

# Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## Successful due to tradition

by Dr phil René Roca\*

“Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno” – this Latin dictum framing the Swiss crest adorns the dome of the Federal Palace in Berne. The maxim – “One for all, all for one” – refers to the corporate and social roots of the voluntary nation Switzerland. Cooperatives (“Genossenschaften”) in their diversity are still a pivotal fundament of the Swiss Federation. In the founding period of the Swiss Confederation (“Eidgenossenschaft”) – the term is evidence of it – the principle of cooperatives (“Genossenschaftsprinzip”) was already well known and trusted.

### Anthropological fundamentals

The principle of cooperatives expresses in an anthropological way the social nature of man. Cooperatives were – and still are – born by a community that demands a high ethical requirement in each task and as an owner of a common cause assumes a lot of responsibility.

In this sense, cooperative forms of the communal life existed probably since the existence of humankind, but we often cannot prove it due to lacking sources. Within the geographical territory of Switzerland, cooperatives are attested since the early Middle Ages. These have always been locally rooted and decided democratically in assemblages about all arising questions; each member had one vote. The purpose of cooperatives always was for all members and the community the ideal exploitation of the common cause. The cooperative association did the work of the community. The rights and duties were put down in writing in statutes and so called “Talbüchern”. The ways of utilisation could differ, but it always had to answer the purpose of in natural law reasoned common good – the bonum commune. Switzerland in its tradition of the cooperative principle is not exceptional. According to the economist and Nobel Prize laureate *Elinor Ostrom*, varieties of cooperatives existed and still exist all over the world.

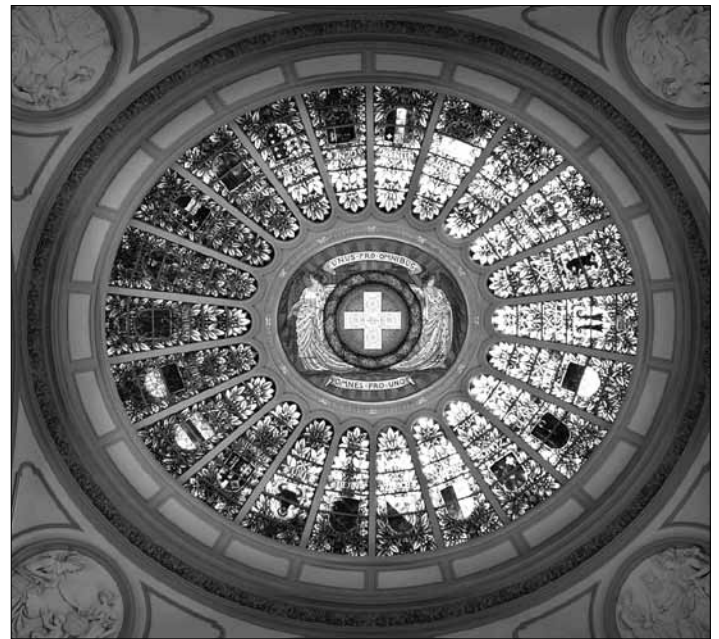
### The origins in Switzerland

In Switzerland the so called “Markgenossenschaften” (marked cooperatives) also named “Allmende” (common land), gained in pivotal importance for the coop-

erative principle’s general spreading and shaping. “Allmende” was land that was parcelled for collective economical use. It had to be assessable as grass-, forest-, and badlands for everyone. Since the early Middle Ages the European nobility tried to rule or leastwise influence the “Allmendverfassung” (common land’s constitution). In many regions, so also the territory of present Switzerland, the cooperative principle could hold its ground. Due to the diversity of the local Swiss communities, numerous cooperative forms developed until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

During the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the village or valley cooperatives took on communal tasks which were beyond traditional activities. This was for example maintaining roads and bridges, or the water infrastructure, water supply, erection of church buildings or even the duty of caring for the poor. Thus, the village and valley cooperatives developed slowly into village and valley communities. Today not for no reason we say that the Swiss state was built bottom up.

Members of cooperatives were therefore village citizens and the recent village cooperatives developed into village communities, the so called “Bürgergemeinden” [collection of persons with citizenship linked to a particular community in Switzerland, editor’s note] which still exist in many cantons. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the commons were more and more divided. Some became single tenancy areas or were taken over by private hands, while others were claimed by municipalities, or there was a formation of private law corporations that partially still exist.



Dome of the Federal Palace with the cantonal coats of arms.  
(picture Peter Mosimann, [www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch))

### The cooperative movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Based on the tradition of the commons and the diverse types of cooperatives, a broad cooperative movement established itself in Switzerland through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially as part of the increasing industrialisation.

This movement advanced into new, also industrial areas – in Switzerland and in Europe. Production cooperatives established in addition to the existing agricultural cooperatives. The idea of the production cooperative particularly results from the early socialist and social reform circles. They looked for an answer to the social question and alternatives to capitalism. Even the consumer cooperative and cooperative housing gained a great economic importance in this context.

Savings and lending banks existed in Switzerland since the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of the industrial revolution. Home and factory workers in urban and rural areas wanted to invest their savings and arrange their pension

# Agriculture and direct democracy (part 2)

## Rude awakening in the First World War

by Dr rer publ Werner Wüthrich

*The first part of this series of articles entitled "From the beginnings to the First World War" was published in number 13 of 18 June. A brief résumé at the beginning: a real agricultural policy did not exist before the First World War. First votes on customs regulations had occurred, which also covered agricultural goods and reinforced border control. Switzerland was heavily involved in world trade. Much was imported and exported, too. Grain in particular was imported to a very large extent, without anyone being much concerned about it.*

Many expected that, having been triggered for spurious reasons, World War I would end after a few months. This was not the case. The war dragged on for years, and the food situation deteriorated. It became increasingly difficult to import the much-needed foodstuffs, particularly cereals. The domestic shortage could not be resolved quickly because farms lacked the equipment necessary for the cultivation of land and many farmers were not familiar with the methods of grain cultivation. Life had become difficult on the farms because fathers as well as sons

were often at the border as militiamen for a long time (with their horses) and income compensation had not been regulated.

In 1917 the situation escalated. The food situation became critical, and there were famine situations. It was only then that the Federal Government started rationing food and established a national import monopoly on cereals, i.e., they organised the import and distributed the little grain that could still be obtained abroad - also to prevent "war profiteers" from taking undue advantage of this plight and making good bargains with scarce foodstuffs. Only the potato production was sufficient. The prices of many foodstuffs had doubled and this hit the workers especially hard. The price of milk, for example, had risen from 21 to 38 cents. - All these were reasons that led to the general strike of 1918, probably the biggest political crisis in the history of the federal state.

### Popular initiative "for the ensuring of people's rights in questions regarding tariffs" in 1923

After the war, the situation improved only slowly. Virtually all countries continued

and intensified their protectionist policy of the prewar period. Even Switzerland, which had pursued a distinctly "free trade" policy for many decades of the 19th century, had no choice. By emergency procedure, i.e. without involvement of Parliament and without the right of referendum for the people, the Federal Council issued a new, more stringent tariff schedule, justifying this with the difficult food situation. However, the population did not accept this. Because the referendum against emergency law decisions was not possible, a broad coalition of Social Democrats, trade unionists (mainly from the free-trader export industry) and members of the cooperative societies launched the popular initiative "for the ensuring of people's rights in questions regarding tariffs" with a view to abolishing the tariff schedule again. Then again the *Swiss Farmers' Union* and some commercial circles also mobilised and defended Parliament's new tariffs. On 15 April 1923, it came to the vote. The people and almost all cantons rejected the popular initiative and more

continued on page 3

### "Successful due to tradition"

continued from page 1

plan. Since many savings and lending banks compromised their common public interest with risky dealings, they lost importance from 1860. A reasonable alternative were the emerging cantonal banks and the foundation of numerous cooperative local banks, among others the *Raiffeisen banks*. Thanks to larger capital base, they enjoyed greater freedom in credit accommodation and won the confidence of many citizens as cooperatives.

The cooperative movement of the 19th century laid stress on the cooperative roots in Switzerland. In this way a connection of conservative political forces with representatives of early socialist approaches succeeded. The education of citizens' movements and popular movements, which put the cooperative principle on a cross-party basis into practice succeeded in this way as in the development of the direct democracy - starting from the communal level through the cantons up to the federal level.

### Social capital and the third way - cooperatives in the 20th century

At the beginning of the 20th century, cooperatives in the services sector were added, for example in the electricity industry. The *Migros*, founded in 1925, was based upon an idea of *Gottlieb Duttweiler*. In 1941, a transformation of the *Migros* into a cooperative took place. By that, the interests of the consumers should be preserved and the business practices should be oriented towards the "social capital". Duttweiler's idea of the social capital is based on the cooperative principle. The capital has to serve the community in a responsible sense and promote solidarity in society and democracy.

The cooperative principle gained many supporters not only as an economic concept. In the political arena personalities tried to establish this principle as the third way - beyond capitalism and Marxism. Thus, the labour movement in Switzerland took over the so-called "three pillars model" of "party, unions, and cooperatives". The unions supported, among other things, the formation of production coop-

eratives and the Social Democratic Party (SPS) took the promotion of cooperatives into their programme from the beginning.

### And today?

Studying the Swiss history and culture, the rich cooperative fundus is oblivious. We should increasingly ponder the three "selves" as a cooperative principle - the self-help, the self-administration, and the self-responsibility - in research and teaching, to give a meaningful answer to current questions. Small and medium-sized cooperatives must get concrete support; administrative and legal barriers must not hamper their foundation. Big cooperatives of today should increasingly face the traditional cooperative principle and promote the participation of their members and not keep reducing it.

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**"Agriculture and direct ..."**

continued from page 2

than 70 percent voted for the maintenance of protective duties.

