

Current Concerns

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More courage to be different! Thoughts on the new book by Paul Widmer “Switzerland is different – or it is no longer Switzerland”

by Erika Vögeli

Switzerland, *Paul Widmer* leaves no doubt, is a special case, it is different from other states, it went through a special development – and has been perceived as such from its beginnings and until today, also from the outside.

The author – historian, former ambassador and lecturer – shows this in a historically sound way from a broad knowledge of history and literature, but in a form that takes the reader on an entertaining walk through the centuries, so to speak. Anyone who puts the book aside after reading it will be glad that the author went ahead with his project, despite his scepticism about possible reactions to “yet another essay on Switzerland”. Of course, much has already been said about Switzerland – but Paul Widmer’s voice is special in its way, because once again, and perhaps more pointedly than usual, he combines a basic ethical stance on the question of power with his broad historical, political and philosophical background.

There are six aspects that Paul Widmer takes up to explain Switzerland’s special development, its otherness: Switzerland as a model, with regard to its name, as a concept, nation, as a state and with regard to its neutrality.

The provocation of the independent path

As a model, Switzerland is “an idiosyncratic witness to alternative possibilities of state existence” (p. 11), whose “independence provokes” (p. 12). It is fascinating how Paul Widmer rejects the derogatory statements about the alleged myth of Switzerland on the basis of the most diverse external perceptions: Since its creation and throughout the centuries of the Confederation’s existence, philosophers, politicians, historians, poets and thinkers have expressed their views on this entity, both proponents and opponents.

What unites them, despite their opposing assessments, is the observation of the tenacity with which Switzerland has defended and held on to its independence, more freedom, less subservience. What



One of the “magnificent boulders in the Alps” –
the Huetstock in Engelberg. (picture wikimedia)

unites them, despite their opposing assessments, is the observation of the tenacity with which Switzerland has defended and held on to its independence, more freedom, less subservience.

Where some, such as *Hegel*, dismissed popular sovereignty as a “desolate notion”, others dubbed it an “anomaly” or did not think much of the Swiss because they were “by nature boisterous, hostile to princes, rebellious and have long been disobedient to their masters”, others were impressed by the democratic society and the freedoms it retained. The greats of the Enlightenment – *Voltaire*, *Diderot*, *Montesquieu*, *Rousseau* – all paid tribute to her. They did so without rapturous exaggeration and not for

pomp or external grandeur, but precisely for their otherness: for the more freedom, the more restriction of power structures. For the fact that it was precisely not a ruling state, but an alternative that grew from below, held together by the will for freedom. “Certainly,” Widmer writes, “anyone who idolises the great, the powerful and the elitist, must be disappointed by Switzerland.” (p. 14) Conversely, one could conclude: Those, however, who think more of the courage to be different, who prefer to serve the people, the common good – are unlikely to be impressed by derogatory stupidity and a lack of halo.

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"More courage to be different!"

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**Names – not really
the most important thing**

Switzerland also stands out from the crowd, so to speak, with its naming: No other country manifests such a lack of uniformity in its naming as Switzerland – although "the" Switzerland (with an article, please!) is a household name worldwide, its official name is the Swiss Confederation, *Confédération suisse*, *Confederazione Svizzera* or *Confederaziun svizra*. "Of course, there is not enough room for so many letters everywhere. Therefore, in 1848, the Latin designation 'Confoederatio Helvetica' was created as a language-neutral compromise". Helvetia, the historical name from Roman times derived from the name of the Helvetian tribe, was to be burdened by Napoleon's dictate, but is then nevertheless found as the country name for stamps that are not called Switzerland, Suisse, Svizzera, Svizra, but operate under the name of Helvetia.

Democracy, federalism and the importance of multilingualism also asserted themselves here. The focus was not on a centralised demonstration of power and the enforcement of externalities, but on the preservation of what was common: "The main thing," Widmer sums up, "is that the state provides what it was created for: Security and prosperity for its citizens." (p. 38) Or even more pointedly: "Names are smoke and mirrors. Something for ossified beings, something for those who want to secure their flagging power with patent protection." (p. 38)

**Freedom requires
personal responsibility**

In his remarks on the concept of Switzerland – which "evokes certain ideas", with which one associates a certain body of thought (p. 47) – Widmer looks a little more closely at the concept of the "Eidgenossenschaft" [cooperative based on oath, a term whose substance is not really captured by the word Confederation – the official translation]: He thus sets a counterpoint to deconstructionist historical accounts according to which the history of the founding of the "Eidgenossenschaft" is a myth. The history of the term shows that the concept of the "Eidgenossenschaft" – a collective singular, as Widmer explains – must have already existed around 1370. Such a collective singular does not arise in the short term, but only after the emergence of what is designated by it. And here, too, he refers to the particular that is also captured by the term. "What took place around 1300 in the original part of Switzerland was most astonishing. All over Europe, princes were expanding their sovereignty and forming dynastic states from above. In original Switzerland,

"What then is Switzerland's own form of morality? In my opinion, it includes three elements: One, an alert sense of citizenship that couples concern for the common good with a strong will for personal responsibility, i.e. the cultivation of the militia system. Two, concordance. What is wanted is not the marching through of a majority, but the

inclusion of as many as possible in the affairs of state. Thirdly, the will to limit power at all levels. The last purpose is not the apotheosis of the state, but the freedom of the citizen. If this common foundation dwindles, the Swiss model is endangered from within." (p. 112f.)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

however, just the opposite happened. Peasants got together to defend their freedoms. These were not individual freedoms, but collective privileges acquired as a community." (p. 51) The community played a decisive role in this, because "with the oath, one did not pay homage to a noble ruler as elsewhere. It was for one's own community." (p. 52) A circumstance that, however, also meant the personal responsibility of each individual: Taking fate into one's own hands also requires the self-responsible participation of each individual. Instead of subordination, "in the cooperative-communal state, the principle of integration, the general will to co-responsibility must necessarily come into play", Widmer quotes *Adolf Gasser* at this point. (p. 53)

If this will for self-responsibility and the willingness to actively participate diminishes, so Paul Widmer's equally unequivocal warning, we will pay in another currency, because: "where the citizen abdicates, the bureaucrat spreads – and a piece of freedom is gone". (p. 113)

**Switzerland – the 'Willensnation'
as a counterpoint**

Switzerland is also a provocative alternative as a nation – Widmer defines it as a larger group of people who feel connected to each other through commonalities and distinguish themselves from others. Paul Widmer calls it a nation 'avant la lettre', it emerged as a nation before this term was introduced: "Long before the term 'nation' emerged as a link between state and people, it constituted itself as a nation through a strong sense of belonging. *Avant la lettre*. However their unifying element is not language, but the will to freedom" (p. 60) – the will to preserve the independent path, held together by the "desire to govern oneself in freedom" (p. 61). Switzerland therefore had to and must offer citizens more freedom and self-determination, which it was able to guarantee in comparison to surrounding monarchies, but also thanks to direct democratic rights and federalist structures. However, he adds the warning: "Should Switzerland one day lose this plus in freedom, its *raison d'être* as a nation would probably be in bad shape." (p. 61) Switzerland – he quotes *Max Huber*, "the great international lawyer and long-time president of the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC)" – is a political

nation, based neither on a common language nor ethnicity, "but on common experiences and the will to master the present and the future together". (p. 62) Just a nation of will. Or, referring to the Frenchman *Ernest Renan*, "un plébiscite de tous les jours" – a daily popular decision. "The fact that Switzerland survived as a nation of the will" – Widmer also points this out with reference to older and more recent history – "is anything but self-evident."

Repeatedly threatened from within and without, its existence had hung by a thin thread several times. Widmer mentions various critical challenges on the way to today's federal state. But one thing is clear to him: "Those jurists who explain modern Switzerland mainly in terms of the spirit of the French Revolution are wrong, nor are those historians who emphasise above all the discontinuity between the Federal Constitution of 1848 and the Old Confederation. Switzerland owes its national cohesion to a mixture of Enlightenment thought and an Old Federal understanding of freedom." (p. 68)

State yes – but please not too much

Widmer's comments on Switzerland as a state – one could also say on the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Swiss to their state – are also very worthy of consideration: they "generally display a peculiar mixture of patriotism and sobriety in their attitude to the state. They love their country, but not necessarily the state." (p. 79) The state in the sense of regulatory power is seen more as a "necessary evil" (p. 73). Since its emergence, any concentration of power has been observed with suspicion and scepticism and avoided whenever possible. Thus, on the one hand, power was divided vertically between the federal government, the cantons and the municipalities, always anxious to preserve as much leeway as possible at the lower level, which was more directly accessible to the citizen, and to delegate only to the higher-level canton or federal government what could not be resolved at the lower level. Moreover, with the emergence of the federal state, power at the political level was also divided horizontally into the familiar state powers of the legislative, the executive and the judicial. But that's not all: at communal, cantonal and

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federal level, the governing bodies function as councils – not one individual alone who can decide, here power is also divided. The Swiss form of federalism is certainly a central aspect of this division of power, and Paul Widmer also refers here to the internal historical contexts: as a principle of order, federalism is relatively young. “On the other hand, communal autonomy, self-government in small communities, is old.

It is the substrate on which federalist ideas grow.” (p. 78) And on it also grew what the Swiss “regard as the essence of their state: a maximum of freedom and independence. They are proud of this, of lived democracy.” The power of the state, on the other hand, tends to cause unease.

