

Current Concerns

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“Cooperation rather than confrontation”

Russia's assessment of the current European security situation and possible solutions

Speech delivered by Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev at the Munich Security Conference on 13 February 2016



Dmitry Medvedev
(picture wikipedia)

cc. Below we document the speech delivered by the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev during the Munich Security Conference in February 2016. This speech by a leading Russian politician has not been completely documented anywhere in German-speaking Western media. Instead, it was again single sentences that were chosen to cast a poor light on the whole Russian policy and to confirm unfortunately by that what has been formulated with great concern in this speech, namely that the world has entered into a new Cold War that might end in a disaster. All the more it is worth doing justice to the fundamental contents of this speech. We should seriously reflect on the political analysis in this speech and on the repeated offers made to us in the West instead of dismissing it.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished colleague Mr Valls, distinguished Mr Ischinger, my speech will be of a more general nature, but I hope it will be useful.

The first cold war ended 25 years ago. This is not long in terms of history, but it is a considerable period for individual people and even for generations. And it is certainly sufficient for assessing our common victories and losses, setting new goals and, of course, avoiding a repetition of past mistakes.

The Munich Security Conference has been known as a venue for heated and frank discussion. This is my first time here. Today I'd like to tell you about Russia's assessment of the current European security situation and possible solutions to our common problems, which have been aggravated by the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West.

Before coming to this conference, I met with President *Putin*. We talked about his

speech at the Munich conference in 2007. He said then that ideological stereotypes, double standards and unilateral actions do not ease but only fan tensions in international relations, reducing the international community's opportunities for adopting meaningful political decisions.

Did we overstate this? Were our assessments of the situation too pessimistic? Unfortunately, I have to say that the situation is now even worse than we feared. Developments have taken a much more dramatic turn since 2007. The concept of Greater Europe has not materialised. Economic growth has been very weak. Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa have increased in scale. The migration crisis

took much time and effort to launch, are expiring one by one. The proposed European security treaty has been put on hold. The idea of a Russia-EU Committee on Foreign Policy and Security, which I discussed with German Chancellor *Angela Merkel* in Meseberg, has not materialised. We believe that NATO's policy towards Russia remains unfriendly and generally obdurate.

Speaking bluntly, we are rapidly rolling into a period of a new cold war. Russia has been presented as well-nigh the biggest threat to NATO, or to Europe, America and other countries (and Mr *Stoltenberg* has just demonstrated that). They show frightening films about Russians starting

“The current architecture of European security, which was built on the ruins of World War II, allowed us to avoid global conflicts for more than 70 years. The reason for this was that this architecture was built on principles that were clear to everyone at that time, primarily the undeniable value of human life. We paid a high price for these values. But our shared tragedy forced us to rise above our political and ideological differences in the name of peace. It's true that this security system has its issues and that it sometimes malfunctions. But do we need one more, third global tragedy to understand that what we need is cooperation rather than confrontation?”

is pushing Europe towards collapse. Relations between Europe and Russia have soured. A civil war is raging in Ukraine.

In this context, we need to launch an intensive dialogue on the future architecture of Euro-Atlantic security, global stability and regional threats more than ever before. I consider it unacceptable that this dialogue has almost ceased in many spheres. The problem of miscommunication has been widely recognised both in Western Europe and in Russia. The mechanisms that allowed us to promptly settle mutual concerns have been cut off. Moreover, we've lost our grasp of the culture of mutual arms control, which we used for a long time as the basis for strengthening mutual trust. Partnership initiatives, which

a nuclear war. I am sometimes confused: is this 2016 or 1962?

But the real threats to this small world are of an absolutely different nature, as I hope you will admit. The term “European security” is now more embracing that it used to be. Forty years ago it concerned above all military and political relations in Europe. But new issues have come to the fore since then, such as sustainable economic development, inequality and poverty, unprecedented migration, new forms of terrorism and regional conflicts, including in Europe. I am referring to Ukraine, the volatile Balkans, and Moldova that is teetering on the brink of a national collapse.

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The cross-border threats and challenges, which we for a while believed to have been overcome, have returned with a new strength. The new threats, primarily terrorism and extremism, have lost their abstract form for the majority of people. They have become reality for millions in many countries. As Mr Valls has just mentioned, they have become a daily threat. We can expect an airplane to be blown up or people in a café to be shot every day. These used to

The energy market remains extremely unstable. Its volatility has affected both importers and exporters.

We regret that the practice of unilateral economic pressure in the form of sanctions is gaining momentum. Decisions are taken arbitrarily and at times in violation of international law. This is undermining the operating foundations of international economic organisations, including the *World Trade Organisation*. We have always said, I have always said that sanctions hit not only those against whom they are imposed but also those who use them

We welcome France’s balanced and constructive stance on Ukraine and on all other acute international issues. I fully agree with Mr Valls that the Russian-French dialogue never stopped, and that it has produced concrete results.

It is true that all sides must comply with the Minsk Agreements. But implementation primarily depends on Kiev. Why them? Not because we are trying to shift responsibility, but because it’s their time.

The situation is very unstable, despite progress made in a number of areas (heavy weaponry withdrawal, the OSCE mission and other issues).

What is Russia’s biggest concern?

First and most important, a comprehensive ceasefire is not being observed in southeastern Ukraine. Shooting is routinely reported at the line of contact, which should not be happening. And we must send a clear signal to all the parties involved, in this regard.

Second, amendments to the Ukrainian Constitution have not been approved to this day, although this should have been done by the end of 2015. And the law on a special status for Donbass has not been implemented.

Instead of coordinating specific decentralisation parameters with the regions, and this is the crucial issue, Ukraine has adopted so-called “transitional provisions,” even though the above requirements were put in black and white in the Minsk Agreements.

Third, Kiev continues to insist that local elections be based on a new Ukrainian law. Furthermore, Kiev has not implemented its commitment on a broad amnesty that should embrace all those who were involved in the developments in Ukraine in 2014–2015. Without being amnestied, these people will be unable to participate in elections, which will make any election results questionable. The OSCE will not endorse this.

As I said, the Minsk Agreements must be implemented in full and this is Russia’s stance on the issue. At the same time, being reasonable people open to discussing various ideas, including a compromise, we, for instance, accepted the initiative of Mr *Steinmeier* on the temporary application of the law on special status as soon as the election campaign begins. After the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights recognises the election results, this law must be applied permanently. But there’s still no progress here, despite the compromise suggested.

Of course, the humanitarian situation is extremely alarming. The economy of southeastern Ukraine is deteriorating, that

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be everyday events in the Middle East, but now it’s the same the world over.

We see that economic, social and military challenges have become mutually complementary. But we continue to act randomly, inconsistently, and in many cases exclusively in our own national interests. Or a scapegoat is appointed in an arbitrary manner.

I am offering you five theses on security as such.

First, the economy.

We have approached a change in paradigm in international economic relations. The traditional schemes are no longer effective. Political expediency is taking priority over simple and clear economic reason. The code of conduct is revised ad hoc to suit a specific problem or task or is bluntly ignored. I’ll just point out how the *International Monetary Fund* adjusted its fundamental rules on lending to countries with overdue sovereign debt when the issue concerned Ukraine’s sovereign debt to Russia.

Talks on creating economic mega-blocs could result in the erosion of the system of global economic rules.

Globalisation, which was a desired objective, has to a certain extent played a cruel joke on us. I personally talked about this with my colleagues at the G8 meetings when everyone needed them. But times change rapidly. Even a minor economic shift in one country now hits whole markets and countries almost immediately. And global regulation mechanisms cannot effectively balance national interests.

as an instrument of pressure. How many joint initiatives have been suspended because of sanctions! I have just met with German businessmen and we discussed this issue. Have we properly calculated not only the direct but also the indirect costs for European and Russian business? Are our differences really so deep, or are they not worth it? All of you here in this audience – do you really need this?

This is a road to nowhere. Everyone will suffer, mark my words. It is vitally important that we join forces to strengthen a new global system that can combine the principles of effectiveness and fairness, market openness and social protection.

Second, the crisis of the global economic development model is creating conditions for a variety of conflicts, including regional conflicts.

European politicians thought that the creation of the so-called belt of friendly countries on the outer border of the EU would reliably guarantee security. But what are the results of this policy? What you have is not a belt of friendly countries, but an exclusion zone with local conflicts and economic trouble both on the eastern borders (Ukraine and Moldova) and on the southern borders (the Middle East and North Africa, Libya and Syria).

The result is that these regions have become a common headache for all of us.

The *Normandy format* has helped us launch negotiations on Ukraine. We believe that there are no better instruments for a peaceful settlement than the *Minsk Agreements*.

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part of Ukraine is blockaded, and the German Chancellor's initiative on the restoration of the banking system in the region there has been rejected. Tens of thousands of people are living on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe.

Oddly, Russia seems to be more concerned about this than Ukraine, why is this so? We have been sending and will have to continue sending humanitarian convoys to southeastern Ukraine.

I must say that Russia has shown and will continue to show reasonable flexibility in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements where this doesn't contradict their essence. But we can't do what is not in our competence. That is, we cannot implement the political and legal obligations of the Kiev government. This is under the direct authority of the President, the Government and the Parliament of Ukraine. But unfortunately, it appears that they don't have the will or a desire to do it. I think this has become obvious to everyone.

As for Syria, we have been working and will continue to work to implement joint peace initiatives. This is a difficult path, but there is no alternative to an interethnic and interreligious dialogue. We must preserve Syria as a union state and prevent its dissolution for denominational reasons. The world will not survive another Libya, Yemen or Afghanistan. The consequences of this scenario will be catastrophic for the Middle East. The work of the *International Syria Support Group* gives us a certain hope. They gathered here the day before yesterday and coordinated a list of practical measures aimed at implementing the UN *Security Council Resolution 2254*, including the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians and outlining the conditions for a ceasefire, except for terrorist groups, of course. The implementation of these measures is to be led by Russia and the United States. I would like to emphasise that the daily work of the Russian and American militaries is the key here. I'm talking about regular work without the need to seek incidental contacts, day-to-day work, everyday work.

