

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

“Russian roulette” with a third world war USA and NATO focus on escalation in the Ukraine war

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

More than 100 years ago, in the year after the end of the First World War, the Viennese individual psychologist *Alfred Adler* wrote an article on the causes of the people’s enthusiasm for war, that is still worth reading today, but where he at the same time defended the common people against blanket accusations of guilt¹: “Daily, these people were subjected in their schools to lectures on their obligation to honour the ruling house [...] Distorted history boasts of bellicose glory of the fatherland [...]. Boredom yawned in the peace societies; no head, no popular breath fanned a contrary movement. Newspapers and magazines, politicians and parties courted the rulers’ favour. [...] it took decades for the nation to be trained in weakness and obedience to authority and for the people to forfeit their self-respect.

Then war came, and no one knew from where. According to tried military tactics, the authorities kept the people in the dark [by, as it were, throwing an opaque cloth over their heads; this term is added from original German text, ed.]. Again the sound of horns was heard and hired bands roamed through the streets, idiotic desk-bound warriors came forward with stinging orations in which they flaunted their own nobility and the insignificance of others. They also promised a short war that would end in a glorious victory.

In this thick fog the people thought they could see a faint light, but mainly felt their own impotence. Then came the general staff with their lies. Poisoned wells were uncovered, dynamited bridges discovered far inland, and tales were told of the martyrdom of citizens living along the borders. As told, there was no end to crimes committed by the enemy: rape, arson, crucifixions, shameless indignities, and the use of illegal weapons. [...]

Censorship threw an iron curtain over cities and the countryside. [...] [E]very critical remark, even when spoken with the best of intentions, seemed threatened by unexpected consequences.”

Finally: “Lacking all ties of mutual trust and a strong, developed sense of community, these people, who were kept in the dark, were incapable of any open resistance.”

“That’s insanity because if you were looking at anything from a rational perspective and you look at Ukraine on the map the first conclusion you reach is: Gee this is wonderful. Let’s have a neutral Ukraine. If the place is neutral that puts hundreds of miles between NATO forces in Eastern Europe and Russian forces in Europe. Isn’t that a good thing? Of course it is.

But what have we done? We’ve destroyed that option. We’ve resisted that option because the objective is not to promote peace, not to create stability,

not to find a balance of forces and interests with which everyone can live. Instead, it’s to destroy another country and why should we be surprised that the Russians have reacted the way they do?

It’s insanity. I would react exactly as the Russians have and I think we should expect the Russians given these long-range strikes to answer our strikes in the same way.”

(*Douglas Macgregor*
in conversation with *Glenn Diesen*)

Would it not be worthwhile to reflect on these considerations in our present day?

It is not only since 24 February 2022 that we have been blitzed with anti-Russian propaganda rubbish. Have we been kept in the dark – in a “thick fog” [with an opaque cloth thrown over our heads] – once again? Are our human weaknesses once again preventing us from putting up the “open resistance” which the situation requires?

The USA has been seeking to weaken Russia for more than 30 years

The efforts of the US government, of the NATO states and of their allies to push post-Soviet Russia into compliance or else to destroy it, date back to the beginning of the 1990s. officially, they spoke of an end of the Cold War, but in fact they have been working towards the establishment of the “world’s sole superpower”, the USA, and its global dominance. The Western course against Russia was tightened when that country’s political leadership was no longer willing to accept the further decline and plundering of its country. Instead, it set its sights on reconstruction, self-reliance and on what the *United Nations Charter* had proclaimed for all member states after the end of the Second World War: equal rights.

The role envisaged for Ukraine

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine – as in the years after 1945 – has been assigned a central role in weakening Russia, and *Zbigniew Brzezinski* confirmed this quite openly in his classic

“The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives”, which was published in the original English version in 1997 and in a German translation in 1999.

Since 2014 at the latest, the USA, NATO and the EU have deliberately provoked a proxy war between Ukraine and Russia.² The propaganda formula of a “brutal war of aggression in violation of international law” and an “unprovoked attack” on the “victim” Ukraine was intended to pillory and isolate Russia internationally and drive it to economic ruin with sanctions. All this is not Russian propaganda, as it can be proven.

However, the plan has failed and the actors are faced with a shambles.

But instead of admitting its own failure and correcting its political course, the West is now obviously opting for escalation. On an escalation of propaganda ... and on an escalation on the battlefield.

History knows the path of political madness

This path of political madness is not unknown in history. At the end of 1941, National Socialist Germany’s war plans against the Soviet Union had resulted in a shambles. The German “blitzkrieg” against the Soviet Union had failed at the gates of Moscow, and the Anglo-Saxon powers long courted by *Hitler*, and which had in return also long sponsored *Hitler*, had now turned against National Socialist Germany, with superior strength, as the USA had entered into the war at

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the end of 1941. And these Anglo-Saxon powers now wanted to put into practice their sinister plan that Germany and the Soviet Union bleed each other white in a long war fought with extreme brutality. The war, which was declared a “total war” by the German side lasted three and a half more bitter years with millions more dead and endless destruction after the further defeat in Stalingrad at the beginning of 1943, and there remained only one goal: murder and destruction wherever possible.

Glenn Diesen and Douglas Macgregor

On 15 September 2023, a 42-minute conversation between the Norwegian political scientist *Glenn Diesen* and the former US Army Colonel *Douglas Macgregor* was put online as a video³ and a few days later, on 21 September, thankfully also as a text in German translation by *seniora.org*⁴. This detailed text is compulsive reading.

The “Biden Phase of the War”

Both interlocutors agree that the previous plan of the USA and NATO to inflict a military defeat on Russia by means of a ground war against Ukrainian troops with Western weapons has failed. For Ukraine, the Ukrainian “major offensive” against the Russian positions has resulted in tens of thousands of victims and enormous destruction of its war material, but no military success. Now Ukraine lacks troops to continue a massive ground war.

Glenn Diesen and Douglas Macgregor therefore conclude that the war is changing from a “Ukraine war” to what Macgregor calls a “Biden phase of the war”: primarily through the delivery and use of longer-range missiles and cruise missiles that can reach far into Russia with pinpoint accuracy and great destructive potential; weapons that, however, cannot be used without direct US or NATO involvement.

The USA and NATO, according to both interlocutors, are now quite obviously “warring parties”.

Russia will not be able to accept this acute threat to its own country and possibly even to Russian nuclear facilities passively or purely defensively. It will be forced to go on a military counter-offensive. The country has the military capacities for this: for action within Ukraine, but possibly also with the aim of hitting strategically important US and NATO bases in the USA, Great Britain, France or Germany – although Russian President *Putin* has so far done everything to avoid a direct war against NATO despite all provocations. So far, he has probably counted on the economic decline of the NATO states and their presumed willingness to back down in that case.

“Everything that we’ve tried has backfired instead of a rational discussion – which is what you’re looking for – that re-examines all the steps we’ve taken looks at what the Russians have done and saying: Let’s talk, let’s halt all operations at this point. Cease operations, meet somewhere with Russian Representatives, we, the United States, and discuss what can be done to end this conflict. We’re not doing it. Instead, we’ve said: We absolutely will not do.

Means that you then look at the inventory of weapon weapons at your disposal and you say: Well, what else can we use short of a nuclear weapon that’s going to harm the Russians that

will theoretically induce them to cooperate with us and negotiate – which of course is absurd because this is not about weapons this is about territory. It’s about the presence of NATO and NATO capabilities on Russia’s borders.

We don’t want to talk about that. We won’t even accept the possibility that Ukraine could be something other than a member of NATO. So, under these circumstances what is the basis for negotiations? What’s the basis for discussion? What’s the basis for talks? I don’t see any.”

(*Douglas Macgregor in conversation with Glenn Diesen*)

It is also conceivable, however, that states friendly to and allied with Russia (Macgregor names North Korea, allies in the Middle East and five Latin American states) could launch attacks on the USA.

Western delusion

So far, Diesen and Macgregor have ruled out a deliberate nuclear exchange. It is still known even in Washington that a nuclear war would mean the destruction of the entire world. And Russia will not use nuclear weapons as long as it is not attacked with them. Because of their limited military capacities and the high level of Russian armament, neither the USA nor NATO as a whole are in a position to wage an open conventional war against Russia. Glenn Diesen and Douglas Macgregor therefore speak of a lack of rationality on the part of the US political leadership. This leadership is driven by the craze of wanting to harm Russia in every possible way – without thinking of the consequences. So far, it does not help that the US people, with good arguments, do not want a war against Russia. Washington is in the hands of the warring party.

It is not yet clear how Russia will react and what considerations are being made in the Russian political and military leadership. What is clear, however, is this: The change from a proxy war to the “Biden phase of the war” is a “Russian roulette” with a third world war – and the defeat of the West, with all the catastrophic consequences for the people, especially in our Western countries, would be foreseeable. Already, the people in the European countries are paying a high price for this war, for which their governments are partly responsible.

Let us not wait until it has come to that

Alfred Adler wrote in the article quoted above: “Just as this nation is about to be given a voice [one year after the war], when only a mighty stream of an awakened social feeling can bring salvation, and when a newly aroused feeling of human dignity cries out for punishment of

the guilty so that the world’s confidence can be regained, the governments of the Alliance [the “Entente”] threaten these, so recently tortured people, with a new form of slavery.” Adler had in mind the unjust provisions of the armistice agreements and the Versailles treaties, and discerned precisely their consequences with reference to peace.

How, after all the humiliations and great sacrifices suffered, a victorious Russia will deal with the defeated, we do not know. Hopefully, it will be more humane than Western states used to be after their “victories”.

But does it have to come to that? Cannot more people fight their way out of the “thick fog” [withdraw the opaque cloth from their heads] even now and do their utmost for peace? This might start with an honest conversation with a friend, a colleague or a neighbour – with prudent objectivity and humanity instead of propaganda and incitement of the people. It is not sensible and it is even against human nature to simply wait and pretend that the danger is not imminent. •

¹ First published as a pamphlet: Adler, Alfred. “Die andere Seite. Eine massenpsychologische Studie über die Schuld des Volkes”, Leopold Heidrich, Vienna, 1919 (“The Other Side. A Mass-Psychological Study of a Nation’s Guilt”). New translation by *Gerald L. Liebenau*, 2003

² This war policy of the USA and the NATO states is not limited to Russia, but has plunged numerous countries and peoples into disaster over the past 30 years (and also during the Cold War). All the more disconcerting and outrageous is the public appearance of Western politicians today putting on a cloak of hypocrisy in order to carry out their sinister work with glowing words. In this context, the speech of the German Chancellor *Olaf Scholz* before the General Assembly of the United Nations on 19 September was scandalous – albeit in front of almost empty seats. The majority of the world does not want to be lied to any longer.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KIqR3ORYLE> of 15 September 2023; one of *Glenn Diesen*’s main areas of research is Russia’s foreign policy. He is sharply attacked by the Western mainstream because of his good contacts with Russia, which he has maintained to this day. *Douglas Macgregor* held various strategically significant leadership positions as a member of the

These are years of great change

Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the 32nd Bálványos Free Summer University and Student Camp (Excerpts)

zf. A large part of the country's Hungarian minority, around 600,000 people, live in the south-eastern Romanian region of Transylvania. Tuschnad, located in this region, has been the venue of the Free Summer University organised by Hungarians every year for about 30 years. This year it took place from 18–23 July under the motto "Time for Peace". Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has given a keynote speech here several times in previous years, including this year. Because of his public criticism of Romania's official conditions for being able to deliver his speech at all, and because of his criticism of the political conditions in the EU, Orbán's speech this year came under severe attack in mainstream media in other EU countries. To give our readers a chance to form their own opinion, we document excerpts from this speech.



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán speaking at the Free Summer University in Bad Tuschnad on 22 July 2023. (picture Visegrad Post)

Dear Friends,

We are living through a particularly dangerous period in the history of humanity. These are years of great change. [...] The essence of my message is that the balance of power in the world has shifted, and now we are suffering the serious consequences of this. Looking back, we see that for eighty years after the Second World War there was a balance of power in the world. For us Hungarians, this period consisted of two parts. [...] But now China has shifted the balance of the world. This is one of the Western world's old fears. Even *Napoleon* said, "Let China sleep, for when she wakes she will shake the world."

Tactical time, strategic time, and historical time

How this situation has come about is instructive.

I will make a brief digression, a digression on methodology. In my experience, when you make a political decision, you have to simultaneously visualise three timeframes. The issue to be decided on must first of all be classified in

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US military and is also a political scientist, as well as a military theorist, the author of specialist books and articles and a consultant. US President *Donald Trump* would have liked to see Macgregor succeed Richard Grenell as United States Ambassador to Germany, but Macgregor was not confirmed by the Senate. For further interesting information about Douglas Macgregor, see the *Wikipedia* entry (retrieved 24 September 2023).

⁴ <https://www.seniora.org/politik-wirtschaft/die-NATO-eskaliert-der-krieg-tritt-in-eine-neue-phase-ein-colonel-douglas-macgregor-und-glenn-diesen> of 21 September 2023

one of these timeframes, and you should only make a concrete decision on it once you have classified it. So there are three timeframes in which politics exists: tactical time, strategic time, and historical time. If you make the wrong classification, your decision will have unintended consequences. Let me give you two examples. When Chancellor *Merkel* was confronted with the migrant invasion in 2015, she classified the problem in tactical time, and said, "Wir schaffen das", or "We can handle this". Today it is clear that in reality the issue belonged to strategic time, because the consequences of her decision would transform the entire culture of Germany.

"There has never been such a rapid and tectonic shift in the global balance of power"

Now we come to China. The second example is from the United States in the early 1970s. Back then the US decided to free China from its isolation, obviously to make it easier to deal with the Russians; and so it put that issue in the strategic timeframe. But it has turned out that in fact this issue, the liberation of China, belongs to the historical timeframe; because as a result of that liberation, the United States – and all of us – are now facing a greater force than the one we wanted to defeat.

Wrong classification, unexpected consequences. But what happened has happened, and now the fact is that there has never been such a rapid and tectonic shift in the global balance of power as the one we are living through today. Remember – or note – that the way in which China

is rising is different from that in which the United States rose: the United States emerged; China was, and is. In other words, we are really talking about a return: we are talking about the return of a 5,000-year-old civilisation of 1.4 billion people.

China is in many areas the strongest country of the world today ...

And this is a problem that needs to be solved, because it is not going to solve itself. China has become a production powerhouse. In fact, it has already overtaken the US – or is overtaking it at this very moment: car manufacturing, computers, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, info communication systems; in the world today it is the strongest in all of these areas. What has happened is that China has made the roughly three-hundred-year journey from the Western industrial revolution to the global information revolution in just thirty years. As a result, it has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, and today humanity's combined prosperity and knowledge is greater than it was. But if this is the case, what is the danger?

... but the US does not want to give up its quest for supremacy yet

The danger, the reason the situation is dangerous, Dear Friends, is that the gold medal already has an owner: after its own civil war, from the 1870s onwards the United States grew to be the preeminent country, and its inalienable right to world economic supremacy is part of its national identity, and a kind of article of faith. And whenever that position has

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“These are years of great change”

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been challenged, the United States has always successfully repelled the challenge. It repelled the Soviet Union. And, let us remember, it also repelled the European Union. A few decades ago the European Union’s plan was to promote the euro as a world currency alongside the dollar. We can see where the euro is today. And we also had a plan, which we expressed as the need to create a great free trade zone stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok. What do we see today? Today, the free trade zone stretches from Lisbon to the outskirts of Donetsk at the furthest. In 2010 the US and the European Union contributed 22 – 23 per cent of total world production; today the US contributes 25 per cent and the European Union 17 per cent. In other words, the US has successfully repelled the European Union’s attempt to move up alongside it – or even ahead of it.