**How to deal with the provision of grain?**

While after the First World War the economy and most sectors of agriculture gradually returned to a market economy, this was not the case with cereals. The population had recognised the importance of food security. The Federal Government kept up its import monopoly for cereals after the war, and the supply of bread grain remained a federal task. On the farms, this worked as follows: The harvested sheaves of grain were threshed on the threshing floor, usually during the winter months. The grain was filled into sacks provided by the Federal Grain Administration and loaded at the train stations. After that, officials of the Federal Grain Administration paid out the grain money, mostly in a village restaurant. This policy was quickly successful. The level of self-sufficiency concerning grain increased from 16 to 30 percent, which was, however, still low. This was the beginning of an active and planning agricultural policy of the Federal Government, as we partly still know it today. And it was also the beginning of an agricultural policy which time and again the people as sovereign have in numerous referendums directly helped to fashion – and that up to today.

In the time from 1926 to 1929 there were three groundbreaking referendums, in which the framework and the central points of our subsequent agricultural policy were already evident: In order to ensure food security, the Federal Council, the Parliament and the Swiss Farmers' Union wanted to keep up the wartime grain monopoly even in normal times. They worked out a corresponding constitutional bill. The text reads as follows:

- 1 *The Confederation shall take measures to supply the country with bread grain and to promote local grain farming.*
- 2 *By way of legislation the exclusive right to import food grain and its milling products can be transferred to the Federal Government subject to the following principles:*
  - a. *Implementation will be carried out by general-interest cooperatives supervised by the Federal Government. The Federal Government as well as private sector organizations shall participate in this. Cantons will be free to opt in.*
  - b. *The purchase prices for domestic food grain should be such that their cultivation is made possible.*
  - c. *Selling prices shall be set as low as possible, but so as to cover the pur-*

*chase price of foreign as well as domestic bread cereals, the return on operating capital and other costs. Subject to the creation of reserves for the purpose of inflationary compensation no profit shall be achieved. Allowance shall be made for the mountain areas by measures that are likely to bring about an equalisation of the price of flour.*

- 3 *Further details shall be determined by law.*

The vote of 5 December 1926 resulted in the closest electorate's refusal in the history of our Federal state. 366,507 voters said yes and 372,049 said no. 14 cantons confirmed the no. Voter turnout was again extremely high with 72.7 percent.

**The "daily bread" becomes the focus of popular initiative and counter-proposal**

Everyone was in agreement that the state should take the helm in the question of grain supply. But must there truly be a monopoly in peacetime? Opponents saw the liberal economic system at risk. Although they said yes to an active agricultural policy, they objected to "so much state". The opponents, who had "overthrown" the proposal in the vote, launched a popular initiative in which their different ideas were clearly expressed immediately afterwards. Although the text differed only slightly from the above-cited parliamentary document, it contained a commitment to the market economy. So it was stated in the initiative text:

*"[...] Subject to a wartime predicament, an exclusive right of importation of cereals (monopoly), [may] not be established for either the Federal Government or for a private organization."*

Federal Council and Parliament took up the challenge and responded with a counter-proposal. This gave the Federal Government control in the field of grain supply; admittedly not in the form of a monopoly, but with clear guidelines and tasks: The Federal Government was to regulate the import of cereals and to frame rules concerning the storage and stock keeping. Further they should have to promote the cultivation of bread cereal and ensure the preservation of the grain milling profession. And they would guarantee the farmers the acceptance of their grain at a fixed price – especially in mountain areas. There was little mention of market economy in this.

The word "monopoly" however, which many citizens had objected to in the vote, or words to that effect only occurred in connection with the importation of baking flour for bakeries. The text of the counter-proposal was as follows:

Article 23 bis:

*1 The Federal Government shall manage the grain stock necessary for the supply of the country with bread cereals. It may oblige millers to store bread cereal or to take over its own stock, so as to facilitate its replacement.*

*2 The Federal Government shall encourage the domestic cultivation of bread cereals, promote the cultivation and the provision of high-quality domestic seed, and support self-sufficiency with special attention to mountain areas. It shall acquire good domestic grain suitable for milling at a price which will allow the cultivation of grain. Millers can be obliged to take over this grain on the basis of the market price.*

*3 The Federal Government shall ensure the preservation of the domestic grain milling profession; it shall likewise protect the interests of flour and bread consumers. Within the framework of the tasks entrusted to it, the Federal Government shall supervise the marketing of bread cereals, baking flour and bread as well as their prices. It shall take the necessary measures concerning the importation of baking flour; and it may reserve its exclusive right to import baking flour. [...]*

**Vote on 3 March 1929 shows the way of agricultural policy**

Voter turnout was again very high at 67.3 percent. The result was so clear and unambiguous as it is rarely to be had. The popular initiative (which wanted to specifically prohibit a monopoly) only reached 2.7 percent of the vote and was not accepted by any canton. The counterproposal of Parliament was adopted with 66.8 percent of the vote and by almost all classes. This result shows the population's trust in the authorities and its appreciation of the state precautions concerning food supply for the people. At this time a circumstance became apparent that one would be able to observe frequently in the coming decades. Popular initiative and counterproposal had interacted in a fruitful manner. Today we may observe that direct democracy has led to very sophisticated proposals and referendums.

On 3 March 1929 steps were taken for the agricultural policy in the coming decades: "No state economy" was the motto, but clear guidelines and tasks were given to the Federal Government so as to pre-

**"Agriculture and direct ..."**

continued from page 3

serve an efficient agriculture and to ensure food security. The question "market or state" has remained a point of contention in discussions to date.

After World War II there were several votes on the continuation of crop regulation, and almost always these were approved by the people in principle. Only in 1956 the voters again rejected – as in 1926 – a renewed bread cereal regulation by which Parliament wanted to establish a monopoly even in peacetime. More recently, state functions were reduced and standards gradually relaxed. In 1998 there was another vote. After a transitional period, the last remnants of the bread grain regulation of 1929 were to be abolished in 2003. In media headlines this regulation was referred to as "an old hat".

Today we live in abundance in Switzerland. The wide range of products sold in bakeries is a delight. Anyone knowledgeable about the way in which modern Switzerland came into being will marvel at the importance "our daily bread" had for previous generations. Among the approximately 20 percent of voters against the abolition of bread grain regulation in the Constitution in 1998, some will still have witnessed the time when the Federal Government decreed that bakeries keep the fresh bread and sell it only after one or even two days (because less would be eaten that way). They still understood why the Federal Government levied a tax on white flour to make dark bread cheaper. For their generation the phrase "give us this day our daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer had a different meaning from what it has today.

Today the question arises whether the massive reduction of risk management in recent times was really so clever – not only in connection with bread cereals. Today, the crop cultivation and milling are supported by way of the general agricultural policy – with a greatly reduced tariff protection at the border. The world before the First World War was at least as global as that of today. Anything and everything might be bought somehow and somewhere in the world. But – as we now know – this did not last.

Let us for the following return once more to the year 1929 – when an economic depression of global proportions began, with the Wall Street stock market crash on Black Friday, which was to result in the Second World War.

### **General situation of the Swiss economy in the thirties**

Over the years, most notably the United States returned to a stricter protectionism. With the *Smoot-Hawley Act* they raised tariffs on over 20,000 products

massively in 1930. For example, US importers had to pay a duty of 60 percent on the value of goods for Swiss watches. Today, all economic historians agree that such tariff barriers (which were tantamount to import bans) did not help the US to cope with the severe economic crisis of the 1930s. But they had consequences for the global economy. Switzerland's high foreign trade figures, which had at the beginning of the century still amounted to a very high 61 percent, had nosedived first in First World War and once again afterwards. Individual industrial sectors, such as the famous embroidery, had almost completely disappeared. Tourism, which had experienced a Golden Age in the years before the First World War and had subsequently recovered to a certain extent, was now reduced to only a shadow of itself, and should revive only after the Second World War. The watch industry, which was strongly anchored in Switzerland, was able to export only marginally because of the US tariffs, as the United States were its most important market. There were companies playing with the idea to relocate their production facilities to the United States – that is behind the "tariff walls" which made exports from Switzerland almost impossible. The Federal Council put a stop to such plans by issuing emergency legislation. It could be seen even then that the US were able to exert massive pressure on Switzerland by political means. In 1936 Switzerland succeeded to conclude a trade agreement with the United States and so to somewhat improve the situation. Yet the watch tariff was not to be abolished until in the context of GATT 30 years later. – The Swiss population became increasingly aware of how vulnerable their country was in global crises.

### **Agricultural policy at the time of depression**

In the Great Depression of the thirties, Switzerland's Federal Government took numerous planning measures in the field of agriculture and implemented them by means of emergency legislation. These included protective tariffs, and in part also fixed prices and quotas. It is interesting to note that even then farmers occasionally produced too much milk, making the milk price drop and so cause the income of farmers to decrease. The Federal Government stepped in with emergency legislation. The measures taken were mostly instruments which would be used again in the decades after the Second World War. In the thirties they infringed the freedom of trade, so that the call for a dependable constitutional foundation grew louder. But this came to pass only after the Second World War, when the protection of agriculture was included in the Federal Con-

stitution in 1947 in form of the following remarkable sentence:

*"If justified by the common interest, the Federal Government shall, if necessary in derogation from the freedom of trade, make provisions [...] to preserve a healthy farming community and an efficient agriculture as well as the consolidation of agricultural property."*

### **The "Plan Wahlen" in the Second World War**

When the Second World War broke out, the government wanted to do a lot of things better than during the First World War. The food supply was to be carefully planned and organized. Action to promote agriculture was taken as early as 1939. When Hitler's Germany attacked France and forced it to surrender in 1940, Switzerland was encircled by the hostile-minded Axis Powers, and there was danger of being attacked itself. It became difficult to import goods. *Friedrich Traugott Wahlen*, professor of agricultural economics at the ETH, held a lecture in Zurich in which he presented the public his plan for the so-called "Anbauschlacht" (cultivation battle). He assumed that farmers would be able to sustain up to ten times more people using 1 ha of arable land than with 1 ha of grassland producing milk and meat. Therefore agriculture would have to be massively expanded at the expense of livestock farming. For many farmers, who were used to the dairy industry, this was a huge adjustment, and applause was not all that Wahlen reaped. His speech ended with a question something like the following: "Do we want to lose our freedom and independence for a piece of bread?" This speech became programme and outlook for the Swiss; if need be they would survive without food imports. The farming community cooperated in a thankworthy way, which earned them a lot of sympathy and benevolence, and would later help them in several referendums in the postwar period – up till today. A country service programme for students was set up to support the farmers. The militia showed as much consideration as was possible in view of the enormous challenges farmers had to meet doing their work. Even the municipalities and industrial firms planted unused meadows and even parks with food crops and so made their contribution to the food supply.