However, this scepticism of the state must be thought together with the awareness of individual responsibility. Actually, we all are the state. Or were we? Paul Widmer sees a need for reflection and contemplation here as well. “The sceptical understanding of the state, which tries to curb state activism with self-responsibility, has been weakened, but not yet extinguished.” (p. 82)



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Paul Widmer (1949), former ambassador, diplomat from 1977-2014, with posts in New York, Washington, Berlin, Zagreb and the Holy See, lecturer for international relations at the University of St. Gallen (2011-2018), guest columnist for the “NZZ am Sonntag” (2016-2021). Author of several political and historical books, including “Die Schweizer Gesandtschaft in Berlin” (The Swiss Embassy in Berlin), (1997), “Die Schweiz als Sonderfall” (Switzerland as a special case) (2007), “Diplomatie. Ein Handbuch» (Diplomacy. A Manual (2nd ed. 2018), and «Bundesrat Arthur Hoffmann. Aufstieg und Fall» (Ambassador Arthur Hoffmann. Rise and Fall) (2017), all published by NZZ Libro.

“Either we are an alternative model and have something to offer that we ourselves exemplify and for which we are willing to pay a price if necessary. Or we have nothing more to offer and enjoy immersing ourselves in the mainstream. That is certainly also a viable option. But then there would be no answer to Voltaire’s question of why half the

world was interested in the boulders in the Alps. The plus of freedom that always distinguished Switzerland would have melted away like the mighty glaciers. The country would still exist in name, but that would be it. Switzerland as an alternative would have abdicated.” (p. 115)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**Considerations on neutrality**

Widmer also sees neutrality as an “endangered success story”. Its importance can be seen, among other things, in the mandate given by the ‘Tagsatzung’ [the Federal Diet of Switzerland, the legislative and executive council of the Old Swiss Confederacy of Switzerland] to the Swiss delegates for the Congress of Vienna in 1815: they were to secure Switzerland’s neutrality, the “basis of its political independence and its military security” (quoted on p. 86). As the passage through history since then shows, the concept of neutrality has repeatedly been called into question: by the great powers because it stands in their way, domestically by those who feel restricted in the exercise of their own power. Yes, neutrality “restricts the government’s room for manoeuvre in foreign policy” (p. 15).

Despite all the difficulties, Widmer states that it is “obvious that neutrality has not reached its end as a means under international law to preserve national independence in conflicts between third countries. It is precisely the frequent failure of world organisations to resolve conflicts that legitimises neutrality time and again.” (p. 95) The only capital of neutrality is “credibility. This must be acquired in peace with a predictable policy in order to possess it in war”. (p. 99) However, neither accession to the Partnership for Peace nor more recent considerations as formulated in the supplementary report to the Federal Council’s report on security policy issues serve this purpose. Joint exercises with NATO or its right to check the interoperability of the Swiss Armed Forces are not confidence-building measures for Swiss neutrality. “In the end, all that would be left would be the name.”

Paul Widmer counters the propagandists of an activist – barracked – “neutrality” policy by saying that Switzerland has not been entrusted by the other states with a judicial role in world politics. Rather, they should “come down from the high pedestal of moral superiority” (p. 99). And he recalls that Switzerland was and is well aware of its great privilege of having been spared from armed conflicts. It has always sought to compensate for this privilege through special efforts: in the area of international law by supporting the ICRC, po-

litically through the Good Offices and at the humanitarian level through generous aid measures in disaster or war situations.

Paul Widmer also sees a possibility today to “reconcile the legitimate interests of a small state with the strategic peace requirements in a reliable neutrality policy, even in the 21st century”.

The common interest, the population not only in one’s own country, would be best served in this way, because, as Widmer says elsewhere: “Since time immemorial, people have cherished the desire to secure peace with wise state precautions”. (p. 23)

Being different – a perspective worth living for

Paul Widmer is not concerned with highlighting Switzerland – modesty is closer to his heart. A modesty, however, that is based on a healthy self-image. His writing reminds us that we ourselves must know what we have with our democracy, our federalism, our neutrality, our political culture.

Recognition is nice – if it is based on respect for the independence of the other person. But those who only focus on being recognised by others lack inner stability and steadfastness at the first adversity of life.

Widmer’s essay is an unequivocal plea for Switzerland, for its preservation, but also a clear reminder that we do not simply have what we have achieved, but must preserve it if we want to keep it. Switzerland doesn’t just exist: we have to want it, and we have to do something for it.

More courage to be different, that is, to remain oneself, less striving for conformity and applause, more committed citizenship – that harms neither the individual nor the community. We don’t have to peddle what we have in our country in a missionary way.

But in the awareness of what Switzerland has meant in the course of history simply by virtue of its existence – a union from below in which the principle of law has been able to assert itself before the principle of power – in the knowledge of why these inhospitable “boulders” (Voltaire) have acquired a place in world history, courage to be different is a perspective more than worth living for. Switzerland may lack the externalities of great powers based on violence, but it exists as an unmistakable message: an alternative is possible. •

Preserving the independent and impartial work of the ICRC

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

“The prerequisite for the credibility of neutrality is its absolute reliability and the constant striving for impartiality. In this area, Switzerland has a unique experience that it can put at the service of world peace.” This was the admonition of the Swiss historian Wolfgang von Wartburg at the beginning of the 1990s.¹

Today, while some politicians and media have almost completely lost their Swiss compass, *Wolfgang von Wartburg’s* admonishing words are of urgent relevance, also for the Red Cross. For the indispensable work of the ICRC, which has its headquarters in our country not by chance, is closely linked to the credibility of Swiss neutrality. Despite the great need of people around the globe, the ICRC is currently having difficulties raising enough donations. We are looking into the causes.

Humanitarian crises have increased worldwide – and with it the activities and the budget of the ICRC

The *ICRC Annual Report 2022* of 29 June 2023² provides detailed information on what the ICRC is doing in the individual countries and regions of the world. More than 20,000 staff members dedicate their lives to millions of people in war and crisis zones. These “activities are part of our mandate to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war, and to promote respect for international humanitarian law.” (Introductory remarks to the Annual Report on the ICRC’s website)

According to *Swissinfo.ch*, in 2013 around 140 million people worldwide were dependent on humanitarian aid from the Red Cross; by 2023 this figure has risen to 340 million! Accordingly, the ICRC’s budget has more than doubled.³

Because of the 2.8 billion Swiss francs that the ICRC had budgeted for 2023, there were critical voices who felt that it had expanded its activities too much and was engaging in development cooperation, which other humanitarian organisations could do as well, instead of sticking to its core mission – life-saving relief and protection services for people in armed conflicts. ICRC President *Mirjana Spoljaric Egger* disagrees: “It is not so clear-cut to define what is part of the core mission and what is not. Take water supply, for example: shall we simply deliver water tanks in Syria that are empty after two days? That is neither sustainable nor sensible. So we try to keep the local water supply going, which was destroyed or severely impaired during the

The ICRC has always been the largest recipient of humanitarian aid in Switzerland

According to President *Spoljaric Egger*, the ICRC has “always been the largest recipient of humanitarian aid in Switzerland”.

- After the USA and Germany, Switzerland is the third-largest donor country (2022: CHF 166 million).
- When I asked the FDFA, *Pierre Alain Eltschinger* stated that the Confederation had granted the ICRC an additional CHF 200 million as an interest-free loan in 2020 (in connection with Covid). According to the media, Ms *Spoljaric Egger* is in talks with the Federal Council as to whether the

ICRC will have to repay this by 2027, as agreed.

- The properties and buildings used by the ICRC in Geneva are allocated by the canton and the city of Geneva. The Confederation has granted several real estate loans to the ICRC through the Real Estate Foundation for International Organisations (FIPOI) - which also supports other organisations based in Geneva – most recently CHF 8.9 million in 2016 for the renovation of a facade. In addition, the ICRC has free access to the International Conference Center in Geneva (CICG).

fighting.”⁴ This sounds convincing even to non-experts.

Nevertheless, under this pressure, the ICRC management reduced its budget to around 2.45 billion. This has resulted in the elimination of 1,800 jobs and the closure of 26 branches (out of 350) as well as the downsizing of other locations – certainly none of them are dispensable for the people in need. Some of the ICRC staff reacted to the cuts with a letter in which they expressed their understandable concern – not only because of the threatened redundancies, but also in view of the people in need, who must not be denied the necessary support. What is out of place, however, is the employees’ criticism of the cadres’ salaries. In contrast to the top executives of large corporations, the ICRC’s top staff do not earn millions for their professionally and humanly demanding work.⁵

As noted in the *ICRC Annual Report 2022*, the fact remains that humanitarian needs continued to grow “as armed conflicts drove global instability and spread fragility within societies and social systems. This, together with the concomitant effects of the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and mounting economic uncertainty, posed additional difficulties to the delivery of aid for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence” (Annual Report, p. 42). In the interview, the ICRC President names the wars in Ukraine, the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia and Sudan, the earthquake in the border region between Syria and Turkey, the worsening situation in Afghanistan and the devastating consequences of climate change in Africa as major challenges.

In many places, the ICRC is the only organisation that can provide aid

It is of great importance that the ICRC helps in many regions where other humanitarian organisations cannot gain access or do not even aspire to do so. As Ms. *Spoljaric Egger* explains: “Unfortunately, even programmes that are indisputably part of our core tasks are underfunded. And because of our neutrality and independence, we are often the only organisation that can provide aid. I was in the north-east of Syria and in Russia. Apart from us, no one has access to prisoners there.”⁶

Anyone who consults various sources, will come to the same conclusion: after the earthquake at the beginning of March, many Western states and organisations became active in Turkey, but in Syria, apart from the ICRC, there were many Arab institutions on the ground, but hardly any Western ones. As far as the war in Ukraine is concerned, all those who want to help the Ukrainians should be happy if the ICRC presidency maintains the dialogue with the Russian government. How else can it check whether the Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russia are being treated in accordance with the *Geneva Conventions*? The same must of course apply to the Russian prisoners in Ukraine.

