominance, but by increasingly emancipating states and peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this new world order, it is no longer the Western side that determines the rules of international relations (by means of its arbitrary “international rules based order”), but equality among states and peoples – according to the Charter of the United Nations – can come more into play. Within this new world order – also in line with the wording of the UN Charter – peace and peace efforts are very serious guidelines for the relevant actors, and international relations are characterised not only by more equality, but also by considering the economic and social interests of all participants. And there are even signs that the US leadership may be beginning to assess the limits of its power more realistically.

Towards a new world order

There has been evidence for all of this in recent weeks and months. They include the fact that the majority of the international community has not joined the Western sanctions against Russia, the declarations of various government representatives of other states that they do not want to heed the politically motivated arrest warrant of the *International Criminal Court* ICC against Russian President *Putin*, the diplomatic successes of China in Good Offices in the Middle East, the aspirations of numerous states from different continents to join the non-Western cooperation community BRICS, the deepening cooperation between Russia and China, and the recent statements by US Secretary of State *Blinken* on peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, which deviate from the previous maximum Western demands.

What will become of the West?

This contrasts with the catastrophic state of the West and its leading power, the USA. Anyone who has observed the history of the West and its internal state in the past decades with an open mind will not be surprised by this – but will still be very concerned in case he or she lives in this West and wants to feel at home there.

Most of the world will find its own way; we can be more certain of that today than we were a year ago. But what will become of the states and peoples of the West? Is there also hope for the West, a

“The valuable traditions of European thought and European cultural substance have always been exposed to the hostility of continental European and Anglo-Saxon power politics and greed. But probably never in the centuries before has the break in values been so radical as in the past decades.”

development model or perhaps also different development models for this part of the world? It is easier to ask this question than to give an answer. Even the arguments listed here are just an attempt. But if the people living in the West, if the citizens of our states do not want to fatalistically resign themselves to their decline, this question must be discussed, good answers must be struggled for.

At this point, I would like to offer three thoughts.

Return to the virtue of honesty

My first consideration: There has to be a return to the virtue of honesty. This concerns our power elites as a whole – and especially our media. The disinformation and manipulation of recent years, which has gone as far as crude propaganda, must be stopped. Just one current example: When searching for reactions on Chinese President *Xi Jinping's* visit to Russia, I looked for voices from other continents. The result is that many media in non-Western countries are trying to be much more objective than our journalists. Instead of formulating commentaries that pretend to be able to judge the matter immediately, they first set out how the state visit is seen by the countries directly involved. For example, on 23 March, the daily newspaper “The Star”, which has the largest circulation and is distributed throughout South Africa, published a statement by the Chinese Foreign Minister on the state visit, which first appeared in China. Where can we find something like this in our media?

The dishonesty of the more than 100-year-old neo-colonial slogan “democracies against autocracies” is recognised everywhere in the world, but still too little here in the West. Starting with the myth that the then US president *Wilson* entered World War I in 1917 “to make the world safe for democracy” which was not true. In the USA itself, contemporaries spoke with good reason of the “merchants of death” – in the form of the US arms industry, which had an overwhelming interest in the US entering the war. Other tan-

gible material interests, namely those of the US banks that had given war loans to Great Britain, France, and Russia, were also involved.

But honesty also requires dealing critically with recipes for overcoming the crisis of the West coming from the ranks of the previous power elites. They may call themselves “Industry 4.0”, “Green New Deal” or “Great Reset”. Regarding the underlying image of humanity and their view of the world, the question of power and money, they are largely “old wine in new bottles”.

Europe must return to its own values

My second reflection: Fifteen years ago, Singaporean scholar and diplomat *Kishore Mahbubani* published the book “The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East”. With a lot of evidence, he proposed that the rise of Asia was due to the fact that the emerging countries of the continent took to heart the earlier recipes for success of the West – free market economy, promotion of science and technology, rewards according to real performance, pragmatism, culture of peace, rule of law and education – for their own development. Whereas the states of the West have turned their backs on their own recipes for success.

