

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,
and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Celac States – “A shining example for the whole world”

33 Latin America and Caribbean States proclaim their region a Zone of Peace

Interview with Prof Dr iur et phil Alfred M. de Zayas, Geneva School of Diplomacy

“It is a shining example for the entire world. Why not a peace zone in the South Pacific? Why not in Eastern Europe, why not in Europe, why not in the Middle East? And I would like to mention that, when we talk about peace, one should understand peace not only in the narrow sense that no hot war is being waged. I want to understand peace as an equilibrium in which structural violence no longer exists, where people and countries are not blackmailed, where states are not forced to take certain political decisions that are against the interests of their own people.”

sion to a world order that can be more democratic and equitable and must be based on the principles of the sovereignty of states and their peoples and as well as international solidarity.” That fact that our media have hushed up



*Prof Alfred de Zayas
(picture thk)*

this conference is a scandal. In the following interview Alfred de Zayas gives his assessment of the Havana summit and its results.

Current Concerns: Professor de Zayas, how do you assess the Conference of Celac States 14 days ago in Havana? What results have been worked out by the countries of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States?

Professor de Zayas: First, it should be noted that a brand new organization was agreed upon in Rio de Janeiro in 2010 and successfully launched in Caracas in December 2011. It is a gathering of 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries, which see themselves as a region and want to solve their regional problems, in the sense of their traditions, in terms of their culture and in terms of their own interests, which are not always, or rather rarely co-terminous with the interests of the United States and Canada. Therefore, one must also understand that Celac is to some extent a competing organization to the Organization of American States. The OAS headquarters in Washington were established in 1948. For decades since then, many Latin Americans states felt patronized by Washington and therefore wanted to escape from this coercion. They are still members of the OAS, but now they have founded their own organization with-

thk. In December 2011, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac – Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños) was established. This community comprises 33 American states with the exception of the USA and Canada. The aim of this organization is to increase regional cooperation and cohesion and thereby reduce the influence of the USA. The fight against hunger and poverty are top on the priority list. At the same time countries want to increase the weight of their voices on international issues. The list of countries is impressive, and includes countries such as Mexico, Honduras, Colombia or Uruguay, countries which despite their previously US-friendly policy, still decided to join Celac and support its objectives.

While just two weekends before new wars were being planned with much media fanfare and attention at the Security Conference in Munich, in which Germany in particular “is to assume more responsibility” (see article on page 3), the Heads of State and Government of the Celac States held a summit meeting on 28 and 29 January in the presence of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in Havana, Cuba’s capital. German media devoted not a single line to this important event. No-one who has no direct relation to Latin America and who is not doing dedicated research on the internet will hear anything about this summit of 33 leaders who are the representatives of

their peoples. So much for the freedom of the press in our “free Western” world.

The outstanding significance of this summit meeting becomes apparent by its final declaration (see page 2), which sets out the results of this conference. In contrast to the Western world that has once again shown its true face in Munich by beating the drums of war, these 33 countries are planning the establishment of a peace zone in Central and Latin America. This is a region of 600 million people and an area of 20.5 million square kilometers. They are pioneers of peace in our world. Until then, several issues need to be clarified, because it is known all too well by Latin American countries what foreign intervention and US interference in internal affairs means to their countries. The examples from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Grenada, Chile, Venezuela or Argentina are in oppressive memory to all of us.

All the more should it be appreciated that an entire region is rejecting militarization. The Independent UN Expert for a Democratic and Equitable International Order, Professor Alfred de Zayas headlined in a press release dated February 3rd “A Central Step against Global Militarism” and thus made the public aware of this groundbreaking summit as one of few. The commitment to dialogue and the rejection of any military action are “a strong signal to the public world.” He sees it as “a positive sign in the progres-

"Celac States – 'A shining ...'"

continued from page 1

out Canada and the United States. So far this seems to be successful.

How is the success becoming manifest?

Previous summits have already been successful. But at the summit held on 28 and 29 January in Havana, in the presence of UN Secretary-General *Ban Ki-Moon*, they took an important step forward for peace, in full conformity with the commitments imposed on all States pursuant to the UN Charter.

Could you please explain in more detail?

All countries of the world are, in principle, in favor of peace. All countries of the world give lip service to peace. Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter states that the states must refrain from the threat or use of force in their international relations. This is *jus cogens*, binding international law, but unfortunately reality is often quite different. Here, the Latin American countries have set an important example.

How do they plan to do it?

Already 47 years ago, in February 1967, the Latin American countries signed the *Treaty of Tlatelolco*, a town near Mexico City, and declared the whole area to be a nuclear-free zone. This remains valid to this day. The Treaty was ratified and respected by the states. To ensure this, they

founded the *Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Now they take the next logical step.

What is this next step?

They no longer want to waste their wealth on wars and the war industry, on large armies and large air forces. Therefore, they have declared the whole area a peace zone. They want to reduce and re-direct the war industry so that it can take on peaceful tasks – of which there are more than plenty. This requires financial resources, which must not be wasted. This is the first region in the world – and that is the extraordinary thing – which has declared a Peace Zone. One knows the Antarctica Peace Zone, but nobody lives there. This is as if one declares outer space as a Peace Zone. But if you declare a part of the world with 600 million inhabitants as a Peace Zone, this is going to have consequences and also a signaling effect. Now we have to see how the declaration is put into action.

Have all the associated countries agreed to this declaration?

This declaration was adopted by consensus. But it bears repeating that what has been agreed on so far is a declaration and not yet a treaty. It is still a long way from a declaration to the necessary implementation measures that would require inter alia all 33 states to revise their budgets.

In addition, they are no longer allowed to participate in military actions operated by other states or to give moral support for military action.

How realistic is that? If countries disarm, it is basically positive, but how are they going to defend themselves if they are attacked from the outside? We know the examples from recent history.

It is obvious that an eventual threat from the outside must be addressed. First, there is a commitment within Celac that any conflicts that might arise between the 33 states must be solved peacefully. That is already a significant thing, the obligation to negotiate within the 33 states. But of course, some of these states need to protect the others if a threat from outside is not to lead to concessions and blackmailing. If a threat comes from outside, they might have to defer to the will of the strongest. Of course these are all questions that need to be addressed at the next Celac meeting.

How do you remain capable of defending yourself? This is a question they have to ask themselves, in particular those countries that have experienced interventions or other breaches of their sovereignty, and in Latin America these are not just a few.

Assuming that there is an economic or military threat, Latin American solidarity against foreign pressures and interventions is indispensable. And you also have to remember that the war industry has many fingers and that it has placed its lackeys in many states. These people sit in a lot of Latin American countries and will naturally seek to undermine this declaration and the resulting policy. This is to be expected. My optimism, however, is based on the fact that this big project has been ventured. That in fact, the conferences were successful and that a new organization has come into being that is courageous enough to do something completely new. And that's my core message. It is a shining example for the entire world. Why not a Peace Zone in the South Pacific? Why not in Eastern Europe, why not in Europe, why not in the Middle East? And I would like to mention that, when we talk about peace, one should understand peace not only in the narrow sense that no hot war is being waged. I want to understand peace as an equilibrium in which structural violence no longer exists, where people and countries are not blackmailed, where states are not forced to take certain political decisions that are against the interests of their own people.

But this requires the sovereignty of the individual states to be fully respected.

continued on page 3

Letter to  the Editor**Sochi – impressive opening ceremony**

You rarely saw so much art and culture at an opening ceremony of the Olympic Games as in Sochi on 7 February. With the ceremony the host demonstrated impressively how much the official Russia is connected to the true European values – without EU. With beautifully presented excerpts from works by *Tchaikovsky*, *Khachaturian*, *Stravinsky*, *Tolstoy*, etc., by orchestral sounds, choirs and soloists and in particular by the unique *Bolshoi Ballet* the high value of classical music in Russia was demonstrated in an impressive way and thus, sure to the delight of many viewers from around the world, one of those enduring European cultural achievements was paid homage to. Also especially Austria as one of the birthplaces of classical music can be proud of these cultural achievements. On the other hand, how poor were those who – in bondage to the political construct EU – had conducted the hate propaganda campaign against "Putin's Games" for months, only because the status of lesbians and gays in public is not

as high in Russia as in Germany with its low-birth rate. Deeper you cannot fall as a nation than marching into at such event in a stupid, family-hostile "rainbow costume"; not even the crew of the United States was able to "manage" that ... Pay homage to the host's right who has invited you and abide by it. This is one of the basic rules of civilization which the EU has been neglecting for long. The EU only knows total liberty at all levels regardless of the consequences whether they are of economical, environmental or social nature. The numerous heads of state of EU Member States who boycotted the opening ceremony of Sochi by their demonstrative non-presence, clearly demonstrated such state of mind. Europe as a carrier of culture and tradition is indeed something completely different than the ill-fated EU. Thank you Sochi, thank you Russia!

Inge Rauscher, Austria

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Celac States – 'A shining ...'"

continued from page 2

This is explicitly stated in the text of the declaration. Celac does not aim at a central government. What it is, is an association of sovereign nations, who want to keep their identity, their culture and tradition. A Celac government is not on the agenda, but very probably a coordination to promote peace with the fraternal countries. Venezuela, for example, was not obliged to help a country like Argentina, so that it could free itself from the International Monetary Fund. That was a fraternal effort that Venezuela freely undertook. My hope is that in a continent that is as rich as Latin America, these riches will be used for the common cause, in order to keep the specific qualities of the 33 states and to promote and preserve peace. They will have to stand together in case this undertaking is endangered by foreign corporations and foreign influences aiming at bringing these states more or less into line. They want to secure sovereignty over their own resources and should not allow them to be managed by multinational corporations. They want to preserve the great rainforests of the Amazon, combat pollution, preserve the rights of indigenous populations (I reject the term "Indians").