Of course, there should be no preliminary conditions to start the talks on the settlement between the Syrian government and opposition, and there is no need to impend anyone with a land military operation.

Third, we sincerely believe that if we fail to normalise the situation in Syria and other conflict areas, terrorism will become a new form of war that will spread around the world.

It will not be just a new form of war but a method of settling ethnic and religious conflict, and a form of quasi-state governance. Imagine a group of countries that are governed by terrorists through terrorism. Is this the 21st century?

It is common knowledge that terrorism is not a problem within individual countries. Russia first raised this alarm two decades ago. We tried to convince our partners that the core causes were not just ethnic or religious differences. Take ISIS, whose ideology is not based on Islamic values but on a blood-thirsty desire to kill and destroy. Terrorism is civilisation's problem. It's either us or them, and it's time for everyone to realise this. There are no nuances or undertones, no justifications for terrorist actions, no dividing terrorists into ours or theirs, into moderate or extremist.

The destruction of the Russian plane over Sinai, the terrorist attacks in Paris, London, Israel, Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq, Mali, Yemen and other countries, the grisly executions of hostages, thousands of victims, and endless other threats are evidence that international terrorism defies state borders. Terrorists and extremists are trying to spread their influence not only throughout the Middle East and North Africa but also to the whole of Central Asia. Unfortunately, they have so far been successful, mostly because we are unable to set our differences aside and to really join forces against them. Even cooperation at the security services level has been curtailed. And this is ridiculous, like we don't want to work with you. Daesh should be grateful to my colleagues, the leaders of the Western countries who have suspended this cooperation.

Before coming to this conference, I read much material, including some by Western experts. Even those who don't think positively about Russia admit that, despite our differences, the “anti-terrorist formula” will not be effective without Russia. On the other hand, they sometimes frame this conclusion in an overall correct, but slightly different way, saying that a weak Russia is even more dangerous than a strong Russia.

Fourth, regional conflicts and terrorism are closely related to the unprecedentedly large issue of uncontrolled migration.

This could be described as a great new transmigration of peoples and the culmination of the numerous problems of modern global development. It has affected not only Western Europe but also Russia. The inflow of migrants from Syria to Russia is not very large, but the inflow of migrants from Ukraine has become a serious problem. Over a million Ukrainian refugees have entered Russia over the past 18 months.

Wars and related deprivations, inequality, low standards of living, violence, and fanaticism force people to flee their homes. Unsuccessful attempts to spread Western models of democracy to a social environment that is not suited for this have resulted in the demise of entire states and have turned huge territories into zones of hostility. I remember how my colleagues once rejoiced at the so-called Arab Spring. I literally witnessed it. But has modern democracy taken root in these countries? Looks like it has, but in the form of ISIS.

Human capital is degenerating in the countries the refugees are leaving. And these countries' development prospects have taken a downward turn. The ongoing migration crisis is rapidly acquiring the features of a humanitarian catastrophe, at least in some parts of Europe. Social problems are growing too, along with mutual intolerance and xenophobia. Not to mention the fact that hundreds and thousands of extremists enter Europe under the guise of being refugees. Other migrants are people of an absolutely different culture who only want to receive monetary benefits without doing anything to earn them. This poses a very real danger to the common economic space. The next targets will be the cultural space and even the European identity. We watch with regret how invaluable mechanisms, which Russia also needs, are being destroyed. I am referring to the actual collapse of the Schengen zone.

For our part, we are willing to do our best to help address the migration issue, including by contributing to efforts to normalise the situation in the conflict regions from which the majority of refugees come, Syria among them.

And fifth, let's be as honest as possible. The majority of these challenges did not develop yesterday. And they were definitely not invented in Russia.

Yet we haven't learned to react to these challenges properly or even proactively. This is why the bulk of resources go into dealing with the consequences, often without identifying the root cause. Or we invest our energy not in fighting the real evil, but in deterring our neighbours, and this problem has just been voiced here. The West continues to actively use this deterrence doctrine against Russia. The fallacy of this approach is that we will still be debating the same issues in 10 and even 20 years. Provided there will be anything to debate about, of course, as discussions are not on the agenda of the Great Caliphate.

Opinions on the prospects for cooperation with Russia differ. Opinions also dif-

Will Saudi Arabia ignite the fuse to start a new Middle East war?

by Andreas Becker

Saudi Arabia is currently not only arming itself for war, but seems almost eager to set fire to the fuse. In recent days, Saudi warplanes, their crews and ground personnel were transferred to the Turkish Incirlik airbase. The relocation was carried out in the context of the US-led military coalition against the Islamic State (IS), which Western politicians and media have recently preferred calling Daesh. The Turkish-Saudi alliance against Syria and Iran should be understood as Sunni alliance against Shiites. However, Lebanon is refusing the Saudi demand to join its military alliance. Today, a leading Maronite Christian wrote an open letter to the Saudi king Salman. A letter for peace on the eve of a war?

Since a week (24.2.2016) the oil-rich desert kingdom has been conducting the biggest military manoeuvres in its history. Troops from 20 countries are involved. Saudi Arabia can now reap the rewards of its investments through generous cash flows into Arab and African countries over the past decades. Operation *Northern Thunder* was started ten days ago and will last one week.

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fer in Russia. But can we unite in order to stand up against the challenges I mentioned above? Yes, I am confident that we can. Yesterday we witnessed a per-

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fect example in the area of religion. Patriarch *Kirill* of Moscow and All Russia and Pope of the Catholic Church *Francis* met in Cuba following hundreds of years when the two churches did not communicate. Of course, restoring trust is a challenging task. It's difficult to say how long it would take. But it is necessary to launch this process. And this must be done without any preliminary conditions. Either all of us need to do this or none of us. In the latter case, there will be no cooperation.

We often differ in our assessments of the events that took place over the past two years. However, I want to emphasise

"We must realise that we face a civilisational question that concerns everyone, the West included, the atheist West of the dead God, of colonial and imperial conquests, unequal exchanges, overt or covert racism and ethical relativism. The American philosopher *Eric Voegelin*, who reflected on millenarianisms, described this relativism as 'a deification of society by itself'.

How in our dangerous times we miss the vigorous debate on civilisational relations that allowed us to play our role as cultural brokers for peace and truth. How we miss thinking about the 20th century we inherited. How we miss the in-depth reflection on Islam to understand what has led to the cultural and political aberration called 'Islamic State'."

Source: Open letter from Fady Noun to the Saudi Arabian King Salman (excerpt)

(Translation Current Concerns)

It was publicised only on its starting day. Simultaneously Riyadh literally threatened Syrian President *Bashar al-Assad* to "violently overthrow" him. This is exactly how wars have begun.

One of the wherefores is the *Islamic State's* (IS) failure to win the day against Assad. Thanks to the Russian military support the Syrian government has lately been able to recapture several areas. In a rela-

tively short time the Russians succeeded in what the US-led anti-IS coalition had not been able to achieve for the whole year before that – namely to stop the rise of the IS. However, the al-Qaeda successors are not defeated yet.

In Yemen, Saudi Arabia is already fighting a war against the Shiite Houthi rebels.

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that they don't differ as much as they did 40 years ago when we signed the *Final Helsinki Act* and when Europe was literally divided by The Wall. When old phobias prevailed, we were deadlocked. When we managed to join forces, we succeeded. There is much evidence to support

son for this was that this architecture was built on principles that were clear to everyone at that time, primarily the undeniable value of human life. We paid a high price for these values. But our shared tragedy forced us to rise above our political and ideological differences in the name of peace. It's true that this security system has its issues and that it sometimes malfunctions. But do we need one more, third global tragedy to understand that what we need is cooperation rather than confrontation?

I'd like to quote from *John F. Kennedy*, who used very simple but the most appropriate words, "Domestic policy can only defeat us; foreign policy can kill us." In the early 1960s the world stood at the door of a nuclear apocalypse, but the two rivaling powers found the courage to admit that no political confrontation was worth the human lives.

I believe that we have become wiser and more experienced and more responsible. And we are not divided by ideological phantoms and stereotypes. I believe that the challenges we are facing today will not lead to conflict but rather will encourage us to come together in a fair and equal union that will allow us to maintain peace for another 70 years, at least.

Thank you.

Source: <http://government.ru/en/news/21784/>

this. We managed to agree on the reduction of strategic offensive weapons, which was a breakthrough achievement. We have worked out a compromise solution regarding Iran's nuclear programme. We have convinced all sides in the Syrian conflict to sit down at the negotiating table in Geneva. We have coordinated actions against pirates. And the Climate Change Conference was held in Paris last year. We should replicate these positive outcomes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The current architecture of European security, which was built on the ruins of World War II, allowed us to avoid global conflicts for more than 70 years. The rea-

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However, the anti-Shiite front is expanding and threatening to encompass an area from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, and from the Turkish border to the Pakistani and Afghan borders. Riyadh is demonstratively showing its willingness to militarily intervene in the Middle East conflict and put things in order according to its own way of thinking, and thus concealing that it is itself part of the conflict. Saudi Arabia got together with its friend, the USA, to form an interest alliance against the ruling Alawites in Syria, who are considered to be Shiites and from whose ranks President Assad's family originates. The reasons of the anti-Assad alliance are not exactly the same, but based on the motto: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend", it was agreed to instigate a rebellion against the Assad government.