Dear Summer Camp, in international politics there is a simple correlation: the bigger your GDP, your gross domestic product, the more influence you have in international affairs. In other words, what we are seeing today is a steady decline in American dominance on the world stage. And no preeminent world power will take kindly to that sort of thing. Their reasoning is simple. It can be roughly summed up as follows: “We’re at the top of the world. We climbed here in order to stay here forever. Of course, there’s this thing called history, which is disagreeable, but the point is that what’s always happened to other countries and other peoples has come to an end with us, and we’ll stay here at the top of the world forever.”

Current trends favour Asia and China

This is a tempting thought, but the unpleasant truth of our life today is that in world politics there are no eternal winners and no eternal losers. An even more unpleasant truth is that the current trends favour Asia and China – be those trends in economics, technological development, or indeed military power. A still more unpleasant truth is that changes are also taking place in international institutions. We all know the correlation which shows that whoever creates international institutions will thereby gain an advantage from them. So China has quite simply created its own: we see the BRICS and the “One Belt One Road Initiative”; and we also see the *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank*, the development resources of which are several times greater than the development resources of all the Western countries.

In other words, Asia, or China, stands before us fully attired as a great power. It has a civilisational credo: it is the cen-

tre of the universe, and this releases inner energy, pride, self-esteem and ambition. It has a long-term plan, which is expressed as “Ending the century of humiliation” – or, to paraphrase the Americans, “Make China Great Again”. It [China] has a medium-term programme: to restore in Asia the dominance that existed before the West arrived. And it can neutralise the chief US weapon, the chief US weapon of power, which we call “universal values”. The Chinese simply laugh at this, describing it as a Western myth, and noting that such talk of universal values is in fact a philosophy hostile to other, non-Western, civilizations. And, seen from over there, that view contains some truth.

In other words, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Summer Camp, the situation we are living in today is one in which day by day we are moving towards conflict. The question – the 1-million-dollar question – is whether this conflict can be avoided. There are ever more studies and books on this, and I am also working from them.

Can the “Thucydides Trap” be avoided?

One notable work says that in the last three hundred years there have been sixteen occasions when a new “champion” has risen to pull alongside – or overtake – the world’s leading power. The bad news is that of the sixteen instances thus identified, twelve have ended in war, and only four were peacefully resolved. In other words, Dear Friends, we are at the most dangerous moment in world politics today, when the leading great power sees itself sinking towards second place. Experience shows that the dominant great power tends to see itself as more benevolent and better-intentioned than it really is, and attributes malice to its challenger more often than is – or should be – justified. Consequently, the starting point for each opposing party is not the intentions of the counterpart, but its capabilities: not what the counterpart wants to do, but what it is capable of doing. And thus war is already in the making. This is what is called the “Thucydides Trap”, named after the man who wrote the history of the Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens, and who first identified the problem.

Settling a new equilibrium: “Two suns in the sky”

Ladies and Gentlemen, The implication for our lives is that a clash between the two great powers – including between their soldiers – is more likely than we are able to see from here in Tusnádfürd today. The good news – or at least a ray of hope – is that war is not inevitable. Its avoidance is conditional on the world’s ability

to find a new equilibrium to replace the one that is now in motion. The question is how this can be done. The truth is that this is a task for the “big boys”. We have not been dealt a hand in that card game. Let us not misjudge our role. All we can say is that now something should be done that has never been done before: the big boys should accept that there are two suns in the sky. This mentality is radically different from the one we have lived with for the last few hundred years. Regardless of the current balance of power, the opposing sides should recognise each other as equals. [...]

So, from this analysis of the situation, what do we need to do? What is worth understanding, Dear Friends, is that the settling of the new equilibrium will not happen overnight – or even from one month to the next. The settling of such a new equilibrium will take a whole generation. This means that not only will we live our lives within this global system of relations, within this world era, this zeitgeist: so too will our children. And we Hungarians must make headway in this world situation and zeitgeist, and we must shape our Hungarian national plans with this in mind. •

Source: Cabinet Office of The Prime Minister <https://miniszterelnok.hu/en/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-32nd-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp/> of 24 July 2023

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Federal elections on 22 October 2023

Switching the Swiss compass back on A retrospective on the autumn session and expectations towards our future parliamentarians

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

I have just completed the “smartvote” questionnaire with 75 questions on my political standpoint and ended up with a majority of candidates who hardly correspond to my political position. Because of the fact that I as a citizen don’t build my opinion based on a left-right-scheme but ponder depending on the subject, I just get any candidates chosen for me ... therefore my recommendation: don’t let yourself get derailed by a voting barometer operating with “artificial intelligence”.

For us, the voters, there are some urgent questions at hand on 22 October: Which foreign and security policies are the best for our country? Which values are vital for a prosperous coexistence? Which measures are the most urgent for a good education of our youth? What should be included into our policy out of democratic, ethical and social reasons? Which candidates are providing the most satisfying answers? (Most of the current parliamentarians will stand again in autumn.) Looking into some of the affairs made in the past autumnal session might be helpful to some voters. By the way: By entering the correspondent affair number on *Google*, you may see every vote and vote results.

Make the Swiss army able to act again instead of sacrificing neutrality

Once again, the compass is drifting away from the Swiss course at the Federal Parliament Building, which would be a foreign policy that preserves our neutrality and thus protects our citizens. Both houses of parliament have decided to muster out 25 Leopard tanks from the army stock to deliver them to Germany at the behest of German ministers *Habeck* and *Pistorius*, as a so-called replacement for the tanks that Germany sent to Ukraine. A foul trick to circumvent the contract duty of Germany not to forward Swiss army goods to other countries. Of driving forces of this deal, *Maja Riniker* (FDP AG), easily claimed on the National Council on June 14th that Switzerland could thereby “contribute to the European security architecture without jeopardising its own safety”. And chief of the *Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport* (DDPS) *Viola Amherd* twisted the definition of neutrality in a spine-crawling manner at the Council of States on 26 September: “*This is possible by the laws of neutrality, and by neutrality policies, it is in the interest of Switzerland from the perspective of the*



*Chamber of the Council of States in the Federal Parliament building in Bern.
(picture Wikimedia)*

Federal Council and the majority of the National Council.”¹

The opposition in both Councils defied themselves against this unneutral and unlawful deal, many found that Switzerland would be wiser to re-establish its defence capabilities instead of sending tanks into foreign warzones. National Council member *Hans-Peter Portmann* (FDP ZH) [addressing a Council colleague from the *Green Party*]: “Dear Madam and colleague, your party is against weapons, because weapons kill people. Now you are voting for mustering out 25 tanks. You know that these tanks will go to Germany, then they will go to Ukraine, and then people will be killed by them.” Council of States member *Alex Kuprecht* (SVP SZ): “But yet, we don’t have a guarantee that not one of these tanks will end up in Ukraine. Therefore, I am of the conviction that we should try to refurbish our material, strengthen our manpower, reconstruct our defensive capabilities and build up our perseverance before we put tanks out of service and sell them.”

The National Council has accepted this unconstitutional deal on 14 June with 132 Yes to 59 No votes. No to tank shipping to Germany, apart from the entire SVP faction, was also voted by the following free democrats: *Jaqueline De Quattro* (VD), *Marcel Dobler* (SG), *Matthias Samuel Jauslin* (AG), *Hans-Peter Portmann* (ZH), *Christian Wasserfallen* (BE) as well as the green liberal *Martin Bäumle* (ZH).

On 26 September the Council of States unsurprisingly joined the National Council with 25 Yes to 15 No votes. (The No votes cannot be matched to the exact statements for or against the tank deal because it was linked with another question.)

Everyone who is of the opinion that, in this highly precarious situation, grovelling in front of the war alliance NATO would buy more safety for Switzerland does himself a favour to remember the beneficent effect of the everlasting armed neutrality of our country during both of the global conflagrations of the twentieth century. Beneficent for Switzerland and the whole world.

G7 Task Force: National Council struggles, Council of States stands strong

The *Green Party* has brought forward a motion at the National Council, after which Switzerland should join the “Task Force Repo” (“Russian Elites, Proxies and Oligarchs”) and search for Russian wealth under the command of the G7.² This undertaking which stands in contradiction to neutrality, the state of law and the sovereignty of Switzerland was averted for now by rejecting the attempt back to the respective committee to clarify certain points by the majority of the Council.

A clear No to the ideas of the green would surely have been preferable. But despite formal subtleties, the free-demo-

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cratic faction and its postponement of the motion at least put a central question into the room: “Would Switzerland [...] keep full autonomy when it came to sanctions or would there be an automatic mechanism?” If one keeps in mind how much autonomy Switzerland has left after being pushed by Brussels or rather Washington to accept their sanctions, namely zero, this question is not that hard to answer.

The Greens however weren’t pleased at all with the postponement, having targeted the Swiss financial centre within their motions’ justification: “As administrator of Russian wealth and as main location of Russian commodity trade, Switzerland carries a major responsibility for the effectiveness of measures which could lead to a swift ending of the destructive offensive war against Ukraine.” Besides the absurd goal of the motion: That the greens are being used by Wallstreet and the London City by acting this way is not something they even realised.

Two positive remarks: On the one hand: the members of FDP, SVP and the Central Party can easily form a majority in the National Council, if they stand together just for once: the motion was rejected to the committee with 101 Yes to 77 No votes. Let us hope that said commission seeks for advice at the *Federal Office of Justice*, which (at least up to now) does not let itself be pushed from the right path regarding this question.

On the other hand, the Federal Council fortunately pleaded for the refusal of the attempt: Switzerland does not need a task force, neither a national nor an international one, says the *Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research* (EAER).

Fortunately, not all Federal Councillors are cast in the same mould: Chief of EAER *Guy Parmelin* obviously is not impressed by arrogant US ambassadors and foreign ministers, clearly in contrast to his colleague at the DDPS.

Narrow victory of the EU turbos for the EEA track

The bourgeois parties in the National Council were unable to unite against the motion of EMS President *Eric Nussbaumer* (SP BL). (*The European Movement Switzerland* EMS is a think tank that has been striving for Switzerland’s accession to the EU since 1998). The motion proposers want to instruct the Federal Council, in addition to talks with Brussels on the continuation of the bilateral path, to initiate “exploratory” talks with the EEA Council on a possible rapprochement of Switzerland to the EEA.³ Nussbaumer’s reasoning: “The Federal Council is only pursuing one strategic option. [...] No one

knows whether this will ever succeed. No one knows either whether negotiations will succeed for Switzerland.” That is why a second track has to be tackled.

Federal Councillor *Guy Parmelin* is also responsible for this issue. He points to the recently published report “Current State of Swiss-EU Relations”, according to which “the bilateral path remains the most suitable instrument for ensuring relations with the European Union with a comprehensive balance of interests”. Joining the EEA, on the other hand, “would allow little to no specific solutions and exceptions tailor-made for Switzerland – just think of state aid. Switzerland’s political room for manoeuvre would therefore be more restricted.” Federal Councillor *Parmelin* therefore recommends that the motion be rejected.

94 National Councillors were in favour of this motion, 92 against, with 4 abstentions – isn’t that annoying? Instead of letting the EU issue simmer as quietly as possible, a new barrel is being opened with fanfare that has already been “explored” – as the EU turbos around *Eric Nussbaumer* know very well. Now the motion goes to the Council of States – so there is still hope.

Let’s end the selection from the autumn session with two positive decisions by the parliament, or rather the Council of States.

With less education at the PH in order to solve the teacher shortage?

The Committee for Science, Education and Culture of the National Council (SECC-N) wanted to introduce easier access to the University of Teacher Education for professionals with a vocational baccalaureate in order to combat the shortage of teachers.⁴ In view of today’s narrow education for future teachers at PHs as well as the pedagogically misguided training to become a coach instead of a teacher, it is to be welcomed that the Council of States in the autumn session at least prevented a reduction in the previous education required for admission to PHs.

Today, a baccalaureate from a grammar school can be admitted to a university of teacher education without having to take an examination, whereas graduates of a vocational apprenticeship with a vocational baccalaureate are required to take an entrance examination. The speaker of the committee in the National Council, *Simon Stadler* (Central Party UR), who has taken this latter path himself, calls the current regulation “a disregard for the vocational baccalaureate”, which is “no longer appropriate in times of a shortage of skilled workers and teachers”. In the debate, the three presuppositions of this statement, which are intertwined here, were taken apart

and carefully answered in both councils. Some opinions from the abundance.

– *On good prior education: Matthias Michel* (FDP ZG), Speaker of the Committee in the Council of States: “Article 61a of our Federal Constitution [...] calls for permeability in the Swiss education system, which is also the basic concern of the motion. However, permeability does not mean ‘free floating’, there is no totally free access to universities, regardless of prior education. So, in this specific case, it does not mean that a vocational baccalaureate allows the same free access to a university of teacher education as a baccalaureate from a grammar school. You have to read the whole article: The same article of the Federal Constitution also calls for educational quality. In this case, quality means that PH students must have the necessary backpack to enter the teaching profession. It is precisely the subjects that are missing in a vocational baccalaureate education that are important tools for the teaching profession.”

– *On the “disregard for the vocational baccalaureate”*: Councillor of States *Mathilde Crevoisier Crelter* (SP JU): “Vocational baccalaureate holders actually have to obtain a one-year additional diploma in order to enter a PH. Conversely, a holder of a baccalaureate from a grammar school has to do a one-year internship before he can go to a university of applied sciences, for example. [...] It is not a declassification of professional skills to say that the vocational baccalaureate does not provide the sufficient academic background.”

– *On addressing the teacher shortage*: National Councillor *Simone de Montmollin* (FDP GE): “Addressing the teacher shortage requires addressing the real problems, such as part-time work, which is quite high in the teaching profession. Another would be the question of why teachers sometimes leave their jobs only a few years after graduation. These questions need to be answered before irreversible measures are considered [...]” Note: It is up to the cantons to urgently tackle this permanent issue.

In the National Council, the motion was clearly adopted with 122 Yes to 41 No, with supporters and opponents in almost all parties and with many abstentions (23) – perhaps a sign that quite a few parliamentarians have not really concerned themselves with the state of teacher training and the primary schools. In the Council of States, the proposal was narrowly rejected, with 21 No to 19 Yes across all parties, with 2 abstentions. With the rejection by the Second Council, the motion is

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Smiling faces, empty words, and empty phrases

by Eliane Perret

Elections are just around the corner. In a well-considered electoral system, Swiss citizens can elect their representatives to the National Council and the Council of States. Each canton provides two Councilors of State, while the number of National Councillors is determined according to the population share of the respective canton. This system ensures that the different parts of the country, language regions, urban and rural areas, are represented in a balanced way. The question of who should represent our country at the highest level of authority is of great importance and is ultimately a matter of trust. However, the people still have the opportunity to help shape events in the country through initiatives and referenda.

A friendly welcome

They greet me with smiling faces from the posters at the roadside at the entrance to our village. They are dressed up, their hair is carefully done, and their make-up is attractive. (Photoshop did the rest.) But the beaming women and men have not won the lottery, instead they are campaigning for me to put their name on the list of candidates for the National Council or the Council of States. They want to represent my interests in the highest offices of our country.