I would like to expand on this idea of *Kishore Mahbubani*: The states and peoples of the West have largely destroyed their own value system. The valuable traditions of European thought and European cultural substance – which, by the way, also strongly fertilised the idealistic beginnings of the USA – have always been exposed to the hostility of continental European and Anglo-Saxon power politics and greed. But probably never in the centuries before has the break in values been so radical as in the past decades – intensified once again after the supposed “victory” in the first Cold War. If the West, if Europe wants to recover, it must return to its values and also live them actively.

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How propaganda blurs the clear vision and clouds thinking

by Eliane Perret

It seems that many media today no longer see their task in informing their readers, listeners and viewers through factual reporting about events that affect the coexistence of people in their own country and worldwide. Not only is there hardly any separation between commentary and reporting, but the texts are prepared with different methods or opinion-steering, with which the view of the essential is to be clouded and clear thinking is to be obscured. It is therefore no coincidence that more and more people are sceptical about the so-called “quality media”. In the review of Johannes Menath’s book “Moderne Propaganda” (Modern Propaganda) (Current Concerns No. 6 of 28 March 2023), this topic has already been addressed. In the following, some of the methods used to steer opinion are presented in more detail.

Monopolisation – create illusory truth

It is right for attentive readers to become suspicious when looking at different media because of the uniform reporting and assessment of an issue. Media corporations can abuse their monopoly position and only distribute desired news filtered by news agencies or even censored news. They try to use this propaganda trick to create a pseudo truth that must not be questioned: “If everyone says the same thing, it must be true!” In doing so, they deny their actual mission of presenting different views and perspectives on an event in an objective manner and providing the reader with balanced, multi-layered information as a basis for forming his or her own opinion. Unwanted observations, experiences or logical considerations are concealed or dismissed as coincidence and subjective opinion. Such one-sided reporting is manipulative and authoritarian, because it not



*The invention of the printing press provided the basis for educating and informing the population, an important prerequisite for democratic decision-making processes. If one looks at today’s media landscape, this goal has been reversed and its manifold possibilities are misused to steer opinion.
(Picture woodcut by Jost Amman (1539–1591); wikicommons media)*

“How should the West be developed?”

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Don’t let the power elites rule

My third consideration: The return to European values cannot be controlled by the current power elites. All people, all citizens of the states of the West, who are of good will and aware of the importance of the question of values, are called upon to participate in a spiritual and ultimately also emotional change that goes to the roots. I think that this “radical” change is needed: not with barricades and violence, but with sure steps with understanding and sentiment. The indelible human social nature will be the key for this. •

only pretends to possess the sole truth, but at the same time devalues dissenters as a minority to be neglected. This condemns different perspectives as disruptive, denies equal discourse, prevents the free formation of opinion and ultimately undermines the foundations of a democratic constitutional state. This authoritarian attempt to steer opinion must be countered by seeking first-hand information and alternative sources.¹

Pseudo-debates – preventing an honest discussion

“Pseudo debates” attempt to disguise the monopolisation of opinion-forming in order to divert attention from critical questions and maintain the illusion of free discourse. In the field of education, such a pseudo-debate took place a few years ago

when it was a question of introducing a second foreign language already in primary school. The discussion revolved around whether it should be French or English. People who rejected early foreign language teaching altogether and pointed to the priority of German lessons to remedy the inadequate German language skills of a considerable proportion of our children and young people did not have their say.

Independent studies such as the one by Professor *Simone Pfenninger* were also ignored, which could clearly prove that early foreign language teaching has no advantages whatsoever, because in the upper school lessons that begin later, the initial head start is made up for in a short time. The outcome of the debate was therefore clear from the

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“How propaganda blurs ...”

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outset and could not have an undesirable outcome – a pseudo-debate.²

**Infantilisation –
suppress critical thinking**

This method aims to suppress critical thinking by addressing the adult addressees as if they were immature children who need to be protected and saved from overwhelming situations and decisions.