For this purpose Syrian Sunni clans were courted and supplied with money and weapons and logistical support. Initially Washington sources reported that a *Free Syrian Army* was fighting against the dictator Assad and for democracy. The Free Syrian Army soon revealed itself to substantially consist of Islamist militias such as *al-Nusra* Brigade and Islamic State (IS). This is a fact neither Riyadh nor Washington care to admit. However, the Free Syrian Army is hardly mentioned any longer, but instead Islamist murders are reported, preferably with Christians as victims. To date, it is unclear what governments and institutions are clandestinely lending a helping hand to the Islamic State and its offshoots.

Lebanon as an alternative model

Lebanon is the only strongly Christian-influenced state of the Middle East. Originally it was a sort of autonomous sanctuary for Christians in the Ottoman Empire, who withdrew from oppression and repression to the mountainous coastal region. The country lost its Christian majority in the bloody turmoil of the Middle East conflict. Yet the country still exists and coheres, and this is thanks to the Christians and their culture-coining faith. Lebanon is the only country in the Middle East which has all groups involved in governance, thus it represents a unique exception.

And yet the Christians would also have sufficient reason to bear a grudge. They could resort to violence just like the other religious groups do, but they only do so if they are forced to. They know their history, but make no charges on its behalf.

Reasons for the fact that Christians no longer have a majority in the state which was meant as a country of Christians, are the creation of Israel and the expulsion of the indigenous Palestinians, Sunni Muslims and Christians. As those expellees' chances

of being able to return to their home countries in the foreseeable future dwindled, the PLO tried to conquer Lebanon as a new territory. It was supported by parts of the Sunni Lebanese.

The result was a bloody civil war. The PLO's attempt was blocked. But the loss of human lives and the destruction were enormous. 27 years after the war Lebanon is still a long way from the prosperity, it had enjoyed before. Wealth that was due to the country's Christians. Just as the Lebanese have to thank the Christians that their country has not become another Iraq or Syria, no second Yemen and no second Libya.

To go into further detail about the Lebanese entanglements between anti-Syrian and pro-Syrian, anti-Western and pro-Western, anti-Israeli and pro-Israeli forces, etc. would blow up this text incredibly and furthermore be likely to create more confusion than clarity.

The Saudi "revenge"

To understand the present situation it suffices to say that Syria attempted to help the Christians against the Palestinian attempt at conquest in the 1970s. And that the Shiites, whose number has significantly increased especially in recent decades, see themselves as the natural allies of the Syrian Alawites.

Fact is that the Christians of Lebanon are grateful to Syria for the military aid in the 1970s. However, it is also true that the majority of Lebanese Christians did not want a Lebanon that would be a Syrian protectorate and therefore advocated the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon concluded in 2005. The fact remains that the Lebanese Christians fully understand that their Christian fellow-brethren in Syria, with which they have often family ties, are much better off under the Alawite Assad than they would be under Sunni authority. While the Shiite Hizbullah is actively fighting on the side of Assad in Syria, the Lebanese Christians at least have sympathy, because of their solidarity with the Syrian Christians.

This partly explains why Lebanon does not want to participate in the anti-Shiite alliance forged by Saudi Arabia with the approval of the US. Their main reason for this is to protect themselves against another deadly and destructive war, in which nobody wants to get involved. The small country has to pay dearly for his refusal to participate. Riyadh recently announced a whole array of penalties against Lebanon. King *Salman* is reclaiming a donation of three billion dollars to upgrade the Lebanese army granted by his predecessor King *Abdullah* at the end of the year 2013. This huge sum that has since flowed partly into the army of the small Mediterranean country by way of arms deliveries from France. The common army represents an important

stability factor in a state in which numerous armed militias still fought each other little more than 25 years ago.

Riyadh also expressed its displeasure by publicly warning that Saudis should avoid choosing Lebanon as a tourist destination for "security reasons". Today Riyadh went even further and urged all Saudis to leave Lebanon, a measure also adopted by the closest Saudi allies in the Gulf region, Bahraini, UAE and Qatar. The Lebanese understand the meaning of this: The travel warning really is an indirect request to cut back economic relations with Lebanon. Today's recall of Saudi citizens factually amounts in a civilian area to a general mobilisation in a military one.

The third threat, which was not officially pronounced but with sufficient conspicuousness informally circulated, has a direct and massive impact: Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf emirates might expel the 400,000 Lebanese employed in the Gulf region. It can easily be imagined what this would mean for Lebanon, a country with 4.4 million inhabitants (plus 450,000 Palestinian refugees and 1,250,000 Syrian refugees). By no later than the announcement of this threat every Lebanese knew that Saudi Arabia is serious and wants to bend the small Mediterranean country to its will. A fourth threat circulating as a rumour is that Gulf countries dominated by Sunni families might withdraw their money from the Lebanese banks and plunge the country into an economic and social crisis, and this completes the threatening scenario.

The Lebanese refusal

The "revenge" of Saudi king *Salman* followed the twofold refusal of the Lebanese Foreign Minister, Maronite Christian *Jebran Bassil* of the *Free Patriotic Movement*, to agree to an anti-Iranian resolution submitted by Saudi Arabia at the recent meeting of the Arab foreign ministers, and thus to join in the Saudi alliance. The Free Patriotic Movement domestically forms the minority faction of the Lebanese Christians. Yet the Christian majority and minority are largely in agreement regarding the foreign policy question of the Sunni-Shiite conflict powder keg, that is threatening to blow up the entire Middle East. A direct involvement of Lebanon in an uncontrollable Middle East war would be the end of the last remaining, significant and especially formative Christian presence in the Middle East.

Not only in Islamic circles but even among Lebanese Christians the conjecture is rumored that a destroyed hinterland as a kind of giant glacier would not be inconvenient to Israel nor to those Western forces who would be able to unabashedly lay their hands on the natural resources of the

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Switzerland has virtually become a NATO member

by Gotthard Frick

Several times in the past the author has provided information on the fact that the Federal Council and the army leadership are leading Switzerland into NATO by the back door.

As late as on the day of the beginning on 16 February 2016 – so that any opposition, what so ever, could not be formed – the Federal Council communicated that a NATO Conference was going to be held on 16 and 17 February 2016 in Zurich, at the invitation of Switzerland. Such stealthy procedure fits to this policy that is aimed at cheating the Swiss people. One hundred officers from the NATO command structure and 28 member states and all member states of the *Partnership for Peace* (PfP), including Switzerland, as well as the 25 member states of the NATO Interoperability Platform – including also Switzerland – participated.

They were to discuss the need for military cooperation as well as the current challenges on the basis of the changed security environment and if necessary adjust it.

Read below once more an overview of what this means specifically:

- The *Partnership for Peace* – a clever neologism of “Spin doctors”, i. e. communication specialists – (and other NATO partnerships) is seen in China’s party press as an “Instrument of the United States to enforce their strategic interests”. This means that China as well as Russia probably no longer regard Switzerland as a neutral country.
- The Interoperability Platform is an organization of the 25 participating states, including Switzerland for the exercise of the joint combat. Even if that still means no formal accession to NATO, the non-western powers see such actions as a last step to join immediately in case of emergency.

- Switzerland has already sent at various opportunities – at first still few – troops to maneuvers of NATO members (for example in Germany). Probably to get the public opinion used to this military cooperation in small steps. Since there were no NATO maneuvers, but only military exercises with NATO members, Federal Council and army leaders said that such operations were not affecting Switzerland’s neutrality.
- The army has adjusted their *Führungs- und Stabsorganisation* (FSO) (Management and staff organisation) to those of NATO.
- NATO compatible weapons and devices are procured, where ever possible. Switzerland has as well aligned its ranks to those of NATO. So, the word “Colonel” before their ranks was removed. Colonel Divisional Commander became Major General. On the lower level, we have taken over following new ranks for the very small army in addition to the previous: Private first class, Head sergeant, First sergeant, Warrant officer class. It is obvious that the cooperation will be facilitated with largely identical weapons and levels of service.
- NATO commanders are frequently visiting Switzerland to inform themselves about our planned military measures and in turn to inform Switzerland of their steps.

With only two mechanized brigades as actual combat troops, Switzerland’s military units aren’t primarily suitable for the needs of the fight in our highly structured and built-up terrain, but are immediately subordinated to NATO in case of war and can be used in the large, flat or slightly hilly areas outside of Switzerland.

It cannot be repeated too often and loud enough: a neutral, well-defended Switzerland in the midst of Europe, with the most

efficient and central Alpine tunnels for rail and road transport and even with the shortest air connection road from Southern to Western or Central and Northern Europe in Western Europe would be a great disadvantage for the United States/NATO. That is why in many places, in the member states of NATO and in Switzerland, work is done, in an obscured but shrewd manner, for a speedy NATO access of our country, this work not being noticed by our people or the media.

The reduction of the army to yet a third since the end of the twentieth century, the halving of this third in the context of reforms of WEA *Weiterentwicklung Armee* (Development of the army) is probably the intention of some influential heads in the Federal Council and the army leadership to be able to rapidly implement and justify accession to NATO in case of emergency. The preparations for this have been going on for years. But since our people remains committed to a strong, independent national defense and neutrality, all must be very cleverly hidden and otherwise justified.

If one imagines a greater crisis situation in Europe, still below the threshold of war, but more in a case of conflict, both the United States and NATO will use our airspace for their own purposes, possibly also the North South Alps transversal and the East-West railway lines and highways, the major airports and will take over the three remaining military air bases. Our smashed army is no longer capable of preventing that. Thus, we have violated our primary duty of neutrality. So an opponent to the United States/NATO can become quite legally militarily active in our country as well by pointing to this incapability.

The Federal Council then has an excuse – probably already prepared – and can inform the Swiss people that our country cannot defend itself alone, call for emergency legislation, and – as we had no other alternative – join NATO.