I am happy to say, we have many committed fellow citizens. It is a fortunate thing, because I want our country to return to its integral neutrality and to finally bury its plans for NATO membership

“I assume that an educated people are an indispensable part of any living democracy and that our elementary schools should impart profound knowledge so that every young person knows his or her civic rights and duties, can orientate his or her actions accordingly, and thus ensure the continuation of our direct democracy and a life lived in freedom.”

and accession to the EU. Only with secure neutrality will my country regain its role as a model of peace for the world, and as a source of hope for the many people suffering in war-torn countries. Unfortunately, many things have gone wrong in Switzerland in recent years, and the course our country now takes is in urgent need of correction. Accordingly, I am eager to vote. But first, I am curious to hear what the candidates have to say.

About truth, courage and freedom of expression

At first, everything I read on the political posters sounds promising. One candidate claims to support, “freedom of expression”. Quite in my spirit, I think. Unfortunately, our mainstream media have fallen “into line” with the political establishment and there is little diversity of opinion or freedom of expression to be found. Instead, they represent the interests of lobby groups or have become the extended arm of big power. It seems that their

purpose is to control my opinion and what I think. (That’s why I now inform myself elsewhere). For example, our mainstream media write that Switzerland would remain neutral even if we supplied weapons to Ukraine, in some roundabout way, or supported unilateral sanctions against Russia. Strange! Then I wonder, does this candidate I’m considering actually think of “freedom of expression” in the same way as I do? I’d rather have something more concrete, Sir!

The candidate on the next poster suits me better: She claims to be “Committed to the truth”. Very good, then she will surely inform me openly about her political and career plans, and will never lie to me (because lying is not nice, her mother must have already said that). But then I wonder, why stress a commitment to the truth? In Bern, honest people with a clear head and an upright stance are already needed.

I look at the next poster where the candidate advertises that he is: “Thinking
continued on page 8

“Switching the Swiss compass ...”

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finally off the table. This is a small consolation for all those who fight for a good primary school and a good luck for our children, who in any case receive too little of the basics for their lives at primary school. Every teacher who has a good and comprehensive education can be of great importance.

No second National Day for Switzerland

On 4 May 2023, the National Council had approved a motion to introduce a bank holiday to commemorate the founding of the Swiss federal state on 12 September 1848, when the Federal Constitution came into force (with 94 votes in favour, 82 against and 6 abstentions). On 27 September, the Council of States rejected a second Swiss bank holiday. There was no opposition here, so the small chamber voted according to the old custom, without digitally recording the individu-

al votes (recorded in the minutes of the meeting: “rejected”). With the No of the Council of States as the second chamber, the proposal is off the table.⁵

The 1 August has been Switzerland’s bank holidays since 1891, 600 years after 1291. Because the celebration takes place in the evening, the 1 August was long a working day. It was introduced as a bank holiday after the adoption of a popular initiative on 26 September 1993. The Council of States rejected the second public holiday mainly because of the Swiss people’s attachment to the celebration of the Letter of Confederation of 1291.

Thomas Minder (SVP SH): “The Federal Constitution of 12 September 1848 is undoubtedly a historical milestone in the development of Switzerland, but Switzerland was not founded in 1848, but in 1291.”

Hans Stöckli (SP BE): “You cannot introduce a bank holiday from the top down: The people themselves must want to dedicate a second day to the founding of our

country. I can’t imagine that 12 September will evoke much emotion and cohesion in our population to create this new day.” (Stöckli’s vote contained this cohesion: he spoke Italian, French and German).

Philippe Bauer (FDP NE): “I would like to emphasise what Mr Stöckli has just said. For me, national cohesion is important. This nation of wills that we boast of belonging to has managed to create a national symbol around the 1 August. [...] this is the case even for the Vaudois – which I am not – because Gilles, one of their great poets, sang ‘Nos ancêtres [ancestors] les Waldstätten’. This cohesion was created around 1 August.” •

¹ Army Message 2023 (23.025). Emphasis mw

² Motion 22.3451. “Switzerland’s participation in the multinational task force Repo for the implementation of economic sanctions against Russia”.

³ Motion 21.4457. “Initiation of exploratory talks with the EEA Council”.

⁴ SECC-N. Motion 22.4268. “Exam-free access with the vocational baccalaureate to teacher training colleges for training as a primary school teacher”.

⁵ Motion 21.4075. “A holiday for democracy”.

“Smiling faces, empty words ...”

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ahead with courage and will”. Exactly right, that’s what I would like to see. But what must be going through the mind of the man smiling at me? Is he the one who will stand up for the integral neutrality of our country with a strong “will”? If so, he would have my vote for sure! Or, will he stir with “courage” in a completely different direction? Will he make our country a boot-jack of the great powers? If so, he won’t have my vote-!

Maybe the two ladies on the next -placard will manage to persuade me. There are, after all, two of them beaming at me. The poster says, “Choose the future now”. Yes, I think, but which future? Surely they must have a specific future in mind, but just don’t want to say. I am allergic to such secrecy. And then what do I see? I’m amazed: “Enough is enough”, says the next poster. Me too! I go home.

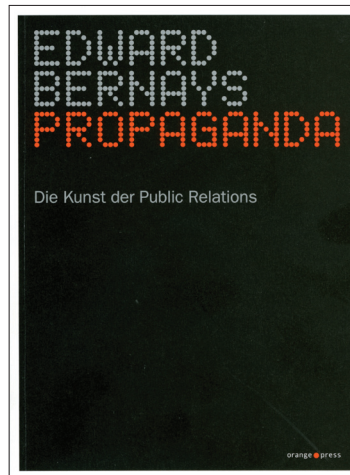
Propaganda – the art of seduction?

Once at home, I pull out from my bookcase the book by *Edward Bernays* entitled “Propaganda; The Art of Public Relations”. This is exactly what interests me now. It was first published in 1928 and has been reprinted ever since, most recently in 2021, in its 13th edition.

The subtitle, which did not appear on the original book but was added to the German translation, refers to the fact that the term “propaganda” tends to be avoided today and has been replaced with the less objectionable phrase, “public relations.” The word propaganda fell into disrepute during the years of the Second World War. (Bernays’ book was on *Joseph Goebbels*’ bookcase). Bernays remains influential and propaganda is still considered compulsory reading for PR consultants – as the propaganda experts are called in politically correct terms.

The preface to the book says: “No one should have the right to call themselves a PR consultant or ‘public relation counselor’ without having read Bernays, not as a compulsory academic exercise, but as a guiding principle of daily practice”. It is true that every book must always be seen in the context of its genesis, in this case America of the 1920s. Propaganda is certainly a mirror of the conditions in America at that time, but the book remains widely read and is still considered relevant today. It was only translated into German in 2007 – eighty years after its first publication.

Bernays was not “politically correct”, but spoke plainly about what he saw as the necessary steering of public opinion through propaganda, including the use of propaganda in politics. That is why he writes at the beginning of his book: “The conscious and purposeful manipulation of the behaviour and attitudes of the masses



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is an essential component of democratic societies. Organisations that work in secret direct the social processes. They are the real governments in the country.” (p. 19) I had to pause and read the sentence again: Manipulation as a component of democratic societies? I have always understood democracy to mean that we are responsible citizens with the right and ability to determine the fate of our country ourselves.

Manipulation – a component of democratic societies?

Bernays goes on to say that “A serious and talented politician is fortunately able to shape and channel the will of the people thanks to the tools of propaganda.” Politicians, he complains, have taken too little cue from the business world in this regard. (p. 83) According to Bernays, “...propaganda carefully tailored to the needs of the masses is an essential part of politics”. (p. 84) As he would have it, “Good government work can be sold as well as any other product.” (p. 92)

Bernays offers the following advice to political parties and politicians: “In order to prepare the programme, a scientifically accurate study of the electorate with its needs should take place. An overview of the wishes and needs of the public is essential for the political strategist when he goes about his task of planning and drafting the activities of the party and its elected protagonists for the upcoming term” (p. 87).

The emotional world of the people must not be forgotten either, according to Bernays. “It makes sense to appeal to people’s feelings in a political campaign – and is even an indispensable factor in any campaign”. (p.89) Today, the numerous PR agencies that run election and referendum campaigns are responsible for implementing all that Bernays advises – even the Federal Palace in Bern is equipped with a huge PR department.

After appropriate preparation, their meticulous implementation is to follow:

“Once the main objectives and the basic plan of the election campaign have been adopted and the main approach to appeal to the groups has been defined, the message has to be conveyed precisely through the media that will bring it most efficiently to the target groups”. (p. 90) Which target group do you think my friends and I belong to?

A leading elite and corresponding propaganda

Anyone who delves into Bernays’ remarks will not be able to avoid asking about his conception of man. Obviously, he assumes “that the organisation and focussing of public opinion is indispensable for a regulated coexistence”. (p. 21) And this requires two things, according to Bernays, a leading elite and corresponding propaganda, which functions to ensure the loyalty, and conformity, of those who are governed: “The gap between the intellectuals and the masses is bridged in the complex society with the help of propaganda. Only propaganda enables the government, an organ of the people, to maintain a close relationship with the people, which is essential for the functioning of a democracy.” (p. 98) What was that exactly?

I assume that an educated people are an indispensable part of any living democracy and that our elementary schools should impart profound knowledge so that every young person knows his or her civic rights and duties, can orientate his or her actions accordingly, and thus ensure the continuation of our direct democracy and a life lived in freedom. So, anyone who wants my vote so that they can represent me in Bern must win my trust. Whether this can be achieved with the slogan “Keeps its promises” can be questioned.

Now, I do not want to imply that the radiant women and men who are trying to convince me to support their candidacy have fully adopted Edward Bernays’ advice. But in view of their colourless slogans, it seems obvious to me that they have taken advice on how to offer as little of substance as possible for discussion while minimizing any possibility of attack. Have they understood so little about the nature of our direct democracy?

That is why I am neither confident about the candidate who advertises her candidacy with the slogan, the “courage to find solutions”. What does she want to solve? How can peace return to our world? What does she say about the question of integral neutrality, about the threat of NATO affiliation and incorporation into the EU? These questions cannot be answered using empty phrases and empty words, but need an honest discussion with Switzerland’s citizenry. One of the political poster actually said, “Stay tuned!” Precisely, that’s what we’ll do!

“A multipolar world order takes shape”

The XXXth “Mut zur Ethik” conference, 1–3 September 2023

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

Some 150 participants and 20 speakers from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the US met in Thurgau, Switzerland, from 1 to 3 September for this year’s “Mut zur Ethik” conference. Invitations were extended by the “Mut zur Ethik” working group.

This was the 30th anniversary of the Mut zur Ethik gatherings. Since 1993, guests from various European countries and numerous speakers from all over the world have come together once a year over three days to discuss the pressing burning issues of the day in open dialogues between speakers and audiences. As the year before, the talks were held in hybrid format, so that, in addition to those present, speakers and participants in different countries could be connected.

The subject of this year’s conference was “A Multipolar World Order Takes Shape – Being Human and Humanity in a Changing World.”

As stated at the beginning, the world is in upheaval: The majority of non-Western countries are speaking out confidently: they have had enough of the paternalism, interference and dominance of Western countries and instead want to pursue their own path in the future while acting prudently but also decisively. Alliances and partnerships are forming, supported by the will to work together on an equal footing – and thus to take more notice of what really serves the well-being of their countries and, while advancing their own interests, to negotiate constructively toward common goals and ways with the others.

However, there are many indications that the dominant forces in the West still refuse to accept these new realities. However, the “rest of the world”, i.e., the world beyond the West, is clearly breathing a sigh of relief. Countries that have long endured Western dominance, arrogance, and neocolonial coercion are tak-

ing courage and no longer acquiescing to these burdens; they are simply saying “No” – no to unequal treatment and subordination they can no longer accept. Instead, they call for mutual respect between countries and equal treatment – and for peace, development, cooperation, and progress for all. This process towards more independent development in non-Western countries is taking place before our eyes, whether in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, or Africa. This process cannot be stopped, even if the road is not easy – this in part because the hitherto powerful West declines to join in.

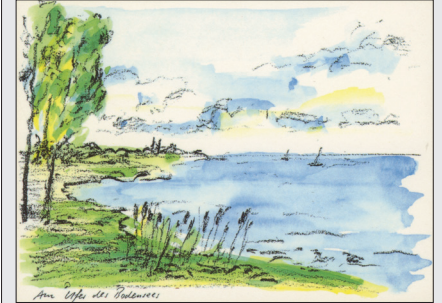
In early 2023, Wang Wen, a professor and executive dean of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, described this process as follows:

“[T]he non-Western world is presenting a picture as never seen before. Their response to Western hegemony is not necessarily through confrontation, conflict or an insistence on checks and balances. Instead, they are simply shaking off Western control by increasingly putting their national interests at the strategic center. A more democratic form of international politics and mutual respect are their main demands. A more equal political relationship between the West and the rest is being built, and this will be an important feature of world politics in this third decade of the 21st century. It will not be a mellow world in 2023, but the de-Westernisation movement is irreversible and will only evolve.”

The Western world is at an historic crossroads. Does it have the greatness to do some serious soul-searching and critically examine what it has done or supported, to put aside its arrogance and prejudices and abandon hegemonic, domineering practices?

“The Western world is at an historic crossroads. Does it have the greatness to do some serious soul-searching and critically examine what it has done or supported, to put aside its arrogance and prejudices and abandon hegemonic, domineering practices? Will it cooperate and finally embark on a constructive path that could enable a coexistence oriented towards the well-being of all people?”

“Mut zur Ethik”



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

es? Will it cooperate and finally embark on a constructive path that could enable a coexistence oriented towards the well-being of all people? Does Europe refocus on its humanistic heritage with its fundamental cultural substance corresponding to man and his nature? The spiritual foundations for human coexistence have been there for a very long time; the records of these foundations fill many libraries.

Since the highly esteemed historian and psychologist Dr Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser founded “Mut zur Ethik” 30 years ago, these proven foundations have also been incorporated into our conferences. These include, in particular, the humanistic traditions of the monotheistic religions, modern humanism, modern natural law, the achievements of the Enlightenment, modern anthropology, and personalist psychology. Its core content is the recognition of and respect for human dignity, the pursuit of the good for all, the bonum commune, the protection of the inalienable rights of all people, and the moral responsibility of each of us. The *conditio humana* has emerged in most cultures of our world.

Being human and humanity must continue to have a central place in a changing world.

In this issue we publish a first selection of Congress contributions. Further contributions will be published in the following issues of *Current Concerns*. •

The great chance of emergence

by Karin Leukefeld, Germany*



Karin Leukefeld
(picture ef)

In September 2019 I offered a feature to German ARD radio. The title was: “Searching for clues in Syria”.

I wanted to report on the people in Syria who were coming home in droves from Jordan and Lebanon at the time. I had met families at the borders, including those who had been internally displaced for years in Rukban, a desert camp in the border triangle of Syria, Iraq and Jordan. They were surrounded by stragglers from the Islamic State on one side and US troops on the other. They had built an illegal military base there, Al Tanf.

People wanted to go back to their Heimat (homeland). In the cities, entire residential areas lay in rubble and ashes. In emergency shelters, people hope for help. Half of the Christians have left the country.

The Turkish army and the US army had divided Syria along the Euphrates and to the north.