How the ICRC is funded

“The ICRC is funded by voluntary contributions from the States party to the Geneva Conventions (governments); national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies; supranational organizations (such as the European Commission); and public and private sources. Each year the

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ICRC launches appeals to cover its projected costs in the field and at headquarters. It will launch additional appeals if needs in the field increase. The ICRC accounts for its work and expenditure in its Annual Report."⁷

This year it is particularly difficult to raise the necessary amounts. Despite the austerity measures, there is still a shortfall of 400 million francs. At a press conference in Geneva on 13 June, the ICRC president called on states to close this gap. More detailed research has revealed the following:

Donor states have not (as one might suspect) fundamentally cut back on their contributions: according to the 2022 Annual Report (p.45), 80.4% of last year's contributions came from 80 governments and the European Commission, and some were remarkably higher than in 2021. The five donor states with the largest contributions: USA 609 million francs (2021: 543.6), Germany 206 million (2021: 247.5), Switzerland 166 million (2021: 156.5), UK 160 million (2021: 153.1), EU Commission 160 million (2021: 128.9).

But the ICRC is severely constrained in its operations for another very troubling reason.

Freedom of the ICRC increasingly restricted

"The ICRC's neutral, impartial and independent approach – as enshrined in its mission – [...] require[s] access to flexible funding." This means that donations should be able to be used at any time where they are most urgently needed. The more conditions donors impose on the use of their contributions, the greater the risk that not all people affected by war and violence can be helped equally.

According to the 2022 Annual Report, "earmarked" contributions, i.e., primarily "country-earmarked" contributions (use of money only for one or more specific countries), have increased to a "worrisome" extent in recent years, from an already very high 51% (2021) to 54% (2022) "in particular driven by the situation in Ukraine". "Furthermore, earmarked contributions were often accompanied by rigorous implementation timetables and stringently specific reporting conditions that increased the administrative burden on its staff." For example, in Ukraine, some states only wanted to fund operations in certain districts. The percentage of unrestricted, flexible funds dropped to only 29% (2022 Annual Report, p. 46/47)! With such regulations, the Red Cross loses a large part of its freedom of action.

According to its own report, the ICRC has been active in Ukraine since 2014,



ICRC headquarter in Geneva (picture ICRC)

with its teams working on both sides of the front, and in addition to "new offices in Moldova, Hungary, Poland and Romania", it has also "expanded the operational capacities" of the ICRC delegation in Russia, which opened in 1992.⁸

The 2021 and 2022 annual reports show that the ICRC was forced to spend a disproportionate amount of money on Ukraine last year, driving up funding needs by more than 300 million francs alone.

The largest ICRC operations in 2021: 1. Syria 150.6 million francs; 2. Yemen 112.5 million; 3. South Sudan 107.1 million; (then Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia); and 9. Ukraine 69 million.

The largest ICRC operations in 2022: 1. Ukraine 381.6 million francs; 2. Afghanistan 190.6 million; 3. Syria 179.3 million; 4. Yemen 128.6 million.

It should be noted that, in accordance with the mandate given to them by the international community, ICRC teams must have the freedom to deliver aid where people's needs are most urgent. The ICRC states, "A continued rise in the level of earmarking could compromise the ICRC's ability to operate in an independent and impartial manner." This is truly worrisome as every mission is always hanging by a thread because there is always a risk that doubts about strict neutrality will be raised, often where there is no justification for doing so.

Mainstream media contribute their share

The ICRC Annual Report 2022 points out in no uncertain terms the role of some media outlets that severely complicate the work of the Red Cross and even try to discredit it. In plain language: "While IHL [International Humanitarian Law] and the ICRC's mission, mandate and principles remained as relevant as ever, they continued to be challenged

by the narratives of highly polarized communities in various types of media and misinformation, disinformation and hate speech; principled humanitarian action was subjected to heightened scrutiny and politicization." The ICRC felt compelled to counter the "fake news", "to clarify the ICRC's mandate and its neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian approach."

Moreover, mainstream media biased the attention of potential donors to the Ukraine war and some other crisis regions: "The ICRC also drew attention to the needs in Haiti, Iraq, Yemen and other contexts that received less coverage." (Annual Report, p. 42)

With their disinformation, these media are complicit in "an increasingly challenging funding environment and a lack of international consensus on issues of humanitarian concern", which the Annual Report deplores. It is urgent to bring back into focus the concern of the founders of the ICRC and the signatory states of the Geneva Conventions to provide humanitarian assistance equally to all victims of war and violence in all countries and on both sides of the front.

Costly security measures

Another alarming consequence of these processes is that the ICRC no longer enjoys the security that the Red Cross in the white field has guaranteed its delegates and their teams for most of its 160-year history. Former delegate *Manuel Bessler* reports that this was still different in the early 1990s: "Back then, when we arrived somewhere in the field, we were always told: "The Red Cross emblem will protect you!" Today, this often becomes a cross-hair itself – in the literal sense. Protected vehicles, safety training, 'safe rooms' or armed escorts, which are unfortunately necessary today, were not known in

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the past. All this, of course, comes at a price."⁹

The ICRC is based on the humanitarian tradition of Switzerland

Until 1993, anyone who wanted to become an ICRC delegate had to have a red passport, says Manuel Bessler, who started at the ICRC back then. Today, 9% of the delegates are still Swiss citizens, at the headquarters in Geneva it is 30%. 80% of the more than 20,000 employees come from the respective countries of operation.¹⁰

One has the impression, the interviewer tells the ICRC president, "that not much of this *Swissness* [!] has remained". Ms. Spoljaric Egger disagrees: "I would dispute that. The Swissness is automatically given, since the ICRC is based on the humanitarian tradition of Switzerland, it has always belonged to the international Geneva and is committed to neutrality. At the same time, the ICRC is universal, all states have ratified the Geneva Conventions, which form the basis of international humanitarian law." [Emphasis mine, mw] She adds that the ICRC could not achieve the impact it does in its respective missions without the expertise and local knowledge of its staff: "You cannot define the *Swissness* of the organisation by the origin of the staff."¹¹ Switzerland's neutrality, Ms. Spoljaric Egger continues, "is the reason why we are anchored in Geneva. It's a place that gives us the space to operate freely and independently." ●



ICRC annual report 2022 (<https://library.icrc.org/library/does/DOC/icrc-annual-report-2022-1.pdf>)

¹ von Wartburg, Wolfgang. *Die Neutralität der Schweiz und ihre Zukunft (Switzerland's neutrality and its future)*, Novalis Verlag 1992, p. 2

² <https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/icrc-annual-report-2022-1.pdf>

³ Burkhalter, Dorian. "Das IKRK steckt in einer Finanzierungs Krise – jetzt lanciert es einen Appell" (The ICRC is in a funding crisis – now it launches an appeal). *Swissinfo.ch* dated 13 June 2023

⁴ Gall, Corina und Fumagalli, Antonio. "Das IKRK von 1980 könnte so gar nicht mehr bestehen" (The ICRC of 1980 could no longer exist in this way at all). Interview with ICRC-President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 1 July 2023

⁵ Fumagalli, Antonio. "Hat sich das IKRK verzettelt? Mitarbeiter üben harsche Kritik am Expansionskurs der vergangenen Jahre" (Has the ICRC got bogged down? Staff members harshly criticize the expansion course of the past years). In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 7 July 2023

⁶ Gall, Corina und Fumagalli, Antonio. "Das IKRK von 1980 könnte so gar nicht mehr bestehen" (The ICRC of 1980 could no longer exist in this way at

all). Interview with ICRC-President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 1 July 2023

⁷ <https://www.icrc.org/en/who-we-are/finances>

⁸ <https://www.icrc.org/en/humanitarian-crisis-ukraine>

⁹ Fumagalli, Antonio. "Hat sich das IKRK verzettelt? Mitarbeiter üben harsche Kritik am Expansionskurs der vergangenen Jahre" (Has the ICRC got bogged down? Staff members harshly criticize the expansion course of the past years). In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 7 July 2023

¹⁰ Fumagalli, Antonio. "Hat sich das IKRK verzettelt? Mitarbeiter üben harsche Kritik am Expansionskurs der vergangenen Jahre" (Has the ICRC got bogged down? Staff members harshly criticize the expansion course of the past years). In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 7 July 2023

¹¹ Gall, Corina und Fumagalli, Antonio. "Das IKRK von 1980 könnte so gar nicht mehr bestehen" (The ICRC of 1980 could no longer exist in this way at all). Interview mit IKRK-Präsidentin Mirjana Spoljaric Egger. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 1 July 2023

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20 Years “Neutral Free Austria”

Sovereignty, Direct Democracy and Neutrality are getting ever more important

by Daniel Jenny and Rudolf Pomaroli

During their 2023 annual meeting the association “Neutral Free Austria” (NFÖ) celebrated their 20th anniversary. The attractive schedule certainly lived up to the occasion.

The political initiative “Neutral Free Austria” (NFÖ) is an association of political groups, small parties and individuals throughout Austria. Their constitution was registered with the ministry of interior affairs on 17 March 2003. This act made the association NFÖ equivalent to a political party. The founding meeting took place on 11 October 2003 in Salzburg.

This year’s meeting started with a discussion on the troubling topic of the war in Ukraine. In his opening statement *Gerald Grüner*, the deputy chairman, summarised the historical developments since 1990 and chaired the discussion afterwards.

Concerning the consequences of the Ukraine war, the participants agreed that both Austrian and Swiss neutrality has been and continues to be jeopardised or even undermined by wrong decisions of the politicians in charge, such as sanctions against only *one* of the war parties. Accordingly, the meeting unequivocally condemned the tank transports carried out by NATO through Austria in April, since they violated the neutrality principle even against the international community.