They are subtly told that they are not in a position to make or judge political decisions and that the “paternal power” of the government must take over this task in their place. Indirectly, they are labelled as dependent, authority-deficient, uneducated and uncritical subjects. The Swiss media like to use the argument of “excessive demands” when referenda are not in favour of lobby groups that behave like elites. Instead of independent thinking and decision-making, infotainment and an easily comprehensible world view created by propaganda are offered. It further promotes the process of infantilisation and can create a fatalistic attitude and disenchantment with politics among those affected, which awakens and perpetuates in them the call for a strong hand.³

**Pacing and Leading –
laying a false trail**

Various findings from psychological research are misused to steer opinion. This includes “pacing and leading”, which comes from *Neuro-linguistic programming* (NLP). This technique is used to try to get people to turn away from their own ideas, values and opinions and follow others without realising it. In order to gain the trust of readers, listeners or viewers, the reporting first picks up on existing views and appears to be in agreement with them, then successively takes a turn towards the actual mindset aimed at. Since many people find it difficult to admit that they have allowed themselves to be manipulated, this method of influencing opinion is often successful. The desired messages are also integrated into products of the entertainment and culture industry, behind which hardly any political or ideological influence is suspected. Examples of this are computer games that have a clear friend-foe scheme and reward violence. Music and film can also contain messages that discredit previous values and encourage their transfor-

mation. And if people are led to believe over a long period of time that it is normal to wear American clothes, eat American food, listen to American music, watch American films and celebrate American festivals, this is hardly questioned any more. This destroys the common identity and sense of belonging of existing ethnic groups and nations, which is based on common history and tradition.⁴

**Framing and labelling – steering
the thinking along certain lines**

These closely related techniques are all about providing a framing, within which the person being addressed is supposed to move and which makes a certain fact or a certain person appear in the desired light. For example, wars are often justified by the desire to bring “freedom and democracy” to the people in the country, i.e. to fight for “human rights”. Another interpretive framework for the same process would be: “We are waging war because we claim for ourselves the raw materials in the enemy’s soil” or “We are waging war to cement our geostrategic supremacy and because we want to establish military bases.” Bombardments euphemistically become “air strikes”, the civilian population killed in the war and destroyed infrastructure become “collateral damage” and the propaganda used to fool the population is simply “public relations” or quite simply PR. Even with evaluative terminology (*labelling*), an event is integrated into a certain narrative. Certain governments are consistently described with the text module “regime”, at best supplemented by “authoritarian” (for example, when it comes to Syria, Venezuela or Russia), with the aim of immediately provoking a negative emotional mood, in contrast to “kingdoms”, which are intended to evoke a romantic association with fairy tales when it comes to Great Britain, Jordan and, until recently, Saudi Arabia. The same method can of course be used to describe people and groups by talking about “controversial historians” or “sectarian groups” whose opinion is supposed to be a ridiculous or even dangerous conspiracy theory and should therefore not be given any space.⁵

**Decontextualisation –
omitting important information**

Propaganda agencies and news portals try to create a desirable image by omitting important background information

or context. This “decontextualisation” is the complementary technique to “framing”. In this process, the previous history, the larger political framework or even intelligence operations that led to a conflict are concealed. A current example is the war in Ukraine, which cannot be classified without its antecedents. This includes the 2014 coup d’état in Ukraine financed by the USA to the tune of five billion dollars – referred to in the mainstream media as the Maidan Revolution – as well as the subsequent discrimination against the Russian population group. Even further back is the classification of Ukraine as a key state for the expansion of US power, as noted by US military strategist *Zbigniew Brzezinski* as early as 1997. Mainstream reporting glosses over this context in favour of the narrative of an unprovoked war of aggression by the Russian army. The interested contemporary must make such information accessible to himself by seeking sources outside the usual news portals such as *AP*, *Reuters* and *AFP*, which supply the so-called “quality media”, and by reading books that supplement the incomplete reporting with reliable and differentiated information.⁶

Don’t let them stop you from thinking

It is an exciting enterprise to approach today’s methods of opinion control. Unfortunately, there are a multitude of them. Therefore, it is not only exciting but also urgently necessary if we do not want to have the right to our own opinion and independent thinking banned. •

¹ cf. Menath, Johannes. *Moderne Propaganda. 80 Methoden der Meinungslenkung*. (Modern Propaganda. 80 methods of opinion steering), Hör-Grenzhausen: Zeitgeist-Verlag, 2023, p. 18

² cf. op. cit. p. 21f.