Europe could do it, too ...

km. The countries of Europe would as well be able to change their policies and to make the explicit waiver of threat or use of power, the absolute respect of national sovereignty and peaceful coexistence aiming at freedom, rule of law, democracy, economic prosperity and security for all their established guideline. In November 1990, there was this promising beginning. At that time, after the fancied end of the East-West confrontation, the representatives of the "Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe" (CSCE), the preceding organization of today's OSC, met in Paris and unanimously came to the decision on the "Charter of Paris for a New Europe" (www.menschenrechtsbuero.del/pdf/paris90g.pdf). Today, this important document has been forgotten. The first heading of the document reads: "A new era of Peace, Democracy, Unity," and is followed by sub-paragraphs on "Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law", "Economic Freedom and Responsibility", "Friendly Relations between Participating States", "Security" and "Unity". Studying this document once again and then taking it seriously would be worth-while.

Here Celac must give direction as an organisation. One must see the whole situation and have a strategy to solve these problems before they become too difficult.

This step, which has been undertaken by the Latin American countries, does it not correspond a lot with the very issue that you pursue with your mandate?

I think so, because my mandate strives for a peaceful world, a world in which human rights are strengthened by international solidarity. But it is not always easy to see precisely where my reports to the Human Rights Council or the General Assembly have an impact. I formulate pragmatic suggestions that may perhaps mean impulses to the states. I identify a number of obstacles to a just international order. I mention the hurdles that must be overcome. I pick out positive developments in the world as central themes, such as direct democracy and neutrality in Switzerland. When you study the reports, you will find plenty of ideas on how states could cooperate to actually attain a better world order

that would be fairer and more democratic. In three or four years when I am no longer a special rapporteur, maybe I will find out if my suggestions have born fruit. But I remain optimistic and see that reason has not been extinguished, and that there will always be countries that do the right thing. I only want, if I can, to support good practices and the humanistic ideals and developments in these countries in order to achieve a more just and more humane world order for all of us.

Professor de Zayas, thank you for the interview.

Alfred de Zayas is since May 2012 the Independent Expert of the United Nations for the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, this interview, however, was conducted in his capacity as Professor of International Law and noted peace activist

Further informations:

http://dezayasalfred.wordpress.com and www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/AlfreddeZayas.aspx

(Interview: Thomas Kaiser)

Table listing 33 Latin American countries with their respective flags: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela.

Proclamation of Latin America and Caribbean as a zone of peace

The Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) gathered in Havana, Cuba on January 28 and 29, 2014 at the Second Summit, on behalf of their peoples and faithfully interpreting their hopes and aspirations,

- Reaffirming the commitment of member countries with the Purposes and Principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and International Law, and aware of the fact that prosperity and stability in the region contribute to international peace and security,
- Mindful that peace is a supreme asset and a legitimate aspiration of all peoples and that preserving peace is a substantial element of Latin America and Caribbean integration and a principle and common value of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC),
- Reaffirming that integration consolidates the vision of a fair International order based on the right to peace and a culture of peace, which excludes the use of force and non-legitimate means of defense, such as weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in particular,
- Highlighting the relevance of the *Tlatelolco Treaty* for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean establishing the first nuclear weapon free zone in a densely populated area, this being a contribution to peace and to regional and international security,
- Reiterating the urgent need of General and Complete Nuclear Disarmament, as well as the commitment with the Strategic Agenda of the *Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL)*,
- adopted by the 33 Member States of the Organization in the Gen-

eral Conference held in Buenos Aires in August, 2013.

- Recalling the principles of peace, democracy, development and freedom underlying the actions of countries members of SICA,
- Recalling the decision of *UNASUR* [Unión de Naciones Suramericanas] Heads of State of consolidating South America as a Zone of Peace and Cooperation,
- Recalling the establishment, in 1986, of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic,
- Recalling also our commitment, agreed in the Declaration of the Summit of Unity of Latin America and the Caribbean, on 23 February 2010, to promote the implementation of our own mechanisms for the for peaceful conflict resolution,
- Reiterating our commitment to consolidate Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, in which differences between nations are peacefully settled through dialogue and negotiations or other means, fully consistent with International Law,
- Cognizant also of the catastrophic global and long-term humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and the ongoing discussions on this issue,

Declare:

1. Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace based on respect for the principles and rules of International Law, including the international instruments to which Member States are a party to, the Principles and Purposes of the United Nations Charter;
2. Our permanent commitment to solve disputes through peaceful means with the aim of uprooting forever threat or use of force in our region;
3. The commitment of the States of the region with their strict obli-

gation not to intervene, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other State and observe the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights and self-determination of peoples;

4. The commitment of the peoples of Latin American and Caribbean to foster cooperation and friendly relations among themselves and with other nations irrespective of differences in their political, economic, and social systems or development levels; to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors;
5. The commitment of the Latin American and Caribbean States to fully respect for the inalienable right of every State to choose its political, economic, social, and cultural system, as an essential conditions to ensure peaceful coexistence among nations;
6. The promotion in the region of a culture of peace based, inter alia, on the principles of the United Nations Declaration on a Culture of Peace;
7. The commitment of the States in the region to guide themselves by this Declaration in their International behavior;
8. The commitment of the States of the region to continue promoting nuclear disarmament as a priority objective and to contribute with general and complete disarmament, to foster the strengthening of confidence among nations;

We urge all Member States of the International Community to fully respect this Declaration in their relations with CELAC Member States.

In witness of the undersigned (the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbeans States) having duly signed this Proclamation in Havana, on the 29th day of the month of January of 2014, in a copy written in the Spanish, English, French and Portuguese languages.

Prominent resistance against German war drums would be welcomed by a majority of the citizens

by Karl Müller

Is Germany pursuing the path to war? One shouldn't shy away from the answer: Yes, they are there, the German warmongers. The German *Gaucks*, *Steinmeiers*, *von der Leyens*, *Rühes*, *Özdemirs* – the *Joffes*, *Frankenbergers*, *Nonnenmachers* and *Korneliusses*. Small as it may be, it is still a rather noisy minority. German politicians, military personnel and journalists, German neo-conservatives, with the transatlantacists and their networks in front-line – they can be found in every political party. They have been persuading the German public for years now. And currently they are doing it with even less camouflage.

They use a “salami-slice strategy”. Resistance is meant to be broken, slice by slice. They apply language confusion and blatant lies for the sake of one goal: one hundred years after the beginning of the First and 75 years after the beginning of the Second World War the Germans are to lose their respect of war, just like former divisionary *Hans Bachofner* had diagnosed almost 15 years ago already, in a speech delivered in Zurich in view of the murderous Kosovo war in May 1999.

They talk about “German interests” actually aiming at a new German superpower regarding war as a mere “continuation of its policy by other means”. They call that “normality” and have coined the phrases “to take on responsibility” or “not standing aside” to describe it. They are willing to continue to provide the vasalls' services demanded by Washington and the centres of Big Money in future, too. None of the grave war crimes of their “allies” deter them. By all means they want to keep the crumbling EU regime together under German supremacy and look for new “markets” in the East, even risking a renewed Cold (or Hot) War.

Yet still a majority of citizens and prominent personalities oppose them, not only from the camps of the German peace movement and the “Linkspartei” (Left Party). Those voices are precious and show that it is possible to step up instead of suffering developments silently.

There is the former secretary of state in the German Ministry of Defense *Willy Wimmer*. He writes (see also here on this page):

“Germany should serve the peace in this world. This is laid down in the ‘Grundgesetz’ (German Basic Law). And we had been able to live quite well with that state of affairs, until a German government chose to overthrow the United Nations’ charter by engaging in a war against the Federal republic of Yugoslavia, there-

Gauck’s position is not covered by the German Basic Law

by Willy Wimmer

He can't help it, our Federal President. It was as early as on 3 October 2013 that he struck the security-political note. In Munich he became the recidivist. You may make allowances that he faced a forum that had not distinguished themselves by noble-minded restraint at any of the wars that were waged during the last decades. In Munich you may turn the cold shoulder to anyone. But not to those who would like to cut loose. And now our Federal President. After all he was member of a profession that tends to forget things. Often they are respectable personalities who explain us afterwards why things went wrong once again. “We, the Germans, are on the way towards a form of responsibility that we have not yet practiced”, Mr Federal President was to be heard in Munich. But hey, this can only be something to which the Basic Law put an end, with good reason. Germany should serve the peace in this world. This is laid down in the ‘Grundgesetz’ (German Basic Law). And we had been able to live quite well with that state of affairs, until a German government chose to overthrow the United Nations’ charter by engaging in a war against the Federal republic of Yugoslavia, thereby breaking international law, and later to support the war of aggression against Iraq. It is neither the German peoples’ fault nor that of the Federal governments prior to 1998 if we hesitate now to talk about a community of Western values. Because Guantanamo is everywhere. Since the bombardment of Belgrade you will get a strange look at best if you openly endorse international law. Although it is written in our German Basic Law that the rules of international law are part of our political culture and therefore our reason of state. We need not practice it as our Federal President preaches to us from the pulpit in Munich. They took that from us without asking us. Where are the initiatives of those who met in Munich to contribute to the reconstruction of international law? If there is something that ruins

the moral it is the gradual acceptance of the right of the law of the jungle.