After a short time the results were already impressive: Compared to 1939 the production of bread grain had been doubled, three times more potatoes were harvested, vegetable production had been

# “In my judgement we are approaching a global disaster”

Interview by world-economy.eu with Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer  
(picture uk)

*World Economy: What are we witnessing today? Is it a global concern – Turkey, the attempted coup, the refugees? Who is to blame? Who planned all this? Are these isolated incidents, or is it going to develop into a global disaster?*

Willy Wimmer: In my judgement, we are approaching a global disaster, because all tracks leading to it have been laid years ago. It also has something to do with the change in NATO's character namely against the will of the peoples and the states, who have agreed to a NATO-contract many years ago. NATO then had the character of a defensive organisation, but the last 25 to 26 years have been used to develop NATO into an aggressive power. What is interesting here is that the member state parliaments did not vote on such a change of the contract at all. Unfortunately, we are not in a contractual situation. We did everything in the past 25 to 26 year's to set the world on fire and NATO, as it has developed to an aggressive power, is now standing at the Russian borders.

This shows clearly, what we are dealing with. Turkey plays a vital role within this process, because it is positioned right in the middle of the zone between Afghanistan and Mali, which the US, the United Kingdom, and France – also with our help – have completely destroyed. In the light of this, in my view, it is an overall development, which we have to deal with and of which the end is not yet in sight.

*Turkey is a member state of NATO. In what direction will the situation develop? After the military putsch, maybe because*

## “Agriculture and direct ...”

continued from page 5

quadrupled – so that food supply was significantly better in the Second World War than in the first.

In part 3 of this series of articles we will elucidate the agricultural policy of the postwar period, which was – not surprisingly – again marked by numerous referendums. This will be stimulating to read.

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## Willy Wimmer: NATO AWACS involved in shooting down Russian jet fighter over Syria

km. In an interview with the Russian news portal sputnik news of 29 July, Willy Wimmer, former state secretary in the German Ministry of Defense, said that there was evidence that not the Turkish government and President Erdogan, but forces of the Air Force which were later involved in the coup attempt, played the leading role in the downing of the Russian fighter jet on the Turkish-Syrian border. (<http://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20160729/311815695/nato-abschuss-russischer-kampfjet.html>). In this, they had probably been supported by NATO reconnaissance planes: “According to my findings both an American and a Saudi AWACS machine were involved. You cannot just simply make a plane like this Russian fighter aircraft fall from the sky. It must be led there. And that is only possible with AWACS”. Wimmer brought to mind that the firing was illegal and not an accident. “What went on there was in really no way in accordance with the binding international rules. They brought the Russian aircraft

down because they wanted to bring it down.” Wimmer surmises that the action was motivated by a wish to wreak damage on Turkish-Russian relations, which had up to then been good.

When questioned directly about the background of the coup attempt in Turkey, Wimmer said: “When I talk to my Turkish friends they cannot understand why we ask who is behind it as there have been several coups in Turkey since 1945. If you look at their policy of recent years, it has obviously been the United States' main concern for some time now to really lay into the Russian Federation, economically as well as politically. Then, when such an important country as Turkey steps out of line and follows its own interests in relation to Russia, the United States must act. So in my view it is clear that American interests have their finger in the pie concerning the Turkish military. So it is only logical that there is a coup in Turkey so that Washington's policy towards Russia is not compromised.”

*of it, will Turkey potentially leave the alliance?*

We must be aware, that the Turkish policy of the last years followed a wavering course. On the domestic front, everything hints at a development that detaches from the *Atatürk* model of a Turkey Republic. This stemmed from the current policy of President *Erdogan* and the policy of islamisation. This is one aspect and the other one is: The Turkish Republic has turned its relationship with Israel upside down, ever since the international signals towards *Erdogan* have turned bad.

Then the Turkish Republic pitched together with Israel and others into Syria and hence contributed crucially to the Syrian tragedy – one has to keep that in perspective. In addition – with regard to NATO – the Turkish Republic obviously committed a strategic fault: by striving to improve

the relationship with the Russian Federation. Something, every European can understand, but Americans do not tolerate. For these reasons we are in the current situation.

*During the last two days, two Syrian refugees committed assassinations in Germany. Are we witnessing a powerless German Government or is it a plain fact that we can't live safely anywhere on earth in the meantime?*

It is obviously intended to evoke this image by the assassinations and such deeds. We have to consider the full picture. After 1990, we consciously didn't take the opportunity to bring peace to the world – also into the region of Afghanistan and Mali. We did not realise our chance, although we had one. Now we face a situation with respect to security, which is not only hallmarked by a wanton violation of laws but also by suspension by the Federal Government last year, which had been established to protect the German territory and population.

There are hundreds of thousands of people in our country, of which we do not know, who they are. And one can put it down to one single aspect: The Federal Chancellor warrants in the official oath contribution to the German people's welfare and there is nothing there allowing her to increase the security risk for the people liv-

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

continued on page 6

# A crescendo of the powers of peace is possible

by Karl Müller

Willy Wimmer says: “In my judgement we are approaching a global disaster” Nobody appreciates hearing this kind of messages. We cannot dismiss it. But how should we deal with this? For all Germans the truth is: Germany is partaking in the process that would allow such a disaster to be possible. Ignoring the people... but with devastating consequences for all Germans... and for the world. This is once again confirmed by the “White paper 2016. On German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr”, presented to the public on 13 July. The 140-page document (internet edition) issued by the German Federal Government is formulating strategic considerations for the coming years. For the first time, a document authorised by the entire government is formulating the claim to be a globally leading power. This claim has been prepared for quite a while.

The German government wants to re-arm and the “stereotypical enemy Russia” has become governmental doctrine. The obligation for peace and the restriction to national defence which is stipulated by the “Grundgesetz” are to be things of the past, once and for all. German military interventions should be possible worldwide, with and also without UN mandate. “German interests” are to be enforced, most of all the economic ones (a more extensive analysis will follow).

The Russian government has already reacted. The insinuations in the German strategy concept are unrelated to present Russian policy. This “further anti-Russian initiative by Berlin” will have consequences for German-Russian relations.

**“In my judgement we are ...”**

continued from page 6

ing in Germany. This exemplifies very well the situation in which we find ourselves and one can only expect bad things to come in the time ahead.

*Assumed, you were again state secretary in the Ministry of Defence, which steps would you take to reassure the situation in Germany?*

I honestly must say that for conscience' sake I could not be member of the current German government.

*Mr Wimmer, thank you very much for this interview.*

Source: <http://www.world-economy.eu/pro-contra/details/article/naehern-wir-uns-einer-globalen-katastrophe/> from 26 July 2016

(Translation: Current Concerns)

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“There can only be a universally accepted international legal system if governments of all states give in, end their politics of confrontation and start searching for means of cooperation. But governments will only do this if there is a crescendo of their peoples.”

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This is diplomatic wording but it clarifies the situation. German politics have also openly clarified the path ahead: striving to be among those who rule the world, no longer following the principle of equal partnership of all states or to rely on negotiations – in spite of all attempts for placation by German politicians. If the former head of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, *Micheline Calmy-Rey* is stating that Germany is “becoming [the EU’s] hegemon” (“*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, 26 July 2016), it is time to listen.

Also prior to the two great global catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there have been warning voices of individuals who saw the danger. They did not give in but they did all they could to avoid the catastrophe. The winner of the Nobel Peace Prize *Bertha von Suttner* was one of them. But: prior to 1914 and to 1939 there were too few who raised their voices. They were not influential enough to stop the powerful who prepared and later lead the wars.

Mankind is a few steps ahead now; the experiences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are part of the global memory. There is no need to convince people of what war really means.

In the beginning of his impressive illustrated documentation on World War I (“*Im Krieg*”), *Nikolai Vialkovich* is quoting contemporary witnesses of July 1914. Guests from all European countries in a Belgian sea spa agree that, despite the murder of the Austrian heir to the throne and his wife and the mobilization plans of the European powers, there would be no war. There had been many crises in the previous years but the diplomats had so far always succeeded in finding solutions and keeping the peace. Then too many people believed in the diplomat’s wisdom. By end of July 1914 the people were taught an important lesson. Today mankind is a few steps ahead.

For a few years now there have been indications that the US government’s claim of 1990 for a “new world order” including a unipolar world controlled by the US is on the decline and that the world is in transition to a multipolar world. But still there is no universally ac-

cepted international legal system for such a world. The United Nations Charter was an attempt after World War II. The states now claiming equal rights for all states in a multipolar world are expressly referring to this document. But the US (and its allies) are abusing their powerful position in the institutions of the United Nations to undermine the Charter’s spirit. They do not yet give in; they still refuse, by all available means.

A multipolar world with a balance of power clearly limiting the former US dominance may possibly be able to avoid a great war for a while. But the prerequisite for this is rationality. Can we be sure about this? History after World War II shows that a balance of terror cannot be a goal. “We just lucked out”, stated *Robert McNamara* later. He had been US Secretary of Defence during the Cuba Crisis in 1962.

There can only be a universally accepted international legal system if governments of all states give in, end their politics of confrontation and start searching for means of cooperation. But governments will only do this if there is a crescendo of their peoples.