³ cf. op. cit. p. 53

⁴ cf. op. cit. p. 31 and p. 107

⁵ cf. op. cit. p. 17 and p. 33

⁶ cf. op. cit. p. 75

Further books on the subject of propaganda and manipulation:

Ellul, Jacques. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes*. Trans. Konrad Kellen & Jean Lerner. New York: Knopf, 1965. New York: Random House/ Vintage 1973

Morelli, Anne. *Die Prinzipien der Kriegspropaganda*. ZuKlampen-Verlag, Springer 2004; (French original: *Principes élémentaires de propagande de guerre*, 2001).

Ponsonby, Arthur. *Falsehood in Wartime*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1929 (excerpts in: <https://archive.org/details/16FalsehoodInWartime>)

NATO 1999 Aggression on Yugoslavia – a turning point

by Živadin Jovanović, Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals



Živadin Jovanović
(picture ev)

On 24 March the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals, the Generals and Admirals Association of Serbia, the Veterans Association SUBNOR of Serbia and some other independent associations and think tanks, marked the 24th anniversary of the NATO aggression on Serbia and Montenegro (FR of Yugoslavia) honoring fallen heroes of the defense of the country as well as all the victims of this illegal and criminal act.

At the NATO high level conference held 28-30 of April 2000 in Bratislava, USA representatives have confirmed explicitly to the allies and then candidate allies, three of the important motives for the “war against Yugoslavia”: first, to take away Kosovo (and Metohija) from Serbia and make it a separate and independent state; second, to turn it into the Balkans carrier of US troupes; and, third, to make precedent for military interventions all around the world without seeking a UN Security Council mandate.

The war against Serbia was a demonstration of unlimited use of force

The NATO aggression has been widely understood as the demonstration of unlimited use of force primarily towards Russia. It should also be noted that during the aggression US planes bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese journalists. NATO explanation was that the bombing of Chinese Embassy was a mistake due to the pilots use of an outdated map, but not too many believed in the explanation.

As it is widely recognised, this aggression was undertaken in violation of the basic principles of International Law, including violation of the UN Charter and without authorisation of the UN Security Council. Having regard that Yugoslavia was not a threat to any NATO member country, the NATO leadership thus violated even its own founding act while NATO member countries violated their own constitutions insofar that they acted without authorisation of their respective parliaments.

While it was falsely presented by national mass media as “humanitarian intervention”, in fact it was the war of NATO/US geo-political expansion towards East, towards Russian borders, also setting the precedent for other aggressions which followed – Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria...

Immediate establishment of the major US military base “Camp Bondsteel”, near Urosevac, Kosovo and Metohija, was only the first in a long chain of the new US military bases in Central and Eastern Europe – Bulgaria (2), Romania (3), Poland...

Militarisation of Europe

Thus, NATO did not only bring back the first war on European soil but at the same time gave an extraordinary impetus to the process of intensive militarisation of the Old Continent. All member countries were obliged to meet 2% of their GDP military spending, to adapt civilian infrastructure to the new military requirements, to limit the sale of major companies to only EU and NATO prospective investors (“for security reasons”), not to import new technologies from “unreliable suppliers” (5G), not to buy gas and oil from those who use them “to undermine the security of Europe”.