Minister *Gerhard Karner*, who is in charge of interior affairs, should have forbidden the transport through Austria. Yet he maintained that he allowed it because the country of destination stated in the documents was Poland and not the war party Ukraine, a rather ludicrous pretext.

The attending members and guests also used the discourse to contemplate on how peace could become a reality again. A promising first step towards peace should be the cancellation of the sanctions against Russia, which were imposed by the Austrian government following orders from the EU. A survey among 1000 Austrians revealed in April 2023 that only a minority of 37% support EU sanctions against Russia while 41% demand an end to the punishing measures.

Greeting addresses from Professor Dr *Heinrich Wohlmeyer*, Magister *Ralph Bosshard* and Universitätsprofessor Dr *Michael Geistlinger* (see box) stood at the beginning of the yearly meeting. The latter reminded the audience of the obligations of neutral Austria, namely: the duties of abstinence (to abstain from waging wars)



Tank transport: 1650 (!) weapon transports were done through Austria during the last twelve months (picture screenshot servus-tv)

and non-partisanship as well as the obligation not to let third parties abuse Austrian territory for their war efforts.

The founder and long-time chairman of the association, the engineer *Rudolf Pomaroli*, was presented with an honorary document acknowledging his inexhaustible commitment. In his acceptance speech *Alt-Obmann Rudolf* assured the audience that they could continue to count on him should his help or advise be needed.

“Neutral Free Austria” (NFÖ) have repeatedly been invited to share their views on alternative internet, radio and television platforms in the past. The official aim is to join forces of all activists towards securing a sovereign, neutral and democratic republic of Austria as it is laid down in the Austrian constitution. To achieve that goal, Austria must inevitably leave the European Union, including *Euratom* (which is currently based in Vienna).

Any measures to undermine their democracy should be countered most appropriately by the Austrian sovereign with democratic tools such as binding referendums and people’s initiatives. The people should be entitled to launch and carry out any of these at any time.

In co-operation with the *Initiative Homeland and Environment (Initiative Heimat und Umwelt, IHU)* events on the topic of neutrality had taken place in last December and March. They had been recorded (see <https://infoe.at>).

Speakers included:

- expert on international law and Eastern Europe Universitätsprofessor Dr *Michael Geistlinger*: “Rights and obligations of eternally neutral Austria in

times of a war of the West against Russia, according to international law”

- long-time OSCE co-worker Magister *Ralph Bosshard*: “Assessment of the military situation in the Ukraine war. Strategic significance of neutral Austria in Europe”

The collection of signatures for the parliamentary citizen’s initiative “Stop sanctions against Russia – now!” is continued by both NFÖ and IHU. Both movements are planning outreach booths in several cities to distribute information material on neutrality and collect more signatures. The resonance has been encouraging so far, many people signed spontaneously at the booths and were generally interested in the peace topic.

At the end of the yearly meeting the NFÖ chairman, engineer *Daniel Jenny* welcomed Dr *René Roca* as the keynote speaker. Dr *Roca* has studied history, is a gymnasium professor in Basel and founding director of the *Swiss research institute on direct democracy (www.fidd.ch)*. In his local community he has served as council member and vice mayor for many years.

The speaker chose the title “Swiss neutrality – a first class peace project”. In his presentation he elaborated on the history of Switzerland regarding neutrality. In his capacity as member of the initiative committee of the *Initiative for the preservation of Swiss Neutrality – Neutrality initiative* René *Roca* also introduced the audience to the aim of this people’s initiative which had launched quite well last November:

Address to the 2023 annual general meeting of the “Neutral Free Austria” Association

Dear Mister Jenny, dear members, friends and supporters of the general meeting!

The name of your association is perfectly chosen and sums up decades of history in just three words, connecting history and present situation of Austria with her future. The Soviet military withdrew from Austria in 1955 on condition of eternal Austrian neutrality. Today Austria could be free, had they convincingly pursued a strictly neutral foreign policy. Austria will be free again in the future, on condition of resurrecting their international obligations towards eternal neutrality.

It was the *Moscow memorandum* as the basis for the Austrian-Soviet treaty of Vienna and its incorporation into the constitution by the Austrian Federal constitutional court issuing a *constitutional law* (Bundesverfassungsgesetz) on eternal neutrality which, on the level of international law, all states of the international community were notified of at the time and which at the end led to the four allied forces (Soviet union, USA, UK and France) withdrawing their troops from Austrian territory and ending the occupation regime. Therefore, from the very beginning of its binding validity in Austria the institution of eternal neutrality exhibited enormous prestige and power. Troops of the four most powerful militaries in the world at the time had occupied Austria but left without firing a single shot. Except for some rudimentary units there was not even such a thing as an Austrian army, not a single soldier was deployed to rid the country of the foreign occupants. All it took was the declaration of eternal neutrality.

For a long period of time, during the Cold war between East and West, credible policies of neutrality secured Austrian freedom. However, with the col-

lapse of the Soviet Union, the former universal adversary of the USA, lawmakers in Austria believed to fare better if they left their position in the middle and joined one of the two blocs, i.e. the alleged winner of the Cold war. Therefore, Austria became a member of the collective West by joining the European Union, and this even despite the doubts expressed by the European Commission whether Austrian membership was compatible with the state of neutrality as it was understood and maintained in Austria at the time. The European Commission offered two possible scenarios: either a caveat clause on neutrality or a re-definition of Austrian neutrality policies, rendering them compatible with EU strategies. The latter was implemented and the Iraq war offered the EU a welcome context to immediately demonstrate Austrian compliance to the world with hundreds of internationally illegal NATO flights over Austrian territory as well as tank transports through the country. Then they kept pushing on. The treaties of Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon and subsequent amendments of the Austrian federal constitution undermined Austrian neutrality step by step in the name of European solidarity, the ruling political class alienated the Austrian people by not even telling them when they gradually overrode the *constitutional law* on eternal neutrality, or, to put it bluntly, revoked it either partially or completely depending on the way you look at it. However, what they could not achieve that way was to revoke neutrality on the international level, too. May some Austrian pro-EU experts on international law try as hard as they can to build up lines of argument for the Austrian government to regard obligations of EU laws as superior to international law – still the EU remains, as a regional international organisation, subject to international law, and

Austria cannot invoke their membership with this regional organisation for ignoring obligations towards international law. As a consequence, we witness countless violations of Austrian neutrality during the ongoing war in Ukraine. To recall a recent one: it does not solve the problem to finance demining activities in Ukraine instead of sending special demining units of the Austrian military. Financing violates international law as well, as long as both sides are not treated equally. These are basic principles of neutrality ruling in times of international armed conflicts, such as the one in Ukraine right now. Then it is required to abstain from supportive measures completely, treat both sides equally and shut one's territory for both military or non-military coercive measures of either side.

But regardless of how many violations will occur, Austria cannot rid itself of the internationally recognised state of neutrality that way. Moreover, it becomes clear to the world that it is not Russia who threatens Austrian neutrality. Rather, it is NATO and the EU who drive Austria deeper and deeper into a behaviour which violates its neutrality and thereby jeopardise Austrian freedom.

In the course of this, organisations such as your association and similarly minded initiatives, societies and political parties committed to honest and actual Austrian neutrality become more and more important, to re-establish Austrian freedom. Time is ripe. The longer the Ukraine war lasts, the more Austrian taxpayer's money is vaporised via EU channels in Ukraine, the nearer the moment when a majority of Austrians will comprehend their fatal political aberrations.

In this regard, I wish you a successful Federal Assembly and perseverance!

Best regards

Michael Geistlinger

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Sovereignty, Direct Democracy and ...”

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this aim is that “eternal and armed neutrality” should be laid down as part of the Swiss constitution. This way the Swiss federal government would be prohibited to sign treaties on behalf of Switzerland joining military or protective alliances or contributing to sanctions

(“non-military coercive measures against states at war”).

For both Austria and Switzerland neutrality has been endorsed by the international community on several occasions in the past. Our governments should stop their neutrality violations and stick to the rules neutrality requires! Only if states maintain neutrality not just on paper but in real life they will contribute to a sus-

tainably peaceful development on the international level. At present, 155 out of the 193 states in the world don't support the sanctions against Russia which are illegal from the standpoint of international law. Austria would be well-advised to join the number of those really neutral, non-partisan states. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The globalists' plans for Ukraine and Russia

by Douglas Macgregor



Douglas Macgregor
picture realclearpolitics.com

The globalists that are running the show this is the globalist neocon elite and both on the Hill as well as in the White House; and these Elites in Europe particularly in Paris, Berlin and London – they're all interested in seeing *BlackRock* take over Ukraine number one so that it can be systematically stripped of its resources and turned into a subjugated state that belongs to the larger globalist Elites.

But they also want to see that happen to Russia which is why this war was never about Ukraine it was always about what can be done to destroy Russia.

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

Biden said, our goal is regime change. Our goal is to get rid of *Putin* and our goal is ultimately to divide Russia into constituent parts then exploit it. All of his supporters, his staffers, everyone in the globalist camp knows this is the truth; the so-called oligarchs *Kolomoisky*, *Soros* and others were all part of this. None of this is news.

And of course, since the people in charge didn't perform any strategic analysis, they never thought about purpose or end state; they concluded that Russia today is still the Russia of 1992: It's weak it's prostrate, its economy is ineffective.

Remember the *John McCain* statement: Oh, Russia is Spain with a gas station. All of these arrogant displays of American hubris treating Russia as though it was a third-class nation with a fourth class military.

Well, we're getting an education right now. We paid no attention to the Russians who had legitimate concerns about what we were doing in eastern Ukraine. We were building an army to attack them; we put a hostile government into that country in 2014 and we kept telling them that it made no difference to us what they thought or what they cared about. They said we don't want NATO on our border. No one paid attention. President *Trump* tried to listen but he was surrounded by people who subvert-

ed him. People who were not loyal to the president; who took an oath of obedience to the orders of the president and then ignored them. So, what's the outcome: You've got a very serious war that could become regional even global and no one in the White House seems to really grasp that. But we're losing! The globalists are losing.