Our Federal President should not fail to appreciate that a lot of people in Germany remember a Federal Chancellor *Helmut Kohl*, Foreign Minister *Hans-Dietrich Genscher* and his successor *Klaus Kinkel*. In comparison to today they were brimming with diplomatic activities to attain the reunification of our country and to make friends at the same time. They are not among those who destroyed the hopeful end of the Cold War by advancing the military and by crashing diplomatic possibilities. We only have to ask ourselves what – just look at Afghanistan – we wasted every year by decrying the diplomatic possibilities within the context of international law. One of the consequences has been that we withdrew the necessary measures of helpful support to the real problems in our world.

What is our government planning to do in order to change the humble existence of German foreign and security policy again to make it resemble the one which distinguished German Federal Chancellor *Helmut Schmidt* and *Helmut Kohl*, or *Genscher* with his flexibility and principled respect to law and conventions in all respects? No Kral in Africa is forgotten for the remembrance of German soldiers. But who talks about the right of the people there to exploit their own natural resources? As a result we then have to face desperate people bouncing back from the walls surrounding Europe. A more bloodless behaviour is hardly possible, whereas Munich would have been an occasion to finally change course in the direction that once had allowed our country to serve peace in the world in most difficult times.

Our Federal President appeals to us to act in the framework of our alliances and he talks about the legitimation they allegedly have in the Charter of the United Nations. Where, however, is the due German approach?

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

by breaking international law, and later to support the war of aggression against Iraq. It is neither the German peoples’ fault nor that of the Federal governments prior to 1998 if we hesitate now to talk about a community of Western values. Because Guantanamo is everywhere. Since the bombardment of Belgrade you will get a strange look at best if you openly endorse international law. Al-

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"Prominent resistance..."

continued from page 5

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There is the Deputy Chairman of the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), Peter Gauweiler. In an interview with the newspaper "Passauer Presse" he stated on 4 February:

"The German Basic Law explicitly demands a culture of military restraint. Whoever wants to change that culture would have to change the constitution. [...] The CSU has always supported this course and will not consent to an amendment of that matter. We must not talk Germany into new military adventures. With us there will be no new 'coalition of the willing' like the one at the beginning of the disastrous Iraq war. [...] Nobody of those who speak in favour of a stronger military commitment abroad have ever explained to us how the 'Bundeswehr' (federal army) is supposed to manage that in terms of personnel, logistics or additional weaponry. They raise expectations which Germany cannot and will not fulfil. Our historical experience tells us that ever more military escalation is the wrong way to go and war is no means of policy."

There are also journalists such as Jakob Augstein. On 3 February he wrote in Spiegel-online:

"We don't have to look it up in history books to know that General Sherman was right when he said: 'War is hell.' It was him who burnt down the city of Atlanta in the American Civil War. So he knew what he was talking about. And we know it if we remember. [...] Just recently Minister of Foreign Affairs Steinmeier said, Germany was '... too big to just make comments on world politics.' And Minister of Defense von der Leyen opined that 'we cannot stand aside when murder and rape occur on a daily basis.' Now Federal President Gauck topped this at the Munich security conference and declared: Germany should commit herself, 'earlier, more determined and more substantially.' All these politicians avoid the term 'war'. But it is just that what is meant when Steinmeier talks about 'active foreign policy' and Gauck encourages the Germans to 'turn towards the world'. They didn't use this language prior to the elections because

they know well that the electorate don't like any of this. They haven't announced this change of strategy in advance, although it must have been planned for some time before. This is impertinent. And it is nonsense in a double sense of the word. This logic is based on an outdated concept of security and responsibility. [...] An overwhelming majority of the Germans oppose the deployment of the German military abroad. Better than their president who keeps living in the past and their actionism-prone Minister of Foreign Affairs they have realized that today's cultural conflicts may not be solved by military force."

And there is the publisher and former politician Jürgen Todenhöfer. He wrote an open letter on 2 February that one has to read in full length:

"Dear Herr Bundespräsident, you are demanding that Germany should accept more responsibility in the world. Including military commitment. Do you actually know what you are talking about? I doubt that and would therefore like to make four suggestions:

1. *A visit to one of the Syrian cities of either Aleppo or Homs. Just for you to personally experience once what war means.*
2. *Four weeks of duty with our soldiers when they are doing patrols in Afghan combat areas. You may send your children or grandchildren instead.*
3. *A visit to a hospital in Pakistan, Somalia or Yemen where innocent victims of American drone strikes are treated.*
4. *A visit to the German military cemetery in El Alamein, Egypt. For 70 years 4,800 German soldiers have been buried there. Some of them had just been 17*

years old. No Federal President has ever paid a visit to them.

Our German Basic Law states it as your duty to 'promote peace'. Wars of aggression are unconstitutional according to Article 26 and punishable by law. War is only allowed as an act of defense. Don't argue now that our security would have to be defended in Africa. We have heard something similar before. One hundred thousand Afghans have paid with their lives for this nonsense.

How come that you of all people call for yet another military mission as a Federal President, after all the military tragedies of our country? It is right that we should take more responsibility in the world. But certainly not for wars, but for peace! As honest mediator. That should be our role. And yours, too.

Yours, Jürgen Todenhöfer

PS: I'd rather prefer a Federal President who accepts an invitation to the 'Oktoberfest' by friends to one who yet again wants to send German soldiers into the fire, while sitting in the safe haven of his presidential office. I am close to craving for Wulff. He wanted to integrate people, not kill them."

These voices are part of a German post-war tradition which, as one example for many others, shall be illustrated here by a quote from the inaugural speech of another Federal President, *Gustav Heinemann*:

"I consider the promotion of peace to be a priority obligation. It is not war when a man has to stand the test, but – contrary to what our generation was taught in the imperial class rooms at the time of the 'Kaiser' – peace is the case of emergency when all of us must stand the test".

The legal position according to the German Basic Law

km. In the preamble to the German Basic Law, it is stated that the German people is "inspired by the determination to promote the world peace [...]".

Article 25 provides:

"The general rules of international law shall be an integral part of federal law. They shall take precedence over the laws and directly create rights and duties for the inhabitants of the federal territory".

Article 26 provides:

"Acts tending to and undertaken with intent to disturb the peaceful relations between nations, especially to prepare for a war of aggression, shall be unconstitutional. They shall be made a criminal offence".

Article 87a provides:

"The Federation shall establish Armed Forces for purposes of defense. [...] Apart from defense, the Armed Forces may be employed only to the extent expressly permitted by this Basic Law".

In its Articles 115a at sequence the Basic Law only knows provisions for the case of defense.

In the German Basic Law there is no mention of "Bundeswehr" operations abroad in order to "not to stand aside", "assume more responsibility in the world" or even, "defend German interests".

“Any reasonable person must wish the Ukraine stability, peace and prosperity”

km. Those who report about the events in the Ukraine in a realistic and balanced manner have little opportunity currently to express their position in the media of the German-speaking countries. Anyone who reads the mainstream media is confronted with the emotionalization that appears campaign-like and brought into line. Even so in cases, where persons responsible for the politics of “the West” speak of the necessity of “compromise” and “talks with Russia” now and again, as did for instance senior strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski on the occasion of the Munich Security Conference. Such statements, however, appear hardly credible, since the actions and whatever else is said point into another direction. One of the exceptions who still have access to Western and Eastern media is the German Russia expert, Alexander Rahr. Alexander Rahr is research director of the German-Russian Forum, Senior Advisor at Winterhall Holding GmbH and member of the international discussion club “Valdai”, founded on Russian initiative. Its annual meetings deal with Russia’s interior and foreign policy. The following two texts are excerpts from interviews which the Russian news agency RIA Novosti and the German radio station Deutschlandfunk performed with Alexander Rahr.

“Any reasonable person must wish the Ukraine stability, peace and prosperity as well as politicians that find a common language and common interests. They should reach agreement and stop this artificially created unnecessary crisis.”

“Yanukovich has not violated any law as was the case ten years ago with the Ukrainian government, when it came to a revolution because of electoral manipulations. He refused and postponed the signing of a document. He even received urgently-needed loans from Russia which the West could not provide. That is why I think a second revolution would be nonsense.

[...] The problem is also [...] that today the EU does not desire to sit down at the negotiating table with Russia. In many ways, Europe stands on the side of the opposition. It wants to make Yanukovich appear as some kind of law-breaker of Ukrainian authorities. Thus, I think, the West is creating an explosive situation. [...]

Source: Alexander Rahr in an interview with RIA Novosti of 24.1.2014. (Translation Current Concerns)

“We have to learn how to cooperate with centres like China and Russia, since they become stronger and not weaker”.

“There is something, I believe, which we have to look at in a different way than we did in the 90s. Russia is not a sinking major power but a power on its way up again. Whether we like it or not and we cannot prevent it. Russia is building a Eurasian Union in the East of Europe. In the long term, of course, this Eurasian Union certainly has to construct a basis of cooperation with the European Union. Otherwise, we are still stuck in the Cold War. I think, both sides have made serious mistakes in the Ukraine, the Russi-

ans with their trade war, but the European Union – as our Chancellor Mrs Merkel admitted in her government statement – made the mistake to confront the Ukraine with the question of either/or. Somehow it must certainly be possible to allow a country like the Ukraine both options, the association with the European Union as well as a close cooperation with the Eurasian Union. [...]

The Eurasian Union cannot be formed without the Ukraine. But for the time being the Eurasian Union which is constructed by Putin and the Kazakh President Nazarbayev is not directed against the European Union per se, it is merely an attempt to create a model of integration in the East of Europe which is to sign a free trade zone with the European Union some time in the future.

Together with the Russians, we have to find common solution for the Ukraine. The Russians have just as much influence on the Ukraine as the West and the European Union. This is why we have to look for common ground. [...]