The West’s attacks on the decrees of international understanding, the equality of all peoples and states, on the substance of democratic nation states governed by the rule of law and its institution, on the identity of people within their nations, on the cultural substance of their communal life, on parenting and education, family and community spirit, on the traditions of most valuable achievements had and have the goal to deprive people of their dignity, responsibility and energy in order to prevent this crescendo. Mammon and its cohorts have declared non-values to principles of life because they want to get hold of the people.

*Bertold Brecht’s* song text about the united front “Und weil der Mensch ein Mensch ist” contains a deep truth. And because man is man, he or she has dignity and can be freed from the strangleholds of manipulation towards immaturity and disposable object. The crescendo is possible!

# The twilight of NATO

by Thierry Meyssan

*The history of NATO and its current activities enables us to understand how the West has woven its lies and why it is now a prisoner of them. The elements contained in this article are shocking, but it is impossible to deny the facts. The only other solution is to cling to the lies and persist in hanging on.*

During their meeting in Istanbul on 13 May 2015, the leaders of NATO finish a well-alcoholised meal by mocking the idiots who believe in their rhetoric of peace, singing “We are the world”. In this unpleasant video, we can recognise General Philip Breedlove, Jens Stoltenberg, Federica Mogherini and a number of Ministers of Defence ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3vqLb3md\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3vqLb3md_o)).

The summit of the chiefs of staff and government of NATO has just finished its meeting in Warsaw (7 and 8 July 2016). It should have been the triumph of the United States over the rest of the world, but was in fact the beginning of its downfall.

Let’s remind ourselves of what NATO means.

## What the Atlantic Alliance used to be

When the European elites were panicking at the idea of the possible accession to power by the Communist Parties after the Second World War, in 1949, they sought refuge under the “umbrella” of the United States. Above all, this was a means for them to present a threat to the Soviets in order to dissuade them from supporting the Western Communists.

The Western states progressively extended their alliance, in particular by adding, in 1955, Western Germany, which had just been authorised to rebuild its army. Worried about the capacities of the Alliance, the USSR responded by creating the *Warsaw Pact* six years after the creation of NATO.

However, with the Cold War, the two alliances evolved in an imperial fashion – on one hand, NATO, dominated by the United States and, to a lesser extent, by the United Kingdom, and on the other, the *Warsaw Pact*, dominated by the Soviet Union. As a result, it became impossible to abandon these structures – NATO did not hesitate to use its *Gladio* network to organise various coups d’état and preventive political assassinations, while the *Warsaw Pact* openly invaded Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which had shown signs of wanting their independence.

Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet Union put an end to this system. *Mikhail Gorbachev* allowed each member of the *Warsaw Pact* to declare

their independence (“My Way”), which he ironically named his “*Sinatra doctrine*”. When the USSR collapsed, its allies dispersed, and it took several years of stabilisation before the present Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) could be constituted. Having learned from past errors, the CSTO was based on the strict equality of its member states.

It is worth noting, by the way, that both NATO and the *Warsaw Pact* are organisations which are contrary to the United Nations Charter, since their member states lose their independence by agreeing to place their troops under US or Soviet command.

Unlike Russia, the United States have remained an empire, and continue to use NATO to batter their allies into obedience. The initial objective of pressuring the Soviets so that they would refrain from helping the Western Communists to gain power, no longer has any meaning. So all that is left now is US guardianship.

In 1999, NATO waged its first war, against a tiny state (presently Serbia) which posed no threat whatsoever. The United States deliberately created the condition for the conflict, forming the Kosovo terrorist mafia which operated from the Turkish base of Incirlik, organising a terror campaign in Serbia, then accusing the Serbian government of repressing it with disproportionate force. Once the NATO anvil had crushed the Serbian fly, it was noted in the chancelleries that the Alliance was in fact extremely unwieldy and mostly inefficient. This is when profound reforms were initiated.

## The Alliance since the 11 September 2001

With the disappearance of the USSR, there remained no state in the world capable of military confrontation with the United States, and thus even less with NATO. At this point, it should have disappeared, but nothing of the sort happened.

First of all, a new enemy sprang into being – terrorism, which struck at various capitals of the Alliance, forcing the member states to support one another.

Of course, there is no common measure between the erstwhile *Warsaw Pact* and a band of bearded fanatics holed up in a cave in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, all the member states of NATO pretend to believe – since they have no choice – that the only way to protect their populations is by signing the NATO communiqués, and holding firm to their obligatory unilateral discourse.

Despite an abundant historical literature, the Western powers have still not understood that NATO was originally created by their governing classes for use against them, and that today, it is

being used by the United States against their elites. The case is a little different for the Baltic states and Poland, which entered into the Alliance only recently, and are still at the stage of elitist fear of the Communists.



Thierry Meyssan  
(picture wikipedia)

## The almost unlimited geographical zone of the Alliance

If NATO were a defensive alliance, it would limit itself to the defence of its member states, but instead of that, it has expanded its zone of geographical intervention. When we read the final communiqué from the Warsaw meeting, we cannot avoid noting that NATO interferes in everything; from Korea – where the United States have still not signed a peace treaty with the Democratic Republic; to Africa – where the Pentagon still hopes to base *AfriCom*. The only part of the world which continues to escape NATO influence is Latin America, a zone which has long been reserved by Washington (“the Monroe doctrine”). Everywhere else, the vassals of the Pentagon are invited to send their troops to defend the interests of their overlord.

The Alliance today is involved in all current wars. It was the Alliance that coordinated the fall of Libya, in 2011, after the commander of *AfriCom*, General *Carter Ham*, had protested against the use of al-Qaeda to overthrow *Muammar Gaddafi*. It was the Alliance, in 2012, that coordinated the war against Syria from the installation of the *Allied Land Command* at Izmir in Turkey.

Little by little, non-European states have been integrated into NATO, with different levels of participation. The latest members are Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Qatar and Kuwait, who each have an office at the Alliance headquarters since the 4 May.

## What the Alliance is today

Each member state is required to arm itself in preparation for the next round of

**"The twilight of NATO"**

continued from page 7

wars, and to dedicate 2% of its GDP to this preparation, even if, in reality, this is far from being an accurate figure. Since the weapons have to be compatible with NATO standards, members are invited to buy them from Washington.

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**"Unlike Russia, the United States have remained an empire, and continue to use NATO to batter their allies into obedience. The initial objective [...] no longer has any meaning. So all that is left now is US guardianship."**

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Of course, there are still some national arms producers, but not for much longer. Over the last twenty years, NATO has systematically pressured for the destruction of the military and aeronautical industries of its member states, except for those of the United States. The Pentagon had announced the creation of a multirole combat aircraft at unbeatable prices, the *F-35 Joint Strike Fighter*. All states ordered them and closed down their own industries. Twenty years later, the Pentagon has still not managed to produce a single one of these ingenious planes, and is forced instead to present jerry-rigged F-22's at the various arms fairs. Their clients are constantly solicited to help finance research, while Congress is studying the possibility for a reboot of the production of old planes, because in all probability, the F-35 will never see the light of day.

So NATO functions like a mafia racket – those who don't pay will have to get used to terrorist attacks.

Now that the United States have backed their allies into a position of dependency on their military industry, they have ceased to update it. Meanwhile, however, Russia has rebuilt its own arms industry, and China is close behind. The Russian army has already out-produced the Pentagon in terms of conventional equipment. The system it deployed in Western Syria, the Black Sea and in Kaliningrad enabled it to scramble the communications networks of NATO, which had to abandon the surveillance of these regions. In terms of aeronautics, Russia has already produced multirole combat aircraft which, amongst their other functions, are capable of turning Alliance pilots green with envy. As for China, it will probably overtake NATO in terms of conventional weaponry within the next two years.

So the Allies are now witnessing the decline of the Alliance, and consequently

their own decay, without reaction – with the exception of the United Kingdom.

**The case of Daesh**

After the hysteria of the 2000's about al-Qaeda, a new enemy now threatens us – the *Islamic Emirate in Iraq and the Levant* – or "*Daesh*". All member states have been invited to join the "Global Coalition"

(sic) and overthrow it. The Warsaw summit congratulated itself for its victories in Iraq and even in Syria, despite the "military intervention of Russia, and its important military presence and support for the régime" which represent a "source of risk and extra challenges for the security of the Allies" (sic)<sup>1</sup>.

Since everyone knows that the Islamic Emirate was created in 2006 by the United States, we are now told that the organisation has today turned against them, just as we were told the same story about al-Qaeda. And yet, on the 8 July, while the *Syrian Arab Army* was fighting several terrorist groups, including Daesh, in the East of Homs, the US Air Force flew in to cover

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**"The Alliance today is involved in all current wars. It was the Alliance that coordinated the fall of Libya, in 2011, after the commander of AfriCom, General *Carter Ham*, had protested against the use of al-Qaeda to overthrow *Muammar Gaddafi*. It was the Alliance, in 2012, that coordinated the war against Syria from the installation of the *Allied Land Command* at Izmir in Turkey."**

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the terrorists for four hours. This time was used by Daesh to methodically destroy the pipeline linking Syria, Iraq and Iran. Or again, during the terrorist attacks of the 4 July in Saudi Arabia (especially the attack across the street from the US Consulate in Jeddah, Daesh used high-tech military explosives which only the Pentagon possesses. So it is not difficult to understand that while the Pentagon is fighting the Islamic Emirate in certain zones, it is simultaneously supplying them with weapons and logistical support in other zones.

**The Ukrainian example**

The other bogeyman is Russia. Its "aggressive actions (...) including its provocative military activities on the periphery of NATO territory, and its avowed intention to attain its political objectives by threat or by the use of force, constitute a source of regional instability, and represent a fundamental challenge for the Alliance" (sic).

The Alliance blames Russia for having annexed Crimea, which is true, but denies the context of the annexation – the coup d'état organised by the CIA in Kiev, and the installation of a government of which several members are Nazis. In short, the members of NATO are allowed to do what they want, while Russia is charged with violating the agreements it concluded with the Alliance.