The government in Kiev doesn't represent the interests of the Ukrainian people. They represent the interests of this globalist Elite who are interested in resources and stripping them and using them and exploiting them to make money.

I think what we're seeing is, this war has become financial as well as military. And the globalists understand that they're going to lose this war. What will come of this is that the BRICS, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are going to be increased by 81 additional members and all of these people are going to go to a currency that is backed by gold; and once they go to that currency backed by gold whether it is one currency or a basket of currencies, it doesn't make any difference.

Yes, we are in a lot of trouble. The globalists know that and this is why they act so desperate right now. •

Source: <https://rubble.com/v2oflak-col.-douglas-macgregor-and-donald-trump-jr.-underestimating-russia-arroganc.html> June 2023 (excerpt)

The capitalists are circling over Ukraine

The war is creating massive profit opportunities

by Thomas Fazi

Two weeks ago, thousands of representatives from businesses and governments from across the world gathered in London to "support Ukraine's recovery". But was the gathering of all those Western corporate elites at the Ukraine Recovery Conference entirely altruistic? There are, after all, massive profit opportunities being created by the war.

Last year, the Ukrainian government essentially outsourced the entire post-war "reconstruction" process to *BlackRock*, the world's largest asset management firm. They signed an agreement to "provide advisory support for designing an investment framework, with a goal of creating opportunities for both public and private investors to participate in the future reconstruction and recovery of the Ukrainian economy". In February, *J.P. Morgan* was brought on board as well.

The two banks will run the Ukraine Development Fund, which aims to raise private investment in projects potential-

ly worth hundreds of billions of dollars across sectors including tech, natural resources, agriculture and health. *BlackRock* and *J.P. Morgan* are donating their services, but, as the "Financial Times" noted, "the work will give them an early look at possible investments in the country". The opportunities are significant, particularly in the agricultural sector: Ukraine is home to a quarter of the world's *chernozem* ("black earth"), an extraordinarily fertile soil, and before the war it was world's top producer of sunflower meal, oil and seed, and one of the biggest exporters of corn and wheat.

BlackRock, J.P. Morgan etc.

From certain perspectives, the war is clearly good for business: indeed, the greater the destruction, the greater the opportunities for reconstruction. At Davos this year, *Larry Fink*, CEO of *BlackRock*, said he hoped the initiative would turn the country into a "beacon of capitalism". *David Solomon*, CEO of *Goldman Sachs*,

also spoke cheerily of Ukraine's post-war future. "There is no question," he said, "that as you rebuild, there will be good economic incentives for real return and real investment."

The Ukraine Business Compact

Seeing opportunity amid the tragedy, 500 global businesses from 42 countries have already signed the *Ukraine Business Compact* "to help realise its huge potential" – or secure their slice of the Ukrainian pie. "Most are standing on the sidelines for now, given the security threat," the FT reported. "But there are already companies on the cusp of moving in – especially in the low-hanging-fruit industries of construction and materials, agricultural processing and logistics."

Over the years, across a series of similar events, Western governments and corporate leaders have made no secret of their enthusiasm to use the post-Maid-

"The capitalists are circling ..."

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an regime – and now the war – to radically alter Ukraine's political economy. The agenda: to open up the country and make it safe for Western capital by transforming it into a special economic zone. This neoliberal shock therapy should, in their view, include "strengthening the market economy", "decentralisation, privatisation, reform of state-owned enterprises, land reform, state administration reform", and "Euro-Atlantic integration", as well as widespread "deregulation" and the slashing of "outdated labour legislation leading to complicated hiring and firing process, regulation of overtime, etc". In short, the *Washington Consensus* on steroids.

"Shock-Strategy" for Ukraine

This programme has, arguably, been underway since the mid-Nineties, when the West used IMF loans-cum-conditionalities to impose on Ukraine, just as it did on Russia, a series of radical free-market-minded reforms that crippled the economy. As the Indian economist *Prabhat Patnaik* has pointed out, the IMF played a key role in precipitating the 2014 crisis: Ukraine's then-President, *Viktor Yanukovich*, refused to accept IMF demands that he cut wages, slash social spending and end gas subsidies in order to integrate with the EU, and turned instead to Russia for an alternative economic agreement. This was the backdrop for the Western-backed Euromaidan protests and, eventually, the 2014 regime change.

After 2014, the West's economic agenda was stepped up once again. Western multinationals had long had their eyes on Ukraine's vast agricultural wealth, but a 2001 moratorium on the sale of land to foreigners had always represented an obstacle to unrestrained privatisation. As post-Maidan governments turned again to the IMF for financing, aid was conditioned on a series of land reforms that would finally allow foreign corporations to acquire vast tracts of the country's farmland. In the 2015 TV series, *Servant of the People* – which starred *Zelenskyy* as the fictional president, *Goloborodko* – the conditions required by the IMF for a new loan are rejected and the Western delegation is expelled. But in reality, things went rather differently. In 2020, *Zelenskyy* gave in to the IMF's demands and finally repealed the moratorium.

Accessing agriculture

"Agribusiness interests and oligarchs will be the primary beneficiaries of such reform," said *Olena Borodina* of the *Ukrainian Rural Development Network*. "This will only further marginalise small-holder farmers and risks severing them

from their most valuable resource." But the *World Bank* could barely contain its excitement, gushing: "This is, without exaggeration, a historic event." Even though the new law isn't set to come into force until next year, US and Western European agrobusinesses have already bought up millions of hectares of Ukraine's farmland – with 10 private companies reportedly controlling most of it.

Radical deregulation...

As war has raged, the West's calls for "structural reforms" in Ukraine have only intensified. In mid-2022, the *Center for Economic Policy Research* (CEPR), an influential European think tank, published a report, *Macroeconomic Policies for Wartime Ukraine*, which argued that Ukraine's aim should be "to pursue extensive radical deregulation of economic activity". Even more troublingly, according to the *Oakland Institute* economic observatory, Western financial aid "is being used as a leverage by the financial institutions to drive post-war reconstruction towards further privatisation and liberalisation reforms". The European Union, for example, made it clear that the bloc's decision to suspend interest payments on Ukraine's loans would only be activated if there were "compliance with political prerequisites" with regard to labour reforms, for example, and the privatisation of state assets.

... and cutting of workers' rights

It came as no surprise, then, when last year the Ukrainian government adopted wartime legislation to severely curtail the ability of trade unions to represent their members. It gave employers the right to unilaterally suspend collective agreements and effectively exempted the vast majority of employees from Ukrainian labour law – a dramatic rollback for workers but a boon for global capital. Western governments have silently consented to the reforms and, in fact, leaked documents from 2021 indicate that the UK, via its development aid arm, *UK Aid*, and its embassy in Kyiv, was funding consultants to assist the Ukrainian government in selling the labour market reforms to the people.

Zelenskyy plays the nasty game

As the Ukrainian government has simplified and accelerated the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, *Zelenskyy* would seem to have gone out of his way to similarly express the country's "openness" to Western capital. Last September, he virtually opened the New York Stock Exchange, symbolically ringing the bell via video stream. He used the occasion to present "Advantage Ukraine", his government's new investment initiative (which relies on another British firm, WPP, for

its marketing side). *Zelenskyy* said that his country was "open for business" – that is, for foreign corporations to come and exploit its resources and cheap labour. "I committed my administration to creating a favourable environment for investment that would make Ukraine the greatest growth opportunity in Europe since the end of the Second World War," he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*. Predictably, the president of the *NYSE Group*, *Lynn Martin*, wholeheartedly welcomed Ukraine's decision to offer "unfettered access to capital".

In January this year, addressing the participants of the meeting of the *National Association of State Chambers*, *Zelenskyy* described American business as the "locomotive that will once again push forward global economic growth". No one would blame *Zelenskyy* for choosing the lesser of two evils here: Western banks over Russian tanks. Yet, the grim fact remains that even if his nation succeeds in repealing the Russian invasion, the future in store for Ukraine is not necessarily one of sovereignty and self-determination but, most likely, one of Western economic tutelage.

• Source: <https://unherd.com/2023/07/the-capitalists-are-circling-over-ukraine/> of 5 July 2023

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The German Peace Movement and the war in Ukraine

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

The worldwide peace movement after the end of the Second World War, and especially Germany's ("Never again war!"), set out fundamentally to end wars as a means of conflict resolution. This goal is shared by all people of good will, as expressed in the United Nations Charter of 1945. The question posed in the following article, which considers the German peace movement as we have it today, is equally committed to this goal. The question is: Does the German movement's sometimes sharp criticism of Russia for the Ukraine war truly serve peace?

On 24 February 2022, the German section of *International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*, a renowned organisation of the German peace movement, published a press release that begins as follows: "The medical peace organisation IPPNW most strongly condemns the Russian military attack on Ukraine, which violates international law." Russian President Vladimir Putin's detailed justification for the invasion of Ukraine by regular Russian troops on the morning of the same day,¹ in which he invoked, among other things, the right of self-defence in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter (see box), was left unexamined. The many facts from the years, months, weeks, and days before 24 February 2022, which had led those responsible in Russia to the comprehensible conclusion that the lives of Russian citizens and the integrity of the Russian state were seriously and acutely threatened by Ukraine (and NATO), were also not considered. I will not here repeat the list of these facts and realities.²

Since 24 February 2022, the German peace movement has formulated many statements that judge Russian actions as does the German section of the IPPNW. This also applies to the movement's most popularly supported appeal so far, the "Manifesto for Peace" of 10 February 2023, initiated by *Sahra Wagenknecht* and *Alice Schwarzer*, which has been signed by more than 800,000 people. Again, the highly important history before 24 February 2022 is completely omitted from this appeal.