The Syrian government has been isolated from the EU and the US. Syria was only heard at the United Nations. Economic sanctions by the European Union and an oil embargo by the USA made it difficult to supply the population, and the necessary reconstruction was blocked. Internationally and regionally conflicting interests in the Middle East threatened to lead to a new war. The signs were not favourable, but people felt homesick. They wanted to go back.

I travelled through Syria. From north to south, east to west and met a wide variety of people who were willing to talk about their wartime experiences. Some were seriously ill and came back to die at home. Women came to show their husbands who were left behind the children who had grown up abroad. They remembered their life before the war and what had happened to them. They talked about their hope for the future. No one could have imagined such a war and such destruction in their homeland.

I submitted my exposé to the German radio. I listed the places and the people, I wanted to introduce, the “protagonists”:

The places

- Kasab, an Armenian town on the Turkish-Syrian border,
- Hambouche (village in Latakia province),
- Homs (Homs Province),
- Rastan (Homs province),
- Tadmur/Palmyra (Homs Province),
- Khan Sheikhun (Idlib Province),
- Deir Ez-Zor,
- Aleppo,
- Tell Rifaat (Aleppo Province),
- Damascus,
- Saida Zeyneb (Damascus),
- Sweida (Sweida Province),
- Nasib border crossing Syria-Jordan (province Deraa),
- Assal al Ward (Qalamoun).

The protagonists

- *Sebouk Kurkjian*, the mayor of Kasab: reports on the raid on Kasab in 2014 – fighters had come from Turkey and invaded their village, the churches were burned. Kasab is a well-known climatic health resort in northern Syria.
- *Delal Darwish*, a farmer from Hambouche: reports on the raid on her village in August 2014 when militants (insurgents) killed more than 200 people and abducted 106 women and children. She was held hostage by militants for 3.5 years. In the spring of 2018, she was released in exchange for captured fighters.
- *Mashrouf Sleiman*, a taxi driver, Mheen (Homs province): lived with his family for four years in the Rukban camp in the border triangle of Iraq, Syria and Jordan. The only wealth they had left was the gold wedding ring on his wife’s hand.
- *Anonymous*, a pharmacist, (Tadmur/Palmyra): witnessed the 2015 ‘Islamic State’ raid on Tadmur.
- *Abu Mohammed*, Syrian Civil Defence Hama, Morek (Hama province): and his team are searching for anonymously buried soldiers and civilians in southern Idlib
- *Anonymous*, Syrian Army officer (Deir Ez-Zor): talks about his operations, his various injuries, what the war means to him.
- *Anonymous*, Syrian Army soldier (Jobar): Eight years in the army: Talks about his previous life, he was a chef in a restaurant in Aleppo. He talks about those who left Syria, his hope for the future.

- *Ayman Diab*, pharmacist (Mayadeen/Deir Ez-Zor): lived among various armed groups in Mayadeen, was able to flee to Deir Ez-Zor with his wife, where they lived surrounded by IS for three years.
- Kurdish displaced persons from Afrin (Tell Rifaat, Aleppo province): They were displaced from Afrin in early 2018 when the Turkish army and its allied combat groups invaded there. One of the men tells that his three children are living in Germany. During the audio recording, he greeted them, but then stopped because his voice failed.
- *Delal* and *Louiza Issa*, Damascus: two sisters (born 1940s): lawyer, gynaecologist.
- *Nour Issa*, Damascus: her grandniece from Hasakeh, who studied English literature in Damascus – and is now married in Sweden.
- *Salim Sabbagh*, Damascus: one of five friends I featured in 2016. Salim was the only one of the five still living in Syria at the time – last Christmas he sent me a message from the USA .
- *Dr Maamoun Abdulkarim*, Damascus: Professor of archaeology at the University of Damascus and former Head of the Syrian Antiquities Authority.
- *Anonymous*, archaeologist and curator of the renovated and newly opened Bimaristan Nur ad-Din, oldest hospital in Damascus (1154 AD).
- Displaced people from the towns of Kefraya and Al Fouah (Idlib province). They live and work today in Saida Zeynab, a suburb of Damascus, a place of pilgrimage where the shrine of *Saida Zeynab*, daughter of the Shia-revered Imam *Ali ibn Abi Talib*, is buried.
- *Abu Marwan*, an engineer: on the Jordanian-Syrian border Nasib, he lives in the US as a successful engineer and has returned to see how he can help rebuild his country privately.

It was a “colourful” piece, as they say. I did something similar about Baghdad in 2005 for the radio. “Baghdad is still breathing” was the title. But there was no longer any interest in Syria in 2019. The radio refused. The editor wrote that no one in Germany really wanted to hear an officer or soldier of the Syrian army.

Building bridges

“Living behind the headlines” is the motto of my work. How do people live and how do they want to live? How do war and sanctions, interventions and paternalism affect their lives and everyday life?

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* Karin Leukefeld is a freelance journalist born in Stuttgart in 1954. She studied ethnology, Islamic studies and political science and reported from the Near and Middle East for various daily and weekly newspapers as well as for ARD radio. Accredited in Syria since 2010, she travels to the country again and again and reports from the ground. Various book publications on the Middle East, especially on Syria.

"The great chance of emergence"

continued from page 10

I wanted to build bridges with my reporting and contribute to understanding between different cultures. But I became a correspondent on wars. Today, I see much more clearly than I did then how the "war on terror" and the USA's fight to assert itself as the "sole" and "indispensable world power" against other states changed my work – the journalistic work.

It had been a long time coming, but I had probably not wanted to face it. The radio station's cancellation of the 2019 feature was then a clear signal. There was no interest in the consequences of the wars, no interest in the people and their questions about how they could have a future in their homeland. Reporting was no longer oriented towards what was happening in the country, what people were saying there – unless they were speaking against the Syrian president. Radio and newspaper reports were oriented along political lines against the Syrian government. My offers to the public service broadcaster went – with two exceptions – unanswered.

It is now clear why my reports from Syria were no longer wanted. They were probably classified internally as "untrustworthy" because – which is normal for foreign correspondents – I had journalistic accreditation in Syria, which is issued by the Ministry of Information.

My work in Syria was classified as a legitimization of the "Assad regime" and as "journalistic sham objectivity" that contributes to the legitimacy of a dictator who "gasses his own people".

Nobody told me that, but when I read the statement from the *German University of Media, Communication and Economics* (HMKW) at the end of 2022, in which the former NDR [public radio and tv in Northern Germany] editor and lecturer *Patrik Baab* was fired pieces fell into place. He had reported on the referendum in Donetsk and thus legitimised Putin.

Editors of the newspapers for which I had reported for more than twenty years no longer showed any interest. Some accused me of being "close to Assad", although or perhaps because I hardly ever wrote about the Syrian President. Some criticised that I kept writing about the sanctions, which were rightly imposed for human rights violations.

The proposal to interview UN Special Rapporteur *Alena Douhan*, who is investigating human rights violations by unilateral economic sanctions, was met with silence.

Instead, reports written outside of Syria are being published about Syria today, emphasising certain positions against Syria: – refugees cannot return because they are being arrested,

- Assad is stealing humanitarian aid,
- and the "Assad regime" is responsible for 98 percent of crimes in Syria.

I now spend a lot of time deciphering the overwhelming propaganda being circulated by Western media. Their aim is to prevent the local public from aligning itself with the people of Syria – or indeed other stigmatised countries. Human feelings, even humanity, are not supposed to arise towards the people there. The aim of the propaganda is that the official justification for the actions of Western governments and alliances is approved and supported. The complicated international geopolitical interests and power struggles have woven a web of propaganda across Syria and West Asia. Am I caught up in this?

The great chance of emergence

The change in international power relations can be seen particularly clearly in the Arab and African world. A few days ago, more than 60 countries took part in the summit meeting of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), which took place in Johannesburg, South Africa. Numerous countries have applied for admission, six states have been admitted: Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The alliance is making a significant contribution to shaping the multipolar world order and, as BRICS Plus, will represent 46 percent of the world's population, which accounts for more than 37 percent of global economic output. For the countries of the "Global South" there is an alternative to free themselves from the net of western paternalism and sanctions and to concentrate on their own development. They take their chance.

People will leave because they know they deserve a better life.

It won't be a walk in the park, but they're prepared.

Universities, think tanks and new media have established themselves to accompany the new beginning. They will set up their own institutions, as we will see.

We should learn from them.

The countries that have so far claimed world leadership will have to reorient themselves. That's going to take time. It will take time to realise that Brussels, Washington or London will no longer set the tone.

The West will have to learn to listen, to communicate.

There is a time for everything and now is the time for others. The time for giving orders is over.

The *Rand Corporation* or the *European Council on Foreign Relations* can design simulation games that are no longer implemented because the countries that are

to be subject to the plans will not participate.

But it is not given that it will end well.

Because if you consider yourself as superior and want to impose your own rules and values on the rest of the world, you won't give up easily.

New weapons and weapon systems are being developed. The public is brought into line. If you want to go your own way, the chains will be tightened even more. The Internet in Europe already does not offer free access to many other media. Content is already being deleted, pictures and videos removed.

"This channel cannot be shown because it violates local laws" was yesterday on a Lebanese news portal. I then found the video in a roundabout way and it showed how children in north-eastern Syria blocked four US armored vehicles from passing through their village of Hamou. They threw stones and tore down the US flags from the withdrawing vehicles, as can be seen in the video.

The more a country from the Western alliance wanted to go its own way, the tighter the shackles that are supposed to hold the US-led bloc of NATO and the EU together.

It is not certain that the rebalancing of the world will end well.

The Western hemisphere relies on war. The rulers in the US and EU do not care about people, it is about control. It's about access to raw materials and control of transport routes. In order to ensure that, people lie and cheat and stop at nothing. Responsibility is shifted to others. This is what we see with the war in Ukraine.

This is shown by the history of the wars on terror, which for more than 20 years have left a trail of devastation from Afghanistan to Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Sudan and the Sahel zone.

Countries and societies that do not submit are stigmatised, punished and despised.

Fields of wheat become battlefields. More than 7 million children under the age of 5 are malnourished in these countries. In English one speaks of "wasted" - dissipated, withered, not viable.

Those who cling to their homeland lead a hand to mouth existence, without electricity or water. Instead of sovereignty and reconstruction, there are alms and war.

What to do?

As a journalist, I often thought about quitting work. The bridges I wanted to build never materialised because of repeated wars and crises. But not reporting anymore means giving way to the propaganda. That's not an option. Reporting from these countries means holding up a mirror to the local public. Showing and say-

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Advocating truth in international relations

by Hans-Christof von Sponeck, Germany*



Hans-Christof von Sponeck
(picture screenshot)

I would like to share with you a story related to the theme of our gathering, which is being human and humanity and our future in a multipolar world order.

Before doing so, however, I must first say something about being in-human and the inhumanity in the current world disorder, which unfortunately also pertains to this topic:

It is about weapons of mass destruction in Syria and the obligation of multilateral organisations to work for the well-being of humanity and to protect it against war, poverty and exploitation.

On 7 April 2018, Duma, a suburb of Damascus, was bombed, killing 43 people. A few days later, US, UK and French air forces attacked Syrian targets in retaliation for the Syrian government's alleged use of poison gas. Inhumane great power politics has led to a serious crisis with worldwide consequences. Scientific investigations of the OPCW have been manipulated and politicised to justify an air strike.

After two years of work, a research report has now been published in July 2023, which you can consult, that sets out what happened and what needs to happen to enable a responsible review of the Duma incident and to restore the trust in the impartial work of international organisations like the OPCW and the UN. Without a doubt an ambitious undertaking.

Now my story:

There are four people who miraculously came together, two professors, one from the US and another from the UK, a Brazilian and former Director General of the

OPCW, and a German, a former UN staff member. The four of us have one thing in common: we want to work unreservedly for the truth in international relations, which we consider to be seriously endangered in the Duma case. More importantly, we are concerned with protecting people who are victims of a proxy war, a war they do not want.

The statements of two OPCW scientists in leading OPCW positions in the Duma investigations, who had become whistleblowers in protest at untruths, convinced us that the OPCW management in The Hague, under pressure from powerful member states, has repeatedly played with the truth about Duma and continues to do so ...

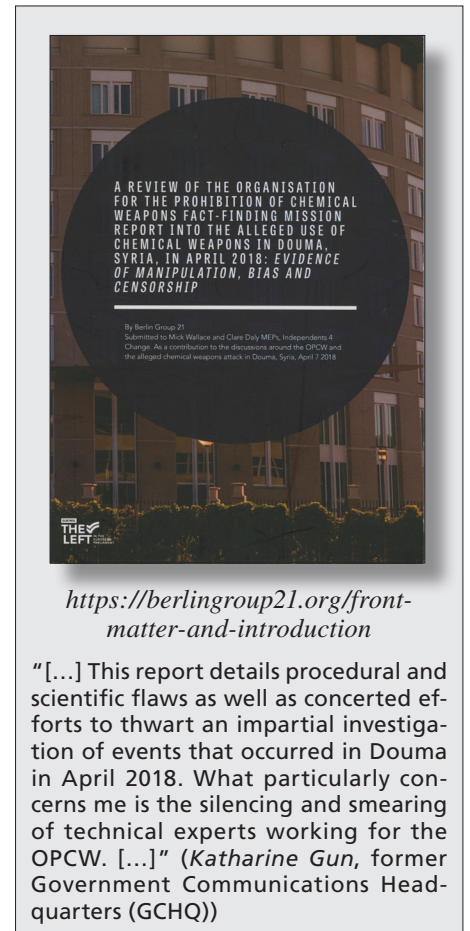
Therefore, after a confidential conversation in Brussels with one of the whistleblowers in Brussels in 2019, we decided to form a small citizens' group that would further investigate this serious Duma issue. We gave ourselves the name 'BerlinGroup 21' because we first met in Berlin in 2021.

Geopolitics at the expense of people

The more we delved into the topic of chemical weapons and the Duma, the clearer it became what a terrible geopolitical game was and is still being played in The Hague at the expense of the people. For this reason, we contacted former OPCW employees and other experts to get more information. These included chemists, toxicologists, ballistics scientists, and individuals with military, intelligence, political, and Syria-related experience. This resulted in a 'Statement of Concern' in spring 2021, for which we invited 24 internationally known people to sign this statement, including four OPCW employees.

The Presidents of the UN General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Commission, as well as the UN Secretary-General, have been the first to receive personal letters asking them to share the concerns expressed in the statement with the signatories. The UN response was silence. Those responsible for the world organisation, who are supposed to represent us – the citizens – had no understanding for our concerns and also did not have the courage to intervene in the interests of peace.

It was also important for us to convey the statement of concern to the OPCW Director General, along with a personal letter requesting that all OPCW staff who had dealings with Duma be invited to review the published reports. His response was to return the envelope with the letter



<https://berlingroup21.org/front-matter-and-introduction>

"[...] This report details procedural and scientific flaws as well as concerted efforts to thwart an impartial investigation of events that occurred in Douma in April 2018. What particularly concerns me is the silencing and smearing of technical experts working for the OPCW. [...]" (Katharine Gun, former Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ))

to us unopened. We really didn't expect so much cold-bloodedness.

No, we weren't discouraged, just disappointed. However, the dismissive attitude of the two world organisations made it clear to us that an expression of concern could only be the beginning of a citizens' initiative. The next step should therefore be to prepare a detailed report on OPCW manipulation, misanalysis and censorship. For this we needed appropriate experts and political support.

