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History Teaching in the Focus of the Swiss People's Party – The Way Policies Take Influence on Schools, too

Introduction

The textbook “*Hinschauen und Nachfragen – Die Schweiz und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Licht aktueller Fragen*“ (Looking loosely and questioning – Switzerland and the National Socialist era in the light of current questions)¹ already attracted great attention in the Swiss media landscape when published as the following brief summary of headlines makes clear:

- The “scandal” gets into our schools
- A textbook causes controversies
- A new book that gives food for thinking
- A new textbook with explosive content
- Textbook: the new political battlefield
- A new textbook shakes our collective memory
- A dispute about shaken views of history²

That this publication aroused that particular attention was due to the topic. For the first time ever, the findings submitted by the independent commission of experts (UEK)³ about Switzerland during the National Socialist era were processed for school use. In particular, three findings resulting from the extensive work of the UEK could usefully be exploited for developing textbooks:

1. At the time Swiss people in different life contexts – be it politics, economy or culture – had sufficient leeway for shaping life.
2. Switzerland was prepared for its defense as well as politically and economically entangled. Thanks to the UEK studies this ambivalence became

1 Barbara Bonhage, Peter Gautschi, Jan Hodel, and Gregor Spuhler, *Hinschauen und Nachfragen. Die Schweiz und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Licht aktueller Fragen* (Zürich: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 2006).

2 The articles are available on the website of the publishing house: www.lehrmittelverlag-zuerich.ch/Lehrmittel-Sites/HinschauenundNachfragen/ÜberdasLehrmittel/Medienspiegel/tabid/488/language/de-CH/Default.aspx (accessed on 15 September 2015).

3 Detailed information on UEK is available on the website www.uek.ch (accessed on 15 September 2015).

particularly clear with respect to the following three areas: a) refugee policy b) economy, industry and traffic c) financial business.

3. Switzerland had underestimated the significance of the Human Rights Society in the 1950s and failed to pay enough attention to processing the events happening in its own country during the National Socialist era.

In particular the Swiss People's Party⁴ which, already then, was the strongest party of the national legislature with a vote share of roughly 25 % and at time was also represented by two Federal Councilors reacted sharply to the textbook. The Swiss People's Party thus attempted to have the textbook legally prohibited shortly after its publication. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* headlined on 11 March 2006:

“The Swiss People's Party attempts to have the history textbook prohibited. Reproaches for indoctrination against the authors and educational policy-makers. The Swiss People's Party of the Canton of Zurich judges the new secondary level textbook about Switzerland in the Second World War to be the work of left-wing historiography aimed at indoctrination. It demands to legally prohibit the admission of the textbook in the schools of all the cantons.”⁵

As co-author of the textbook my awareness for the Swiss People's Party's endeavors to take influence on history teaching has since then been sharpened. I will use this party as a case example for the purpose of demonstrating how influence is exerted on history teaching from the field of history culture, here more concretely from history policy, in order to solidify and strengthen one's own respective societal and political position. I will do this in three steps along different historical-political actions of the Swiss People's Party:

1. A polemic pamphlet against the history textbook “*Hinschauen und Nachfragen*”
2. A programmatic paper for a new history curriculum
3. A people's initiative for subject-specific history teaching

Just already my first three chapter headings make clear: History teaching is important for the Swiss People's Party and in its focus. History teaching is

⁴ Swiss People's Party SVP policy is marked by national-conservative positions favouring the unrestricted political sovereignty of Switzerland and a markedly conservative model of society. In the last national parliamentary elections 2015 again the party clearly became the strongest party, with a vote share of 29.4 per cent in the National Council.

⁵ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, March 11 and 12, 2006, 55.

assessed to have an effect that strongly impacts on society and forms their identities. This reflects what Jörn Rüsen puts as follows in his work “*Historik*” (‘Historics’): “Forming identities is therefore one of the most important, if not the most important function of historical thinking in the life practice of one’s time”.⁶

A polemic pamphlet against the history textbook “*Hinschauen und Nachfragen*”

At the time when “*Hinschauen und Nachfragen*” was published the educational and historical policy of the Swiss People’s Party was to a large extent marked and still is it today by National Councilor Luzi Stamm who has been a member of the Federal Parliament since 1991, and there was also President of the Foreign Policy Commission of the National Council and a member of both the Committee for Legal Affairs as well as of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

As a reaction to “*Hinschauen und Nachfragen*” in 2007 National Councilor Luzi Stamm brought out a publication of his own about the history textbook and wrote the following in the preface:

A perfect example of manipulative technique. On 3 March 2006 the textbook “*Hinschauen und Nachfragen – die Schweiz und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Licht aktueller Fragen*” was published. The findings of the Bergier Report thus enter the schools. Whoever reads the book superficially hardly recognizes the ideology hidden behind; the entertaining style and the apparent balance cleverly conceal the political intentions (...). For all times people who wanted to convert history for their own political purposes have tried to manipulate the youths. The present textbook is a – unfortunately “superbly” done – perfect example of this manipulative technique.⁷

National Councilor Luzi Stamm judged the textbook to be even worse than the Bergier Report itself. Stamm had in fact also written a book of his own entitled “*Der Kniefall der Schweiz*” (Switzerland’s genuflection) concerning

⁶ Jörn Rüsen, *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Publishing House, 2013). 267. Cf. also Peter Gautschi, “Social Identity Through Public History,” in *Public History Weekly* 3 (2015), doi: 10.1515/phw-2015-4410.