One of the few weighty exceptions to this perspective in the German peace movement was a public statement on 19 July 2022 by *Albrecht Müller*, who served as an advisor to *Willy Brandt*, the former chancellor. *Müller*, who is today editor of the *NachDenkSeiten*, wrote as follows:

"There are many articles and videos critically questioning Western policy

Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this

right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Vladimir Putin, on 24 February 2022

"In these circumstances, we have to take bold and immediate action. The people's republics of Donbass have asked Russia for help. In this context, in accordance with Article 51 (Chapter VII) of the U.N. Charter, with permission of Russia's Federation Council, and in execution of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic, ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 22, I made a decision to carry out a special military operation.

The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. To this end, we will seek to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation."

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843> of 24 February 2022

*on Ukraine and Russia. But very rarely do these contributions get by without invoking the general outrage over Russia's war in Ukraine. Even if this is not at all part of the topic, the corresponding words are used: 'invasion in violation of international law', 'inhuman war of aggression', 'Putin's war', and so on. Many of these invocations are far from correct. They disregard that the story is told in a truncated way when the shelling of eastern Ukraine by the Ukrainian military after 2014 is not considered. Many good contributions – including some in the *NachDenkSeiten* – are thus relativised, and in my view often devalued."*

The importance of the peace movement

The fact that in its more than one hundred years of history the German peace movement has never prevented war preparations and wars does not diminish its honourable concern. This concern corresponds to the basic need of human life – *Alfred de Zayas* makes a strong argument in favor of a "human right to peace"³. Yes, the peace movement did not prevent the First and not the Second World Wars; nor the German rearmament at the beginning of the 1950s; nor the implementation of [the NATO Double-Track Decision at the beginning of the 1980s; nor Germany's first direct participation in a war after 1945, in NATO's war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999; nor the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an offensive army for world-

wide foreign missions; nor the participation of the Bundeswehr in the war in Afghanistan; nor the war of the "coalition of the willing" against Iraq; nor the wars against Libya and Syria.... But that cannot mean that it is not relevant – if it is indeed a persuasive voice for peace.

To consider this requires also looking impartially at the following questions: What really creates peace? What is the contribution of the German peace movement? Is there anything that distracts the peace movement from placing the basic human need for peace, the "human right to peace", entirely at the centre of its efforts?

German politics has decided in favour of war

One thing is certain: Current German policy has decided that Germany is a party to the war – even if statements of this clarity are still publicly avoided or denied. But the facts speak for themselves. Just read the current article by *Scott Ritter*, the former US officer and UN weapons inspector regarding the active German training of the Ukrainian army for its current "offensive" by means of a war simulation programme of the Bundeswehr.⁴ Unfortunately, this reading is only possible for Germans by diversions, because the internet portal *Russia Today* with *Scott Ritter's* article is banned in Germany. A scandal for a country that is officially committed to the human right to freedom of expression.

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“The German Peace Movement ...”

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And what happened to the basic need for peace when militaristic headlines such as one that appeared recently in the newspaper *Bild* – “Ukrainian offensive underway. Now German Leopard tanks advance”⁵ – no longer provoke a broad outcry of indignation? What is going on in Germany that allows responsible politicians and media representatives to spread their propaganda formulas without widespread opposition?⁶

The accusations against Russia are no trifling matter

The assertion that Russia is waging a “war of aggression contrary to international law” is no trifle. The *Charter of the United Nations* states in Article 2, paragraph 4: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.” According to Article 51 of the Charter, only individual or collective self-defence is permitted.

“Collective” in this context means that states defending themselves against attack may be assisted in this by other states. The *Nuremberg Trials* in 1945/1946 and the “Nuremberg Principles”⁷ adopted by the United Nations International Law Commission in 1950 declared war of aggression to be the most serious war crime, followed almost inevitably by all other war crimes. The German Basic Law, in Article 26, already declared the preparation of a war of aggression unconstitutional and made it a punishable offence.

A peace movement that speaks of the “Russian war of aggression in violation of international law” must allow itself to be asked with what logic it wants to judge the Western warfare against Russia since 24 February 2022. The Western war leaders will ask: Isn’t it legitimate to assist by all means, including military means, a state “attacked in violation of international law”? In other words, the formula of the “Russian war of aggression in violation of international law” serves the West primarily to justify the escalation of its war against Russia.

When is a war a war of aggression?

However, whether or not such a war of aggression happens or has happened is not decided by the peace movement. This question must be examined very thoroughly, impartially, and without prejudice. All necessary documents must be accessible and examined. The Nuremberg trial against the 24 main defendants of the Nazi regime began six months after the end of the Second World War and lasted almost a year; the files fill 5,215 folders containing 270,000 pages.⁸ How should it be possible

to judge Russia’s actions in Ukraine on the very first day as a “Russian military attack in violation of international law”?

No judgement regarding international law on the war in Ukraine should or can be formulated here. And of course, this is also true for the war in Ukraine: The many victims and the destruction on both sides of the front once again prove that war is always a “failure of politics and humanity” (Pope *Francis*). But everyone should also know: Once the war (whether still “cold” or already “hot”) is raging, the accusation of “war of aggression contrary to international law” is often a propaganda formula, mainly to justify one’s own warfare – as stated above. This makes the demand for a thorough and unbiased investigation even more important.

The fact that German citizens who critically question the official and the peace movement narrative of the “Russian war of aggression in violation of international law” are being investigated under criminal law and that first-instance criminal sentences have already been handed down is rather an indication of how much German democracy has already suffered from its participation in the war. Everyone who is a little awake has by now noticed how politically incorrect positions on the war in Ukraine, but also on other wars in which Germany is involved, are to be marginalised.

Grotesque propaganda war

On 25 June, Foreign Minister *Annalena Baerbock* visited South Africa. She knows that South Africa is seriously interested in peace in Ukraine. She also knows that South Africa is not prepared to side with the Western warring party. Likewise, she knows that South Africa has good relations with Russia – as well as with many other states in the world community. And, of course, she should also know what the neocolonial policies of the West have done to the whole of Africa. Nevertheless, Baerbock brought her propaganda war with her to Pretoria.

Once again, the whole thing seemed grotesque. Ms Baerbock had the cheek to state in Pretoria: “When the country of *Nelson Mandela* and *Desmond Tutu* raises its voice against injustice, the world listens. That is why I also want to talk in Pretoria about how South Africa can throw its weight around to put an end to Russian aggression in Ukraine and preserve the United Nations Charter”.⁹ In her election campaign for the Bundestag in 2021, Baerbock had appointed herself an expert on international law without any factual basis. In South Africa itself, at any rate, Baerbock’s smug appearance probably did not go down at all well.¹⁰

¹ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843> of 24 February 2022

² cf. at length: Baud, Jacques. *Putin. Herr des Geschehens?* Westend-Verlag 2023; especially pages 105–202

³ cf. also https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/14session/A.HRC.14.38_en.pdf of 17 March 2010

⁴ <https://www.rt.com/russia/578411-nato-ukraine-counteroffensive-training/> of 22 June 2023

⁵ <https://www.bild.de/bild-plus/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/erstmalig-bei-offensive-gesichtet-jetzt-stossen-deutsche-leopard-panzer-vor-84253894.bild.html> of 8 June 2023

⁶ One of many examples was the program *Kontroversen of Deutschlandfunk*, 10 July 2023

⁷ https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/commentaries/7_1_1950.pdf

⁸ Since 2020, the files can also be accessed online: <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/virtual-tribunals/feature/taube-archive-of-the-international-military-tribunal-int-at-nuremberg-1945-1946>

⁹ Cited after <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/baerbock-spricht-in-suedafrika-ueber-den-ukrainekrieg-18994328.html> of 27 June 2023

¹⁰ cf. <https://www.anti-spiegel.ru/2023/baerbock-scheitert-erneut-bei-auslandsreisen/> of 30 June 2023

On Jaques Baud’s book, *Putin – Master of the events?*



From the back of the book:

“There is no solution in sight for the war that until recently was called a ‘special military operation’ in Russia and is called a ‘Russian war of aggression’ in the West. Dying in Ukraine is progressing. Although this war is present in the media on a daily basis, much remains underexposed, as its background is merely incompletely portrayed or even ignored.

An overly simple assignment of blame has become entrenched and reduces the chances of a negotiated settlement. Based on documents mainly from the U.S., Ukraine, the Russian opposition, and international organisations, this book presents a factual view of reality and opens the door to an unbiased estimation of the war in Ukraine. In this book, Jaques Baud states clearly: This is high time to get back to the facts and back to dialogue” (*Westend Verlag* 2023, ISBN 978-3-86489-426-8).

Right to education – what does that mean?

What is missing in the discussion on school integration

by Dr Eliane Perret, curative teacher and psychologist

The last day of the school year is over and the summer holidays have begun. For some young people, it was even their last day of school before they start their professional lives. Not all of them finish their school years with the confidence that they will be able to cope with the new challenges. Their school backpacks are not full enough, not only do they lack the basics in school material, but also their social-emotional competences are not developed according to their age. This applies especially to children and adolescents who are subsumed under the term “children with special needs” and who have attracted attention at school due to their behaviour or persistently weak performance. Today, they are usually taught “integrated” in regular classes.

In recent weeks and months, these children and young people have often been a topic in the media and the question has arisen whether they are in the right place in the mainstream class. The problem was mostly addressed from the perspective of the other children, whose lessons were disrupted or even made impossible by the “special children”. In the discussion, however, the ball is kept low, and at most structural measures are discussed: smaller classes, more support hours, time-out classes, additional class assistants, etc., and “learning islands” and “time-outs” or the reopening of small classes are suggested as solutions. However, hardly anyone asks who is supposed to lead these classes and whether today’s training – geared towards integrative and individualised teaching – methodically and didactically enables teachers and special educators to guide and lead a group of such children. Even less is asked about the causes of the misery.