In my view, the West is still in the winning position of the 90s. From our point of view we won the Cold War and regard countries like Russia still as apt pupils. This has changed. The world is no longer uni-polar, but multi-polar. We have to learn working together with centres like China and Russia in a totally different way than we did. They are becoming stronger, not weaker.“

Source: Alexander Rahr in an interview with the Deutschlandfunk of 28.1.2014

(Translation Current Concerns)

Letter to  the Editor

Munich Security Conference

The pretty euphemisms of Mr Gauck, Mrs von der Leyen and Mr Steinmeier at the above-mentioned event, namely “Germany’s new role in the world” or “Germany, as such an important country has to assume more responsibility”, allow deep insights. “Germany has to pursue a more active foreign policy than before”, says the Foreign Minister.

These statements mean nothing else but an attempt at making war once more publicly acceptable as a political means. However, two third of the German population reject this. What, then, are Bundeswehr operations abroad all about? Since when does Germany’s defense not only take place at the Hindu Kush, but also in Africa? During my basic training

as a soldier in 1975, I myself solemnly vowed to defend the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany. In the early 1990s with the First Gulf War, I subsequently refused to do military service, because I have a well-functioning memory.

It is quite evident that in Africa it is about the robbery of raw materials such as coltan and other rare substances, which the West requires for the manufacture of mobile phones, tablet PCs and other IT products. Similarly these operations are important for the US and its allies to secure the traffic routes for such and other raw materials. Geo-strategic considerations that must not be underestimated, also play a part by which the tot-

tering US-empire underlines its imperialistic politics.

The words “humanitarian aid” and “responsibility to protect” are nothing but fraudulent labelings serving to obscure the facts.

Such wars blatantly infringe the 1945 United Nations Charter, which prohibits such violations of human rights. The sovereignty and thus the equivalence of individual states are also violated. These international laws are embedded in our German Basic Law, in other words, our German Basic Law is violated as well.

Werner Voss, Cologne

(Translation Current Concerns)

Civil wars often result in wars of aggression intended by the USA and NATO

Given the prevailing international legal norms, such as the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states, Article 2, paragraph 5 of the UN Charter, that are – with reference to the demonstrations in Ukraine – being broken by leading Western politicians, one wonders why international law experts in Germany do not raise their voices. Do they believe that the fueled civil wars in certain countries followed by US/Nato-led wars of aggression in the same

countries, have already become customary law to such an extent that one can do nothing about them? Or do they believe that those wars are taking place sufficiently far away?

If Federal Minister of Defense *von der Leyen* or Federal President *Gauck* are frankly declaring – most recently in their statements at the Nato Security Conference in Munich – that Germany had to “contribute to NATO” more than before, all of us should hear the alarm bells ring.

Luckily, there are many, especially young people, who oppose the growing fascist tendencies in Germany.

But are they also aware of the fact that “wars of aggression are the worst form of fascism”, as chief US Prosecutor *Jackson* explained during the opening of the Nuremberg Trials in 1945?

Brigitte Queck,
Dipl. Staatswiss. Aussenpolitik, Potsdam
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Are violent revolts particularly democratic from now on?

by *Patrick J. Buchanan*

Despite our endless blather about democracy, we Americans seem to be able to put our devotion to democratic principles on the shelf, when they get in the way of our New World Order.

In 2012, in the presidential election in Egypt, *Mohammed Morsi* of the Muslim Brotherhood won in a landslide. President *Obama* hailed the outcome.

One year later, the Egyptian army ousted and arrested *Morsi* and gunned down a thousand members of his brotherhood. The coup was countenanced by *John Kerry* who explained that the Egyptian army was “restoring democracy.”

Comes now the turn of Ukraine.

In 2010, *Viktor Yanukovich*, in what neutral observers called a free and fair election, was chosen president. His term ends in 2015. [...]

Military coups, a la Cairo, and mob uprisings, a la Kiev – are these now legit-

imate weapons in the arsenal of democracy.

What did *Yanukovich* do to deserve ouster by the street? He chose Russia over Europe. [...]

Kerry is putting us on the side of mobs that want to bring down the president, force elections, and take power. Yet, Americans would never sit still should similar elements, with similar objectives, occupy our capital. [...]

How would Europeans have reacted if, in the bailout crisis, he, *Putin*, had flown to Athens and goaded rioters demanding that Greece default and pull out of the eurozone?

How would the EU react if *Putin* were to hail the United Kingdom Independence Party, which wants out of the EU, or the Scottish National Party, which wants to secede from Great Britain? [...]

Security police who have questioned jailed rioters seem to believe we Amer-

icans are behind what is going on. And given the *National Endowment for Democracy's* clandestine role in the color-coded revolutions of a decade ago in Central and Eastern Europe, that suspicion is not unwarranted. [This was completely confirmed by Mrs *Nuland's* phone call as even the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” wrote on 9 February.]

Nor is Russian foreign minister *Sergei Lavrov* entirely wrong when he says, “a choice is being imposed” on Ukraine, and European politicians are fomenting protests and riots “by people who seize and hold government buildings, attack the police and use racist and anti-Semitic and Nazi slogans.” [...]

Source: Extracts from Patrick J. Buchanan *Will Mobocracy Triumph in Ukraine?* of 4 February 2014, www.buchanan.org

Financial aid of the West for Ukraine – it's all just rhetoric

According to the Russian foreign politician *Alexei Pushkov* the information of rapid aid from the West for the crisis-stricken Ukraine is nothing but demagoguery and rhetoric.

“There are no such plans”, said *Pushkov*, Chairman of the Russian State Duma Committee on International Affairs (the Russian lower house of parliament) at a *Ria Novosti* press conference on Wednesday. He told that American and European diplomats speak merely of “guarantees” and “investment prospects”, which would be made dependent on consultations with the future government in Kiev.

“This is not financial aid, but demagoguery and rhetoric”, said *Pushkov*. He was sympathetic about the fact the West did not want to invest money in Ukraine, which had been facing a crisis with unforeseeable consequences, the politician said. But he expected that the EU did not pretend to be preparing a huge aid package.

On Monday the “Wall Street Journal” reported, referring to officials in Brussels and Washington that the EU and the US were working on a package for rapid financial aid for Ukraine. Precondition for the emergency loans, the amount of which was unknown, were economic and political reforms. The Ukrainian Foreign Min-

ister, *Leonid Kozhara*, said on 3 February 2014, Ukraine had received no official proposals, but would discuss this issue with the EU's chief diplomat *Catherine Ashton*, who was going to visit Kiev that week.

Previously, Russia had already announced a 15 billion US dollar financial aid for Ukraine. Moscow does not transfer the money directly, but buys Ukrainian Euro Bonds for this sum. In December the first three billion dollar were invested in the Ukrainian debt securities.

Source: *Ria Novosti* of 5 February 2014

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The US – the global financiers of terrorism

by Thierry Meyssan

Since the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets, many authors have emphasized the US role in the financing of international terrorism. To date, however, there were only secret actions, which have never been approved by Washington. A decisive step was reached with Syria: The Congress voted for the funding and arming of two organizations representing al-Qaeda. What has so far been an open secret is now the official policy of the “land of freedom”: terrorism.

The first week of the *Peace Conference Geneva-2* was full of suddenly emerging developments. Unfortunately, the Western public was not informed and made victim of censorship by which it is suppressed.

This is in fact the greatest paradox of this war: the pictures are quite contrary to reality. According to the international media, there is the conflict on the one hand with states assembled around Washington and Riyadh who claim to defend democracy and lead the global fight against terrorism, and on the other hand, Syria and its Russian allies who feel more and more inhibited, because they are defamed as dictatorships that are associated with terrorism.

While everyone is absolutely aware that Saudi Arabia is not a democracy but an absolute monarchy, the tyranny of a family and a sect over an entire nation, the United States enjoy the reputation of being a democracy, and better yet, the “land of freedom”.

Now the most important news of the week was censored in all member states of NATO: The US Congress met secretly to agree on the funding and arming of the “rebels in Syria” until 30 September 2014. You read that right. The Congress holds secret meetings which the press does not have the right to speak about. Therefore,

the news originally published by the British *Reuters* agency was scrupulously ignored by all printed and audiovisual media in the United States and most of the media in Western Europe and the Gulf. Only the inhabitants of the “rest of the world” were entitled to know the truth.

However, the freedom of expression and the citizens’ right to information is a prerequisite for democracy. They are better respected in Syria and Russia than in the West.

Since no one has yet read the law passed by Congress, it remains unknown what exactly it contains. However, it is clear that those “rebels” do not seek to overthrow the Syrian government – they already abandoned this idea – but want to “bleed” it out. Therefore, they do not behave like soldiers, but like terrorists. You again read that right: The US, supposedly victims of al-Qaeda on 11 September 2001 and since then the spearhead of the “global war on terror” finance the center of international terrorism, where officially subordinate organizations of al-Qaeda (the *al-Nusra Front* and the Islamic Emirate of Iraq and the Levant) rage. The whole affair is not an obscure intelligence maneuver, but rather a completely accepted law, even if it was agreed upon behind closed doors, so as not to contradict the official propaganda.

On the other hand, it is unclear how the Western press, which has been claiming for 13 years that the initiator of the attacks of 11 September had been al-Qaeda, and has been concealing the impeachment of President *George W. Bush* by the military on this day, could explain this decision to their readership. In fact, the US method of “Continuity of Government” (CoG) is also protected by censorship. So the West has never learned that on this 11 September the power had passed from civilians to the military, namely from 10 o’clock in the morning until the evening, and that during this whole day the United States were ruled by a secret authority, in violation of their laws and their constitution were.

During the Cold War, the CIA financed the writer *George Orwell*, when he designed the dictatorship of the future. Washington believed to raise awareness of the threat posed by the Soviet Union. However, the USSR has in reality never been like the nightmare of “1984” while the United States became its incarnation.