Missiles, including those with depleted uranium bombs, including cluster bombs, had definitely been falling on Serbia and Montenegro, killing their citizens and destroying their economy. Serbia is still recovering from immense economic and social losses. Belgrade and other major cities, even in the very central parts, still continue to live with ruins and debris of government and other buildings bombed by NATO. But at the same time NATO 1999 aggression on Serbia and Montenegro (FRY) had destroyed the whole security and cooperation architecture of Europe and the world, annulling Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam, Helsinki and other agreements and pillars of the post Second World War Order, thus ushering disorder, insecurity, even chaos.

Aggression against Serbia continues

NATO aggression ended by the UN SC resolution 1244 (1999) guaranteeing sovereignty and territorial integrity of FRY (Serbia) and a large autonomy for the Province of Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia. The aggression, however, has continued ever since by other means. The objective to take out the Autonomous Province from Serbia, got a new framework. While the Province has been under UN mandate and *KFOR* (Kosovo Force) – mostly composed of NATO troops – empowered to guarantee equal security for all, about 250,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians have been purged, their homes burnt, lands usurped. In 2008, former KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) terrorist leadership, proclaimed unilateral secession. NATO & EU countries, with exception of Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus, were among first to recognise the secession fully aware that it was con-

trary to international law, UN SC 1244 resolution, and Serbia’s Constitution.

Lately, Serbia is under unprecedented pressure from the USA/NATO/EU not to oppose Kosovo’s membership in the international organisations, including the UN, to establish good neighbouring relations based on equality, mutual respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, to mutually recognise state and national symbols, establish quasi diplomatic relations. Under the guise of “normalisation of relations” the West, led by the USA, seeks in fact to oblige Serbia to de facto recognise a new state of Kosovo resulting from the NATO 1999 aggression. Promises of membership to the EU, investments and donations are being exploited to lure Serbia to recognise secession of the part of its own state territory, thus renouncing of all the rights based on international law, UN Charter, UN SC guaranties as well as on its own Constitution. All these demands are contained in the so called “Agreement on the path of normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia” presented to Serbia on 27 February 2023 and confirmed on 18 March 2023, in Ohrid, Northern Macedonia, in the form of an, more or less, open ultimatum. Interestingly, this ultimatum, accompanied with the threats of economic, financial and other measures and restrictions in the case of non-compliance, was confirmed by the European Council on 24 March 2023, the date when exactly 24 years ago NATO started bombing Belgrade, Pristine and other cities all over Serbia.

The real reasons for NATO’s Balkan policy

What are the real reasons for all this? To make Kosovo eligible to join NATO and even to unite with Albania; to establish a complete NATO-isation of the Balkans, encompassing Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; to push away Russian and Chinese presence from the Balkans; to remove the objection of five EU member states (four NATO) to the recognition of unilateral secession of Kosovo, thus re-establishing a unity within alliances.

The NATO aggression on Serbia and Montenegro (FRY) in 1999, was the turning point from a defensive to an aggressive alliance, of Europe’s partially autonomous to complete submission to the USA in pursuit of globalisation of the interventionism and global confrontation with Russia and China. Although, it did appear the peak of unipolar arrogance and USA/NATO hegemony, it was a wakeup call to everybody believing in the new democratic world order.

The “Cemetery of the Villages”

Recollection of a visit to the Belarusian memorial site Khatyn on 13 October 1988

by Leo Ensel*

ef. 22 March 2023 marked the 80th anniversary of the tragedy of Khatyn in Belarus. It was there that the SS Sonderkommando Dirlewanger carried out a terrible massacre. Today, the memorial site built on 50 hectares at this location is a sacred place for the Belarusian people. A place of remembrance and mourning for all the rural settlements that had been destroyed during the years of occupation, for hundreds of thousands of victims of the tormentors: burned alive, shot, beaten to death; old men, women and children. A quarter of the population of Belarus fell victim to the cruel extermination campaigns. Little or nothing is known about this in our country. To ensure that these tragic years are not forgotten, a compulsory lesson on the topic “What the bells of Khatyn tell us” (see below) has been established in all Belarusian schools since last year.