In that case the Federal Council can immediately place the two mechanized brigades under NATO command as our contribution. Thanks to the previous preparations, the latter can be done very quickly.

This means that we will be in all likelihood in a possible next war as member or partner of NATO. Must we prepare a revolution to enforce the will of the people, or how should we address the flagrant violation of the Constitution by the Federal Council and the Parliament? This question must urgently be answered. •

“Will Saudi Arabia ignite...”

continued from page 6

Middle East after a war. This assessment can do nothing to raise the overall mood. A leading Christian Lebanese does not want to speculate on such backgrounds behind the backgrounds. To him the facts on the table are sufficiently serious, and they caused him to act.

The Maronite Christian *Fady Noun*, deputy editor of the respected Lebanese daily “L’Orient-Le Jour” wrote an open letter to King Salman of Saudi Arabia in this dramatically worsening situation, in which you can smell the fuse even as far

as Beirut. In this letter, he calls for mutual respect and illustrates why Lebanon can not be part of an alliance, because otherwise the only model of a sustainable solution to the conflict would be destroyed. Noun instead presents Lebanon to the Saudi king as a model for resolution, and he calls on him to choose peace instead of war. •

Source: www.katholisches.info/2016/02/24/zue-ndet-saudi-arabien-die-lunte-zu-einem-neuen-nahost-krieg-offener-brief-eines-libanesischen-christen-an-den-saudischen-koenig/ from 24.2.2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

An independent policy towards the EU and NATO

Rl. The Swiss press reported it instantaneously: The EU superiors implied that the negotiation results between Brussels and London would not mean any compromise for Berne. One would like to add that the non-EU country Switzerland should kindly comply decorously and do as commanded from Brussels. But in what shape is the EU actually?

The EU has feet of clay. The refugee crisis is far from being solved. Spring is sure to come bringing hundred of thousand new migrants. In individual states lawless zones are caused by massive immigration flows. Social costs of extraordinary proportions are to be expected. The populations are dissatisfied.

The EU on feet of clay

The economies of most EU member states are sluggish despite the unchecked financial injections from the European Central Bank, ECB.

Parallel to this, the USA incite along the neighbouring countries of Russia unrest in Ukraine and Turkey. The United States itself would be little hurt by a war. Furthermore, their staged boycott against Russia massively harms the economies of individual EU states – and competitors.

Simultaneously, Brussels EU headquarters increasingly ties itself to Washington: Brussels pushes the TTIP negotiations against the citizens' resistance. A selling out of the economy is feared. In addition, the agreement leads to a further deprivation of rights of the citizens. Furthermore, Brussels actively promotes migration flows to the European countries. Hereby, *Jean-Claude Juncker* and *Jan Asselblom* ultimately try to impose EU internal policy against the declared opposition of many European countries. Whoever does not obey, is to be pilloried and threatened.

NATO are getting ready on the borders to Russia

At the same time the United States are activating the "defense alliance" NATO for further military interventions: NATO in Syria, North Africa, in the Aegean, in Georgia and Ukraine. NATO massively upgrades on the borders of Russia. The Norwegian NATO general secretary *Jens Stoltenberg* does not miss any opportunity to stir up public opinion against Russia. The situation escalates increasingly.

Swiss policy must remain independent

On the international level Swiss politics is facing great challenges. As negotiating

venue, as Depositary State of the ICRC and as agent for Good Offices, Switzerland has to deploy all their experience. At the same time, Switzerland cannot neglect itself. What counts now is to stay neutral and credible, to maintain distance to the conflict parties and show independence. All this in an internationally narrow, cross-linked environment with many mutual interdependencies. Does it make sense to continue participating in the NATO-run organisation "Partnership for Peace"? Does it make sense to unquestioningly accept guidelines from the EU headquarters in Brussels? Does it make sense to literally follow the Schengen Agreement or to be dictated how one organises its domestic policy? Or is it not valid after all to lead a sovereign foreign policy again which for example shapes independently the question of immigration, defense policy or economic and financial policy? Switzerland has to maintain its independent position. Another blind alignment with foreign interests will impact Switzerland as a neutral mediator in unforeseen ways, but will also impact directly our country and our citizens. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Army postpones refresher course for 5,000 soldiers because of refugees

Because the federal government expects that this spring more refugees will reach Switzerland, the army is positioning itself to support the Swiss Border Guard. Therefore the *Refresher Course* (RC) of 5,000 soldiers – consisting of mostly the military police – has been postponed.

On 26 February 2016 the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) confirmed a report of the Swiss newspaper "Blick", that in January the refresher course for five battalions was postponed.

On request of the news agency *sda* the DDPS mentioned as an example that one battalion will do its service during the summer holidays, two months later than planned. For another one the RC was postponed for two weeks only. The Army issued readiness requirements for another two battalions. But the date on which the soldiers have

to enlist for the RC remained the same.

The DDPS media office wrote: "The army is aiming to ensure that they have access to a roughly equal number of troops in service throughout the year who can thus be used for short term support operations in favour of the civil authorities."

André Blattmann, Chief of the Swiss Armed Forces, explained to "Blick", that if the Swiss Border Guard should be unable to cope with a great press of refugees, the army could mobilise up to 2,000 soldiers within 48 hours.

First of all, military police should support the border guards. If this is insufficient, first infantry conscripts will be mobilised and thereafter the RC battalions with the readiness requirements.

At the media conference on army reform, Blattmann had hinted at the possibility of mobilising

additional units. On Friday the DDPS specified, that such a move would take time because another mobilisation "would have to be mandated and decided upon by the government and the parliament".

In "Blick", Blattmann had also outlined various possible missions for the soldiers, for example they could welcome refugees and take them to reception camps, or do service at the border.

On Friday the DDPS wrote, that "the army has not been commissioned yet". The question of the tasks "is presently being discussed between the participating departments and authorities – Federal Department of Finance with the Swiss Border Guard, Federal Department of Justice and Police with the State Secretariat for Migration and DDPS with the army".

Source: *sda* from 26 February 2016
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Commentary

Mass migration: Wake up, act. Reality as guidance

me. There has been much dispute about the Army reforms and the so-called FDA. The abbreviation stands for *Further-Development of the Army*. But observers are not sure whether it is rather an actual systematic *Further-Disarming of the Army*.

Undoubtedly every realist knows that with about 30,000 available combat troops (many of the 100,000 men of the army are assigned to supply, transmission, transportation, air force and disaster relief), it would take only one small insurgence stemming from the opposite side of the Rhine, advancing to Winterthur, to finish off the Swiss army. Then it would be done. Thereafter everyone can go home. There will be no army left for the rest of Switzerland. Thank you for this progress.

Also, the army cannot be mobilised, this is a further damning indictment. Just a few years ago we had one of the best mobilisation systems and we were able to mobilise 500,000 men within 2 days – equipped, trained and ready to defend. Additionally, at present we face an insufficiency of equipment and supplies. There are certainly people, who are responsible for today's state of our army. The question is: Do they have the courage to admit accountability?

Rather than finger-pointing and looking back, it seems more important to look forward concentrating on the tasks ahead and supporting those responsible today. They have not caused all that mess. Reality is relentlessly taking its toll, and the army planners of the past failed. The army simply has to adapt. This will be a demanding effort. As we did in the past we have to think things through and act consistently. It is what it is: Neither NATO nor the EU will support Switzerland. On contrary, they are the source of our problems we are facing. The problem starts with the mass migration. The Swiss Border Guard is reaching its limits. The army needs to give them support. Through this the citizens will protect their state and Switzerland would return to normality. We have a good reason too, because we support a state that enables us to determine our *modus vivendi* through direct democracy. That is unique worldwide. If more needs to be done, then let us just do it. It is worth it. Together and united let's tackle the challenges and clean up the stupidities of yesterday's know-it-alls.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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“Switzerland can still build bridges where no one else can beat the odds”

Interview with Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter in radio SRF, “Samstagsrundschau” (Saturday Review), 20. February 2016, moderation: Géraldine Eicher (excerpts)



Didier Burkhalter (picture wikipedia)

mw. What qualifies Switzerland to provide its Good Offices around the world, once they are required – and they are ever more urgently needed today – is its neutrality, impartiality, credibility.

On this basis, Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter, head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), impressively explains the humanitarian and diplomatic duties of Switzerland in the world in the “Samstagsrundschau” of 20 February 2016.

The listener feels great consternation in being reminded of the NATO Conference in Zurich, hosted by Switzerland just a few days earlier from 16 to 17 February. Officers from more than 40 States gathered here to discuss their “future cooperation within the context of a changing security environment” and to “potentially adapt”. – “At the same time the meeting serves as a celebration of the 20-year anniversary of the Swiss participation in the Partnership for Peace.” (Press release of the Federal Government, 16 February 2016)

How does that fit together? How can Switzerland credibly carry out its time-honoured role in the world as a neutral and impartial mediator and later as the seat of the ICRC and as a depositary State of the Geneva Conventions, and at the same time effectively bind itself to the

NATO, the military alliance that has since 1999 mutated to an aggressive war alliance?

As Swiss citizens we commit the Federal Council to the tradition of Good Offices, which Didier Burkhalter presented in such touching words, and we do this especially for all the people of the war- and crisis-torn countries of the world. We commit him to the everlasting armed neutrality, which is essentially coupled with a credible independent defence of our country. To fulfil this historical commitment, which is also stated in our Federal Constitution, befits us much better than to join a war alliance merely to join in with the “Great Powers”.

Radio SRF (after welcoming and some general introductory remarks): So you mediate in Saudi Arabia?

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter: We don’t mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia. We took over a representation of interests between two countries, two major powers in their region, which had dropped their diplomatic relations. This is dangerous. The situation in the Middle East is already quite ugly in many aspects. If there is no dialogue between the different players any more, it will become really dangerous. That’s why Switzerland contributes something which can have an impact. Actually we can be proud of this.