**The Warsaw summit**

The summit did not enable Washington to plug the leaks. The United Kingdom, which has just put an end to its "special relation" by leaving the European Union, has refused to increase its participation in the Alliance to compensate for its cancelled partnership in the EU. London is presently hiding behind its coming change of government in order to avoid questions.

At best, they have been able to make two decisions – to install permanent bases along the Russian frontier and to develop the anti-missile shield. Since the first decision is contrary to NATO's engagements, it will probably proceed by

installing troops on an alternate basis so that there will never be a permanent contingent, but soldiers will always be present. The second decision consists of using Allied territory to deploy US soldiers and a weapons system. In order to avoid annoying the populations they will be occupying, the United States have accepted to place the anti-missile shield not under their own command, but under that of NATO. However, this is a

continued on page 9



# Asia belongs to the peoples of Asia

## The Shanghai Forum 2016 – view from Serbia

by Zivadin Jovanovic, Belgrad Forum for a World of Equals



Zivadin Jovanovic  
(picture ev)

*The topic of the recently held 11<sup>th</sup> Shanghai Forum was “Inter-connectivity, Integration and Innovation: Building Community of Common Destiny in Asia”. The work of this, in many*

*ways a unique international gathering, brought together seven hundred scientists, experts, politicians and business-people from all over the world; during three days of this symposium were delivered some 100 presentations. Besides the participants from China and Asian countries, who have naturally comprised the majority of participants, other most numerous participants came from Europe, and thereafter from Americas, Africa and Australia.*

The attendants found particularly interesting presentations of former President of Indonesia Mr *Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono*, Secretary-General of the Nordic Council Mr *Dagfinn Høybråten*, former Italian Prime Minister Mr *Enrico Letta*, former US Secretary of Treasury Ms *Rosario Marin*, Nobel Prize Laureate (2007 Climate change) Mr *Frans Berkhout*, Fudan University Prof *Wu Shinbo*, Director in the Chinese Ministry of Finance *Guoqi Wu*, Vice President of the BRICS New Development Bank Mr *Paulo Nogueira Batista*, and others.

### Free academic exchange

The three-day free academic exchange of views centered on the future of Asia, its economic and technological development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, integration and

### “The twilight of NATO”

continued from page 8

change which only exists on paper, because the Supreme Commander of the Alliance, currently General *Curtis Scaparrotti*, must be, by obligation a US officer named by the President of the United States alone.

Source: *Voltaire Network*, Damascus (Syria) from 13 July 2016

(Translation *Pete Kimberley*)

the role in the world affairs. The starting points were that, over the post Cold War period, Asia has established itself as the region with the most dynamic economic, technological and scientific growth in the world. Asia is the largest market in the world providing great contribution to end the world economic crisis as well as to safeguard peace and stability. Accordingly both, Chinese and foreign participants emphasised that Asia should play a greater role in managing global affairs, defusing the crises hotbeds and in decision making, in general. “We cannot be happy with the mere right to vote in the United Nations and other international forums. It is only natural that we take part in real decisions making in all matters concerning our common destiny”. This was one of the prominent views shared by the participants of the forum.

“We need to always be aware and undertake the common position that Asia belongs to the peoples of Asia”. This point of view, as expressed at the closing plenary session, was a summary of many specific proposals how to foster the future of the largest world continent. It was primarily addressed to the out-of-region powers to refrain from interfering into affairs of Asia.

### Striving for solidarity and cooperation

Economic, infrastructural and cultural connectivity, win-win cooperation, coordination and leadership – are the key pre-conditions for Asia to assume the role that belongs to it at a global level. A broad integration of Asian countries on the basis of comprising common destiny, full equality and mutual benefits, is the natural aspiration and the best way for further prosperity of Asia and its contribution to the recovery of the global economy – was one of frequently expressed views.

In order to sustain and strengthen the process of innovation, integration and dynamic development, Asia needs a dynamic leadership – this is the opinion of renowned Chinese scientist, Prof *Wu Shinbo*, one of the leaders of the *Fudan Development Institute*. He considers that even the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) lacks dynamic leadership capacitated to respond to the contemporary development challenges.

### Economic power

Presently, China is the second and Japan is the third most powerful economy in the world. Economies of India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and other Asian countries are

rapidly growing, thus contributing to a dynamic economic development of the largest continent. Japan chairs the G-7, whereas China chairs the G-20 Group. China is the initiator of the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, hosts the New Development Bank (NDB), founded by the BRICS countries and the *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* (AIIB). Asian countries and the new financial institutions are increasingly investing in innovation, renewable energy sources and generally in the “green” development.

The multidimensional global initiative “One Belt, One Road”, launched in 2013 by President *Xi Jinping*, has opened broad prospects for a faster development in a large part of the world spreading from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The essence of this initiative comprises development, connectivity, and win-win benefits. Unlike some other initiatives and integration that are narrow oriented to custom free commerce, locked for others, the “One Belt, One Road” Initiative is broad, opened, and development-oriented, without formal membership. As an example of closed initiatives, a reference was made to the *Trans Pacific Partnership – TPP* (USA, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Peru, Brunei, Vietnam).

### Important contributions to economic development on a global level

The point was made that China also gives its significant input to the economic development at the global level, especially to the development of the developing countries (South-to-South cooperation), by modifying the obsolete economic structures and in particular by building modern infrastructures. In doing so, neither China nor the new international financial institutions established by Chinese capital or upon its initiative (NDB, AIIB) discriminate borrowers by using political criteria or by interfering in their internal affairs.

This finding was supported by the Brazilian *Paulo Nogueira Batista*, Vice President of the New Development Bank (NDB). He said that, regardless of the NDB being established by the BRICS countries it is not a BRICS’ bank, and that the NDB’s 50 billion dollar founding capital was not earmarked for the development of BRICS members but rather for the developing countries in general. While expressing cautious and fair attitude towards

continued on page 11

# China is setting up the menu for Global Financial Order

by Ariel Noyola Rodríguez

*During the first Annual Summit organized by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in Beijing, China has shown her intention to take over the global leadership in infrastructure investment. By the end of this year, AIIB would have more than 100 members, making it the first lending institution in multilateral loans in history, under the control of the most important emerging countries. Yet, it is expected that she makes the decision of dropping off the Dollar, as it is the only way to break away from US hegemony in international finance.*

China is already ahead of the US in the race of financing infrastructure at the global level. International Finance is going through transformation, in spite of the strong resistance by the powerful American controlling power. Last year, high officials from Washington had tried to sabotage the launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – AIIB, but failed to do so.

In fact, countries that had formerly declared their allegiance to the US government, namely Germany, France, Italy, UK, had, at the end of the day, taken the decision to join the new multilateral lending institution promoted by Beijing. President Barack Obama could not imagine that the AIIB would have got the support of more than fifty countries within a few months.

Without a doubt, China is accelerating US decline across the globe. In April 2015, Larry Summers, former Secretary of Treasury under Bill Clinton, declared that the successful call made by the AIIB represented the most dreadful blow to the US hegemony. « Last month will be remembered as the time where US have lost their role as gatekeeper of the World Economic System », he said.<sup>1</sup>

## Beijing is delaying its major attack against the Dollar

However, until now, China has been proceeding with the uttermost caution. As a result, the majority of G-7 countries – Germany, Canada, USA, France, Japan, UK – have hailed the launch of AIIB. Nonetheless, in spite of the extraordinary power of attraction of Beijing's offer which reduced

the influence of Washington over the Global Infrastructure Investment Finance<sup>2</sup>, AIIB is holding itself back from rejecting the Dollar. And while many had speculated<sup>3</sup> that AIIB loans would be issued in Yuan, or possibly in local currencies, to this date, all loans have been issued in USD currency.

Furthermore, we should also take note that three out of the four loans which have been approved by AIIB this year, amounting to USD 509 million, are investments which are linked to the traditional World financial institutions, built after World War II Washington's model. In my view, Chinese investors want to make use of shares that have been invested in World Bank and Asian Development Bank, as well as of the excellent relations already established with Europe.

At present, AIIB is co-financing, together with World Bank, a Housing Project in Indonesia, through a loan of USD 216,5 million; she also co-finances a Road Construction Project in Pakistan of USD 100 million, together with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UK's International Development Department; Another loan amounting to USD 27,5 millions, financed by the European for Reconstruction and Development, is supporting the Road Upgrading Project in Tadjikistan; The only project which AIIB finances itself is a loan of USD 165 million to support the Power Plant Project in rural Bangladesh.

The Asian Bank's mission as Global Investor in Infrastructure

Above all, AIIB's launch marks a significant threshold in the history of multilateral credit institutions as the first bank – in addition to the new BRICS Development Bank – to be owned mainly by emerging economies<sup>4</sup>.

The financial contribution of the super economies of the BRICS Eastern countries are important: Chinese shares occupy 29,78%, followed by Indian shares with 8,36%, and Russian shares come third with 6,53%. The twenty (20) remaining shareholders come from other regions represent only ¼ (25%) of the authorized registered capital amounting to USD 100 billion<sup>5</sup>.

Initially, AIIB was conceived to support mainly Asian economies, yet, China seems to consider upgrading it into an institution with global reach, capable of assembling aspirations of the rest of the emerging economies<sup>6</sup>. In this perspective, during the launch of the first Annual Summit in Beijing last June, AIIB president, Jin Liqun, a Chinese national, announced that he was considering adding 24 more countries to the existing list<sup>7</sup>.

In Latin America, Chile, Columbia, Venezuela are now applying. In Africa, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan already

signed up. It is useful to note the application of Canada, who is member to the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA), just as Mexico and USA are. In Europe, Cyprus, Greece, and Ireland are highly interested to join in. If all goes well as it does until now, it is possible that by the end of this year, AIIB will have gathered more than 100 member countries<sup>8</sup>, i.e at least 34 more members than the Asian Development Bank itself, although it still has a long way to go to reach the level of World Bank whose membership reaches 183.