Have the courage to stop tunnel vision

A deeper discussion would require a closer reflection on the school reforms of the last 30 years. Not only, but also especially, when it comes to the educational needs of children who do not find learning easy or who do not fit in constructively in a larger group of children. During the last few years, they were part of a large-scale school trial without being asked, because integration into the mainstream class was the order of the day. “Education for all”, “Diversity is beautiful” were slogans fed into the education debate. People spoke of “social participation” and praised the experiment as a “win-win situation for all”. The until now conventional offers such as small classes and special schools were badmouthed. They were accused of discrimination, deportation, exclusion, stig-

matisation of children and “old-fashioned” pedagogy. Many expressed their views without ever having had an insight into such an institution. Especially the argument of “stigmatisation” was and is often brought in by bodies with little practical experience. However, such tunnel vision only confirms what one wants to see and think, and prevents an unbiased perspective and an honest admission of undesirable developments.

Stigmatisation – Dare to look at history

To begin with, the way people with disabilities are treated has always been shaped by the respective conception of the human being and reflects the current state of knowledge, scientific preferences and the social and political situation. This is also the case today. Again and again one hears the argument that special education for children and young people with disabilities leads to their stigmatisation. If we take a look at history, we see that, on the contrary, it was an integration project. Until the 18th century, impoverished, neglected, deaf or blind children were excluded from the mainstream school system. Then, in the 18th and especially in the 19th century, individual pioneers took care of these children and laid the foundations for the later development of curative education. This was not a consequence of progress in pedagogy or medicine, as one might assume, but an achievement of the Enlightenment and the associated right to education and upbringing also for those people with a disability who had previously been virtually “forgotten”. For example, Abbé Charles Michel de l'Épée founded the first school for the deaf in Paris in 1760. In 1774, Valentin Haüy opened a school for blind children, also in Paris, and André Venel established the *Orbe Hospital School* in western Switzerland in 1780. Care also began to be taken of impoverished, neglected or orphaned children and young people who had hitherto led a marginal existence. Special educational programmes were now created for them and for children with physical disabilities. It is therefore historically wrong to claim that special education contributed to stigmatisation, segregation, discrimination, labelling and disintegration of these children and adolescents, because this is rather a question of the social mood towards them. On the contrary, special education has always been concerned with expanding the concept of upbringing and education and conceding the right to education for all.

Empathy and expertise

Personalities such as *Heinrich Hanselmann* (1865–1960) and *Paul Moor* (1899–1977) were among others responsible for the further development in Switzerland. When the first chair for curative education in Europe was established at the University of Zurich in 1931, they followed each other as professors. They were guided by the principles of *Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi* and understood curative education as a value-based, human-scientific discipline that clearly distinguished itself from medicine and emphasised the educational aspect of the profession’s mandate.¹ The practice-oriented training at the Curative Education Seminar was about training empathy, combined with appropriate theoretical expertise. For a long time, curative education was also embedded in the subject areas of psychology and pedagogy in the training of regular school teachers. It was therefore also about the “education of educators”, as Paul Moor called it. This enabled many teachers in mainstream classes to cope with “difficult” children in their classes, which of course also depended on their personal pedagogical skills and interest.

Increasing academisation

As in many other sciences, special education knowledge deepened over time. Training in special education became more differentiated, and specialised schools and classes emerged depending on the task at hand. The personal view of the human being was fundamental, which encompasses the children in their individual life and learning history. Today, training is designed as an academic bachelor’s and master’s degree programme at the University of Special Needs Education, which means that Switzerland has moved away from its long independent path and (not to its advantage) has aligned itself with European and international standards.

Serious paradigm shift in the conception of man

However, this new training concept involved a decisive paradigm shift in the foundations of curative education work, which is hardly known today. Whereas previously the concept of the human being had been based on a humanistic-social-scientific view of man, curative education today is based on a biologicistic concept oriented towards Anglo-American science. Since then, children’s problems have been recorded using psychiatric methods and diagnosed with ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, depression, etc. Often, medication is

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used in combination with behavioural instructions for the teacher, which are borrowed from the American-inspired behavioural therapy. The individual life and learning history of a child has receded into the background. The consequences of this paradigm shift are serious. The psychiatric view of a developmental problem includes diagnoses that are drastic for a child's life and self-esteem. Such labelling sticks to him for life and largely deprives him of the chance to learn to cope with his developmental tasks in an age-appropriate and constructive way.

Back then, this paradigm shifts evidently did not go unchallenged. Particular criticism was levelled at curative education's turning away from a value-guided curative education towards an auxiliary science closely linked to psychiatry. The academisation of special education was also a thorn in the side of many. Emil E. Kobi (1935-2011), another of the great Swiss curative educators, expressed this as follows: “In fact, probably never before has so much research been done in the field of education and at the same time so little has been achieved as in our time, and the relationship between effort and return threatens to shift increasingly to the disadvantage of the latter”.²

Antipsychiatry and school reforms

An important catalyst for this development was also the anti-psychiatry movement in Italy with *Franco Basaglia*, based on a Marxist concept of society. In 1978, a law was passed which, among other things, decreed the abolition of psychiatric institutions. In the course of this, the special schools that had been opened shortly before were also closed and the integration of children into regular classes was completed. Italy became the model country for integration in Switzerland. “It is normal to be different” was the doctrine according to which society was to undergo a change of consciousness, and therefore “integration” instead of “separation” was the new direction. Teachers were to be obliged to adopt the trendy individualising teaching concepts by integrating the “special children”. – As with other socio-political developments, two seemingly opposing social currents drove the integration/inclusion movement. The associated political strategies have shaped the educational policy concepts of the last 30 years.

Re-interpretation of international conventions and treaties

In the discussion on integration, reference is always made to the obligation to international treaties and national legal founda-

tions. Here, it should be noted that international conventions refer to school conditions all over the world. They are primarily legal recommendations for countries that could not afford to support people with disabilities until now, and they are fundamentally about the right of all children to schooling, to equal access to a public education. The agreements always allow for both inclusive and separative education. In the German-speaking world, it was derived from these conventions, especially from the Disability Equality Act of the UN, that every child, regardless of disability, is to be educated within the framework of a mainstream class. *Otto Speck*, probably the best-known professor of special education in Germany, therefore spoke out again at the age of 95 and pointed out that a misinterpretation or reinterpretation in the German-language translation of this convention is the basis of the integrative/inclusive form of education. Doesn't that make you think?

Missed opportunities for promotion

Every child has only one schooltime, in which they must be able to seize their right to education. Particular care is needed for children with “special needs”. While in one case integration into a regular class may be the right thing to do, in another it is trivialising their problem, combined with a lack of professional support. Unfortunately, studies have shown that integrative education is often discontinued after some time, usually when a change of level takes place. Such children end up in a special school after a more or less long period of missed support and failure. Often parents have to admit that their child has lost the courage to face the learning process with the necessary perseverance. Or they are frightened by the fact that their child has not yet learned to constructively participate in a group of peers and is conspicuous by being restless and loud or by withdrawing into a world of their own. Today, it may well be that parents explain this behaviour to themselves solely on the basis of the child's diagnosis and

see few possibilities for change, but are nevertheless concerned about what his or her journey through life should ultimately look like. It is more helpful for a child if the parents, together with the teachers, can develop a path on which a child can grow out of its discouraged attitude and exercise its right to education.

“Social participation” is more than “being present”

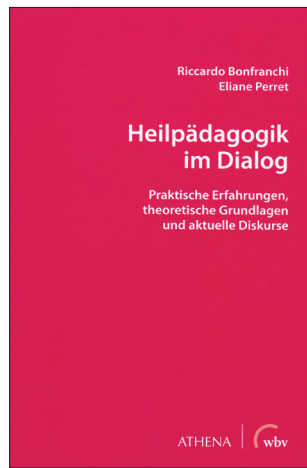
Whatever the parents' position on this: A demanding learning process is called for. It involves effort, practice, perseverance, failure and will ultimately bring success in small steps. Whether this should happen in the context of integration into the regular class or in a small class must be carefully clarified. The repeatedly demanded “social participation” means more than being present in the classroom, but to experience oneself as a valuable part of one's social environment and to be able to contribute. That is why one of the primary goals of every lesson is to bring the children together to form a community in which they support and respect each other, which is of course an important learning field for social-emotional development tasks. But shouldn't this be the basis of every school if it takes the right to education seriously?

Right to education – the discussion needs foundations

Without including the issues raised, the question of how the right to education of all children can be realised cannot be clarified, because as Emil E. Kobi said:

“Integration [...] should not degenerate into an ideology without alternatives, which violates personal identity. Alternatives also characterise a democratic education and school system that has to offer a variety of options”³.

¹ The development in Germany and Austria was based on different foundations and took a different course, which will not be discussed here.



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A palace for education

by Carl Bossard

Anyone with an eye for Swiss school buildings built in the second half of the 19th century is amazed at the architectural splendour of these structures. Many have the character of a residence. They signalise new beginnings and progress. Let us have a look at the small town of Zug of that time.

Until well into the 19th century, schools and teaching had a hard time: there was no regular school attendance. In a rural and commercial society, the status of education was modest. It remained the prerogative of the few chosen. The population was poor, the means of subsistence were meagre for many, and therefore education was limited. The children were needed as helpers in the fields and on the farm. The stable was necessarily stronger than the slate, bread more important than a book. Compulsory school attendance, as postulated by the 1800 Helvetic Republic and envisaged by the liberal federal state of 1848, was therefore difficult to put into concrete terms.