Leo Ensel, an expert on eastern countries, visited the memorial site of Khatyn in 1988 and had experiences there that have shaped his life and work to this day.

Almost 35 years ago, in perestroika times, in autumn 1988, I took part in a peace and reconciliation trip to the Soviet Union organised by the Peace Network of the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association). It took us to Minsk, Moscow and Leningrad, among other places. We wanted to see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears what crimes Germans had done to the people in the Soviet Union during the Second World War. In Belarus, we visited the memorial site Khatyn¹. Here, on the route between Minsk and Vitebsk, there is a graveyard that is probably unique in the world: the “Cemetery of Villages”. A cemetery for 186 Belarusian villages that were torched by the Germans during the anti-Partisan struggle in 1943 and later never rebuilt. – A few months later after this visit, which has deeply impressed me, I wrote the following text:

Khatyn, the memorial for hundreds of destroyed Belarusian villages, for 260 camps on the territory of Belarus and for two and a half million people from Belarus, murdered by the Germans during World War II.

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The sculpture of the only survivor, Iosif Iosifovich Kaminsky, with his dead son in his arms stands as a central figure for the victims of Khatyn. (picture <https://e-cis.info/news/568/99125/>)

Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen – these were places that have always been associated with Nazi atrocities for me. But I had never heard of Khatyn until shortly before our trip to the Soviet Union. It was also news to me that there had been so many camps in the USSR. Yes, I had already known that the Russian population had suffered 20 million victims in the Second World War². But what are numbers! Only concrete examples of flesh-and-blood people help the sluggish imagination to get going.

The tragedy of Khatyn

Khatyn is such an example. On 22 March 1943, all 150 inhabitants of the village were driven out of their houses into the village barn by the SS Sonderkommando Dirlewanger. A short time later, the barn was ablaze, as were all the other houses in the village. Except for the blacksmith *Josef Kaminsky*, all the inhabitants burned alive, including 75 children. Khatyn is only one of 186 Belarusian villages that were destroyed by the Germans and never rebuilt. But that is not all. 628 Belarusian villages were destroyed with all their inhabitants, as well as 4667 villages with part of their inhabitants.

You can see from the face of our Minsk tour guide *Ludmila* that the walk through Khatyn is a strain for her, too, every time. At times she has to pull herself together. We walk past the statue depicting Iosif Iosifovich Kaminsky. With wide eyes open and flowing hair, he carries the corpse of his son towards the viewer. Be-

hind it, the chimneys and foundation walls of the 26 courtyards of Khatyn. This is all that remains of the houses. Cast in concrete, they still stand today. A bell hangs in each chimney, and every half minute a peal blows across the grounds. In each chimney, a plaque gives the names of the inhabitants of the house and the ages of the children. On the grave of the people of Khatyn, carved into a white marble slab, are the words: “Dear human fellows, remember: we loved life, and our Motherland, and you, dear ones. We were burned alive in the fire. Our request to all: let sorrow and sorrow turn into your courage and strength, so that you can establish peace and tranquility on earth forever. So that from now on, nowhere and never in a whirlwind of fires, life does not die!”

“Every number, every place, every name a cry”

Then the cemetery of the villages. 186 graves, one for each village. On the graves, urns containing soil from the respective village. There were 260 camps in Belarus alone³. In the niches of the long memorial wall, names and numbers are written on plaques. 40,000 dead, 80,000 dead, 200,000 dead. A total of 2,300,000 Belarusians lost their lives in the Second World War. Every fourth White Russian is missing. At the final memorial, three birch trees stand in the square. Where the fourth should stand, an eternal fire burns in remembrance.

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"The 'Cemetery of the Villages'"

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Walking along the memorial wall from niche to niche, then from grave to grave through the village cemetery, I feel very alone. Never have I been so aware of how little we know about the German crimes against the peoples of the Soviet Union, never have I been so aware that we cannot escape from our historical guilt. Every number, every place, every name a cry. What will the many Russian people who also walk through this memorial feel?