Does this really have an effect? Does Switzerland actually play an active role, or is it rather acting as a postman between Saudi Arabia and Iran? [...]

But a good postman is a player! [...] If the message is very important, because things are on fire, the messenger is appreciated. He is needed to secure a channel of communication. It is of great importance to defend the values of a strong diplomacy and concretely apply them. This is what we Swiss can do. We can’t do everything, one always has to be modest, but we also have reason to be proud.

It takes both: Development assistance and humanitarian aid

The development assistance provided by Switzerland is increasing more slowly than originally intended. On the other hand, Switzerland increased emergency relief and humanitarian aid, for example in Syria. Does this mean that we are rather reactive than proactive?

We are both. In our budget frame for the next four years we provide humanitarian and development aid. About 60 percent of the funds are used for development aid, ie the permanent aid by which we try to eliminate the causes of possible crises. But unfortunately we also have to do a lot in the area of humanitarian aid in the next few years. [...] If you were in a refugee camp in Jordan or Lebanon, during the Syria crisis – I visited a camp in Jordan. For example there was a young woman with two young children, the first born in Syria during the war, and the second in the camp. They will be living there for years.

In these cases it takes not only basic humanitarian aid, but also development assistance, for example schools for the children. So it is too simple to say that we provide is too much or too little humanitarian assistance or development aid. It takes both. Efforts for peace are very important, too, they form an integral part of the whole. Switzerland is actually doing a lot for more peace and for less poverty.

The current problem that is keeping Europe busy right now is the influx of refugees. Is development aid really helping to reduce these refugee flows?

We have a yearly budget of about 2.5 to 2.7 billion Swiss francs – if the parliament agrees. And every year we will directly or indirectly invest one out of six Swiss francs in migration projects. Directly: that means to protect migrants locally. If we protected refugees from Syria in the field they would not want to migrate to Europe. And indirectly: we need to invest before there are

Switzerland negotiates directly with Assad government on humanitarian issues

Switzerland has been negotiating directly with the government of Syrian’s President *Bashar al-Assad* on humanitarian issues for three years now. This access to the regime is unique, said *Yves Rossier*, State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

“We are the only ones”, *Rossier* told the program “HeuteMorgen” on Radio SRF. At the same time the Swiss commitment “is appreciated highly by the other parties”. It is “as good as a shopping list” that is compiled in cooperation with the major international organizations before each of these diplomatic meetings.

The Swiss chief diplomat said that the Syrian government had been very suspi-

cious of these discussions. “It took time. During the first year it was very, very difficult.”

When it comes to humanitarian efforts it is but a matter of “concrete work improvements”. So it has been possible to achieve significantly more visas for humanitarian staff in Syria and easier check-ins on the checkpoints.

Switzerland wishes this connection “if possible to stay not political,” said *Rossier*. “The confidential relationship with the humanitarian arm of the Syrian government is important.”

Source: *sda*, 9 February 2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Switzerland can still ...”

continued from page 9

reasons for unwished migration, so that the people have prospects where they live.

That means we would actually need to provide development aid based as well on selfishness as on the feeling of human duty? [...]

I do not feel that way. When I was in the region around Syria I talked to people in the refugee camps and asked them about their wishes for the future. Almost everyone said: we would like to go back to where we lived before. And I think this is also normal. If you yourself had experienced this: would you really want to emigrate? Most of the people just want to go back home. It is very difficult for them because for years they thought it would be possible to return. That is why they have stayed in the region. And then all of a sudden this hope died. Now many young people, but also families, say, our future is no longer where we have come from. Now, we must leave and go to Europe, where there is a perspective. Therefore I think, it is not selfish to give more opportunities to the people so that they can stay where they are and return home.

The streams of refugees have been keeping us busy for months now. Let us take a brief survey of this week. Europe is about to close its borders. [...] What will be the impact for Switzerland?

We are already prepared for what is in store for Switzerland. We have known for a long time that the situation may get worse. There is the crisis in Syria, the crisis in Yemen, the Libyan crisis – which could be very dangerous – and if these crises are not resolved, if they are not resolved by political means, then there will be further migration problems. A political solution is needed. This includes a dialogue between all parties, so that it will again be possible to build a country in this region, to build a state, a permanent state under the rule of law. In Switzerland itself we have national solutions [for an increasing number of migrants]. In our laws we have already provided solutions concerning legislative regulations that are now being discussed in Germany and Sweden. I hope the new asylum law will be accepted by the population – in the referendum vote. [The amendment of the asylum law of 25. September 2015 is to subject to a people’s referendum on 5. June 2016] We are even prepared for the risk that there may be routes through Switzerland.

In the Federal Council we deal with the latest information every day, every week, and we prepare our point of view on this matter. At the moment we have everything under

“Switzerland has always said that it is very important to maintain a dialogue between Russia and the Western countries, without making judgments about who is right or wrong.”

control, but we know that it could be dangerous and difficult. [...The Federal Council and the cantons are jointly responsible for these problems and work well together. If it becomes more difficult, we will take the decisions that are needed then.

Foreign policy: “Switzerland is very important on this continent ...”

Foreign policy is generally characterised by instability, even the EU could disintegrate. Are you afraid of this, or do you firmly believe in Angela Merkel’s statement, “We can do this”?

First and foremost I believe deeply in Switzerland. I have great respect for Mrs Merkel. But the question for the Federal Council is not whether we fear something for the EU or whether we like someone or not. For us, the interests and values of Switzerland are important. We live on a continent, Europe, and we are very important for this continent, although we are not such a large country. This year, for example, we will open the Gotthard tunnel [referring to the Gotthard Base Tunnel, a 57-km long railway tunnel], and then you see exactly how important Switzerland is for this continent. We want to proceed in this direction. Concerning the various problems of security and migration, our work is very practical and constructive.

Recently the Russian Prime Minister Medvedev stated that the world is in a new Cold War. Was he playing a little with the feeling of insecurity, or is there perhaps already a threat?

I think there is a tension that has already been increasing during the last decade between Russia and Europe, or the “West”, between Russia and the NATO countries and NATO projects – perhaps it was not noticed, or we did not want to take notice. Let’s put it like that. This is dangerous. Switzerland has always said that it is very important to maintain a dialogue between Russia and the Western countries, without making judgments about who is right or wrong. We will continue this dialogue in the coming years; in the same way as when we started it when we had the chair in the OSCE (*Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe*). For we believe that the future of security in Europe, is also our

future security, depends on the following question: Can we still see Europe as a joint project for security? If so, we need to tackle it together.

“Together with Switzerland something can be done for peace”

What is the future role of Switzerland in this context? Switzerland used to be a mediator in several conflicts, but at the latest from the thaw between Cuba and the United the impression arose that this role is no longer needed. Was this a fallacy?

With regard to mediation, we receive requests from all over the world. We are also getting more requests again for facilitations¹ and interest representation. In addition to requests from Saudi Arabia and Iran, we have a few others more. Switzerland’s good services, also in the form of facilitation and mediation, are even more likely to be called for in the near future due to the increasing tensions between many actors.

[...] Do you perhaps even feel that the international community has certain expectations? That they expect Switzerland to play a more active part?

Yes, I have felt this. I have felt it daily, notably since we have had the OSCE chair [Switzerland chaired the OSCE in 2014]. My text messages now come from almost around the world, and they are often very important. They show that there is an interest for a partner, for Switzerland, which is almost ... well, unique.

Switzerland’s specific characteristic is its neutrality and also notably its impartiality, which is very credible because we have been demonstrating clearly for a very long time that Switzerland can still build bridges where no one else can beat the odds. It is very important that we continue doing this. I think it is Switzerland’s tradition.

You know, when people talk to me in the street, many – and they reflect all sorts of political opinions and come from all social classes – say they just think, Switzerland: that means peace. You can work towards peace using Switzerland. And that characteristic belongs to all Swiss, it is not only the task of the official Switzerland, but somehow a “genetic” task of all Swiss citizens. •

Source: Radio SRF, *Samstagsrundschau* on February 20, 2016; moderation: Géraldine Eicher

¹ “Facilitation is also an instrument of good services and means that in a negotiation logistic or host tasks are performed. As facilitator, Switzerland provides the ideal venue and guarantees a safe environment, but is not involved in the process design or negotiations.” <https://www.eda.admin.ch/>

“Contaminating the culture of debate”

A troubled glance on Germany

by Karl Müller

In 1952, only a few years after the war and only one year after it had taken up its work, the German *Federal Constitutional Court* forbade a political party for the first time in its history: the *Sozialistische Reichspartei SRP* (Socialist Reich Party). This party considered itself the successor to the Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party NSDAP. Four years later, in 1956, the only further party ban so far has followed, namely that of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands KPD* (German Communist Party). The Federal Constitutional Court tried to correspond with these two bans to what the still young constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany predetermined in its clauses on parties (Art. 21 of the Basic Law) as fortified democracy namely that “Parties that, by reason of their aims or the behaviour of their adherents, seek to undermine or abolish the free democratic basic order or to endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany shall be unconstitutional.” And: “The Federal Constitutional Court shall rule on the question of unconstitutionality.” Especially this last clause should assure that the accusation of unconstitutionality would not become a means of election campaigning and defamation of unwanted political enemies and that the observation of unconstitutionality should be preceded by rigorous legal examination.