We already had access to experts. Contacts with Members of the European Parliament were established and two Irish MEPs gave us their support and commissioned us to provide this report. This was an important step, which also provided the means to secure funding and distribution of the report. Up to that point, we had personally borne all previous expenses for the administration of our website, translations and material expenses. Until the report was published in July, after two years of difficult work in a complex environment, the cooperation with the two MEPs had to remain a secret for obvious reasons.

During this time it was not easy to make everyone involved to understand that the Duma case was a very serious in-

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* Hans-Christof von Sponeck, born in Bremen in 1939, studied demography and physical anthropology at the universities of Bonn, Tübingen and Washington and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Marburg in 2010. He served with the United Nations from 1968 to 2000. During this time he worked in New York, Ghana, Pakistan, Botswana, India and was Director of UNDP's European Office in Geneva. From 1998 to 2000, he was UN Coordinator and Assistant UN Secretary-General responsible for the Oil for Food Programme in Iraq. In February 2000, he resigned in protest against the sanctions policy against Iraq. Various awards and publications. He is currently working on a book on UN reform together with Richard Falk.

"Advocating truth ..."

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dividual case, but that it was far more important to classify this individual case as symptomatic of a global conflict between the great powers and to act accordingly.

"The great chance of emergence"

continued from page 11

ing what is and the context, creating the connection, offers the chance to understand the consequences of actions in the Western hemisphere.

In the devastated, affected countries, people have long since lost confidence in the West and are turning away from the monster that promises democracy and freedom and yet only wants to plunder raw materials and riches.

Fed up with war and destruction, the Global South is turning to new, more reliable partners.

It is important to support that – not from a feeling of guilt, but with the conviction to do something for a good future.

Today we are less and less able to participate in shaping the world. Not because we don't try or make suggestions, but because governments steal good ideas, appropriate them and let the initiators get nowhere. Because the will and well-being of the population does not count.

The new emergence of the countries in the South is a great opportunity for everyone who wants to put a stop to the destruction. Let's be courageous, let's join. Let's learn from each other and with each other. Together we can succeed in correcting the mistakes and aberrations of the past. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

While we were working on the report, opportunities arose again and again to present the causes of the Duma case in public discussions and, in a deliberately limited way, to also write corresponding articles. The big media in America and Europe had no interest in expressing themselves in our spirit. On the contrary, a witch hunt was set in motion, or rather we were hounded and accused of defending the dictator of Syria and submitting to Russian propaganda.

Attacking ad personam instead of factual discussion

Each of us has been personally attacked and vilified. One was blocked from speaking at the UN Security Council, another was certified by two ambassadors from the P5 group as unworthy of their hearing by not even attending the hearing. Elsewhere, referring to our group, an ambassador said: "Yes, and there are people throwing mud hoping it will stick." A well-known and respected European academic institution drew an invitation to a congress on chemical weapons Convention back at the time our report was published, arguing "there has to be a balance between the political and academic dimensions" – a statement that frightens me. Another of us was attested as having destroyed his life's work by participating in our group.

A well-known Central European public television station last year ran a lengthy documentary on the subject of chemical weapons and the Duma, which concluded that chemical weapons had been used there – a finding that in no way corresponded to what we heard from the

documents available to us. We contacted the head of the department and asked him to give us the same amount of time to present our findings. In his reply, he meant that we first had to prove that we could comply with his institution's reporting standard.

The head of the department received our report a few days ago. We are curious to see whether we will pass the television standard test and whether a conversation will take place. Incidentally, there were also false statements on the BBC and in the English print media, which – and this is a small ray of hope – then had to be retracted.

Our report has now been sent to all 193 UN & OPCW member states, both digitally and in print format. The General Director of the OPCW and his Technical Advisory Board also received the report with a renewed request to the organisation to fulfill its obligations and to convene a new Duma investigation. In any case, the envelopes have not yet been returned.

The new-old Brazilian government of President *Lula da Silva* reacted quickly to the report, instructing Brazil's embassies in New York and The Hague to insist that the report be discussed at the UN Security Council and the OPCW. We expect other governments and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to do the same. Of course, we very much hope that civil society organisations will raise their voices and remind governments that organisations like the UN and the OPCW have an ultimate duty to citizens to protect the truth and uphold international law. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**Current Concerns**

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Twenty-first century journalism

by Patrick Lawrence, USA*



Patrick Lawrence
(picture ef)

We are thinking and speaking this weekend about the multipolar world we witness as it takes shape around us. As *Xi Jinping*, a prominent champion of this world, asserted not long ago, it is a time of great challenge but also of great promise. I

subscribe to this thought. And this morning I have a few remarks concerning the role, the position, and the responsibilities of the journalist in this emergent multipolar world.

A profound transformation

Journalists must undergo a profound transformation to match the challenges and meet the hopes of our time. In a single word, although I will add a few to this, journalists must make themselves multipolar if they are to reflect their moment, our moment, in history.

The task of the journalist in any circumstance is to represent the world for readers and viewers who will never see much of it for themselves. So, for the journalist, and I am speaking here of the correspondent, “representing” means “re-presenting.” In effect, the journalist is creating realities, and these realities become fixed in the minds of readers and viewers as the way the world truly is.

The responsibility the correspondent bears when we consider his work in this way will be obvious. Until our time, the journalist has been required to report, write or broadcast entirely from the perspective of the nation that supports his medium. If you write for an American newspaper, your work reflects the orthodox American point of view.

The perspectives of others

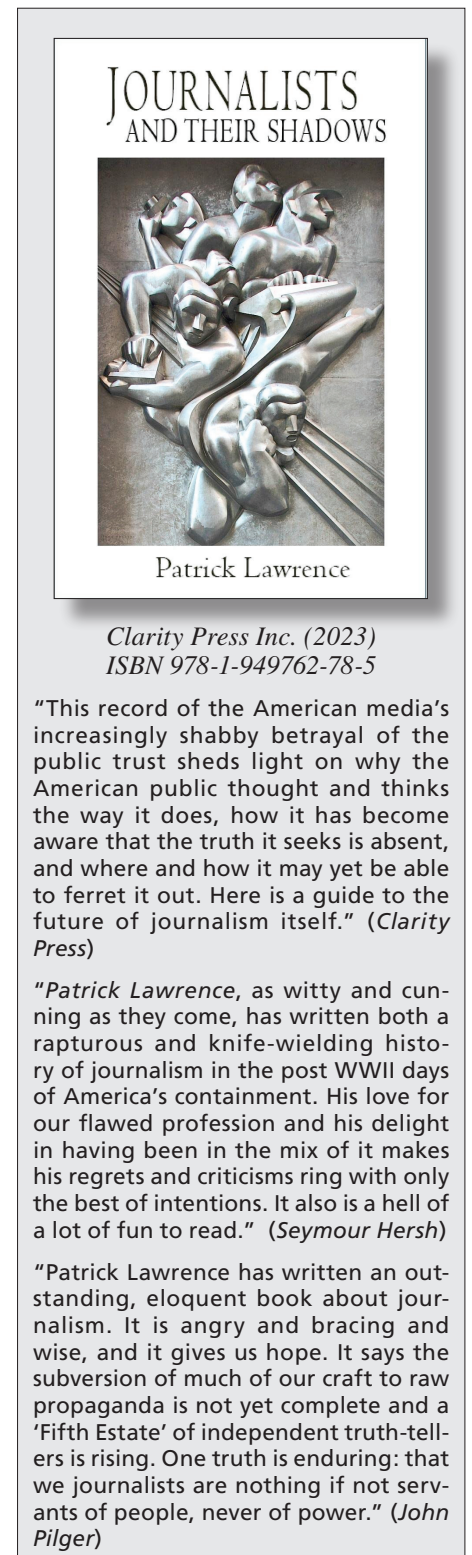
It is a subtle point, but the perspectives of others are rendered as deviations from the norm. The journalist, in other words, must work within and fortify the construct scholars call “Self and Other.” There are the “we,” and there are the “they.” The work

was done, so to say, with one’s nose pressed against a pane of glass, on the other side of which were the people and the societies one was reporting upon. It was a little as if the correspondent looked in upon them as if looking at one of those snow globes with which you may be familiar. To draw too close was to “go native,” as the expression goes, and this was considered a not-unserious transgression. It was, in quotation marks, “unprofessional.”

In the interest of time, I give you a very brief outline of the practice of journalism as it has been for a very long time, and as it is today. The Cold War, I consider, was for journalism the most damaging development of the last century in that it more or less institutionalized the Self-and-other narrative. It is this practice of journalism we must now transcend – quite decisively to leave behind if we are to match the challenges of our multipolar world and make our contribution to fulfilling our hopes for it.

The reinvention of the foreign correspondent

I spent three decades abroad as a correspondent, commentator, and editor, and I was very fortunate in many ways. One of these was the nature of the publications I worked for. The two most important of these, the “Far Eastern Economic Review” and the “International Herald Tribune”, were rare in that they effectively had no nationality to which they were required to conform. The “Review” was published in Hong Kong and was majority owned by a bank. The “Herald Tribune” was American-owned, but its head office was in Paris and it had, in consequence, a very worldly perspective on events, as against a strictly American perspective. When I finished my three decades abroad, most of them in Asia and all of them in the non-West, I collected my thoughts in a course I lectured at The University of Hong Kong. I called it “Reinventing ‘the foreign correspondent,’” and this is what I determined then had to be done – a reinvention. I began with questions, and it was more important to me to pose the questions than to have answers to them, given they were very new. Must a correspondent’s work remain always embedded in his or her culture or nationality? Must it reflect the assumptions and presuppositions, the politics and political positioning, of the medium for which he reports? Or can the work transform the correspondent such that he is more than an American writing for an American newspaper, or an Egyptian writing for an Egyptian newspaper, or (not infrequently the case now) an



Clarity Press Inc. (2023)
ISBN 978-1-949762-78-5

“This record of the American media’s increasingly shabby betrayal of the public trust sheds light on why the American public thought and thinks the way it does, how it has become aware that the truth it seeks is absent, and where and how it may yet be able to ferret it out. Here is a guide to the future of journalism itself.” (*Clarity Press*)

“Patrick Lawrence, as witty and cunning as they come, has written both a rapturous and knife-wielding history of journalism in the post WWII days of America’s containment. His love for our flawed profession and his delight in having been in the mix of it makes his regrets and criticisms ring with only the best of intentions. It also is a hell of a lot of fun to read.” (*Seymour Hersh*)

“Patrick Lawrence has written an outstanding, eloquent book about journalism. It is angry and bracing and wise, and it gives us hope. It says the subversion of much of our craft to raw propaganda is not yet complete and a ‘Fifth Estate’ of independent truth-tellers is rising. One truth is enduring: that we journalists are nothing if not servants of people, never of power.” (*John Pilger*)

Egyptian or Brazilian reporting for American, British, or who-have-you media?

These were not musings. I counted them, as I count them now, vital questions. The readily available reply to this last thought is negative. Taking the past as a guide, it is a shared point of view that defines a culture, and this cannot be

* Patrick Lawrence is a writer, a commentator, a critic, a longtime newspaper and magazine correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the “International Herald Tribune”. He is a columnist, essayist, author and lecturer. His next to last book is *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century*, Yale 2013. In July 2023 his new book *Journalists and Their Shadows* was published by Clarity Press. His web site is patricklawrence.us. Support his work via patreon.com/thefloutist.

“Ukraine, before and after”

by Scott Ritter, USA*



Scott Ritter (picture wp)

It’s an honor and a privilege to be here to have an opportunity to talk to you. I wish we could talk about better subjects. I wish we were in a time we could talk about moving forward with a confidence that the world would move forward with us, but we live in difficult times.

Today I’ve been asked to address “Global geopolitics in the context of the

* Scott Ritter is a former Marine intelligence officer who served in the former Soviet Union, implementing arms control agreements, and on the staff of General Norman Schwarzkopf during the Gulf War. From 1991 until 1998, Ritter served as a Chief Inspector for the United Nations in Iraq. He was a vocal critic of the American decision, again in 2003 to go to war with Iraq. He works on issues pertaining to arms control, the Middle East and national security. *Disarmament in the Time of Perestroika* is Mr Ritter’s tenth book.

Ukrainian conflict.” I think when historians look back on the events that are transpiring today you’re going to be speaking of “BU” and “AU” the same way we speak of “BC” and “AD.” “BU” is “before Ukraine,” “AU” is “after Ukraine.” The Ukrainian war, ladies and gentlemen, has changed everything.

The world that exists today is a fundamentally different world than existed before the conflict in Ukraine began. And when I say “the conflict in Ukraine” let’s just be clear: In reality, the conflict in Ukraine has been going on for decades. But the conflict I speak of is the conflict that has transpired since the decision by Vladimir Putin to send Russian troops into Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022.

“The USA will have to learn to participate in a global community of equals”

I have the honor and privilege twice a year to advise a board of some of the world’s most powerful and influential people, and those, of course, are people who operate in the oil and gas industry. They make a lot of money and money equals power.

I was brought in to talk geopolitics, and for several years now I’ve been hammering away at two things trying to convince these leaders of global industry that the

world is evolving, that you need to evolve with it or you are going to be left behind. I spoke of the fact that the world is evolving away from an American singularity to a multipolarity, where America is no longer viewed by the world as the global hegemony – where, instead, America will have to learn to participate in a global community of equals. They have said, “No. Because that would require America to depart from the rules-based international order.” Which, of course, are rules that the United States wrote in the aftermath of the Second World War to continue to empower ourselves.

The rules-based international order is a sharp deviation from the principles, for instance, of the *United Nation’s Charter*, which speaks of multipolarity, global equality, and all that kind of nonsense. When I say “nonsense”, I mean from an American perspective because we don’t believe in any of that, we believe in the sole empowerment of the United States.

Many of these leaders of industry are American. They lead multinational corporations, but the multinational corporations don’t enrich multi-nations. They enrich the United States. Therefore, they need the rules-based international order to continue to exist, to maintain the system of enrichment.

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“Twenty-first century journalism”

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surrendered. If you report for an American newspaper, you are tattooed “American” and your work, by the time it is published, speaks in the tongue, the unspoken language hidden within all languages. But my years in the field suggested another answer. Of all that our time has to tell us, first among its messages is that the past is only so useful as a tool of navigation. High among our tasks is a purposeful, continual act of transcendence – of ourselves, of our inherited perspectives, of our cultures. I am not talking here about pretending to be other than what one is – American, German, British. I am talking about a new recognition of the very unique place correspondents occupy, one that requires them – with an understanding of their responsibilities and with discipline – to leave their nationalities behind for the duration of their assignments among others. This is the project I propose now.

Who correspondents are, what they do and how, where they stand in relation to those they are covering, their responsibility to those they cover as well to their readers or viewers – all this requires a fundamental rethink, if these questions have until now been thought of at all.

“Going native” is an imperative

Going native, once a transgression, is to be counted not merely a virtue but an imperative. It means drawing much closer than tradition has allowed to erase the imaginary borderline between Self and Other. It means leaving part of oneself behind for the sake of the assignment. It means reporting another people not with one’s nose pressed against glass but, after determined effort, from within, from among them. Friedrich Nietzsche, in another context entirely, called this taking off the garb of the West. Vaclav Havel, in a noted speech delivered at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on 4 July 1994, called what I describe “a new model of coexistence, based on man’s transcending himself.” There are a couple of other names to mention here.