## Opting for a multipolar world

AIIB has still a lot to do on its agenda. Indeed, although the Asian region has registered a high level of GDP growth during the last two decades, she has not managed to set up a first class infrastructure yet. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of the United Arab Emirates, stated that in the Asia Pacific region, around 1,500 million people are still lacking basic sanitary installations, 260 million still have no access to drinking water, and at least 500,000 have no current electricity in their home<sup>9</sup>.

In conclusion, AIIB first Annual Summit showed China's determination to be part of International Finance "Premier League". Through its commitment in the construction of the "Silk Road"<sup>10</sup>, AIIB is a power counterbalance to the geo-economic influence of the US and Japan in Asia. Nonetheless, in order to speed up the construction of a multipolar world order, it is imperative that AIIB Executives make the decision to drop the Dollar, and, more importantly, to keep up their promises on improving standards of living of the people.

<sup>1</sup> "Time US leadership woke up to new economic era", Lawrence Summers, Financial Times, April 5, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> "The AIIB: The infrastructure of power", The Economist, July 2, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> "China seeks role for yuan in AIIB to extend currency's global reach», Cary Huang, The South China Morning Post, April 14, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> "Beijing, le crépuscule asiatique post-Bretton Woods", par Ariel Noyola Rodríguez, Réseau Voltaire, 11/11/14.

<sup>5</sup> "Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Articles of Agreement", Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

<sup>6</sup> "President's Opening Statement 2016 Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank", Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, June 25, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> "AIIB expansion plans underscore China's global ambitions", Tom Mitchell, Financial Times, June 26, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> "AIIB will have 100 countries as members by year-end: Jin Liqun", Li Xiang, China Daily, May 31, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> "The AIIB has been designed to benefit all", Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, China Daily, June 25, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> "China's AIIB seeks to pave new Silk Road with first projects", Tom Mitchell & Jack Farchy, Financial Times, April 19, 2016.

Source: Réseau Voltaire, from 14.7.2016

\* Ariel Noyola Rodríguez, graduated as an economist from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (NAUM). He is a Research Fellow on Globalization for the Global Research Centre based in Canada. His reports on World Economy are published in the weekly magazine *Centraline* et his opinion column articles animate the *Russia Today* international channel. He got the National Award in Journalism in the category of « best economic and financial analysis » for his articles which were published in 2015 in *Voltaire Network* (Réseau Voltaire).

**"Asia belongs to the ..."**

continued from page 9

the World Bank (WB) and offering cooperation to it, together with providing assurances that the NDB is neither competition nor replacement but rather "assistance" and "supplement" to the existing system of international financial institutions (WB, IMF), Batista spoke, with a hint of pride, about the advantages of the NDB. "We are a mere technical bank, since the loan applications are decided solely by assessing the quality and credibility of projects, rather than by setting ideological or political conditions or by interfering in the internal affairs of countries applying for loan" – says Batista. He adds that the NDB resolves each loan-application within 6 months, unlike the WB where the procedure takes 16 months, on average. The NDB has only 100 employees, says Batista, letting the audience itself to compare this figure with the oversized and expensive bureaucracy of the WB or the IMF.

#### Internal integration and unity based on mutual benefit

In order to vigorously launch and exploit its vast developmental potential, and, in particular, to exercise its intrinsic role and responsibilities in managing of global affairs according to its economic power, Asia firstly needs to accomplish an internal integration and unity based on mutual benefits. All Chinese initiatives are open for other parties, and are not aimed at acquiring privileges, dominating, or isolating any other country. An excellent example is the "One Belt, One Road" initiative. Even though, over decades, China has been investing billions of dollars into economic development all over the world,

especially in developing countries, there were no complaints or any mention of its interfering into internal affairs, or of its striving for dominance or "excellence". Neither does China deploy its armed forces around the world to guarantee the security of its investments.

Asian countries possess sufficient knowledge, wisdom, and will to resolve their disputes and to manage their relations in mutual interest, while preserving stability, enhancing understanding and comprehensive cooperation. This view of participants at the Shanghai Forum sounds like a message to out-of-region factors which might intend to exploit unresolved issues in relations between China and some of its neighbors for own geopolitical objectives.

#### Peaceful conflict resolution without intervention of the US

It goes without saying that China is not and cannot be satisfied when, for instance, the USA try to exploit such issues, or when it seeks proxies to harm the legitimate interests of China. A more serious example among such issues is the dispute with the Philippines over the South China Sea.

China offers to its involved neighbours to resolve the dispute peacefully and in direct negotiations, without involvement of any other external actor. Attempts to internationalise this issue lack both, legal grounds and political justification. Internationalisation does not lead to any solution but rather to unnecessary distrust, deterioration of the atmosphere and postponement of sustainable solution. Consequently, China's position against internationalization is legitimate and should not surprise anyone. The sooner direct

negotiations between the involved parties are accepted, the sooner win-win solutions would be achieved. It is difficult, indeed, to believe that anyone outside of the region may have greater interest for a just and durable solution than China and other directly involved parties. The threats of escalation should be disabled and taken out. The ways to do this are direct negotiations of the involved parties and implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" Initiative, where for the latter the stability of the South China Sea is of utmost importance.

The Shanghai Forum was established in 2005 and, in no time, it evolved into one of the most famous and most influential conferences in the world. Traditionally, the organisers are the Fudan University, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, and the Korean *Higher Studies Foundation*. The executive organiser is the Fudan University's Development Institute. The forum itself is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, holding its symposiums regularly each May in Shanghai.

Indeed, the Shanghai Forum is a gathering of independent scientists, philosophers and thinkers in general, instead of governmental officials taking part in operational decision-making, however this does not make the value of its findings any less. Quite the contrary. There is no doubt that everything said at this year's Forum has quickly found its way to the major decision-making centers all over the world, to be carefully scrutinised.

If Asia is the 21<sup>st</sup> century's center of world development, then China is the center of development of Asia and a growing world power. •

(Translation Current Concerns)

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# Tim Anderson: The dirty war on Syria

## Washington, regime change and resistance

by Carola and Johannes Irsiegler



Truth always comes to light. Many people might have remembered this wisdom in recent weeks given the results of the *Chilcot Commission* in the UK. Thirteen years after the beginning of

the Iraq war a commission of inquiry concludes that former Prime Minister *Blair* led the country into a war, which killed hundreds of thousands, most of them civilians, telling lies. It is to be hoped that for his actions Blair has to justify himself in court.

Now, truth comes to light in another war, too: Five years after the outbreak of the war against Syria there is a detailed documentation of the Australian political scientist *Tim Anderson* unmasking the lies about the dirty war against Syria. Tim Anderson is a senior lecturer in political economy at the University of Sydney. His research is about political developments in Latin America, the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East. His recent book published in March 2016 "The dirty war on Syria - Washington, regime change and resistance" is now available in German.

Anderson wants to show that what happened in Syria is different from what Western mainstream media have presented us. He follows the principle of *audiatur et altera pars*: The other side should be heard, too. On the one hand, he sees his documentation as a "resource book" and a "contribution to the history of the Syrian conflict". This is achieved by carefully and meticulously revising what happened in Syria in reality and beyond a massive disinformation campaign. Anderson argues that in Syria, we face a dirty war of the Western powers and their allies in the region long planned beforehand. The operation aims at balkanising the region, that means creating unstable, internally divided units that rely on US aid. On the other, it aims at preventing an axis of regional states independent of the West. The war is directed against a state, which was predicted a good development; education and health system were freely accessible to all citizens in Syria and had a high level. The president, who has enjoyed and still enjoys a high degree of support in the population, intended to implement political reforms. Furthermore, Syria had no foreign debts.

In addition to the documentary character, Anderson wants to see his book as a "strong defence" of the right of the Syrian people "to determine their own society and political system", this "position is consistent with international law and human rights principles". Anderson accuses the West, to

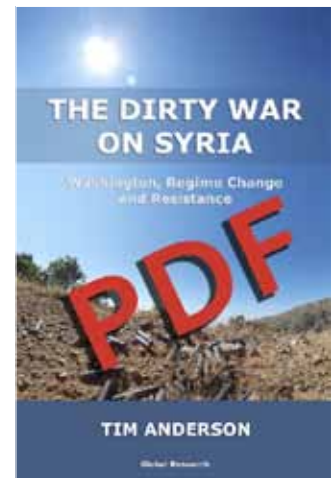
negate this right and to resort to its worst traditions: "[...] the 'imperial prerogative' for intervention, backed by deep racial prejudice and poor reflection on the histories of their own cultures."

Anderson relies mainly on Western sources. "I have also used western sources where possible, not because they are more reliable but to avoid any claim that I might have been too reliant on pro-Syrian sources." At the end of each chapter follows a rich bibliography.

From the beginning, the author presents the war in a wider geopolitical context: For a long time, the United States have been aiming at the creation of a "New Middle East". He continues to present meticulously what has happened from the outbreak of the war in 2011 until today. He always confronts the reader with deviations in western reporting so that the political agenda of this disinformation is getting clear. For example, many readers may remember the images of dead or injured children in 2013, which were said to be victims of poison gas use in the Syrian East Ghouta Region. Anderson evaluates thirteen reports of this event and concludes that "independent evidence" is inescapable: "chemical weapons had been used in East Ghouta, but the charges against the Syrian Army were fabricated. [...] Further, many of the images of sick or dead children were not reliably linked to East Ghouta. [...] The weight of evidence shows this to be another 'false flag' incident, designed to attract deeper foreign intervention". However, in our mainstream media the Syrian government is charged with this crime until today!

Anderson also shows a way out as already indicated in the title: the emergence of a stronger Resistance Axis. "There is clear evidence that Washington's plans, whether for 'regime change', or for rendering the state dysfunctional and dismembering the country on sectarian lines, have failed. In its place we are seeing the rise of a stronger Resistance Axis, the core of which has been Iran, Syria, Palestine and Hezbollah, backed by Russia and drawing in Iraq." Anderson is convinced: "Syria is winning because the Syrian people have backed their army against sectarian provocations, mostly fighting their own battles against NATO and Gulf Monarchy sponsored multi-national terrorism." The victory of Syria will finally be the end of "Washington's bloody spree of 'regime change' across the region".