Many people are not aware how the Federal Constitutional Court then defined unconstitutionality and thereby especially clarified the concept of the *free democratic basic order* (FDGO), which is mentioned in Art. 21. Even today this definition cannot be brought to mind often enough:

“Free democratic basic order within the meaning of Art. 21 II Basic Law is an order which, excluding any rule of arbitrary force, represents a constitutional political order based on the self-determination of the people according to the will of the majority and freedom and equality. Among the basic principles of these regulations are to be expected at least: respect for the human rights specified in the Constitution, especially for the person's right to life and free development, popular sovereignty, separation of powers, the responsibility of the government, the legality of the administration, the independence of the courts, the multiparty principle and equal opportunities for all political parties with the right to constitutional formation and execution of an opposition.” (BVerfGE 2, 1; Leitsatz 2, S. 12)

Nevertheless in the meantime in Germany it has become prevalent to label unwanted political opinions and activities as political “extremism” and therefore as unconstitutional. Had it been opportune for many decades during the Cold War to warn primarily against “left-wing extremism” and thus label many socio-critical impulses, things changed in the first years after 1990, immediately after the entry of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to the territory of the West German constitution and its various disastrous economic and social consequences for the people in the east of Germany. It has happened again for some years initiated by a circle of interested people: In the years after 1990 and now again people talk about the great danger of “right-wing extremism”. And the citizens in the east of Germany are the target again.

The former president of the German Federal Parliament, *Wolfgang Thierse*, placed the people of eastern Germany again under general suspicion. He voiced his opinion after an event in an eastern German town where about 100 people loudly chanting “We are the people” tried to hinder the passengers to get off a bus in front of a refugee accommodation and after a planned refugee hostel was set on fire in another eastern German town. Thierse suddenly knew how to classify the events and said, the people in the east would be “more responsive to inhumane messages” and “less solidified in their democratic and moral convictions”. This is reminiscent of the 90s when violent outrages of eastern youngsters were to be explained by absurd theses which aimed first of all at one thing: to shed a negative light on the education and the schools of the former GDR.

How big the difference between external labelling and self-perception is in Eastern Germany shows a book that a participant of “Pegida” (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident) published some weeks ago (*Sebastian Hennig*: “Pegida. Spaziergänge über den Horizont. Eine Chronik.”) In the preface to the book we can read, “It cannot be denied: The majority of the Pegida-demonstrators are people who have already taken to the street in autumn 1989. [...] The awakening of Pegida in 2014/15 is not the continuation of the revolution of 1989/90. But there are parallels: On closer examination, there is in fact an amazingly great number of parallels. Problems have accumulated, whose entire dimension cannot be expressed given the language regime of the political system in power. Those

who tried first to utter the open questions in their own, down-to-the-earth language in public were defamed as Nazis by the media which were brought into line – or behaved alike. The narrow-minded reaction of the media has stimulated the protests and thereby worked as mobilisation factor. And the talk of ‘Nazi March’ even today is an expression of helplessness of the political decision makers. Their ingrained patterns of thought neither knows nor allows appropriate answers to the new reality. The first sentence of the first proclamation of the *New Forum* from September 1989 regains an amazing actuality: ‘In our country the communication between state and society is obviously troubled’.”

Michel Beileites, the author of the book's preface, has after all been *State Commissioner of Saxony for the Stasi-Documents* for 10 years, from 2000 to 2010. Might it not be possible that many people in Eastern Germany have a distinct sensorium for lies and deception in politics and for dictatorial tendencies?

A party colleague of Wolfgang Thierse, the German minister of Justice, *Heiko Maas*, went even beyond. He moved all those who challenge the rightfulness of the present asylum and refugee politics close to “intellectual arsonists”. Even the former judge at the Federal Constitutional Court, *Udo di Fabio*, the author of a legal opinion on behalf of the Bavarian State Government, was obviously not exempted, so that even a mainstream newspaper like the “*Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*” wrote on 15 February 2016: “The contamination of the culture of debate culminated at last in the Minister of Justice, Heiko Maas, (SPD), proclaiming Di Fabio as an intellectual arsonist.” Only short attention was given to a total verbal faux pas of EU-Commissioner *Günther Oettinger* about the chairwoman of the party *Alternative für Deutschland AfD* (Alternative for Germany), *Frauke Petry*. In normal times, the consequence of libels like this should be a demission.

But this “contamination of the culture of debate” does not happen by accident. It aims at defaming and weakening democracy. A broad “constitutional formation and exertion of an opposition” shall be prevented. The principle is: “divide and conquer!” That can only be a consequence of the political class of a country ruling against the majority of the people and making politics by argumentation no longer possible. All this happens in a time of really great challenges. It is a fact that

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More and more zones without rule of law in Germany

A police officer describes her everyday life in German major cities



rt. A reader's letter in the magazine *Deutsche Polizei* caused a stir in November 2013. In this letter, Greek-born police officer *Tania Kambouri* talks freely about her everyday experience as a policewoman on patrol. She precisely describes how lawless areas are established throughout all of Germany, mostly in muslim-dominated areas in Bremen, Berlin and the Ruhr region. She is evermore confronted with mounting problems when practising her profession; she gets less and less respected for being an officer. Furthermore, her own consternation is distinctly shown when she doesn't meet with the appropriate decency as a human being and gets offended in her dignity. Her letter found widespread consent amongst her colleagues.

These reactions encouraged her to lay down her experiences in a more detailed manner in her book "Deutschland im Blaulicht. Notruf einer Polizistin" (Germany in the blue-lights – A policewoman's emergency call). Starting out from witnessing everyday situations as a policewoman on patrol like false parking, arguments, fights or ID controls, the 33-year old describes how the key rule of the liberal-democratic constitutional order is less and less respected, especially by certain immigrant groups. They no longer accept the police as representatives of the government order, but see them as an enemy. Practically, this means that police officers can not fulfill their duty more often because with increased frequency they risk being exposed to physical violence. The law just can no

longer be enforced. That is how legal vacuums are being established, where the law of the jungle is reigning instead of the state's rule of law.

Kambouri is also sceptical about the so-called "peace judges" of muslim-informed clans, who increasingly settle differences between muslims. They don't judge according to German laws but according to their traditions. This solidifies parallel structures and the undermining of the legal order. Up to now, politics and justice close their eyes to these facts. This is one of the reasons why Kambouri demands more political and judicial succour for the work of the police.

But she does not only point to the shortcomings, she also analyses potential reasons and suggests expedients. It may not be a coincidence that she builds on the suggestions made by the – sadly far too early deceased – Berlin public prosecutor *Kirsten Heisig*.¹ Neutralising these parallel structures can only be achieved by means of consistent and effective enforcement of federal norms and respective constitutional methods. And this process has to begin already in kindergarten. Terms like learning the German language as well as decent cooperation with the parents have to be expected and demanded. Anomalies and infringements – even the small ones – have to be sanctioned in time to achieve a learning success or rather a change of behaviour. Affected administrative bodies and institutions must liaise closely during this process. Even a shortage of social benefits must be taken into consideration. Sim-

ilar to Heisig, Kambouri affirms a connection between delayed or rather weak sanctions and stabilisation of delinquent behaviour.

Despite several attempts of political usurpation, Kambouri won't let herself be

taken over into a certain scheme. Her position is that of the German constitution. For her, it goes without saying that it is possible for each and every migrant to integrate him – or herself actively into the country, which the majority actually does. Therefore, personal contribution and acculturation is required, and those efforts have to be demanded by society.

At the end of her book, the author describes the increasing difficulty of the police's everyday life. It is getting obvious that police officers in Germany have to endure an unbearable amount of insults and even physical violence and are often let down by politics and justice. Tania Kambouri demands more understanding and support. •



ISBN 978 3 492 06024 0

¹ Kirsten Heisig. *Das Ende der Geduld. Konsequenz gegen jugendliche Gewalttäter*. ISBN 978 3 451 30204 6

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Contaminating the culture ..."

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German politics have been in a great number of deep real crises for a long time. This is confirmed by an attentive glance in the mass media. These crises indeed are not tackled in a solution-oriented manner but they are really (and purposely?) exacerbated. Instead of looking for solutions together with the citizens of the country - solutions that the majority of the citizens could trust in - emergency situations are constructed, it is spoken about "lack of alternatives", the executive rules ruthlessly against the citizens – all seconded by many media, but also by ostensible noble names of personalities and organisations from outside the country. One thing is already for sure: there will not be any solutions and results in the sense of the bonum commune like this.

In his book "Myths, Lies and Oil Wars" *William F. Engdahl* has titled one

chapter "The Project Hitler". Here he portrays how in the 20ies and 30ies of the last century circles of the US and Great Britain's financial world did their utmost to weaken European democrats and bring dictators to power. Other books like that of the British historian *Antony C. Sutton*, "Wallstreet and the Rise of Hitler", the book of the Swiss historian *Walter Hofer* and the US-American historian *Herbert R. Reginbogin*, "Hitler, the West and Switzerland 1936-45", published in 2001 or the book of *Hermann Ploppa* "Hitler's amerikanische Lehrer. Die Eliten der USA als Geburtshelfer des Nationalsozialismus", published some years ago, reinforce and deepen the thesis of Engdahl's book.

Today it is not necessary that a new *Hitler* comes, but the danger of a new dictatorship, even a renewed dictatorship in Germany, exists – this time probably with another global political direction of impact and other formulae of propagand-

da than in the 12 years between 1933 and 1945. What else should be the significance of the evoked chaos? Is it only lack of knowledge, ignorance and aloofness which bar the political class in Germany's way to democracy? Or is there a plan behind this?

The following sentences by *Martin Niemöller*, the protestant theologian who was persecuted by the National Socialists, have survived, "First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a communist; Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a socialist; Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a trade unionist; Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak out for me."