Barack Obama’s annual State of the Union address has thus been transformed

into an exceptional lying exercise. In front of the 538 members of Congress, who applauded him standing, the President declared: “One thing will not change: our resolve that terrorists do not launch attacks against our country.” And he continued, “In Syria, we’ll support the opposition that rejects the agenda of terrorist networks.”

However, when the *Geneva-2 Delegation* of Syria made a proposal to the delegation, which should represent the “opposition”, based exclusively on the Security Council’s *Resolutions 1267* and *1373*, that is they condemned terrorism, this was rejected by Washington without the slightest protest. And for good reason: The United States is terrorism, and the Delegation of the “opposition” gets its orders directly on the spot by Ambassador *Robert S. Ford*.

Robert S. Ford is the former assistant of *John Negroponte* in Iraq. In the early 1980s, Negroponte had attacked the Nicaraguan Revolution by hiring thousands of mercenaries who, along with a few local employees, formed the “*Contras*”. The *International Court of Justice*, that is to say the United Nations internal tribunal, condemned Washington for this concealed interference. In the 2000s, Negroponte and Ford then played the same scenario in Iraq. This time, it was necessary to let the nationalist resistance be destroyed by al-Qaeda.

While the Syrians and the Delegation of the “opposition” were discussing in Geneva, the President further pursued in Washington his feigned maneuver and cannoned in Congress, which mechanically paid him applause: “We counter terrorism not just through intelligence and military action, but by remaining true to our constitutional ideals, and setting an example for the rest of the world [...]. We will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future the Syrian people deserve – a future free of dictatorship, terror and fear.”

The war, which NATO and the countries of the *Gulf Council* (GCC) imposed on the State of Syria, has already taken its toll of more than 130,000 deaths, according to the MI 6 and its mouthpiece, the *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights*. Their executioners now impose the responsibility on the people and their President *Bashar al-Assad*, who had dared to resist them.

Source: www.voltairenet.org/article182009.html of 4.2.2014

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

cc. According to the British news agency *Reuters*, the US Congress secretly approved means for military support to “Syrian rebels”, namely until the end of the government fiscal year (this means until 30 September 2014): “The weapons deliveries have been funded by the U.S. Congress, in votes behind closed doors, through the end of government fiscal year 2014, which ends on September 30 ...”

Quelle: *Congress secretly approves U.S. weapons flow to <moderate> Syrian rebels*, by *Mark Hosenball*, *Reuters* from 27.1.2014

Nuland's telephone call proves US interference in Ukraine

Letter to  the Editor

On the journalistic smear campaign against Sochi

Western media are topping each other with ongoing and repulsive criticism of Sochi, which is, however, targeting at Vladimir Putin. As if there was not enough to criticize in their own ranks and countries; no: the finger is pointing at a heap of earth in Sochi, presumably suggesting muck, however, only for one day did the finger point at the highly hazardous waste around Naples – here, one readily goes on to something else – the people are permitted to die here, quietly and at an early age ... The EU is trying to conceal its deep crisis. Corruption? Yes, a little bit, admitted, but in general? Corruption exists almost exclusively in Sochi ...

The media are as unreliable as they have been in all of the past years. They want to create a reality, stir emotions, demonize countries and their leaders, they are in the service of a cruel war and financial cartel. Every journalist who lends his hand because he let himself be bought in will have to expect to a bad awakening – particularly, when the actual events will come to light more clearly. For a long time yet, everyone who wants to be informed, doesn't obtain his information neither from "Die Zeit" nor "Die Welt" nor from "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" nor from "Tages-Anzeiger". He gets his information from the Internet where, with little practice and experience, you can obtain reports that are more likely to represent reality. Russian media as *Ria Novosti* and *Russia Today* belong to them as well as Asian and Latin American newspapers.

It should be part of the journalistic code of honour to report about reality and not to spread grotesque lies on behalf of various intelligence agencies, lies that are very often exposed as such already the next day. However, all too often the sense of shame gets lost given a little financial advantage ...

Dr phil Barbara Hug

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The recording of a telephone conversation between the European Head of the Department in the US State Department, *Victoria Nuland*, and the US ambassador in Kiev, *Geoffrey Pyatt*, proves a high degree of US interference in Ukraine.

"The United States regard other states as pawns on the chessboard", said *Leonid Slutsky*, chairman of the Duma Committee on the Affairs of the *Commonwealth of Independent States* (CIS), Euro-integration and the Affairs of Compatriots, on Friday in Moscow.

Previously a recording of the conversation between the two diplomats had been published on *Youtube*, which dealt, inter alia, with a new Ukrainian government. Nuland said: "Ok. He (the UN deputy General Secretary for Political Affairs, *Jeffrey Feltman*) managed to make both (the UN special envoy *Robert Serry* as well as (UN Secretary General) *Ban Ki-moon* agree that Serry would be allowed to join on Monday or Tuesday. I think that would be very good to help fixing the thing as well as the UN helping to fix it, and you know, shit on the EU."

In addition, Nuland said she did not think that "Klitsch" (opposition leader *Vitali Klitschko*) should join the government. "I do not think that this is necessary. I think this is not a good idea."

The US did not comment the authenticity of the recording. However, Nuland already apologized to her EU colleagues.

According to Slutsky this is an open and impudent interference into the internal affairs of an independent state. "This scandal finally undermines America's reputation as an advocate of democracy. This

is one and the same chess game which is about the fate of countries and Ukraine is only treated as a pawn", said the Russian parliamentarian.

The US already accused Russia of tapping and recording the telephone call. In this case, US officials referred to the fact that the advisor of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister *Dmitry Rogozin*, *Dmitry Loskutov*, had been the first one to link the recording on *Twitter*. But fact is that Loskutov published the recording on the 6th February, whereas the conversation had wandered through the Ukrainian websites as early as on the 4th February.

Slutsky also said that the United States had provided financial assistance to Ukraine in case that Kiev undertook political reforms. "On the other hand, Russia had agreed to help the Ukrainian sister people without any preconditions", Slutsky said. •

Source: *Ria Novosti* on 7.2.2014

(Translation: *Current Concerns*)

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility, and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

Editor: Erika Vögeli

Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-

for all other countries.

Account: Postscheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters to the editor. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *Current Concerns*.

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"Strategic struggle"

"The conversation recording [of a telephone conversation between *Victoria Nuland*, Head of the European Department in the American State Department, and the Washington Ambassador in Kiev] would make all the glory of a screenplay about the Cold War, because it refutes the willingly made Washington assertion that the future of Ukraine solely lies in the hands of the Ukrainian people. Rather it is evident that the crisis is understood as part of a strategic struggle."

Source: "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 8 February 2014

Who is ruling in Switzerland?

Opposition against Curriculum 21 is growing – EDK* directors show a lack of democratic conviction

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

If anywhere in the world a government is inclined to rule itself in place of the country's parliament, a storm of indignation rises in our media – sometimes with good reason sometimes, however, also on grounds of a rather one-sided optic. The fact, however, that in Switzerland – the democracy par excellence – some executive members or administrative officials behave increasingly autocratically when parliamentarians or other citizens claim their democratic decision-making power, is a dangerous signal which we should not pass over.

During the last years numerous conferences were established by cantonal executives as a new level between the Confederation and the cantons, in order to govern Switzerland better from top down – and from outside? (cf. Conference of Cantonal Governments, CCG – Governance of executives instead of federalism and democracy, in: Current Concerns No 34 of 22. 11.2013)

Indeed, this disguised coup d'état in Switzerland meets with resistance by ever broader circles: We Swiss, accustomed to democracy, do not let anyone deprive us of our political rights just like that.

As was repeatedly reported in *Current Concerns*, some Cantonal Ministers of Education with their entourage have for years and in quiet been producing a monumental *Curriculum 21* which – if accepted – would overthrow the complete European and Swiss educational tradition. After an alibi “consultation” of cantons and associations (that is an opinion poll without any binding obligation) the *Curriculum 21* should be introduced in 21 German-speaking or multi-lingual cantons by the cantonal governments – or an education council or a similar committee – simply without consulting the parliaments and, of course, bypassing the electorate.

Against this imposition a wide movement of citizens in the whole country has emerged who claim an education for their children which earns this name. Thus teachers of all school levels have raised their voices with a resolution “550 against 550” (550 signatures against 550 pages of curriculum) in which, inter alia you can read: “We do not see, why our successful model should be extensively reformed with a curriculum by the back door. As the examples of prominent neighbouring countries and the United States demonstrate,

“Starke Schule Baselland” thinks aloud about withdrawal from HarmoS

“Starke Schule Baselland” (Strong School Baselland), a group of teachers from different political parties, launched a cantonal popular initiative against the cancellation of streaming in Secondary School as early as in October 2013 – and thus opposed reforms that are of use to anybody except some consultancy firms – definitely not to the students (see *Basler Zeitung online* from 25.10.2013). Now the “Starke Schule Baselland” considers a popular initiative to opt out of HarmoS.

Michael Herrmann (FDP), a member of the Education Committee of the Cantonal Parliament, had a critical stance towards joining the HarmoS Agreement from the very beginning, today he sees his view confirmed: The key points of HarmoS were not fulfilled. “This is not a real harmonization, if not even the introduction of

the first early foreign language is regulated uniformly” he says. In addition, it is becoming evident now that the project will be much more expensive than 50 million francs as the costs were presented then. For Herrmann it would certainly be an option to opt out of HarmoS. “In that case we might be able to realize those substantive means of HarmoS that are meaningful and set aside those that are not.”