Ryszard Kapuściński, the noted Polish journalist, published an excellent book on this topic called *The Other*. Emmanuel Lévinas, the French phenomenologist born in Lithuania, devoted much of his work to the question of the Self in relation to The Other. He argued, indeed, that we must, in the end, not merely recognize the Other but take responsibility for the Other.

After a long time at the self-transcendence as I have just very briefly men-

tioned it, correspondents will realize, as I did, that in covering others they are staring into a mirror – there to learn as much about themselves as those to whom they pose incessant questions. I like this word “transcend” to describe what I propose. It can be done. We can transcend ourselves. I have done it and I am not alone in this. I cannot conclude with any thought this is other than a long process. It is the same with the matter of exceptionalism and post-exceptionalism: In both cases I am talking about a new consciousness. The changes our time requires of us are large and require extended effort.

Independent media

I will end by pointing out that this task will be especially difficult to accomplish among our corporate-owned media. I have argued for a long time now that the responsibilities of independent media are far larger than their resources but are nonetheless to be assumed, even embraced. I am describing for you another of these responsibilities. It is among independent media that the journalist of our time can be most effectively “reinvented,” to take the term from my university course, so as to meet our new century’s challenges and fulfill our hopes for it. •

“Ukraine, before and after”

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ment that they have put in place over the course of the past 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 years.

The days are over

The other thing I brought up to them is that for those who believe that America can impose its will on the world no matter what. Even if we run into an economic hiccup, we will be able to resolve this hiccup in our favor by projecting military power, which is unmatched: There is nobody in the world that can match the Americans in terms of military power. I said, “Those days are over, too”.

They did not want to hear this. But I brought up the reality that twenty years of endless war in the so-called “global war on terror” had fundamentally transformed the lethality of the American military. No longer were we trained, armed, equipped, or prepared to fight a land-based war in Europe or a large-scale conflict in the Pacific. We, instead, had broken our military in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Syria – we no longer had the skill set. They didn’t want to hear that, either. They said, “No. America has aircraft carriers, America has armored brigades, America is America and the world will never be able to defeat America.”

After Ukraine ...

That was “before Ukraine.” After Ukraine, a new reality has set in. Before Ukraine, the United States was able to convince Europe that Russia could be sanctioned into submission. I know we laugh about it today, when we reflect on the ludicrous nature of the overconfidence of those who thought so. But those who have memories that can go back simply two years remember, in the leadup to the conflict, how the United States said over and over and over again, “We will bring Russia to its knees.” That, “Together with the West, we will sanction Russia, we will break the will of Russia. Russia will fold. Even if Russia were to go into Ukraine militarily they could not sustain this attack because their economy will fail.”

The Russian economy today is stronger than it has ever been largely because of the economic sanctions: “before Ukraine,” “after Ukraine.” But it’s more than simply the empowerment of the Russian economy. It’s how the world thinks about America: The American singularity is over.

BRICS – multipolarity is a reality

Just the other week [22–24 August] there was a meeting in South Africa of the BRICS organisation – five “developing nations”, we call them. Is China a developing nation? Is India a developing nation? These are developed nations. Now, they haven’t been able to come together before Ukraine. There were internal squabbles: India and

“When will Europe realise that NATO is a false prophet? When will Europe realise that the money you put into NATO is wasted money? When will Europe realise that instead of pursuing war you should be pursuing peace? It’s time for Europe to wake up. Because if you don’t, if you continue to believe in the myth of American hegemony, the myth of American supremacy – because it is a myth, it isn’t real anymore, it exists in the minds of American politicians, but it doesn’t exist in the way the world operates today. Europe has to decide: Do you want to become a prisoner in a cage of your own construct? Because that’s what’s happening. The world is bypassing America. The world is moving on with their collective life. And the American singularity is in the rearview mirror going backwards.”

China didn’t get along; the Russian economy wasn’t so hot. Who knew about Brazil? Was the African continent ready for development? These are questions that were thrown out there. There is no longer talk about that. BRICS prior to last week was a concept that had promise. BRICS today is a reality that has changed the world. Notice that I didn’t say “changing” the world. I said “changed the world”.

Let me tell you what happened when BRICS came together and expanded. America went from being number one to being number two. The day of the American singularity is over. It’s past, it’s done, it’s finished, it’s gone. We haven’t, maybe, realised it yet. Americans might believe that we’re still number one, but we’re not. We’ve been bypassed by BRICS. Well, you’ll say, “Wait a minute Scott, that’s many nations.” What do you think multipolarity means? It means many nations working together. And multipolarity is no longer a theory: It’s a reality.

The reality of BRICS is such that America is number two. It will forever be number two because it will not have the economic strength to surpass the multipolar organisation known as BRICS, which is expanding as we speak. And an interesting thing about BRICS is that we tried to keep Russia off the agenda. We tried to keep Vladimir Putin away from that meeting. He attended by proxy with his foreign minister, *Sergei Lavrov*. He attended by video. He dominated the proceedings, *ladies and gentlemen*. Russia will be the chair of BRICS starting in January 2024. When BRICS expands from its current membership of five, adding six, Vladimir Putin will be the head of BRICS. And when BRICS meets again next summer and they talk about bringing

ten nations in, Vladimir Putin will be the head of BRICS.

NATO – nothing but failures

It’s backfired. Everything we do has backfired. And it’s not just economically. Militarily: Prior to Ukraine, before Ukraine, BU – I’m trying to inject this concept into people’s minds – before Ukraine, people did fear the American military. With good cause. We go to war a lot. There is lethality associated with what we do. In Europe, NATO believed that it was a powerful military alliance. NATO believed that when NATO flexed its muscle people listened – before Ukraine. After Ukraine, NATO has been exposed as a paper tiger. A paper tiger.

There is no military strength in NATO. NATO has no capacity to project meaningful military power beyond the borders of Europe. NATO cannot fight a war along the lines of the war that’s being fought in Ukraine today. Don’t believe me, believe General *Christopher Cavoli*, four-star American general, commander of U.S. forces, supreme allied commander. He said in a Swedish defense forum last January (2022), that NATO could not imagine the scope and scale of the violence taking place in Ukraine today. Think about that.

What do military people do? We prepare for the future. We prepare for the future based upon what we imagine. We imagine something, we create capabilities to meet that which we imagine. If we have not imagined the scope and scale of the violence taking place in Ukraine today, that means we’re not ready for it. We haven’t trained for it, we haven’t equipped for it, we haven’t organised for it. We can’t fight it. And this is a fact.

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“Ukraine, before and after”

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Right now there’s a counteroffensive taking place in Ukraine. The Ukrainian army has three brigades trying to take the town, the village, of Robotyne. Three brigades. That’s 15,000 men. Imagine NATO putting three brigades on the line right now. They can’t. NATO cannot put three brigades on the line. But imagine if they did: They’ve assaulted the village, they’ve been repulsed by the Russians. So three brigades are now being pulled out, three more are being brought in, in a complex passage of lines. NATO has not done a six-brigade passage of lines ever. And Ukraine is doing it under fire. They’re failing, but they are doing it. [Editor’s note: As of 8 September, Moscow acknowledged withdrawing forces from Robotyne.]

**NATO is a paper tiger –
in the Pacific too**

That war that’s taking place right now in Zaporizhzhia, in Kherson, in Luhansk, in Donetsk: It’s a war that NATO cannot fight. And now the world knows it. NATO is a paper tiger. The world knows it’s a paper tiger. They know the United States cannot meet its stated desire to reinforce Europe in a fashion. Ukraine has lost 400,000 men in battle, 40,000 to 50,000 in the last several weeks. It took America ten years to lose 58,000 in Vietnam and that broke our back. Can you imagine a situation where the United States military was asked to sacrifice 40,000 men in two weeks? Can you imagine a situation when any European army was asked to sacrifice 40,000 men in two weeks? The fact of the matter is: We can’t win a war today in Europe. We’re not number one anymore. We’re not number two anymore. We might be number three.

But this is a reality. It’s not just in Europe that we can’t prevail. It’s in the Pacific. Don’t believe me, believe Lieutenant General *Samuel Clinton Hinote*. He was the deputy chief of staff of the *United States Air Force*. He just recently retired. But his job was strategy. And what he did for the last four years is war-game every potential scenario of conflict between the United States and China in the Pacific. And he recently, before his retirement, went to the Pentagon and went to the White House, and said the following: “Cease and desist your policies that push us to a potential military confrontation with China. Because if it does become a kinetic fight between the United States and China, there is no scenario in which we win. We lose every single time. And there is nothing we can do

in the immediate future to change that outcome. We have to change the way we interface with China.”

“America loses”

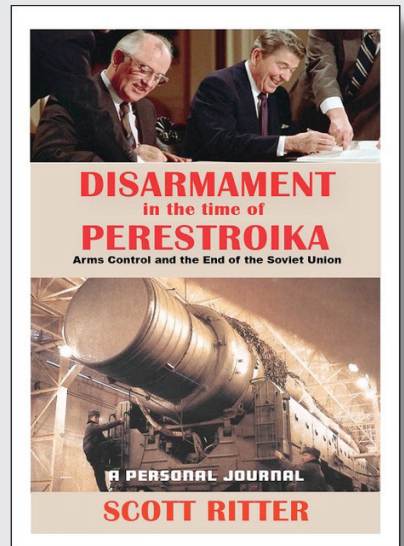
That’s why *Tony Blinken* went to China in July. You remember that trip? He went – he had to go through thirty Chinese officials before he got to *Xi Jinping* – for a thirty-minute lesson in humility. The reason why he had to go there is because the United States had to hit pause on its China policy: Stop the path towards confrontation. We had just had a situation in the Strait of Taiwan where an American ship was almost rammed by a Chinese ship. And the *Pentagon* said, “If they do hit us, what do we do? Sink them?” And now the scenarios begin: If we sink them they retaliate, we retaliate, how does it end? Well, General *Samuel Clinton Hinote* said that it ends only one way every time: America loses.

This is the reality today. We lose because we don’t have the capacity. But before Ukraine nobody understood that. Nobody believed that. Everybody believed that America was the supreme military power in the world. Today, the blinders have come off. Economically, we’re number two. Maybe we can maintain that position, maybe not. Militarily, we’re number three. And who knows where we’ll go with that. Because our military is a broken system. We spent hundreds of billions of dollars on a system that produces nothing beneficial to the defense of the United State. Let alone the defense of its allies. How can you spend \$900 billion a year and say we can’t fight and prevail in a land war in Europe against the Russian army that spends \$68 billion a year? It’s because our system is broken. But that’s another question.

Ukraine has changed everything. Before Ukraine, America was number one, at least perception-wise. After Ukraine, American is number two economically, number three militarily, and this is a reality that the world is accepting. It’s not *Scott Ritter* saying this in a closed community to oil and gas executives. It’s *Scott Ritter* saying this while the rest of the world acknowledges this. Russia knows this. Russia no longer fears the American military. It’s not that they want to go to war against the American military, but Russia knows its capabilities. It’s been tested. China knows this, as well.

Europe must wake up

When will Europe know it? When will Europe realise that NATO is a false



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“Disarmament in the Time of Perestroika’ is the definitive history of the implementation of the INF Treaty signed by *Mikhail Gorbachev* and *Ronald Reagan* in all its complexities, and the lengths both sides went to ‘trust, but verify’ this successful and unique historic disarmament process. It demonstrates how two nations fundamentally at odds with one another could come together and rid the world of weapons which threatened international peace and security and, indeed, all of humanity ...”
(Clarity Press)

“An absorbing account of how the U.S. verified the key agreement that ended the Cold War. Should be read and absorbed by all who wonder how we can overcome the rush to war today.” (*Jack Matlock*, former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, 8 May 2022)

prophet? When will Europe realise that the money you put into NATO is wasted money? When will Europe realise that instead of pursuing war you should be pursuing peace? It’s time for Europe to wake up. Because if you don’t, if you continue to believe in the myth of American hegemony, the myth of American supremacy – because it is a myth, it isn’t real anymore, it exists in the minds of American politicians, but it doesn’t exist in the way the world operates today. Europe has to decide: Do you want to become a prisoner in a cage of your own construct? Because that’s what’s happening. The world is bypassing America. The world is moving on with their collective life. And the American singularity is in the rearview mirror going backwards. •

Prohibit the use of uranium weapons!

by Srđan Aleksić, Serbia*



Srđan Aleksić (picture ug)

Natural uranium is a radioactive and toxic element consisting of three isotopes: ^{234}U , ^{235}U and ^{238}U . Depleted uranium containing the isotope ^{235}U is nuclear waste. Its radioactivity is reduced by about 40% compared to natural uranium, which is taken as the most common argument in the thesis that its use for military purposes does not lead to the development of cancer. However, the fact is ignored that from a chemical point of view, natural and depleted uranium behave the same, and their chemical toxicity is the same. Since uranium is a pyrophoric metal, after the explosion of a DU projectile, it burns and creates toxic uranium oxide, which can be blown up to a distance of 40 kilometres by means of an aerosol. At the same time, plutonium is added to such missiles, which is highly radioactive, several thousand times more toxic and carcinogenic. Inhalation of these particles, as well as their introduction into the body through the skin, through food and/or water (due to environmental contamination), leads to numerous health consequences as well as the occurrence of malignant diseases.

Even 24 years after the NATO war: Cancer numbers still rising

After 1999 and the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the use of depleted uranium ammunition, the world public is shaken by a new syndrome – the Balkan syndrome. Illness and mortality from cancer of Italian soldiers, who participated in the cleaning of contaminated areas in the Balkans as part of peace contingents, led to the development of this syndrome.

All research on cancer in Serbia indicates that the number of newly diagnosed cases, as well as the number of deaths, is increasing from year to year. The mortality rate from malignant tumors increased

from 238.8 in 2001 to 305.9 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017. Depleted uranium, released carcinogenic and toxic materials, destruction of infrastructure (hospitals, schools, roads), with particular damage to general living conditions and the environment, undoubtedly leads to endangering the health of the population of the bombed areas, and twenty-three years after the NATO aggression, the Republic of Serbia is facing a trend of increasing new cases of malignant diseases.

With the bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 by NATO forces, international law and elementary human rights were repeatedly violated. A war was fought on the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which in terms of its effects belongs to chemical and radiological wars. By using depleted uranium ammunition, NATO forces contributed to the effects of a radiological accident. By using the most modern means of combat, using the greatest intellectual achievements of mankind in the development of science and technology, NATO misused them for war purposes. Using these funds, NATO carried out over 25,000 attacks with the most modern fighter planes equipped with the most lethal weaponry, using them to kill the civilian population; for the destruction of military and civilian targets; destruction of means of work and survival of the population; for the destruction of economic potentials; destruction of objects protected by international law. Special mention should be made of the destruction of buildings whose damage caused long-term environmental pollution on a large scale, which further produces far-reaching consequences. Reckless warfare, conducted with the aim of inflicting as much damage as possible, is without a doubt contrary to international treaties and generally accepted rules of international law.

Destruction of existing resources

The aggression was not only aimed at military victory, but also at the destruction of all available capacities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is about such a concept of waging war in which there are no exceptions in terms of goals, actions are taken against any goal that affects any interest of the one against whom the war is being waged. The limitations of warfare, in terms of actions, objectives and other limitations with a foothold in international law, have been completely ignored and marginalized. The aim of the aggression was obviously to inflict maximum damage in every sphere of life, with

the aim of forcing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to declare capitulation.