Have these sentences become relevant again today in the light of a "contamination of the culture of debate" and the attempts of social marginalisation in Germany? •

“... may this meeting be a sign of hope for all people of goodwill”

Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia

cc. Almost 1,000 years after the splitting of the Christian Church in the year 1054 into the Roman Catholic Church based in Rome and the Orthodox Church based in the former Constantinople, both Christian churches have succeeded to express their wish to overcome the existing differences and to issue a joint declaration on the similarities in the church historical observation, in the Christian faith and in central ethical issues. This is a history-making meeting and a sign that it is possible to overcome serious differences and how, in view of the state of the world, to put the things in common into the centre. In this sense, the following joint statement could give guidance for the currently again very tense and volatile East-West relation.

The official English translation of the full joint declaration is below:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Cor 13:13).

1. By God the Father’s will, from which all gifts come, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit Consolator, we, Pope *Francis* and *Kirill*, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, have met today in Havana. We give thanks to God, glorified in the Trinity, for this meeting, the first in history.

It is with joy that we have met like brothers in the Christian faith who encounter one another “to speak face to face” (2 Jn 12), from heart to heart, to discuss the mutual relations between the Churches, the crucial problems of our faithful, and the outlook for the progress of human civilization.

2. Our fraternal meeting has taken place in Cuba, at the crossroads of North and South, East and West. It is from this island, the symbol of the hopes of the “New World” and the dramatic events of the history of the twentieth century, that we address our words to all the peoples of Latin America and of the other continents.

It is a source of joy that the Christian faith is growing here in a dynamic way. The powerful religious potential of Latin America, its centuries-old Christian tradition, grounded in the personal experience of millions of people, are the pledge of a great future for this region.

3. By meeting far from the longstanding disputes of the “Old World”, we experience with a particular sense of urgency the need for the shared labour of Catholics and Or-



picture reuters

thodox, who are called, with gentleness and respect, to give an explanation to the world of the hope in us (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

4. We thank God for the gifts received from the coming into the world of His only Son. We share the same spiritual Tradition of the first millennium of Christianity. The witnesses of this Tradition are the Most Holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and the saints we venerate. Among them are innumerable martyrs who have given witness to their faithfulness to Christ and have become the “seed of Christians”.

5. Notwithstanding this shared Tradition of the first ten centuries, for nearly one thousand years Catholics and Orthodox have been deprived of communion in the Eucharist. We have been divided by wounds caused by old and recent conflicts, by differences inherited from our ancestors, in the understanding and expression of our faith in God, one in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are pained by the loss of unity, the outcome of human weakness and of sin, which has occurred despite the priestly prayer of Christ the Saviour: “So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you ... so that they may be one, as we are one” (Jn 17:21).

6. Mindful of the persistence of many obstacles, it is our hope that our meeting may contribute to the re-establishment of this unity willed by God, for which Christ prayed. May our meeting inspire Christians throughout the world to pray to the Lord with renewed fervour for the full unity of all His disciples. In a world which yearns not only for our words but also for tangible gestures, may this meeting be a sign of hope for all people of goodwill!

7. In our determination to undertake all that is necessary to overcome the historical divergences we have inherited, we wish to combine our efforts to give witness to the Gospel of Christ and to the shared heritage of the Church of the first millennium, responding together to the challenges of the contemporary world. Orthodox and Catholics must learn to give unanimously witness in those spheres in which this is possible and necessary. Human civilization has entered into a period of epochal change. Our Christian conscience and our pastoral responsibility compel us not to remain passive in the face of challenges requiring a shared response.

8. Our gaze must firstly turn to those regions of the world where Christians are victims of persecution. In many countries of the Middle East and North Africa whole families, villages and cities of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being completely exterminated. Their churches are being barbarously ravaged and looted, their sacred objects profaned, their monuments destroyed. It is with pain that we call to mind the situation in Syria, Iraq and other countries of the Middle East, and the massive exodus of Christians from the land in which our faith was first disseminated and in which they have lived since the time of the Apostles, together with other religious communities.

9. We call upon the international community to act urgently in order to prevent the further expulsion of Christians from the Middle East. In raising our voice in defence of persecuted Christians, we wish to express our compassion for the suffer-

“... may this meeting be a sign ...”

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ing experienced by the faithful of other religious traditions who have also become victims of civil war, chaos and terrorist violence.

10. Thousands of victims have already been claimed in the violence in Syria and Iraq, which has left many other millions without a home or means of sustenance. We urge the international community to seek an end to the violence and terrorism and, at the same time, to contribute through dialogue to a swift return to civil peace. Large-scale humanitarian aid must be assured to the afflicted populations and to the many refugees seeking safety in neighbouring lands.

We call upon all those whose influence can be brought to bear upon the destiny of those kidnapped, including the Metropolitans of Aleppo, *Paul* and *John Ibrahim*, who were taken in April 2013, to make every effort to ensure their prompt liberation.

11. We lift our prayers to Christ, the Saviour of the world, asking for the return of peace in the Middle East, “the fruit of justice” (Is 32:17), so that fraternal co-existence among the various populations, Churches and religions may be strengthened, enabling refugees to return to their homes, wounds to be healed, and the souls of the slain innocent to rest in peace.

We address, in a fervent appeal, all the parts that may be involved in the conflicts to demonstrate good will and to take part in the negotiating table. At the same time, the international community must undertake every possible effort to end terrorism through common, joint and coordinated action. We call on all the countries involved in the struggle against terrorism to responsible and prudent action. We exhort all Christians and all believers of God to pray fervently to the providential Creator of the world to protect His creation from destruction and not permit a new world war. In order to ensure a solid and enduring peace, specific efforts must be undertaken to rediscover the common values uniting us, based on the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

12. We bow before the martyrdom of those who, at the cost of their own lives, have given witness to the truth of the Gospel, preferring death to the denial of Christ. We believe that these martyrs of our times, who belong to various Churches but who are united by their shared suffering, are a pledge of the unity of Christians. It is to you who suffer for Christ’s sake that the word of the Apostle is directed: “Beloved ... rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly” (1 Pet 4:12–13).

13. Interreligious dialogue is indispensable in our disturbing times. Differences in the understanding of religious truths must not impede people of different faiths to live in peace and harmony. In our current context, religious leaders have the particular responsibility to educate their faithful in a spirit which is respectful of the convictions of those belonging to other religious traditions. Attempts to justify criminal acts with religious slogans are altogether unacceptable. No crime may be committed in God’s name, “since God is not the God of disorder but of peace” (1 Cor 14:33).

14. In affirming the foremost value of religious freedom, we give thanks to God for the current unprecedented renewal of the Christian faith in Russia, as well as in many other countries of Eastern Europe, formerly dominated for decades by atheist regimes. Today, the chains of militant atheism have been broken and in many places Christians can now freely confess their faith. Thousands of new churches have been built over the last quarter of a century, as well as hundreds of monasteries and theological institutions. Christian communities undertake notable works in the fields of charitable aid and social development, providing diversified forms of assistance to the needy. Orthodox and Catholics often work side by side. Giving witness to the values of the Gospel they attest to the existence of the shared spiritual foundations of human co-existence.

15. At the same time, we are concerned about the situation in many countries in which Christians are increasingly confronted by restrictions to religious freedom, to the right to witness to one’s convictions and to live in conformity with them. In particular, we observe that the transformation of some countries into secularized societies, estranged from all reference to God and to His truth, constitutes a grave threat to religious freedom. It is a source of concern for us that there is a current curtailment of the rights of Christians, if not their outright discrimination, when certain political forces, guided by an often very aggressive secularist ideology, seek to relegate them to the margins of public life.

16. The process of European integration, which began after centuries of blood-soaked conflicts, was welcomed by many with hope, as a guarantee of peace and security. Nonetheless, we invite vigilance against an integration that is devoid of respect for religious identities. While remaining open to the contribution of other religions to our civilization, it is our conviction that Europe must remain faithful to its Christian roots. We call upon Christians of Eastern and Western Europe to unite in their shared witness to Christ and the Gospel, so that Europe may preserve

its soul, shaped by two thousand years of Christian tradition.

17. Our gaze is also directed to those facing serious difficulties, who live in extreme need and poverty while the material wealth of humanity increases. We cannot remain indifferent to the destinies of millions of migrants and refugees knocking on the doors of wealthy nations. The unrelenting consumerism of some more developed countries is gradually depleting the resources of our planet. The growing inequality in the distribution of material goods increases the feeling of the injustice of the international order that has emerged.

18. The Christian churches are called to defend the demands of justice, the respect for peoples’ traditions, and an authentic solidarity towards all those who suffer. We Christians cannot forget that “God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, that no human being might boast before God” (1 Cor 1:27–29).

19. The family is the natural centre of human life and society. We are concerned about the crisis in the family in many countries. Orthodox and Catholics share the same conception of the family, and are called to witness that it is a path of holiness, testifying to the faithfulness of the spouses in their mutual interaction, to their openness to the procreation and rearing of their children, to solidarity between the generations and to respect for the weakest.

20. The family is based on marriage, an act of freely given and faithful love between a man and a woman. It is love that seals their union and teaches them to accept one another as a gift. Marriage is a school of love and faithfulness. We regret that other forms of cohabitation have been placed on the same level as this union, while the concept, consecrated in the biblical tradition, of paternity and maternity as the distinct vocation of man and woman in marriage is being banished from the public conscience.

21. We call on all to respect the inalienable right to life. Millions are denied the very right to be born into the world. The blood of the unborn cries out to God (cf. Gen 4:10).

The emergence of so-called euthanasia leads elderly people and the disabled begin to feel that they are a burden on their families and on society in general.

We are also concerned about the development of biomedical reproduction technology, as the manipulation of human life represents an attack on the foundations of human existence, created in the image of God. We believe that it is our duty to recall

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the immutability of Christian moral principles, based on respect for the dignity of the individual called into being according to the Creator's plan.