Paul Wenger (SVP), President of the Education Commission of the Cantonal Parliament can imagine a withdrawal from HarmoS because it has failed anyway in all of Switzerland. Citizens had agreed on HarmoS because they were told that one would have no problems with another school system when moving to another canton. This promise was not fulfilled – and yet HarmoS cost a lot of money.

Source: “Basler Zeitung” from 18.1.2014

competence orientation and central educational control damage the quality of the schools.” Numerous teachers, parents, pedagogues and entrepreneurs have expressed themselves, in the meantime, with growing uneasiness against the conversion of our until recently good elementary school.

EDK tells the cantonal parliaments what to do in autocratic style

Now, apparently the democratically not legitimized establishment of Directors Conferences rubs off on the attitude of certain executive members in the House of the Cantons in Berne. In any case, Messrs. Presidents of the *Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education*, EDK and the D-EDK (*German Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education*) reveal in embarrassing openness what they think of the participation of the legislative, which is after all their superior, in decision-making.

Since in different cantons also parliamentarians have intervened in the meantime and have requested some information from their councillors about the further proceedings with respect to *Curriculum 21*. Many parliamentarians believe correctly that the legislative powers, i.e. the parliament and finally the electorate must decide on such radical changes of the school system. In the cantonal parliaments of Solothurn, Schaffhausen, Zurich

and Basel-Land corresponding motions have been submitted. As the *Curriculum 21* is not a decree, which would be subject to a referendum, the respective cantonal school law must be revised as a first step. Actually, this should be no problem in our democratic state: By law revision every cantonal parliament can prescribe at any time that new curricula must be presented to the parliament and that they are subject to the compulsory or optional referendum. Or: Every citizen can start a popular initiative in his canton to take such a law revision to the vote. Who in our country could mind that parliaments and voters make active use of their political rights?

However, they are there, those who are opposed to exerting democratic rights. Some councillors apparently do not remember any more their politics lessons and have not learnt that as members of the executive they have to merely execute what the sovereign and the parliament decide – as an “elected servant of the people”. Would you like to hear an example? D-EDK president *Christian Amsler*: “In principle, nothing can be held against somebody making use of his democratic rights and demanding a vote in parliament or at the ballot box.” But: “The cantons are called up to take over the essential con-

* The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

Letter to  the Editor

School, Curriculum 21 and the political responsibility for our state

Our great technical inventions, buildings and our prosperity were generated thanks to our excellent engineers, craftsmen and our balanced economy. This has been acquired in quite traditional schools, with excellent textbooks and by the simplest means. Sensible and renewals were always carried out observing educational criteria, and the population was always willing to raise the necessary financial means for good schools. In the Canton of Thurgau's cantonal elementary school law of 29 August 2007, the valid educational mandate is clearly stated: "Elementary school promotes the spiritual, emotional and physical abilities of the children. In addition to the parents' educational mission it educates children, according to Christian principles and democratic values, in order to help them become independent personalities capable of coping with life and acquiring a sense of responsibility towards others."

With the centralist *Curriculum 21* a paradigm shift is now intended that will lead to the largest cutback in school, education and training in our country. "Harmonization" did never mean a total transformation of our education system!

Already after the abolition of the reliable teacher training seminars they broke with all well-proven traditions up to this point, the teacher training colleges aban-

doned the proven Swiss school model. Largely they took on Anglo-American and economic models. Much of this was also imported with the EU programs from our neighboring country! (Skills, constructivism, individualisation and self-organized learning, evaluation.)

We must not permit to continue on this path with the result that our culture of European humanist tradition of education and value system is sacrificed to these developments. The important subject of history does no longer exist as a separate subject in the *Curriculum 21*! Today after nine years of school and all the unreasonable reforms, a majority of the student body are lacking numerous necessary basic skills and knowledge.

The curriculum was not discussed with the training companies, and no professional association was included! Parenthood, apprentice masters, SMEs and vocational schools have been complaining about this unacceptable situation for years. Now the student body is to be trained to be used in open-space offices by means of computerized, standardized knowledge and operationalized assessment strategies. Easily accessible "knowledge" in the sense of the "input-output-model", and knowing where to look something up does not have much

to do with education. Our youth and our country does not deserve this. School must not conform to the zeitgeist, on the contrary it should take countermeasures and call for a more holistic approach, for focussing and "slowing down" [of reform-zeal]. Of course, new media should be used moderately and sensibly. But humility is an important virtue. Who will pay all the expected enormous cost that the *Curriculum 21* will generate with the expensive electronic purchases and the conversion and new construction of school building facilities and classrooms in order to create "learning environments"? Politics, parents and the commercial sector would be well advised not to allow any further experiments with our school system, but to demand a return to what is tried and proven with the necessary improvements. For the preservation of our state model of direct democracy and of our economy, but also for our humanitarian responsibility, a more demanding education and a better education strategy are necessary. Personalities are intended to mature who can master the upcoming serious and complex challenges of the global world.

Urs Knoblauch, Fruthwilen

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Who is ruling in ..."

continued from page 11

tents of the *Curriculum 21* for the purpose of an optimum harmonisation; they should restrict their cantonal-specific adaptations to only a few sensible supplements and renounce cutbacks." (cf. *St. Galler Tagblatt online* from the 2.2.2014)

In principle, democratic rights all right, but only in the narrow framework permitted by the Directors Conferences.

EDK president *Christoph Eymann*: "I think it is rather problematic if politics interferes too strongly now. I can only say: Higher powers may save us from that. Democratisation is good and right. But we did not ask everybody who was ever operated whether the new system suits him before we introduced the flat-rate cost allowance per case." (*www.bzbasel.ch* from the 1.2.2014)

We, the democratically-minded citizen reply: Higher powers may save us from such politicians unqualified for democracy. •

mw. From Article 62 of the Federal Constitution no obligation of the cantons can be derived to introduce *Curriculum 21* (LP21).

Article 62 decrees in paragraph 4 (in force since 21 May 2006) the "harmonisation of school education [...] in the areas of school entry age and compulsory school attendance, the duration and objectives of levels of education, and the transition for one level to another, as well as the recognition of qualifications [...]."

It cannot be concluded from this general wording that the cantons were obliged to adopt a common curriculum.

By the way, the responsible Federal Departments and the EDK share this point of view:

"Confederation and cantons agree on a few precise and verifiable goals for the current decade. [...] The goals are based on the principles of quality and permeability enshrined in the Constitution."

Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) and Federal Department of Economic Affairs (FDEA), Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK): 2011 Declaration on the common goals of educational policy in the Swiss educational area from 30 May 2011 (extract)

Educational misperceptions of Curriculum 21

A critical examination

by Margret Brückner

Where – as seen pedagogically, with regard to the goals and the educational concept – is “Lehrplan 21” (LP 21, Curriculum 21) headed? Its central theme, its guiding principles are set forth in the introduction and in the chapter on interdisciplinary competences and show clearly what kind of people those are who made it. These “interdisciplinary competences” are to be acquired in all subjects during the entire time spent at elementary school – reason enough to critically question this chapter.

“Learning opportunities”

Under the heading “educational goals” the introduction postulates: “School offers learning opportunities that reflect the different learning and performance levels and the heterogeneity of a class.”¹ This already shows a problematic understanding of school and education: The teacher no longer instructs and guides, demands effort and supports the children, he no longer structures the learning process and sets goals – he offers learning opportunities. An opportunity can be accepted or declined. It is not binding. Thus, the teacher has no longer the responsibility to ensure that the students really learn. He becomes a “provider”, an animator, as unfortunately is already the case in many schools.

Everyone works on his or her own – everyone is busy with something different

The above quotation shows the heterogeneity of the class as the basis. Each child is to work individually on his or her subject material, his or her individual program. In this way, class lessons where all pupils work together at one task will be barely possible. This also becomes clear when we read: “Good skill-based tasks [...] encourage individual learning processes at different levels of performance and also taking in account the varying degrees of interest.”² It is obvious that individualization is to take precedence over classroom instruction. And yet, John Hattie observed in his comprehensive study the effect of teaching methods: “As to the emphasis on individualization, this shows a scant effect.”³ Nevertheless, the Curriculum 21 makes this method compulsory, contrary to the previously guaranteed freedom of method. Accordingly, also the “Dachverband der Schweizer Lehrerinnen und Lehrer” (LCH, Swiss teachers’ umbrella association) states, “Freedom of method for teachers will be strongly relativized by

the Curriculum 21.”⁴ Until today, most teachers have structured their lessons as to frequently use classroom instruction – next to individual work, partner and group work. The class functions as a learning community and works together on a topic, researches, studies a learning object, discusses it, digs deeper. One student’s contribution encourages the others to reflect further upon the matter, they all feel encouraged, relieved and stimulated by the joint work. The result is often a wonderful ambiance of creating something together, of joint reflection and inter-dependence, all the children can experience their own effect on their class and are strengthened by the fact that their contributions are valuable to the whole community. Jean Romain has outlined some aspects of the significance of class instruction in *Current Concerns*: “Learning together has many advantages, especially for decision-making. It is often important to tackle problems together, because acting as a group makes it possible to realistically assess its dimensions. If the whole class does not understand a thing, it is less of a shock for the single child to have reached its own limits. The help of a comrade who finds the right words to explain the teacher’s line of argument is of the greatest importance.” And, “Moreover, the basis of shared experiences in a class gives rise to the conviction, that one is stronger together. In fact, there is such a thing as a class climate. The best teachers know how to create an empowering climate and how to prevent a destructive one.”⁵ And should these best teachers now be stopped by the Curriculum 21? Even if the Curriculum rhetorically continues to grant freedom of method to teachers and accepts class teaching as one method among others – if you implement individualization, self-regulated and self-directed learning according to the Curriculum in your lessons, class instruction will fall by the wayside.