"We ask the Russian people for forgiveness"

At the place where the three birch trees stand and the eternal fire burns, we lay down fresh flowers and a dove of peace, which a woman from our group made especially for this trip. And then something happens – I almost wrote: we are allowed to experience something – that our whole journey had probably been aiming at. Next to us, also at the eternal fire, is a group of travellers from Siberia. There are maybe 20-30 women and men, most of them probably forty to fifty years old. Ludmila has an idea: "Don't you want to say something to these people?" And then she translates what the speaker of our group tells the people from Siberia: "We are a travel group of the West German YMCA. We have come to see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears what crimes our fathers and grandfathers committed against the Russian people. We confess this historical guilt and ask the Russian people for forgiveness."

"The earth belongs to all of us ..."

I don't know when I last saw such attentive faces as those of the people from Siberia here. When Ludmila finished translating, something changed for all of us: The Russian men and women are crying heartbreakingly like children, and we, we have to cry with them. Suddenly the dam is broken. Never before have I experienced



There is a chimney obelisk for each of the burnt-down houses, on which there are bronze plaques with the names of those who were born and lived here. At the top of each obelisk is a sad-sounding bell. The bells ring simultaneously every 30 seconds.

(picture <https://e-cis.info/news/568/99125/>)

so strongly how grieving together can actually unite and liberate. The leader of the Siberian tour group answers us, and Ludmila translates again: "In Russia there is a saying: 'The children can't help what their parents did'. We are supposed to look forward, the earth belongs to all of us, just as the sun shines for all people."

... just as the sun shines for all people"

Just as the sun shines for all people. I don't know why this sentence struck me so deeply and why even now, months later, I am fighting tears as I write these lines. I don't know, it was just a feeling that one almost never experiences in this strength. A feeling that we, all people in this world, belong together, that what happened must never be repeated and that I wish all people in East and West to be allowed to experience such an encounter. I believe that then wars would no longer be possible.

We distribute our leaflets with the Russian translation of the confession of guilt of the Protestant churches from both German states. They are read attentively by the Russian people. Crying together has made us free and happy, we can look into each other's eyes as if we had been good friends for ages.

As we walk back to our coach, we notice that the bus of the Siberian group is parked right next to us. From the Russian bus many wave friendly, and then they come rushing out again, our sheets of paper with the confession of guilt in their hands. We should write

something on it, they tell us. Somewhat helplessly, I draw the only Russian word I can write in Cyrillic – МИР – and its German translation: Frieden (peace). But what we write is not that important either. We would all like to give each other something as a souvenir.

МИР – when people from East and West join hands

What remains? Never before have I experienced so strongly how much grief, but also how much readiness for forgiveness and warm friendship lies in the people of the Soviet Union and how important it is that we as Germans take the first step. Guilt, grief and forgiveness – these words are then no longer phrases when they are combined with encounters between people from East and West. Then the desire and the strength for a common future without war and violence can grow out of the common mourning.

Just as the sun shines for all people.

PS: If you want to know more about the massacres of the Wehrmacht and Einsatzgruppen in the Belarusian villages – and can bear it – you should definitely watch the film "Come and see/ Иди и смотри" by *Elen Klimow* from 1985.

See "Films that should be compulsory in grammar schools" (including "Come and see!").



"Cemetery of the Villages". 185 graves each symbolise one of the unrevived Belarusian villages that were burned along with their population (the 186th unrevived village is Khatyn itself). (picture Veenix - Own work, CC BY 3.0, Wikimedia Commons)

¹ The Belarusian memorial Khatyn is not to be confused with the memorial Katyn near Smolensk, where thousands of Polish officers rest, murdered by the Soviet NKVD in May 1940 by shot in the neck.

² At that time, I too used the word "Russian" largely synonymously with "Soviet". The fact that the actual number of Soviet victims was much higher, at 26.6 million, only became known in the 1990s.

³ Most of them were camps for Soviet prisoners of war.