22. Today, in a particular way, we address young Christians. You, young people, have the task of not hiding your talent in the ground (cf. Mt 25:25), but of using all the abilities God has given you to confirm Christ's truth in the world, incarnating in your own lives the evangelical commandments of the love of God and of one's neighbour. Do not be afraid of going against the current, defending God's truth, to which contemporary secular norms are often far from conforming.

23. God loves each of you and expects you to be His disciples and apostles. Be the light of the world so that those around you may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:14, 16). Raise your children in the Christian faith, transmitting to them the pearl of great price that is the faith (cf. Mt 13:46) you have received from your parents and forbears. Remember that "you have been purchased at a great price" (1 Cor 6:20), at the cost of the death on the cross of the Man – God Jesus Christ.

24. Orthodox and Catholics are united not only by the shared Tradition of the Church of the first millennium, but also by the mission to preach the Gospel of Christ in the world today. This mission entails mutual respect for members of the Christian communities and excludes any form of proselytism.

We are not competitors but brothers, and this concept must guide all our mutual actions as well as those directed to the outside world. We urge Catholics and Orthodox in all countries to learn to live together in peace and love, and to be "in harmony with one another" (Rm 15:5). Consequently, it cannot be accepted that disloyal means be used to incite believers to pass from one Church to another, denying them their religious freedom and

their traditions. We are called upon to put into practice the precept of the apostle Paul: "Thus I aspire to proclaim the gospel not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on another's foundation" (Rm 15:20).

25. It is our hope that our meeting may also contribute to reconciliation wherever tensions exist between Greek Catholics and Orthodox. It is today clear that the past method of "uniatism", understood as the union of one community to the other, separating it from its Church, is not the way to re-establish unity. Nonetheless, the ecclesial communities which emerged in these historical circumstances have the right to exist and to undertake all that is necessary to meet the spiritual needs of their faithful, while seeking to live in peace with their neighbours. Orthodox and Greek Catholics are in need of reconciliation and of mutually acceptable forms of co-existence.

26. We deplore the hostility in Ukraine that has already caused many victims, inflicted innumerable wounds on peaceful inhabitants and thrown society into a deep economic and humanitarian crisis. We invite all the parts involved in the conflict to prudence, to social solidarity and to action aimed at constructing peace. We invite our Churches in Ukraine to work towards social harmony, to refrain from taking part in the confrontation, and to not support any further development of the conflict.

27. It is our hope that the schism between the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine may be overcome through existing canonical norms, that all the Orthodox Christians of Ukraine may live in peace and harmony, and that the Catholic communities in the country may contribute to this, in such a way that our Christian brotherhood may become increasingly evident.

28. In the contemporary world, which is both multiform yet united by a shared destiny, Catholics and Orthodox are called to work together fraternally in proclaiming the Good News of salvation, to testify together to the moral dig-

nity and authentic freedom of the person, "so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). This world, in which the spiritual pillars of human existence are progressively disappearing, awaits from us a compelling Christian witness in all spheres of personal and social life. Much of the future of humanity will depend on our capacity to give shared witness to the Spirit of truth in these difficult times.

29. May our bold witness to God's truth and to the Good News of salvation be sustained by the Man – God Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who strengthens us with the unfailing promise: "Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32)!

Christ is the well-spring of joy and hope. Faith in Him transfigures human life, fills it with meaning. This is the conviction borne of the experience of all those to whom Peter refers in his words: "Once you were 'no people' but now you are God's people; you 'had not received mercy' but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet 2:10).

30. With grace-filled gratitude for the gift of mutual understanding manifested during our meeting, let us with hope turn to the Most Holy Mother of God, invoking her with the words of this ancient prayer: "We seek refuge under the protection of your mercy, Holy Mother of God". May the Blessed Virgin Mary, through her intercession, inspire fraternity in all those who venerate her, so that they may be reunited, in God's own time, in the peace and harmony of the one people of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and indivisible Trinity! •

Francis, Bishop of Rome, Pope of the Catholic Church and Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

12 February 2016, Havana (Cuba)

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Leipzig Book Fair events hosted by “Genossenschaft Zeit-Fragen”



At this year's Leipzig Book Fair, “Zeit-Fragen” (Current Concerns) will be represented, as well. The booth is located in Hall 4, Stand A107. Additionally Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns, organizes three events at the fair and three evening lectures with discussion in the context of “Leipzig Reads”.

A good school for our children – it is the view of man that matters

Speakers: Karl-Jürgen Müller (D), Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist Josef Nyari (D), Urs Knoblauch (CH) Many current “educational reforms” are based on a wrong view of man. It is economic and deconstructivist. Current educational reforms with their emphasis on self-directed learning already in primary school correspond to this concept. The teacher should reduce his activities so that he operates merely as an impersonal instructor, an advisory “learning guide” and “coach”. Shared learning in a classroom community is displaced by a form of learning, which is called “individualising”. In contrast to this is an education, following the classic works of European educational theory, emanating from a personalist concept of man and conceiving of man as a social being. Education consists of interaction in the spirit of ethics of moral reason, social solidarity and the common good. Children and young people therefore need educators and teachers who in mutual relationship introduce them to reality. The best way of realising this in school is to give to the child and the adolescent the opportunity of developing and deepening his or her compassion and sense of community in a class community and to learn together with his classmates.

Thursday, 17 March 2016, 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm, Library Wiederitzsch, Zur Schule 10 a, 04158 Leipzig (North)

This event will be repeated on:

Saturday, 19 March 2016, 10 am to 11.30 am, CCL Bankettraum 1 (Banquet Room 1) (fairground)

Efficiently educating for life. Work with children and young people in socially deprived areas

Speakers: Moritz Nestor, psychologist (CH); Wolfgang van Biezen, qualified curative teacher (CH)

Given the wave of refugees and the escalating war events between Hindukush and Africa and the worsening social misery, priests, community workers, missionaries, social workers and others are facing in-

creasingly hard tasks, in particular in social hotspots of cities like Leipzig: failed marriages and families, overstrained single mothers left in the lurch, homeless children in the streets, often sexualized at an early age, increasing isolation and de-solidarisation, increasing social distress, unemployment, diminishing educational opportunities in public schools, increasing resignation - but also anger and rising public violence, even among ever younger children. This and many more problems too often require to harden the heart in the face of this bitter reality, but also to keep it tender for the people, the children, the mothers and fathers – and last not least for the refugees brought into the country who once all had hope of a better life. How can we help building human communities where children from precarious parental homes find a bit of human warmth and a home? How can we still provide education, thus allowing the little ones better opportunities at least to some extent and giving them some hope?

Thursday, 17 March 2016, 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm, Die Brücke – Begegnungshaus Leipzig, Zollikofer Strasse 21, 04315 Leipzig (am Volkmarksdorfer Markt)

Reading – an ideal manner of emotional education

Speaker: Dr Peter Küpfer (CH)

Reading is not only an elementary cultural technique. Like no other medium reading trains imagination and empathy. In particular, reading texts which are humanly appealing and literarily enriched is a basis especially today. Children and young people who read such texts, experience a piece of the world through the eyes of another person. In contrast to film, video, and also comics, immersing oneself in a textually designed story implies some indispensable brain and soul training. For each appearing image, every event, every emotion has to be relived, imagined, conceived of and followed by the reader. Maturation of empathy, resulting from it, is not only an intellectual, it is also an emotional performance. Real understanding, genuine tolerance towards other humans find a fertile soil where this elementary exercise of one's own emotional education is nurtured and trained. School, parents, grandparents too (!) and our cultural public are required.

Friday, 18 March 2016, 12 to .30 pm Literaturcafe, Hall 4, B 600

Cooperative principle – social and ethical foundations

Speaker: Dietmar Berger (D), Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller (CH), Dr phil René Roca (CH)

The speakers of the evening are Dietmar Berger, former president of the Cen-

tral German Cooperative Association, Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller, psychologist, and Dr phil René Roca (historian, Research Institute Direct Democracy). From the history of cooperatives we can draw valuable conclusions for the present. It is in the tradition of the cooperative movement, to respond to current socio-political and economic-political challenges and to develop respectively implement constructive solutions. The cooperative principle is characterised by a high degree of participation and involvement; therefore, the cooperative is often preferable to other forms of enterprise. The cooperative principle includes fundamental values of human co-existence in equality and freedom and is oriented towards the common good. Cooperative interaction is a form of human coping with life in self-help, self-responsibility and self-administration, which has developed in various forms in many parts of the world. In our modern times, the cooperative idea may reveal new solution approaches, especially when it comes to the sector of provision with basic supplies. A sound basic care of the population – along the local/regional needs – is a prerequisite for the common good and can be promisingly established and maintained within a cooperative.

Friday, 18 March 2016, 7.30 pm

Lawyers Viehweger Hartmann & Partner, Chopin Strasse 9, 04103 Leipzig (city centre)

If the sovereignty of the people is really to become true. Switzerland's direct democracy in theory and practice

Speaker: Dr phil René Roca (CH)

As part of “Leipzig Reads” the weekly newspaper *Zeit-Fragen* from Switzerland invites to an interesting book presentation. Thereby, the historian René Roca (Research Institute Direct Democracy, Switzerland) is presenting his book. It is titled “Wenn die Volkssouveränität wirklich eine Wahrheit werden soll” (If the sovereignty of the people is really to become true) and examines the Swiss direct democracy in theory and practice. Using the example of the Canton of Lucerne, the author shows how, in a difficult political process, direct democracy became part of the cantonal constitution. Direct democracy was also introduced in other cantons. Finally, it was possible to enforce it at the federal level. Today direct democracy is a central part of the political culture in Switzerland more than in any other country. To know its history is important for the identity of Swiss citizens and can serve as a model for other interested countries.

Sunday, 20 March 2016, 11 am to 11.30 am Forum Specialised and Reference Book, Hall 3, Booth H 200