The St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868

The *St. Petersburg Declaration on the Prohibition of the Use of Certain Missiles in War* of 29 November 1868 indicates that the only legitimate goal that states should have before themselves during war is the weakening of the enemy's military forces, and that goal would be exceeded by the use of weapons that would unnecessarily increase suffering people put out of combat or would make their death inevitable. Without any doubt, it is a fact that the use of ammunition with depleted uranium more than exceeds the only legal and legitimate goal of warfare. Due to their characteristics, weapons with depleted uranium do not only affect the military forces of the "enemy", but with their subsequent effect, such weapons inevitably affect the rest of the population as well as the environment. As such weapons cannot be directed only at a predetermined target, the use of such weapons must be interpreted as prohibited.

In addition, combat means of this type are prohibited by *Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions* of 12 August 1949 on the *Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts*. Article 35 of the protocol clearly stipulates that in any armed conflict the right of the parties to the conflict to choose the methods and means of warfare is not unlimited, and that it is prohibited to use weapons, missiles and materials and methods of warfare that cause unnecessary injuries or unnecessary suffering, as well as that it is prohibited to apply methods or means of warfare that are intended or can be expected to cause extensive, long-term and serious damage to the natural environment. According to the data that NATO gave to the United Nations, about 30,000 missiles with depleted uranium were fired in the area of Kosovo and Metohija, 2,500 missiles in Serbia proper and about 300 missiles in Montenegro, which violated the entire international law, explicit norms of international war in the crudest way. and humanitarian law.

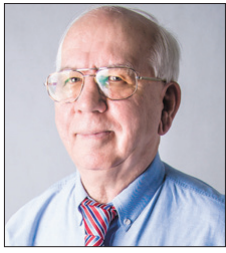
As a result of all of the above, it can undoubtedly be concluded that depleted uranium ammunition represents such a means of combat, the use of which must be viewed as prohibited in accordance with the provisions of international law, due to its chemical effect, causing excessive and unnecessary suffering, as well as causing serious, long-term and extensive damage to the natural environment.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

* Prof. Dr. iur. Aleksić, Srđan, born in Buštranje, southern Serbia, in March 1968, is a lawyer in Nis. He has been fighting for many years for the victims of the NATO bombings with DU munitions as a result of the war against Yugoslavia in 1999. He represents more than 3,000 people suffering from cancer.

People's Diplomacy in the Changing World

by Yury Starovatykh, Russia*



Yury Starovatykh
(picture ma)

First of all, I would like to extend my congratulations to all the participants of the “Mut zur Ethik” Forum on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of this remarkable event! Despite the Forum's formidable age, its agenda

is always most relevant, and its organizers remain the champions of humanism and advocate faith in humanity through all and any perturbations in the international arena. When my memories take me five years back to our encounter at the Forum in the city of Sirnach, what comes to my mind is not the pear bread we ate and not the trip to the mountains we took, but, first of all, the heartfelt attitude of all speakers, which was evident even while they were talking about the US' barbaric actions in Yugoslavia – including the use of depleted uranium ammunition – and, second of all, their concern about whether the war was or was not just around the corner. Thank you for those memories!

Nothing learned from Stalingrad

I am now speaking from Volgograd, a city famous all over the world under its previous name – Stalingrad. Barely a six-year-old child, I personally witnessed the horrors that a war can bring. This year, we celebrate the 80th anniversary of an important historic event – the end of the Battle of Stalingrad. There is not a single person on the planet who doesn't know that the Stalingrad victory of the Soviet troops was the turning point of World War 2; that it was this very victory that made people believe that destroying Nazism and fascism was a task which could and would be achieved. It is here, from the banks of the Volga River, that the march to the victory over the “brown plague” began 80 years ago.

It would seem that the Nuremberg Trials ended on an unequivocal note – that

fascism was destroyed, that the Bible was right in claiming that “the good will always triumph above the evil”, and that the Stalingrad lesson was to be learned by all men of reason. But no!!! Even with the USSR – this constant thorn in the side of the US and the West – long gone, the majority of the European political minds are still corrupted by envy. They cannot live in peace knowing how vast and enormous Russia is – the country which the West has seen as its enemy since the beginning of times, the country which Livonian knights, and *Napoleon*, and *Hitler* – all tried to strip of its resources ... and which repeatedly sent its invaders running home with a few teeth missing!

It was best said by the Chancellor of the German Empire *Otto von Bismarck*: “Do not assume that, having profited from Russia's weakness once, you will be able to collect your dividends forever. Russians always come to claim their money back. And when they come – don't hope that those Jesuit agreements you signed earlier to justify yourself will be of any protection to you. These agreements are not worth the paper they are written on. With Russians, you either play fair, or don't play at all.” Here, I am talking about the Minsk Agreements and the non-expansion of NATO to the East, about the resurging of fascism in the Ukraine and several European countries.

And yet, this meaningful historic date – the anniversary of the end of the Battle of Stalingrad – is more than a reminder of war. It is a reminder of the solidarity between the nations that jointly fought against their common enemy, and of the solidarity between cities. It is because there was another outcome of the Stalingrad victory – the birth of the international twinning movement, the movement of twin-towns and sister-cities that cooperate on the basis of people's- or citizen-diplomacy.

The founders of this movement were the Soviet Stalingrad and the British Coventry, brought together by the tragedy of World War 2. Both cities, located on the opposite sides of Europe, were almost completely destroyed by the Nazis. And their residents – the people of Stalingrad and Coventry – supported each other through their shared tragedy and in the name of peace, and in June 1944 announced a brotherly union between their two cities, thus making the first step in the history of the international movement which grew from a single spring into a massive river comparable to the Volga, the Nile, and the Mississippi. The important thing is that the two cities' residents did

it out of their own volition, and not at the order from their government. This is what people's diplomacy is about.

People's diplomacy – today of all days

In our difficult times, interaction between nations – at the level of regular citizens, and not political figures – is becoming increasingly important. While American and European political leaders are promoting Russophobia, calling for the ban on the Russian culture and the eradication of our traditional values, regular European residents are coming to Russia to preserve and develop human relations, face to face with our own people.

Over the past year and a half, as the Chair of the “Russian Peace Foundation” Volgograd branch, I have twice met with the residents of Germany – participants of the “For Peace with Russia” car races, and members of the “Berlin Friends of the Peoples of Russia” organization. They were the people of different ages, professions and walks of life. But all of them came to our country to see its true face and not the one propagandized by the Western media.

In August 2023, when the German participants of the car race came to Volgograd, their leader *Reinhold Gross* justly pointed out that the main aim of such journeys is “to be a small wheel in the massive struggle for the friendship between our countries, and to push towards this goal all the other wheels inside our state machines.” Let there be many more such wheels on the way to friendship and cooperation, because we are open to communication!

In my previous address, I mentioned a German medic *Kurt Reuber*, the picture of “Stalingrad Madonna” he drew and the words “Licht, Leben, Liebe” (“Light, life, love”) he wrote on it. One ray of such light, shining through the current darkness of Russophobia, a drop in the ocean, was the congress of the *International Russophile Movement* that took place about two months ago in Moscow and united representatives of several countries. And we, the world nations, have to finally find the ways and the means to return to the *World Peace Council* its lost status of the leading governing body for the international movement of peace champions.

Peace will not come by itself; we have to fight for it!

I am convinced that people's diplomacy has a huge potential both for improving the global international situation as a whole, and for strengthening the friend-

* Yury Fyodorovich Starovatykh, born in Stalingrad in 1937, was the Lord Mayor of the city of Volgograd from 1986 to 1990. He was evacuated during the Battle of Stalingrad from August 1942 to February 1943. During his term as Lord Mayor, 40 twinning agreements were concluded, amongst others with Coventry, Chemnitz, Cologne, Toronto and Cleveland. He is recipient of the Medal of Honour “For the Consolidation of Peace and Understanding between Peoples”. He is chair of the “Russian Peace Foundation” Volgograd regional branch. Yury Starovatykh is honorary citizen of the hero-city of Volgograd and honorary citizen of Hiroshima

Life according to the measure of man

by Heinrich Wohlmeyer, Austria*



Heinrich Wohlmeyer
(picture ma)

An attentive observer of the world's current events is in danger of falling into resignation or anger, because fear usually causes two reactions: resignation or flight into violence. In recent times, we have also seen the flight into event ecstasy, in which one experiences short-term illusory happiness.

What is happening in "modern" societies is characterised in the individual sphere by increasing depression and burnout as new mass diseases, by increasing, inexplicable acts of violence – especially by young people – and by ecstatic mass events with hundreds of thousands of young people.

In the geopolitical sphere, too, aggression follows aggression.

We currently have 363 violent conflicts, 27 of which are declared wars.

The only country on earth that has not been involved in a war is small, democratically governed Iceland.

The following questions arise above all:

- Does the cause lie above all in intemperance, in the asocial gigantomania of globalised social structures?
- How do we get out of the present vicious circle that endangers the entire world?

* Heinrich Wohlmeyer, born 1936 in St. Pölten; Gen. Dir. a.D.; Hon. Prof. Dipl. Ing agr. Dr. iur; Dipl. in Law, studied agriculture and law in Vienna, studied "Agricultural Economics and Business Administration" as a Fulbright scholarship holder in the USA and did his doctorate in London on "International Commodity Steering Agreements". He worked for 20 years in industry, regional development and trade policy. Wohlmeyer was a research manager for more than ten years. He taught at the Vienna University of Technology and the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna. Early on, he was concerned with sustainability issues, circular economy and economic, ecological and social undesirable developments. Various awards and numerous publications.

"People's Diplomacy ..."

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ship and mutual understanding between individual residents of different countries. A peaceful future, development and prosperity can only be achieved through everyone's joint efforts. And this path is the only path possible in a large multipolar world. And this is what we will strive for!

I wish the Forum good luck and hope to see you again.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

- Is there a standard for a successful life of individuals and peoples in this crisis-ridden world?!

Smaller social units

My friend, the economist and philosopher Leopold Kohr, who died in 1994, saw the solution in the reduction of the size and the democratic controllability of social units. Together with the English philosopher of history Arnold Toynbee, he noted that all great empires at their zenith broke down because of their remoteness from human beings, despite huge military and administrative apparatuses.

Societies based on the measure of man are therefore the desideratum of our time.

But what is this life according to the measure of man to consist of?

What are the essential adjusting elements that should guide us politically, ecologically, economically and socially?

I would like to suggest six areas in which we need to make the necessary course correction and bring them into our education systems:

- in terms of respect for our genetic, cultural and social heritage
- with regard to the respect of the ecological framework conditions
- in the design and application of modern technologies
- in the adaptation of the economic framework
- in the return to traditional international law
- in the spiritual orientation of our activities.

Regarding the *genetic and cultural heritage*, Nobel Prize winner for neurology *John Eccles* and behavioural biologist *Hans Zeier* in their book "Brain and Mind – Biological Insights into the Prehistory, Nature and Future of Humans". issued the warning "The earth does not guarantee our survival independently of our behaviour." They therefore recommend paying attention to our genetic heritage.

According to this heritage, we are "programmed" for manageable, self-organising groups of about 100 people.

This has also been noticed in the military field. The Roman centurion was the commander of a hundred and modern companies are also of this size. *Mahatma Gandhi* aspired to this dimension in his "village industries".

Eccles and Zeier therefore literally recommend: "Refraining from further unbundling of functions in agriculture and industry – which is only efficient in the short term – and restoring decentralised, functionally interwoven, socially satisfying small-scale societies with manageable

power structures and communication networks; preserving rather than destroying local culture."

They emphasise that genetic adaptation is far slower than the rapid current cultural change and design of social systems.

A considerate and humane pace of adaptation is therefore called for.

Respect of the biosphere and modern technologies

The ecological framework conditions require that the system principles of the biosphere be observed, namely

- the solar orientation of the energy systems to the abundant solar energy that radiates into them
- the principle of not taking more out of biological systems than they replenish
- the cascading use of energy and materials
- the recycling of man-made material flows
- the promotion of biological diversity to ensure the stability and buffering capacity of systems
- and finally, the intelligent decentralisation of supply systems in order to realise the above desiderata.

So we end up with Leopold Kohr's "right measure".

This brings us to the *design and application of modern technologies*:

These should be 'adapted', i.e. not designed and applied in a way that overcomes nature, but in a synergistic, mutually beneficial way.

This applies especially to developments in the field of AI (artificial intelligence).

These can be used for inhuman, anonymous control and oppression – for imposing "digital necessities", but they can also contribute to the democratic shaping of communities.

To combat the rampant "digital impotence", the Vienna University of Technology has established a UNESCO Chair of *Digital Humanism* to research the ethical, social and political consequences of digital technologies.

The adjustment of the *economic framework conditions* must above all include the reform of the current property, financial and trade systems.

New order of economy and finance

In his socio-political parable *Utopia*, *Thomas More* postulated only entrusted property committed to the common good and rejected uncontrolled ownership.

Modern ESR (*Economic Social Responsibility*) and ESG (*Economic Social*

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Composer, pianist, conductor – and gardener

On the 150th anniversary of the birth and 80th anniversary of the death of Sergei Rachmaninoff

by Winfried Pogorzelski

On 1 April 1873, the Russian composer, pianist and conductor Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninoff was born in the Novgorod Governorate in the Russian Tsarist Empire; on 28 March 1943, he died in Beverly Hills in California, where he had settled in 1942. The artist also made a stop in Switzerland, namely near Lucerne in Hertenstein, a district of the municipality of Weggis on Lake Lucerne. Here he spent a few years, having been forced to leave his homeland forever in 1917, to devote himself to composing and tending his garden. His work, like that of many other Russian artists, belongs to European culture.

His life's path is as unsteady as his work is multifaceted. *Rachmaninoff's* career is marked by many changes of place, also caused by the course of history: from St. Petersburg to Moscow, from there via Dresden and Rome to Scandinavia and finally, towards the end of the First World War and during the October Revolution, into exile in the USA, where he lived – interrupted by regular stays in Switzerland – until the end of his life. His diverse compositional oeuvre can be placed between the post-Romantic symphonist *Peter Tchaikovsky* and the representatives of modernism *Sergei Prokofiev* and *Dmitri Shostakovich*.

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Villa Senar – a cultural centre open to the public



“Take a seat on Rachmaninoff’s couch, at his desk or on the chaise longue. In Rachmaninoff’s studio with its *Steinway* grand piano, up to 35 people experience music up close.” This is the invitation on the homepage of the *Rachmaninoff Foundation*. Musicians, students, pupils in particular are welcome, but of course also anyone else interested in music, architecture and culture. In 2022, the Canton of Lucerne purchased the property, a cultural monument of national and international standing. He also finances the maintenance. The foundation set up by Rachmaninoff’s grandson has succeeded in taking over the entire invento-

ry and displaying it or making it available to visitors, including his *Steinway* grand piano, a gift from Frederick *Steinway* for Rachmaninoff’s 60th birthday, on which he played together with the 36-year-old *Vladimir Horowitz*, among others. The site is to be developed into «a regional as well as international centre of culture and education with charisma», as it says on the homepage of the Canton of Lucerne, which is probably also the composer’s intention. On the occasion of the anniversary year, various events organised by the *Rachmaninoff Foundation* will take place at the venue, such as guided tours, master classes, concerts and more. (picture wp)

“Life according to the measure ...”