America’s education disaster as a guideline for Swiss education

The Curriculum’s “understanding of learning and teaching” is characterized by the expressions “competence orientation” and “educational standards as guiding principles”.⁶ Pisa is emphasized as the orientation point for aspiring educational standards.⁷ Therefore, we must ask: what is Pisa, for whom is it meant and who is behind it? Pisa was not created by an organisation involved in education, rather by the OECD, the *Organisation for Econom-*

ic Cooperation and Development. The OECD was pushed by the USA to implement Pisa in the 1990s. Pisa pretends to test objective, relevant knowledge. The “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” accuses Pisa of pursuing the goal of “restructuring school from the bottom up. [...] In future, school will be a function of the economy.”⁸ This does not mean the micro economy, the SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), rather it is the globalised economy towards which our education is to be oriented. Personalities with a comprehensive education, those who are responsible for taking on and reflecting economic tasks are not needed any longer; rather those who only know about their small area of responsibilities and who do not care about what is going on around them. That makes it possible that one could make use of them all over the world. We might also call this rootlessness. Our humanistic understanding of education, the focus of which is a mature, comprehensively educated citizen, is getting lost. The “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” is right to criticize the fact that the OECD, “a world-wide body for economic cooperation and development without a related assignment and without any such mandate and social legitimacy, is conducting international assessments”. By setting its educational goals, the OECD determines the educational agenda. One must now learn what the test requires, no longer learn and study what countries, cantons, etc. have established as essential educational goals. In this sense Pisa is criticised by many.⁹ Why should we then orient ourselves towards Pisa? Pisa is not a Swiss, not even a European product. America was looking for an escape out of the embarrassment of its self-made educational misery and invented Pisa. “The US Department of Education insistently forces the OECD to conduct a project for the international development of comparable indicators. For, ‘entirely intra-american reasons, the American government considers it necessary to find external support, to export the American educational debate and to emphasize that this educational crisis is not only an American problem.’”¹⁰ It is extremely alarming that Curriculum 21 draws on Pisa as a relevant educational standard.

Learning arrangements are to replace teacher personality

In what way are these educational standards to be achieved? What does *Curric-*

“Educational misperceptions ...”

continued from page 13

ulum 21 say how students are to achieve the prescribed competences? “*Pedagogically created learning environments*” is a central term in this context. “*Learning-environments and teaching sequences consist of structured offers of meaningful subject-matters, tasks, objects, materials, methods and work techniques*”, states Curriculum 21. This means: Not the teacher with his knowledge and personality motivates and guides the student on the basis of their personal relationship, but students are to be directed by a setting of items and techniques. This is based on the theory that an animating and didactically structured environment leads to a self-activated learning of students who direct their learning-process by themselves. There are already schools which are working according to this theory. It claims that the teacher is no longer the decisive factor in the learning process, but the “*learning environment*”: In addition to the architectonically design of rooms and furniture this also includes items like computers, computer-programs, tasks, books etc. These arrangements are provided in order to generate quasi-automatically learning of the students. Guided instruction, motivation, demands among others that are based on activities of the teacher are lacking; the teacher is an arranger and facilitator at the utmost. When Curriculum 21 states: “*Ideally arranged learning environments provide many learning opportunities supported by the teacher and teaching materials to acquire one or several facets of a competence*”, this totally conforms to the constructivist theory according to which everyone constructs his own reality again and again by himself, even students. Objective, factual knowledge doesn’t exist in this theory; therefore the teaching process in which the teacher provides knowledge and helps during the learning process is also obsolete.

When Curriculum 21 praises “*attractive, contently and methodologically well thought out learning assignments and tasks*” as “*central didactic design elements of the learning environments*” which are to build “*the backbone of good teaching*”, the teacher is in fact abolished. It is not him who motivates the students but the learning environment. In Curriculum 21 this is viewed as “*source of motivation and the starting point for students to embark on subject matters*.”¹¹ Each practitioner knows that this does not work.

However, attractive and well thought through both methodologically and didactically a task is: the fewest students would even notice it if the teacher were not there, an adult, who enthuses for it, leads to it,

makes it meaningful, demands, encourages. The absence of the teacher as a central figure in the learning process is a core element in the Curriculum 21. The teacher is only expected to do the following: “*In the competence-oriented lessons the teachers on the one hand create manifold substantial and methodologically varying learning environments and teaching sequences.*” Thus they only create the arrangements. And further: “*On the other hand they guide the class and support students in their learning process.*” Actually the teacher can no longer guide the students, because each student works more or less successfully individually on his “*learning assignments*”. Therefore the teacher just remains a facilitator, a coach, although Curriculum 21 – presumably because of the expected criticism – does not yet call him so. But his task allotted by the Curriculum is exactly the one of a facilitator than that of a teacher. Against this all available studies point out: It depends on the teacher. In a Meta-study consisting of 50,000 studies John Hattie figured out what has more or less effect on learning. “*Die Zeit*” writes: “*For Hattie the teacher must not be a bare facilitator, not an architect for learning environments. If the teacher wants to achieve something, he must see himself as a director, an activator who has his class under control and steadily keeps an eye on every student.*”¹² If the teacher takes Curriculum 21 as a starting point he will withhold his personality in the relationship to the student, he will hardly be authentic, neither guide nor really demand anything. Instead he will back the tempting effect of more or less accurately arranged “*learning environments*” or “*learning arrangements*”. The young teachers are trained accordingly and won’t even know how to teach successfully and how to lead the class to a community.

Class management instead of community building

The Curriculum 21 calls for “*effective classroom management to create a low-interference learning environment in which the learning time can be used efficiently.*” (p. 7)

Of course no one has any objection against undisturbed lessons, but this expression reminds more of the management of a production hall, where production processes should run smoothly, than of a class with young people who are expected to grow into life. It is no longer a matter of young people as human beings, as evolving personalities, it is a matter of trouble-free, well-managed processes. Are such young people supposed to be capable once of living up to our democracy and – if necessary – to defending it with heart and soul?

And just by the way: at schools where these methods – called “*learning land-*

scapes” or “*learning environment*” – are already being practiced, students complain that they have to work all the time alone, only with the computer. If one enters one of these classrooms as a visitor and witnesses how the students work individually at any topic whereby the communication between teachers and pupils and the class among themselves is reduced to a minimum, one is taken aback and saddened observing the soulless atmosphere in which students are growing up here. Not seldom such schools are struggling with significant discipline problems in the senior classes because students cannot bear this lack of relationship. If Curriculum 21 demands a “*positive school and classroom climate [...]*” (p. 7), we may either recognize this a very strange understanding of “*positive climate*” given the priorities set out above or as a special treat to those who know about the importance of the teacher-student relationship.

Pupils are supposed to develop “*self-control*” and “*self-responsibility*” by dealing with the learning content on their own and are to experience themselves “*as competent and increasingly action- and self-determined*”¹³. Again: One aim of school surely can and must be that young people are responsible and competent at the end of their school time. But this can only be learned when they engage in the relationship with a teacher, receive his support, orient themselves towards him, take him seriously and appreciate him, wanting to learn from him. With the prescriptions of Curriculum 21 this is virtually impossible. •

¹ “Lehrplan 21” (Curriculum 21), Introduction p. 2

² “Lehrplan 21” (Curriculum 21), Introduction p. 7

³ Hattie, John. *Lernen sichtbar machen* (Visible learning), Baltmannsweiler 2013, p. 236

⁴ LCH Dachverband Schweizer Lehrerinnen und Lehrer. *Antwort des LCH zur Konsultation Lehrplan 21 der D-EDK 2013* of 15/16 November 2013, cf. “Lehrplan 21” (Curriculum 21), Introduction, p. 7

⁵ Jean Romain, President of the “Association Refaire l’Ecole” Geneva, in *Current Concerns* No 31/32 of 31 October 2013

⁶ “Lehrplan 21” (Curriculum 21), Introduction p. 4

⁷ “Lehrplan 21” (Curriculum 21), Introduction p. 4

⁸ Bengel, Michael. “Die Schulhoheit gehört den Bundesländern (in der Schweiz den Kantonen)”. In “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” of 20.8.2011, cited after *Zeit-Fragen* No 35 of 29.8.2011

⁹ cf. e.g. Langer, Roman: “Warum haben die Pisa gemacht?” – in: Langer, Roman (Ed.): *Warum tun die das?*, Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 49

Krautz, Jochen: *Wa(h)re Bildung*, Kreuzlingen, Munich 2007, pp. 45

¹⁰ Martens, Kerstin/Klaus-Dieter Wolf: “Paradoxien der Neuen Staatsräson”. In: *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*, Annual 13 (2006) Magazine 2, pp. 145-176

¹¹ “Lehrplan 21” (Curriculum 21), Introduction p. 6

¹² Martin Spiewak: “Der Lehrer ist superwichtig”, („The teacher is of highest importance“) In: “Die Zeit” of 3 January 2013; cf. Hattie, John. *Lernen sichtbar machen* (Visible learning), Baltmannsweiler 2013, p. 143

¹³ “Lehrplan 21” (Curriculum 21), Introduction p. 7

Michael Winterhoff, “SOS Kinderseele” (SOS children’s soul)

What endangers the emotional and social development of our children and what we can do about it

by Dr phil Eliane Gautschi

Seventeen year old *Dennis* sets off with his eleven-year-old brother *Nick* at the weekend. Their destination is the DIY market nearby. They use a crowbar to make their way into the hardware store. *Dennis* wants to steal a chainsaw, because the motor of this device is ideal for the craft work on his kart. The police catch the two brothers. Finally *Dennis*, a good high school student from an intact family and a good social environment, ends up in the psychiatric practice for children and adolescents of book author *Michael Winterhoff*. *Winterhoff* describes what he experiences in his encounters with *Dennis* as symptomatic for many children and young people in today’s world, *Dennis* shows no regret, no understanding of the problem and he does not fear the consequences of his deed. Neither is it a problem for him that he has involved his younger brother in the offence.