From the narrow schoolroom to the majestic temple of education

With the total revision of the Swiss Federal Constitution (BV) of 1874, all cantons had to enforce compulsory primary education: The new BV decreed universal compulsory education. Primary education

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² Kobi, E. E. (1984). "Zum Verhältnis von Pädagogik und Heilpädagogik" (On the relationship between pedagogy and curative education). In: Kobi, E. E./Bürli, A./Broch, E. (eds.). *Zum Verhältnis von Pädagogik und Heilpädagogik. Referate der 20. Arbeitstagung der Dozenten für Sonderpädagogik in den deutschsprachigen Ländern in Basel.* (On the relationship between pedagogy and curative education. Papers of the 20th Workshop of Lecturers in Special Needs Education in the German-speaking Countries in Basel). Lucerne: Verlag Schweizerische Zentralstelle für Heilpädagogik, p. 34

³ Kobi, E. E. (2008). "Alternative Integration als integrierte Alternative?" (Alternative Integration as an Integrated Alternative?), https://www.bildungserver.de/onlineresource.html?onlineresourcen_id=40331&mstn=1; accessed 12.7.2023

The following books have guided my writing:

Bonfranchi, R./Perret, E. (2021). *Heilpädagogik im Dialog.* (Curative education in dialogue.) Oberhausen: Athena-wbv

Bonfranchi, R./Dünki, R./Perret, E. (2022). *Integration, Separation, Kooperation. Ein heilpädagogischer Blick auf die Bildungschancen für Kinder und Jugendliche mit Behinderungen.* (Integration, separation, cooperation. A curative education view of educational opportunities for children and young people with disabilities.) Oberhausen: Athena-wbv

Schöler, Jutta (ed.). (1987). *"Italienische Verhältnisse" – insbesondere in den Schulen von Florenz.* ('Italian conditions' – especially in the schools of Florence.) Berlin: Guhl



The Minerva Institute, later Athene, at the lake of Zug (around 1880): since 1920 (until 1975) Kantonsschule Zug (picture sFMS Zug)

became compulsory and free for all children. But the road to this goal was steep and rocky. Education had to be laboriously freed from the confusion of random learning and institutionalised in a timely manner. But progress was made.

The expansion of education after 1850 called for space. The town of Zug, for example, built a representative school building on the vaulted cellars of the old Spittel (former hospital) – made of natural sandstone and designed in the style of contemporary neo-Gothic: The Burgbach Schoolhouse. The building was inaugurated in 1875 and became the central schoolhouse of the town of Zug – albeit only for boys.¹

The often-stuffy confinement of a room now gave way to the spaciousness of a building. The change from the stuffy and ramshackle schoolroom of earlier times to the spacious Burgbach Schoolhouse was like a seven-mile leap. It comprised six airy and bright classrooms, plus a music hall and specialist rooms. What was new became tangible and concrete.

The schoolhouse clock signalled a new era

Every community built its own schoolhouse, often with classical columns, usually with a clearly structured façade, wide windows and a large staircase: the children now climbed upward to education – and passed through a large entrance gate for lessons – symbol and mission at the same time, as was also the case with the Burgbach school building.

This was impressively expressed in the imposing Neustadt school building in Zug (now a music school): the wide stair-

case and the striking door with the round arch and the allegorical figures. It was also open to girls – but only after hard political wrangling.

Just like the church, the school building was also given a clock. It signalled the new era: school life goes by the clock – clock time as standardised normality. Time at school is a time of learning.

A neoclassical school palace

Anyone looking at the two school buildings in the city of Zug will be amazed at the architectural elegance of these buildings. Both are of residential character. Like many school buildings from this period, they were regarded as temples of educational awakening and progress. The building signalled the new era: the country realised ideally and then also materially and organisationally what the Helvetic Republic (1798–1803) under its Minister of Education *Philipp Albert Stapfer* already wanted to achieve: a comprehensive and compulsory education for all children as the foundation of the democratic state.

In 1870, a private boys' school was realised just outside the city of Zug. An impressive school palace in the neoclassical style was built there. It included a gymnasium – the first in the canton of Zug; there were also playgrounds, an avenue and a wide park with fountains, grottos and a pond. The area extended all the way to the lake. The Gotthard railway did not yet exist. It was not until 1897 that its tracks cut through the extensive green space of this stately school complex.

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“Education as liberation”

A brief pause before 1 August

by Peter Küpfer

In his cultural-historical article in this issue, *Carl Bossard* draws attention to the eye-catching, castle-like architecture of our traditional Swiss school buildings. Using the example of two particularly impressive buildings in Zug, he calls them “palaces for education”. Many such traditional school buildings in Swiss cities are indeed palatial, especially those that housed the primary schools, which has been compulsory since 1874.

Smaller such democratic “palaces” can often be found in non-urban communities, especially in villages. Sometimes they are enthroned on a hill with a far-reaching view, which makes them comparable to a castle or a palace.

Such a privileged location provides a better overview, a better view, one could also say: a wider horizon. In Switzerland, however, entry to such a “palace” was not reserved for an “elite”. The Swiss primary schools, which became compulsory towards the end of the 19th century, was general and free of charge. The fact that it occasionally had noble features in its architecture did not have a “lordly” background, quite the contrary, but a primal democratic one. In the spirit of its courageous founders, the Swiss primary schools were first and foremost a school for the people, and therefore in a very characteristic way also a school of the people. In

its political supervisory bodies sat craftsmen, peasants, professional people alongside the “college-men”. The school was “their” school. The people’s representatives elected by the electorate to their supervisory bodies (significantly, they were called “school boards”) brought their knowledge and professional experience with them into their office, in the living knowledge of what this school of theirs should and had to achieve.

Out of this original democratic spirit, their exterior, their architecture, carried a message: “This is *our* school, and we are proud of it.” The path is indeed steep, the often mighty staircases inside point to that, and it leads upwards. “To the top”, yes, but this by no means meant that one thing that the modern age promises its youth (not quite honestly): to a lucrative profession. No, *Bosshard* also states this clearly, every real education is not only education for itself, it is also education for the meaningful whole. Therefore, education must above all lead to *freedom*, freedom of being, of thinking and of acting, in other words, “*education as liberation*”.

That is as boldly stated as it is thought, that is *Kant*, that is *Pestalozzi*, *Humboldt*, *Jeremias Gotthelf* and *Gottfried Keller* rolled into one, *Goethe* and *Schiller* would also testify to it – the core of the concept

of autonomy that has already been ground down today. Freedom, especially for the Swiss, essentially requires knowledge. About himself, about his environment, in his profession and, as our primary schools is designed for, also as a sovereign citizen, because he is ultimately a member (and thus co-responsible!) of its final decision-making authority, which in Switzerland is called to the ballot box several times a year: the electorate.

In this capacity, Swiss voters are, whether consciously or not, bound back to the *common* good (not only to their *own* and their party’s). They can only retain this freedom of choice given to them by the constitution if they also keep their autonomous power of judgement at the necessary level, despite all the massive sources of influence today.

This is both a gift and a justified demand on each of us. It is all the more important to face up to it today. Measured in this way, it is not difficult to see how far our Swiss primary schools, long admired around the world and rightly so, has already moved away from its fundamental origins in our constitution. The witnesses cited by *Bosshard* remind us. This is worth a few minutes of reflection. 1 August would be a good opportunity to do so, if possible before the firecrackers and rockets go off. Or again afterwards. •

“A palace for education”

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Contemporary witness and place of remembrance for many age groups of grammar school students

The school was named *Minerva*, after the Roman goddess of wisdom. In 1906, a private “girls grammar school and an international secondary school for girls” were founded on the campus; the school was named after *Athena*, the Greek goddess of science. The school was forced to close before the outbreak of the First World War.

In 1920, the Zug Cantonal School moved into *Athena*’s imposing school building – with around 100 male as well as a few female students. *Athena*’s name is both programme and mission: humanistic education, oriented towards Greco-Roman classicism – for countless grammar school students. Fifty years later, the school counted over 700 students and staff. The building had become too small. In 1975 the Zug grammar school moved to a new location – after a lavish farewell party and a “wild night with *Athena*”.²

The old 1870 school palace was to make way for a new building. But a popular initiative saved from demolition this contemporary witness and place of remembrance for many grammar school student age groups. The building was carefully renovated.³ Today, *Athena* houses the cantonal technical college FMS and the Berufsvorbereitungsschule (school for career preparation) BVS.

Education as an uphill process

To lead the “people in cotton-twill”, the common people, out of their misery and upwards – and to put them on an equal footing with the “people in silk” through education, that was *Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*’s idea, that was what the representatives of the Helvetic Republic dreamed of, and that is what the new federal state of 1848 realised. But education is strenuous and demanding, learning and educating oneself is a constant uphill process and not a linear fast track – the founding generation of the Swiss primary schools knew this. The staircase leading up to a schoolhouse symbolised this. Many old school buildings are reminders

of this departure – and the ascent to education.

At the same time, the representative school buildings of that time show the impressive form given to formation, to education: The path led out of the cramped, stuffy schoolroom to the majestic temple of education – education as liberation, entirely in the terms of the philosopher *Immanuel Kant*. That is not surprising. The thinker from Königsberg had often inspired and educated the early promoters of a better education. This was true of *Stäuffer* as well as of *Pestalozzi*. •

¹ The girls continued to attend school with the teaching sisters of *Maria Opferung* above the town of Zug.

² Andreas Grosz: *ATHENE oder: Aus der Schule plaudern (ATHENA or: telling tales out of school)*. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 25/26 February 1989, pp. 86-88.

³ Renato Morosoli: *Göttin am Zugersee (Goddess on Lake Zug)*. In: *Personalzeitung* 86/2018, p. 14f.

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