Tim Anderson's documentation is an important contribution that truth comes to light, that right is enforced and that war is



finally stopped. We hope for the oppressed people of Syria that this will happen as soon as possible. Finally, we want to thank to the author *Hermann Ploppa* who is already known to readers of *Current Concerns* for the German translation and the publication of this precious book. •

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# How television affects our youth

## A teacher in a dialogue with her class

by Anne Noll

Nowadays, parents wonder increasingly, where the young people take the role models for their actions. They do not understand why their children are involved in mobbing as perpetrators or as victims, as they are sure that they themselves set an example of another world in their families and treat their children with respect. Also the affected behaviour that young women, almost children, suddenly show is alien to many parents. However, if you watch television programs that are produced and broadcast for young people, you understand better why they suddenly live up to other values than their parents. With the help of the media and, in particular, through television, young people are massively influenced today.

The students of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade had recommended that I should really watch a certain program on TV. In this exciting series young women participated in a competition with the aim to become a model. For three years I have been teaching this class, and in addition to the subject material, we repeatedly use opportunities to discuss everyday events and questions of life.

Curious to know what fascinates the students so much, I am sitting in front of the TV. A young woman is trying to walk up to a small podium between rocks stepping on stones. She attempts to stride dynamically, because that is the order to all candidates of today. Her performance is assessed by the "jury", the three persons who are enthroned in director's chairs on the podium.

The woman is wearing only little on her body, a kind of swimsuit, extended by cantilevered brackets with metal or fabric between waist and head. It represents an "alien", that was the comment when the clothes had been handed over. Her feet are in objects that you cannot really call shoes and the soles are at least 15 centimeters high.

Despite the shoes she succeeds in getting the path to the jury over and done tolerably. Now her face appears in close-up shot. Hope and uncertainty are reflected in the pretty young woman's face. *Heidi Klum*, former model and member of the jury, comments this performance analogously: "You did not perform so well, you wobbled. What was my order?" The young woman cannot repeat it, she had not been attentive as she admits. Other derogatory comments of the jury members follow. The young woman's reactions are shown in close-up each time, she is ashamed. On her way back the camera follows her, now you can see from the back how she is trying to keep her balance.

*Germany's Next Topmodel* is a German casting show in a Reality-TV format on the Pro Sieben TV network. This series has been produced yearly since 2005. The first series was already watched by 2.74 million viewers, which means that it reached 7.9 percent of the total viewing audience and 13.5 percent of the advertising-relevant target group of 14 to 49 year-olds.

The self-declared goal of the programme is to find Germany's "next top model". In 2010 there were already 21,312 young women applying for it, 2000 queued for the casting in Cologne, and a double-digit number of them was chosen. The young women then compete against each other in special tasks, so-called "challenges". For example, candidates were doused with salad sauce, an octopus was put on their head or they had to pose in a bar made from ice. The women may refuse

carrying out a task for personal reasons such as feelings of shame when revealing photos are taken or when they have phobias, but this may have a negative impact on the jury's decisions.

The jury, which consists of *Heidi Klum* and two other members of the fashion industry, decides at the end of each episode who has to leave and who will progress to the next round.

The content of the series and also its impact on the public have been severely criticised from different sides since the start. Also the "taz" reported in 2009 that so far none of the recent winners had succeeded in building an international model career.

Compare: "Germanys next Topmodel", [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) from 27 May 2016, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* of 8 May 2010, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 17 May 2010.

In spite of the shoes some of the girls succeed in getting the way to the jury over and done with quickly, with others are more kind of a stumbling. The day before, a young woman had injured a toe and, seeing the shoes, worried about how she should walk in them. The viewers can see that, too. Again and again, close-ups of faces are shown: fear, hope, uncertainty is seen in the one, boldness and challenge in the others.

"You did everything exactly as I imagined." "You implemented all instructions." "What was good about your performance was that you did not complain in the distribution of footwear. This is unsuitable on a set." Such compliments are distributed to some of the women.

By various means the suspense for the audience is maintained. For example, a scene is displayed where three women are placed in front of the camera together. A longer, expectant silence is broken by a member of the jury: "We could have fired each of you." Pause, dramatic music. Two of the young women learn: "We will give you another chance." Each of them thanks neatly. The third is informed that she will leave now, her great disappointment is obvious. Again close-ups, all reactions are presented in long shots.

Repeatedly, individual scene segments are shown: The young women in the car on their way to their performance, in the camp with the other participants, when clothes are distributed, as they see the shoes. Sometimes they comment on their own performance into the camera, as if they were telling their thoughts to a friend. Airtime is also allocated to participants' intimate telephone conversations

with their mothers. In this way, the audience is privy to their self-assessment, their fears and hopes.

While watching all this, I become ever more outraged at this way of dealing with young people. The young women and their spontaneous feelings are properly shown up. I think about my students. Why are they so keen on this? And above all, what they do they learn from it, what lessons do they draw?

### What are the values conveyed to the audience?

This programme, which enjoys viewing figures of 13.5 percent (see box), is only superficially about the models. The target group is essentially the audience, young women in the German-speaking countries. For ten years now, this series has influenced the self-image of young women, has shown them what they should be like.

Being beautiful according to today's ideals is a prerequisite to even being on the show, but it is not enough. There are three people who claim the power to issue orders and instructions. These have to be implemented by the young women whatever happens, if they want to compete successfully. They have to ignore what their own body tells them, they have to ignore pain, their sense of shame, and they have to give up their own will. They bear being humiliated by others, here the "jury", because they want to surpass their competitors and progress to the next round. Plus: They watch when others are humiliated, and compassion is not in demand.

continued on page 14

Letter to  the Editor

## Curriculum 21 – no freedom of method and no more classroom teaching!

With the Curriculum 21 there is, contrary to the assertions in the media, no more freedom of method and no more proven teaching by the teacher. It is significant that the expression “freedom of method” still exists in the “foundations of the Curriculum 21” of the D-EDK [Swiss German Education Directors’ Conference] in 2010, though it was omitted in the 2016 revised footing for the cantons. Quote: “With the competence orientation there is an altered perspective on teaching. Learning is more understood as an active, self-directed, reflexive, situational and constructive process.” ([www.lehrplan.ch/sites/default/files/Grundlagenbericht.pdf](http://www.lehrplan.ch/sites/default/files/Grundlagenbericht.pdf)) With the “modified perspective on teaching” of the competence orientation there is, instead of freedom of method and instruction by the teacher, only “diversity of methods” and “learning support” by “facilitators/learning coaches” for the “self-directed, individualised learning”.

The method of freedom for the individual teacher is only possible with the experienced teaching in classes of age groups. With the “new learning meth-

ods” of the Curriculum 21 (“self-directed learning,” “individualised learning,” “age-mixed learning, AdL” etc.) the entire schoolhouse structure is changing. The free teaching method for the individual teacher becomes a prescriptive “learning” method for the entire team of teachers. It is arbitrarily determined by the school board and the school principal – past municipality meetings and parents – and is valid for the entire school building or the school community. Today, this is already a fact with the Curriculum 21 experimental schools. The teachers’ choice is to either participate or to change the place of work. Should the Curriculum 21 be introduced across the whole country, parents cannot change to a commune with the proven classroom teaching. Then they may choose to change only if they can afford a private school. This is the reason why in several municipalities in the Zurich lowlands as well as at the Lake Zurich it has come to parental protests and massive teacher layoffs for several years.

The Zurich municipality Obfelden was an exception. From 2006 on the parents

could select whether they wanted to put their children in primary school in classes of age groups or in the controversial new AdL classes. Parents have specially moved to Obfelden because there was this choice. In 2014 the Obfelden primary school board suddenly decided to eliminate the mainstream classes and against the wish of many parents and teachers to completely switch to mixed-age classes. Apparently, the parents’ experience with AdL classes were as negative as they have increasingly opted for the proven age group classes.

It negatively affects the opportunities of the students with the Curriculum 21 who are isolated and are quasi individually served by a learning coach. “It especially effects the weak students, the strong get stronger, the weak get even weaker. A gap is widening.” (*Ralph Fehlmann*, teacher of subject didactics at the University of Zurich, *Beobachter* 4/2015). The successful Swiss education system shall not be buried secretly past the people!

*Peter Aebersold, Zurich*

### “How television affects ...”

continued from page 13

The next day, my students are eager to hear what I think about the series. In consternation I describe to them what I saw and what I thought about it.

My students counter in an engaged and lively way, as they are full of admiration for the world presented in this show. Their most important objection is that the young women have joined the show voluntarily and that they might therefore also leave it at any time. They have trouble understanding that the show addresses the girls’ ambition and their wish to beat the competition and then step by step leads them into undignified situations, as it is the ones who subordinate themselves without complaint and even keep appearing bold and challenging.

The idea that they are themselves the actual target group of this programme first

seems strange to my students. However, they are willing to listen to my observations and reflections and to consider them. Some days ago now they told me that a few of them had discussed this further amongst themselves and would now like to speak about it again in class.

### Engaging in dialogue with young people

I have also reflected about it in the meanwhile. This so-called competition is not about the beauty of ten women, but about the spectators who are engrossed by it at least for one hour every week, and in whom certain values patterns are to be implanted. Natural emotions like disgust, shame and pain are devaluated. Ruthless treatment of themselves and of others gets to be praised and rewarded. Sensitive and feeling young women who might also show a weakness are voted out, while the

bold, cheeky and tough ones go on to the next round. In this way, a sharp divide between those at the top and those at the bottom is shown and practiced.