With this example from his children and adolescent psychiatric practice *Michael Winterhoff* starts off with his book’s subject “SOS Kinderseele. Was die emotionale und soziale Entwicklung unserer Kinder gefährdet und was wir dagegen tun können” (SOS children’s soul. What endangers the emotional and social development of our children and what we can do about it). The book was written out of the author’s concern for today’s children and youth. For quite some time he has observed in his medical practice that more and more children and young people contact him, who can no longer cope with the demands of school, everyday life, and later the world of employment. The author gives an answer to the question “why” with a depth-psychology approach, by means of some psychoanalytic concepts and in the context of a develop-

ment pyramid of the social and emotional psyche, designed by himself. “Behind the peculiarities of most children who are consulting me there is a development of their psyche that is inappropriate to their developmental age”, he says and explains with many observations and case studies that a lot of children and young people today are emotionally and socially retarded at the level of a sixteen-month-old child and think they can control their fellow human beings according to their immediate needs. For *Winterhoff*, the reason for this is the fact that many children are lacking adults who offer them a clear counterpart and give them the opportunity to develop their psyche gradually. The importance of human relationship for the development of emotionally healthy children runs all the way through *Winterhoff*’s reflections on education and school, which he refers to in the following, and he calls for a debate without taboos, “The question we must ask ourselves is, ‘Have we adults reached a state which enables us to face this problem without holding back? Or do we want to continue limiting ourselves

“The child’s psyche develops with the adult counterpart. Everyone who deals with children should try to remember this sentence over and over again. If we take the insight seriously that adults as a reference person and point of orientation are crucial for the child’s mental development, we must also be clear that each of our actions towards children has a meaning for their future.” (p. 60)

and react by referring to our own youth like a reflex as soon as there is an indication about the background of the emotional impoverishment of young people?’ This is the most popular pattern of argument in order not to enter into the debate that I initiated.” (p. 17)

Winterhoff attributes the unspoken taboos to a kind of lobby, which was created mainly in the area of educational policy and educational sciences in order to transfer certain ways of thinking freely into concepts and operating instructions. These include, for example, the view that concepts that were still valid ten or twenty years ago must be overcome, just because they are old and therefore backward. Or that we must not be permitted to say that freedom could best develop within cer-

tain limits; he who does so, is regarded as an enemy to freedom. Finally, we should not speak of a natural hierarchy in the relationship between adult and child, since that smells of power games, and who still speaks of it is a supporter of authoritarian education concepts. We should not say that children do not develop by themselves. Those who emphasize the importance of adult reference persons were narrowing the freedom and were supporting authoritarian education concepts. This ban on thinking does indeed stifle the discussion, says *Winterhoff*.

Winterhoff breaks these taboos and illuminates current reform projects in kindergarten and school. These primarily include the now widely publicized open learning forms. “These concepts contradict developmental-psychological principles, they demand too much of the children and fail to support their development in the fields of the emotional and social psyche.” (p. 113) Behind these concepts there is the idea of free learning. The child is supposed to practice self-reliance. They ignore the fact that the children do not learn independence this way, but are more or less left to their own devices, instead. This is a significant difference, because the latter implies a neglect of the students. In this case it does not help that the neglect is actually well-intentioned. What is covered up, however, is that in these teaching models the teacher will become insignificant and is to act only as a facilitator and guide, who the students must actively address when they are in doubt, and this relationship is to be replaced by the relationship between one student and another student. As other studies have shown before, there are exceptional students who can get along with any concept and develop splendidly despite adverse conditions, which *Winterhoff* confirms. “However, they are and remain exactly that, exceptions.” (p. 71)

Instead, however, we observe the opposite with an increasing number of children, who are no longer able to cope with the school situation, “More and more children employ more and more ergo therapists, speech therapists or psychotherapists, because they have significant difficulties in learning and – not least – in the area of social competence.” (p. 10) And he rightly asks, “Have the findings from de-

“Here, at the interface between school career and working world, the misery is at its clearest. Companies complain increasingly about young people unprepared for training, entire industries are desperately searching for qualified young employees. They do not only lack basic knowledge in German or mathematics, but also the so-called <soft skills> like work ethics, good manners, a sense of punctuality, recognition of structures or frustration tolerance.” (p. 12)

(all quotes translated by *Current Concerns*)

continued on page 16

"Michael Winterhoff, 'SOS Kinderseele'"

continued from page 15

"It is therefore essential that directing and accompanying are an important part of education. Behind the currently favored open concepts in kindergarten and elementary school there is the idea the child should be free to choose and learn. In such concepts, however, educators and teachers cannot provide this important service to the emotional and social psyche's development. The child is left to its own devices." (p. 154)

developmental psychology been pulverized and do no longer apply?" (p. 89)

Therefore Winterhoff asks to at least test all currently circulating concepts of open work and supply-oriented education and to verify the educational experiments by long-term studies. (p. 168) He anticipates considerable resistance, "However, a surprising number of educators are sitting in the ivory towers of education faculties in Germany [and not only there; the author] and they seem to believe that with each new learning model the world will automatically become a little better." (p. 79) That would basically require figuring out again and again that the emotional and social development of children must not be a plaything of academic theories and models when thinking these concepts over.

Winterhoff does not suffice himself with the description of the problems. The "magic word" is relationship which he puts in the center of his considerations; for relationship is a prerequisite for the process of a child's developing into becoming an adult, a social being capable of thinking independently and acting freely. It is the adult's task to refer to the child in an appropriate and positive manner and to guide and accompany the child. In school, this task falls to the teacher of course. Therefore the adult counterpart called "teacher", towards whom the child is oriented, who directs and introduces the child into the learning material, should be strengthened in every educational concept and be put into the foreground, "The children are then will-

"It is developmental truism that the psychological development of social competence [...] does not work when there is only a counterpart of the same age. The adult counterpart <teacher> at which the child is oriented should actually be at the forefront and strengthened in every educational concept. Instead, [...] concepts are increasingly being developed that push the teacher aside and make him useless as a long-term reference person for the pupils." (pp. 129)

ing to learn and eager to learn, but they remain dependent on classes in which the teacher refers to them and instructs them. At first a foundation must be established which enables, for example, the student to learn the cultural skills. [...] The child feels supported and safe, it willingly does something for the adult when prompted, and in turn the relationship grows." (p. 155) The relationship therefore becomes the antidote for a failed development and allows the children and young people to make those emotional steps toward maturity that they have not yet made so far. "Children who have the opportunity to undergo a psychological development appropriate to their age will also develop the mental skills that are necessary for democratic action and thought. These include sensitivity and empathy so that they are able to take others and their opinions seriously and respect them, or else a consciousness of doing wrong, so that they can distinguish between right and wrong deeds." (p. 105) Teachers in their training would therefore need to be taught in-depth knowledge in developmental psychology apart from their pedagogical qualifications and identify completely with their task.

Winterhoff concludes his book with a quite optimistic perspective getting to the heart of our task at home and at school.

"If we do not want to have more and more egoists, narcissists and pleasure-oriented egoists in our society, who are incapable of having relationships, we must quickly wake up and take countermeasures." (p. 201) The point is to look at the situation without ideological blinders, because "the emotional and social skills of people is the cement of our society. If it is lost, society will break apart." (p. 208) "Yet, we adults are able to turn things around by taking suitable measures and stopping the disaster that we are

"Behind the idea of free learning there is again the concept of the 'child as a partner'." (p. 127)

"We shift the responsibility for our children's future on our children themselves. Under the guise of a partnership mindset in education the adults increasingly refuse taking on the responsibility for the emotional and social competence of future generations." (p. 62)

facing in the near future. But in order to achieve that we must all become active as parents, grandparents, teachers and trainers." (p. 216)

Each individual can begin here and now to bring about the changes on a small scale, "This way will allow children to go through an emotional development that makes them happy and socially competent adults. Children are the future, we say rightly so. Therefore, we should do everything that they will have a future in which they have the chance of satisfying work and satisfying interpersonal relationships." (p. 199)

Michael Winterhoff's book is one of the new publications on the pedagogical-psychological sector that beneficially, realistically and understandably deal with the current problems and therefore can be warmly recommended for reading. •

Winterhoff, Michael. *SOS Kinderseele. Was die emotionale und soziale Entwicklung unserer Kinder gefährdet und was wir dagegen tun können*. Munich 2013. ISBN 978-3-570-10172-8 (The book is only available in German. Quotes translated by *Current Concerns*)

ds. As if further evidence was needed ... What experienced teachers and educators in Switzerland and elsewhere have been warning of for years, has now been confirmed by the new book of the medical doctor and psychotherapist Michael Winterhoff: a misconception of the child's development and open concepts in kindergarten and school, hence concepts in which the kindergarten teacher or the school teacher has to withdraw as much as possible and leave it to the child to design his learning process largely by himself, and which "contradicts the principles of developmental psychology". Learning in lower classes takes place mainly through the relationship to the teacher. And the teacher's restraint, which so-

called open learning forms require of him, is exactly the wrong way. The reports of parents, kindergarten teachers and teachers give impressive evidence. The "self-directed learning", part of many of today's school concepts, is mainly responsible for the increasing need for therapeutic and supportive measures and the general decline of achievement levels.

It is alarming that precisely these forms of learning are favored by Curriculum 21, because their negative effects have been known in Switzerland for long. Therefore, the SOS emergency call by Michael Winterhoff should be taken seriously: by parents and not least by those responsible in government and business.