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Governance), as well as environmental and social reporting requirements for companies and communities can be seen as a step in this direction.

In the *financial sector*, money creation should be shifted back to the communities in order to finance them cost-effectively and to avoid anonymous dependency.

Peacemaking, democratic governance power should replace covert financial and resource wars. International institutions should be transformed from instruments of domination towards institutions of promotion.

I have elaborated on this in my manifesto, which is available in eight languages.

The *international trade order* should integrate environmental and social agreements as mandatory and, above all, implement the country of destination principle.

The latter means that free import is only allowed if compliance with the social and environmental standards of the

country of destination is made evident in the production of the good or service concerned.

Return to traditional international law ...

Above all, there must be a turn away from the “rules-based” international vassal order that the current hegemon is trying to impose, towards traditional international law.

This must once again enable the small nations to participate in a respected, equal and sovereign manner.

The invoked ‘family of mankind’ must consist of children with equal rights and dignity.

... and spiritual orientation

I think, however, that the movens for the realisation of all the previously mentioned adjusting elements is *spiritual orientation*. In the absence of this, illusory solutions and justifications will dominate the individual and global scene.

Albert Camus, who himself could not believe in transcendence, formulated the consequence of this lack as follows:

“In the absence of transcendent consolation, one might fall into lethargy, into amorality, or even hedonism.”

“In a world that seems to have lost all spiritual support and in which all conventional offers of meaning have been exposed as deceptions what is the point of commitment?”

And yet he has given himself the advocacy of human dignity and understanding as the meaning of life ...

One of France’s most brutal politicians – *Georges Clemenceau* – in a bright hour coined the phrase: “The true revolution on this earth would take place if people decided to live by the precepts of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.”

That the emerging multipolar world order may be shaped by this maxim – this is what I pray and campaign for. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Composer, pianist, conductor ..."

continued from page 21

All beginnings are difficult

Rachmaninoff spends his childhood in difficult family circumstances: his sister dies early, his parents separate. He fails the final exams at the Petersburg Conservatoire, but a member of the family manages to place him with a piano teacher and at the Moscow Conservatoire. Here he passes the exam, among other things with a one-act opera. But the way to success is not yet cleared. His first pieces for piano and orchestra follow, but they do not meet with a positive response, especially as *Alexander Glasunov*, composer and professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, severely criticises the first works and the young composer is rejected at a private concert in *Leo Tolstoy's* house around the same time.

First successes

Thanks to the support of a psychiatrist, he regains his self-confidence. He takes courage for his further musical work and composes his 2nd Piano Concerto op. 18 in C minor, which is still one of the best-known works of the late Romantic period and serves as a melody source for several well-known feature film scenes. His marriage to his cousin *Natalia Akexandrovna Satina* (such connections were not unusual at the time), whose support benefits him, the successful direction of the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre, the perfection of his piano playing, his activity as a conductor and, last but not least, the benevolent accompaniment of

Peter Tchaikovsky lead him on the road to success. Visits to the musical cities of Dresden and Leipzig spur him on writing further works such as the 1st Piano Sonata op. 28, inspired by *Goethe's* "Faust", and the symphonic poem "The Isle of the Dead" op. 29 after a painting by *Arnold Böcklin*.

Premiere as composer and pianist in the USA

In 1909, Rachmaninoff composes the also very popular 3rd Piano Concerto in D minor op. 30 – quasi as preparation for his tour of the USA; because of its immense degree of difficulty in the tradition of high Romanticism (*Franz Liszt, Frederic Chopin*), it demands nothing less than constant top performance from the artist. Even the composer and piano virtuoso is confronted with an extraordinary challenge: During the crossing to the USA, he diligently practices with a mute keyboard in order to perform it in New York's Carnegie Hall under the direction of *Gustav Mahler* – a great moment in music history! His concert tour is a great success; further tours in Europe and elsewhere follow.

Exile in the USA ...

The First World War leads to Russia's complete isolation from the rest of Europe. Inflation and the first reports of atrocities committed by the Bolsheviks against landowners cause the family great anxiety. They are driven from their country estate, which is looted and destroyed. In 1917, Rachmaninoff takes

advantage of an offer to give a few concerts in Sweden and flees Russia with his family, unaware that this is for ever. In 1918, they settle for good in the USA, where the composer continues to concertise restlessly in order to build up a new existence. In time, he is able to support his fellow musicians back home with donations and food shipments.

He stops composing in the United States because he lacks the inspiration of his Russian homeland. He never feels at home in the foreign country: he lives in seclusion, speaks only imperfect English, and his domestic servants are from Russia. During the Second World War, he provides financial aid to the Red Army. In 1942, Rachmaninoff buys a house in Beverly Hills and becomes a US citizen.

... and also in Switzerland

In order to get a little closer to his homeland again, Rachmaninoff buys a riverside plot in Hertenstein in 1930 and has a Bauhaus-style villa built; he gives it the name "Senar", an acronym of "Sergei and Natalja Rachmaninoff". He designs the park himself and lends a hand by planting trees and growing roses.

For six years, he is granted the opportunity to spend his time here – and also to compose again: Thus, the 3rd Symphony op. 44 and the *Paganini* Rhapsody op. 43 are written. On 11 August 1939, he plays his last concert in Lucerne under the direction of the Swiss conductor *Ernest Ansermet*; the day after – three weeks before

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Sergei Rachmaninoff in concert. (Picture screenshot)

Observations in nature – with plants and animals through the ten seasons

Phenological Handbook

by Hedwig Schär

Have you also made a mistake and started gardening too early or too late? In spring, every passionate gardener is itching to to start to work after the winter's rest. But sometimes there is still the threat of ground frost, which destroys all the work. The "tried and tested" remedy is to pay attention to the calendar or the farmers' rules. But the seasons are not always the same, sometimes everything blossoms early, then again late ... The experience of the last years showed that one could rather start earlier. But when?

Now a small, very appealing booklet has been published that recommends an interesting approach.

Phenology

"The word 'phenology' is a real tongue twister. The doctrine it describes, on the other hand, is easy to put into words: It looks into the question of what influence weather and climate have on the seasonal development of plants and animals. The ten phenological seasons have no fixed dates, but are based on the phenomena in nature". This is how the authors describe it in the preface of their booklet.

The ten seasons

The idea is that gardeners should not be guided by the calendar, e. g., the rule that warmth-loving plants can be put outside after 15 May, when the *cold Sophia* has rumbled. In Switzerland, the climate varies greatly depending on the geographical location. In the mountains there is often

still snow when in the lowlands it is already summer. Depending on the mood of the weather, flowering can also be delayed or advanced by a few weeks. So, it makes sense to take your cue from the plants in the area. They reliably show what the local temperatures are like. They don't care whether they are in Bern or Chur, nor do they care about the date.

In early spring, coltsfoot flowers when the soil is at least six degrees warm. It does this reliably every year. That is why coltsfoot is one of the indicator plants of early spring. There is at least one typical indicator plant in every season, which can be used as a guide for sowing and gardening.

Phenological handbook

In this very attractively designed booklet, the ten phenological seasons are described by a team of authors consisting of an organic farmer, a gardener, a travel, environmental and nature expert, an illustrator and a copywriter. There are three of each in spring, summer and autumn, and a resting phase in winter. Each of the seasons is presented on six pages in words and pictures. On the first double page, the indicator plants are introduced. The next two pages describe the work to be done in the garden. On the third double page, under the title "Discoveries", active animals in the season are presented.

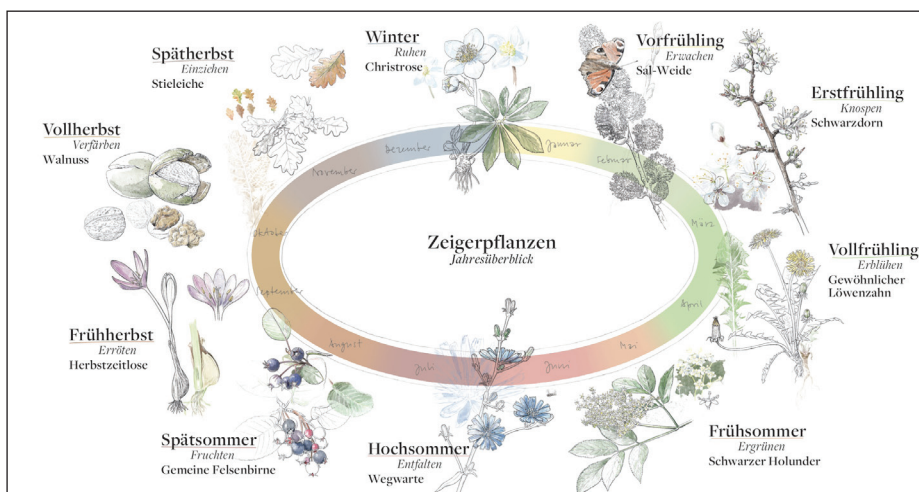
On each page there are lines for your own notes and observations. The authors' idea is explicitly to use the booklet as an observation tool for one's own garden.



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The illustrations are drawn by hand with great care and attention to detail, some in black and white, others coloured in water-colour. "And for those who don't dare to draw anything themselves, our illustrators [...] have pre-sketched examples that can be completed", this is the authors' advice. Thus, all ten seasons are always described in the same way.

At the beginning of the booklet, a leaflet with the most important indicator plants in the annual overview is included. It is advantageous if the gardener knows such indicator plants in his surroundings, or even better, finds them in his garden and can thus observe them without complications. If he has a blackthorn (first spring), elderberry (early summer with the blossom and early autumn with the berries), and an apple tree (ripening in late summer) in the garden, four seasons are already covered with indicator plants. The fact that the dandelion is in flower (full spring) cannot be overlooked, and the willow catkins (early spring) can be easily observed on a walk. In midsummer, the chicory flowers with its blue florets. In full autumn the leaves of the trees change colour and in late autumn they fall off. In winter, the blossoming of the Christmas rose is the sign of the dormant season. But winter is easy to recognise even without the indicator plant. In this way, the gardener always knows when new sowings are possible or what work needs to be done in the garden. For this purpose, a multi-coloured sowing



The graph shows the annual overview of the indicator plants. Top right-hand side: winter (dormant; Christmas rose), early spring (awakening; Sal willow), first spring (buds; blackthorn), full spring (blossoming; common dandelion), early summer (greening; black elderberry), midsummer (unfolding; chicory), late summer (fruiting; common rock pear), early autumn (blushing; autumn crocus), full autumn (discoloring; walnut), late autumn retract; English oak),

“Composer, pianist, conductor ...”

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Hitler's invasion of Poland – he leaves Europe forever; in 1943, he dies in the USA.

On Rachmaninoff's musical oeuvre

Rachmaninoff composed works in many genres, including chamber music, operas, secular and sacred choral works and songs. His music bears late Romantic traits, which repeatedly brought him criticism: he clung to tradition by continuing to rely on catchy melodies and spectacular effects, which went down well with a wider audience. Not surprisingly, the criticism was particularly severe from representatives of the *Schoenberg school*, which worked with atonality, but it also came from *Igor Stravinsky* and *Richard Strauss*. His Piano Concertos No. 2 and No. 3, however, with their atonal, loud and extremely virtuosic passages, show that the composer had already pushed open the door to modernity.

In the meantime, Rachmaninoff, with his distinctive, characteristic personal style, has a firm place in the repertoire of all orchestras, soloists and concert halls. In addition to the aforementioned piano concertos, the *Paganini Rhapsody* op. 43 and the *Corelli Variations* op. 42 are particularly popular. His symphonies are being played more and more often – and not only since the beginning of the anniversary year. There is still much to discover, such as his art songs, which are based on the Russian folk tradition. You can recognise the Russian soul in them. Every Russian, he explained, feels a strong connection to the native soil and continues: “Perhaps because of the need for solitude. Even after I left Russia, my music was inspired by it.”

Some concert highlights in the anniversary year

- until 14 January 2024: Exhibition “Rachmaninoff in Lucerne” at the Hans Erni Museum Lucerne, combined with various concerts by the piano master classes of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, lectures and talks, <https://rachmaninoff.ch/wp-content/uploads/hem-rachmaninoff-karte-august-2023.pdf>
- 8, 10 and 11 November 2023, 12 February, 29 and 30 March 2024: Rach-

- maninoff Festival in Zurich in cooperation with the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich and Zurich Opera House, <https://www.opernhaus.ch/tonhalle/>
- 12 November 2023: 4.15 pm, Stella Matutina Hertenstein. The Concert Choir of the Swiss Youth Choir sings parts of Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Vespers* in the Stella Matutina Church.
- 27 November 2023: Tonhalle Zurich, Rachmaninoff Piano Recital with Francesco Piemontesi

For the chief conductor of the Zurich Tonhalle *Paavo Järvi* and for *Gianandrea Noseda*, general music director of the Zurich Opera, who are performing a Rachmaninoff project in the current season, Rachmaninoff's music sounds particularly Russian, “perhaps even more Russian than that of Tchaikovsky”, for example, in that it does not describe conditions but tells a story. The reader is invited to go in search of traces during the Rachmaninoff Year and beyond, and to listen carefully at concerts.

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“Observations in nature ...”

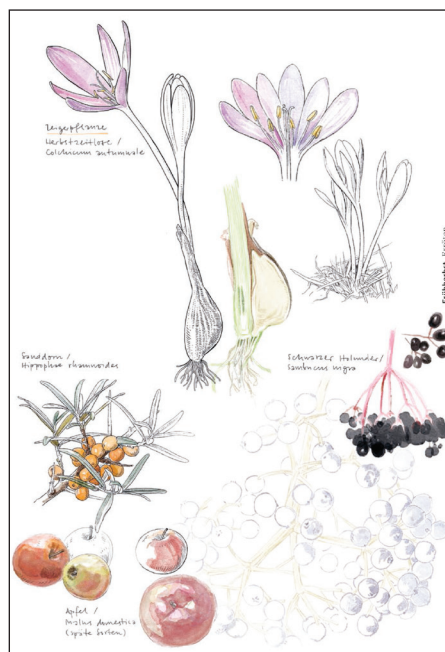
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calendar, coordinated with the ten seasons, is added at the end of the booklet.

PhaenoNet, Observations by private individuals

These observations are not new: since 1951, a number of (29) indicator plants have been observed at 160 sites in Switzerland and their developmental stages recorded.

In 2011, the *PhaenoNet* was launched. Here, school classes and private individuals can observe nature and enter their data. (Registration at www.phaenonet.ch). 15 plants are available for observation. It is recommended to start with one or two observation objects. The data collected in this way provide an overview of the state of vegetation and climatic changes. They are also passed on to *Meteo Switzerland*. This also provides, for example, a more accurate pollen forecast for allergy sufferers.

**More detailed information for interested parties**

The “Phenological Handbook” is highly recommended to every gardening enthusiast.

For those who want to deal with the subject in more detail, the book “Spriessbürger – Handbuch für den Anbau von Gemüse und Salat in der Schweiz” (Spriessbürger – Manual for growing vegetables and lettuce in Switzerland) by *Eveline Dudda* and *Klaus Laitenberger* (ISBN 978-3-9524524-0-0) is highly recommended. This 360-page basic work is much more detailed and also refers to the ten seasons and their indicator plants.

Now nothing stands in the way of identifying and observing the indicator plants in one's own environment. In the next gardening season, you can try out how your observations in nature can be incorporated into garden life. Of course, your own notes will be of great value!