I am curious to hear the ideas and observations of the young people in my class, and so we are soon in the midst of an important discussion. The illusory world presented in this show that has nothing to do with lived reality can be revealed and perhaps even deprived of its mystique by means of a genuine dialogue. This kind of dialogue gets going when adults take it up with joy in young people and in the debate. Instead of being manipulated by means of such programmes, young people need this kind of dialogue in order to form basic values on their way to becoming mature and responsible adults. Do not let us leave them in the lurch and spoil their futures! •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# Lino and the fundamentals of arithmetic

by Anne Flachsmann

cc. Taking her arithmetic lessons as an example, the experienced primary school teacher Anne Flachsmann here shows how, with knowledge and empathy, a child can be encouraged to grow out of a difficult school situation.

It should be mentioned that Anne Flachsmann, in addition to her rich experience as a teacher allowing her to exactly grasp the learning steps of a child, has extensively addressed pedagogical and psychological issues. Therefore, she succeeds in accurately understanding Lino in his personality and also in deliberately initiating the appropriate next learning steps.

A teacher's accurate knowledge of the developmental-psychological and age appropriate order in which methodological learning steps have to be made will allow all children of a year-based class to achieve the learning objectives.

The high level being expressed in of Anne Flachsmann's mode of practice – which only a few years ago could be regarded as standard in teacher training and in practice in the Swiss cantons – is being destroyed by the new learning methods and the corresponding teacher training which the curriculum 21 involves. This curriculum ignores 20<sup>th</sup> century fundamental developmental-psychological findings, and in regard to the didactics it prescribes it falls far back into the time before Comenius. It is imperative to stop this curriculum in the individual cantons and to correct the grave aberrations of the past twenty years. We should continue giving our children the benefit of class teaching with a teacher like Anne Flachsmann. This can easily be achieved given the pedagogical knowledge available today.

“When I met Lino, he had already begun his second year of primary school. They told me that he was very weak in mathematics and that I would always find him where any fooling around was going on. Both things turned out to be true. But I soon realised that Lino is also sensitive and very witty.

I love teaching arithmetic. In the first school year children solve equations in the number range up to 20. At the end of the year they deal with equations such as  $19 + 3$  or  $15 - 9$ . For these they need to understand the place value of ones and tens, and this is very important for the development of mathematics.

The equations for the second year require an understanding of place value again, but here numbers up to one hundred are used ( $59 + 3$  or  $85 - 9$ ).

I started my first lesson with this class, by explaining this context. I demonstrated some calculations on the blackboard and I invited them to follow my processes of thinking continually: “If you are clever, you will do the calculations together with me. In this way you will solve ten calculations, not only the one given specially to you!”

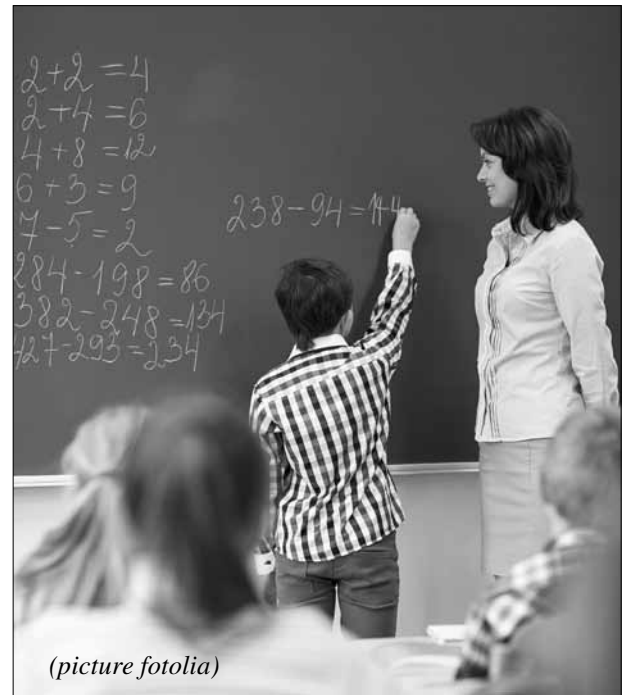
## Using the advantages of class teaching

When I had finished the first calculation, Lino raised his hand: “I did not understand that.” Without comment I calculated two more tasks for the class and I clearly felt that the children were following my reasoning attentively. After that every child did a calculation on the blackboard, the order being voluntary, but not so the participation. When about half of the ten children had calculated, Lino raised his hand again: “I have understood it a little.” When it was his turn at last, he managed the task with my help. Then he said: “I think I have almost understood it now.” He was right in his self-assessment, as he would be in other cases. The class remained attentive and concentrated to the very end.

With this approach to learning new subject material I am usually successful. Like this, pupils can follow an arithmetic operation several times and they only raise their hands when they feel able to cope with the task. Since all children know from the beginning that they will also have to do a calculation in front of the others, they normally follow my thought processes or those of their classmates. So they will already have some practice when they have to calculate in their own exercise books later on. The result is a calm atmosphere because all children participate and they can simultaneously learn from each other.

At the end of the arithmetic lesson Lino came to tell me: “Do you know why I like to have arithmetic classes with you? You explain the work several times and you give me time.” This was the beginning of our learning process together.

Indeed, Lino had not mastered the basics of the first school year and he often failed to master the tasks set to him. If he had applied some rule somewhere, he clung to it even when doing calculations that were quite different. “I see,” he ex-



(picture fotolia)

plained for example, “you always have to add the last number to the first number.” And so it was extremely difficult for him to let himself in for my explanations. I illustrated my thoughts using few specially selected materials, and took care not to smother him with a variety of solution approaches. And I adapted myself to the fact that he usually grasped only a small part of my instructions. However, a great help in our joint work was his ability to inform me very promptly about how much he had understood.

## Involving the parents

Two months later, I got to know his mother when reviewing his school report. I showed her that Lino's results in mathematics were barely adequate. I told her, however, that in other subjects I had noticed his contributing many interesting thoughts which would testify an alert intelligence. In contrast, in arithmetic, he didn't think for himself fluently. But I was sure that he could succeed in this as well, as there was nothing lacking.

When I described him in this way, his mother felt that I understood her son so well that she became just as open and spontaneous in her response to me as he was. She told me that as a child, she had also failed in mathematics, and that her father had had no understanding for this. Although she now held a challenging position in the area of social work, respect for numbers and figures still gripped her to the marrow. When learning with her son she got nervous. I could

**"Lino and the fundamentals ..."**

continued from page 15

understand this and we decided that the boy's elder sister would take this over in the future.

In this conversation I succeeded to form a working alliance with Lino's mother. We would be working jointly with him from now on.

When greeting me the next morning Lino said right away: "When my mother came home yesterday, she was very proud of me." She had not been able to praise him for his barely sufficient math score of course, but she had let my encouraging view be known to her son.

**Strengthening the children**

After three months, we started work on the multiplication table. I hoped Lino would find a better access to mathematics with this. The subject did not include any topics treated but not quite understood in the first year, and many pupils love these tables, because they can get good results by learning them by heart.

But not so Lino. The two times table seemed to be no problem for him, since the steps are simple and well known. But when I asked him what 2 times 2 was I got no answer. He had apparently not yet decided to think seriously about numbers.

Without letting myself be impressed by that I learned one series after the other with my class. The whole class developed an increasing enthusiasm and they enjoyed learning, Lino as well, but very slowly. There were lessons when he did no more than two calculations – talking or dawdling the rest of the time. Also he was still quite actively involved in ragging.

One day I returned a math test to the class. Everybody was happy as they had good marks. Lino was the only one with an inadequate score. He sat there with a cloudy face and watched the cheerful bustle. He knew the tables reasonably well by then, but he was much too slow. Although I felt sorry for him, I did not say one word of comfort to him. It was not possible to overturn reality.

And yet Lino never lost his humor. Again and again he was, for example, convinced that 6 minus 6 equal 1. I explained to him: "But look, if you have six jellybabies and I take away six, then you have none left." He looked at me briefly and replied: "Then I'll tell my mother!"

Seven minutes after starting the next test, he was already back, with the test in his hand. This was nothing out of the ordinary, he often did this. With shining eyes he asked me: "What do you think? Am I coming to ask you something, or because I'm done?" I replied: "In your eyes I can

see that you're done." "It's true," he exclaimed, "I'm finished!" He had fulfilled his dream also to be among the quick ones for once. I was curious about the test result and, in fact: All calculations had been solved correctly!

Lino could barely believe this the next day. The whole class shared his joy! Obviously he had been so annoyed about his recent defeats that he had decided to make progress also in mathematics.

After seven months my substitution period ended, and I saw the class off for the last time. It was the beginning of the summer holidays. The small cloakroom was crowded. Everybody was packing and chattering excitedly. Lino stood in front of me in the turmoil and had a last request: "Would you test me the six times table?" He had memorised it, but I had not checked it yet. Summarily I asked him in every which way. He did all calculations without errors and at a brisk pace. He said goodbye cheerfully and happily.

I regret that I will no longer be able to teach Lino. His development is the result of cooperation between Lino, his mother and me.

Like all children, Lino wanted to be good. He also has the convenient gift of expressing himself clearly and he is active and enjoys learning from adults.

I brought a lot of teaching experience into the process and also – and that was crucial – the absolute certainty that there was nothing wrong with him and he was perfectly able to understand mathematics. And I was able to understand him. At school I had also been weak at mathematics. Later, when I wanted to train as a primary school teacher, there was no other way left to me than to tackle the problem. At that time, a friend and teacher showed me the way and taught me with great calm and confidence. He passed his enjoyment of mathematics on to me. I hear him still enthusing: "Today we will begin to tackle the theory of probability, Anne, you'll love it!"

Today I bring this safe and quiet mood to work with my pupils. I guide the children towards mathematical thought with little use of didactic frippery – merely with crayons, a blackboard and a lot of humor.

The joy I experience when I am able to help a pupil like Lino is a key reason for why I still enjoy teaching. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

**Beautiful hikes to specific plants**

rt. Who really knows when and where a particular plant species blooms especially rich and safe? The *King-of-the-Alps* for example in the Upper Engadine or the *flower-of-Jove* in the Puschlav.

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