⁷ Luzi Stamm: Bergier-Bericht. *Politische Ideologie in den Schulstuben? Kommentar zum Zürcher Schulbuch “Hinschauen und Nachfragen”* (Aarau: Interessengemeinschaft Schweiz – Zweiter Weltkrieg, 2007), 2.

the discussion about Switzerland in the National Socialist era and detected the same “self-accusing basic tone” as in the Bergier Commission. This attitude he meant stood for an erroneous view of history. It would be disastrous if this attitude should now become part of school education. In addition, this textbook, for example, had used the figures of the Bergier Report as regards the refugee issues without comparing them against the background of other figures.

In the Zurich Canton Council already the announcement of the textbook had given rise to a debate. An excerpt of the debate was already printed in the preface to the textbook. The following quotation shows how the different political positions result in different assessments. Or to put it differently: The political fundamental conviction defines the view of history.

Rolf André Siegenthaler (Swiss People’s Party, Zurich) reproaches the Bergier Commission with trying to rewrite the history of Switzerland with the report. The report should serve the political purpose of the 68 generation and would twist the facts. And our children should now be fed with this kind of historiography. One would thus contribute to the stultification of society, since what was going to be told in the schools would be difficult to correct again.

Ursula Braunschweig-Lütolf (SP, Winterthur) explains that the textbook is not mandatory but optional. Additionally, the Bergier Report is not converted into a textbook but it is only based on the report. The Bergier Report did not rewrite the history but it supplemented it with new findings. There will never be a final history of Switzerland. The perception of the past is being marked by the present. The textbook does not proclaim any final truth. Young people should realize that history is not set in stone but being created.

Hanspeter Amstutz (EVP, Fehraltorf) explains that teachers who have until now presented history based on facts will not be thrown of the track by the textbook now. More alarming than the Bergier Report used as a textbook is the reduction of the number of history lessons at the secondary level.

Thomas Heiniger (FDP, Adliswil) points out that history cannot be denied. It catches up with us. The Bergier Report is part of our past and thus also belongs in our schools. We are confident in the structures which know how to prevent the arbitrary and tendentious processing of history.⁸

⁸ Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 31 May 2005, Nr. 124, p. 56; quoted from “Hinschauen und Nachfragen“ (footnote 1), 5.

A programmatic paper for a new history curriculum

Of course, each of the above-quoted sentences could serve as a starting point for a reflection about beliefs of politicians about history and history education:

- “History cannot be denied. It catches up with us.”
- “More alarming than the Bergier Report used as a textbook is the reduction of the number of history lessons at the secondary level.”
- “Young people should realize that history is not set in stone but being created.”
- “What is going to be told in the schools will be difficult to correct again.”

Who like the parliamentarian Rolf André Siegenthaler of the Swiss People's Party believes in the powerful impact of schools and history teaching does consequently not only have to pay great attention to history textbooks but in particular also to curricula. The Swiss People's Party also pursues this approach, and has increasingly done so for the last ten years, because since 2006 a new dynamic has been set in motion in Swiss schools.

At the time the Swiss voters and all the States Councils have approved a new constitutional article concerning education with a proportion of “yes” votes of 86 %. Since then, the constitution has obliged the cantons to regulate important benchmark parameters concerning compulsory schooling nationally consistently. Inter-cantonal contracts form the basis for this tool. By means of the HarmoS Concordat, Article 62 of the Federal Constitution has been implemented for compulsory schooling by harmonizing all therein listed benchmark parameters: school entrance age, compulsory education, duration and objectives of the individual levels of education and their transitions. After the ratification by ten cantons the Concordat became effective as of 1 August 2009. With respect to the school harmonization of educational objectives a second project was initiated in addition to HarmoS: The implementation of a common curriculum for primary and secondary schools in all German-speaking and multilingual cantons. It is called “*Lehrplan 21*” (Curriculum 21).

In 2010 the Cantonal Directors of Education of the 21 German-speaking and multilingual cantons approved the basics for this new common curriculum. 2015 it has been finalized, and since summer 2015 the first canton, namely the Canton of Basel-Stadt, has started to teach according to Curriculum 21.⁹

⁹ Curriculum 21 is available on Internet too, but only in German language: www.lehrplan21.ch (accessed on 15 September 2015).

These explanations make also clear that Curriculum 21 was however developed with a view of the entire German-speaking area of Switzerland, but that due to the distinctly federalist educational system with a lot of regional particularities along with the important principle of subsidiarity the individual cantons decide themselves whether and when to implement Curriculum 21 in their own canton.¹⁰

Already at a relatively early stage fierce resistance arose within the Swiss People's Party against the project of Curriculum 21, and a few months after the first concrete benchmark parameters concerning Curriculum 21, the so-called basic report, were approved in spring 2010, the Swiss People's Party presented a curriculum of its own in autumn 2010.¹¹

From the introduction of the Swiss People's Party's curriculum some of this political party's main concerns become clearly apparent, in particular their emphasis on direct democracy, proximity to the people, simplicity and volunteerism:

Out of concern for the quality of our primary and secondary schools a group of teachers have set to work to exemplarily implement for some subjects the sovereign's mandate for formulating common learning objectives for the core subjects for each school year without infringing the cantonal autonomy in education. The development of the present Swiss People's Party's curriculum as an alternative project to Curriculum 21 was preceded by an extensive comparison of all the curricula still available today in all the cantons. Eventually, the important learning objectives were formulated and determined in the form of a simple framework curriculum. Although the Swiss People's Party's curriculum was worked out extremely cost-effectively (all the participants of the undertaking work on a fully honorary basis – they also personally assume all the expenses), one succeeded in formulating coordinated learning objectives for all Swiss schools.¹²

Subject curricula are presented for a few selected subjects only, amongst others history,¹³ which as such already shows that this subject is particularly significant for the Swiss People's Party. In the paper – which will be called the

10 For further information about History Education in the Swiss federalist educational system, see e.g. Beatrice Bürgler and Peter Gautschi (forthcoming), "Historisches Lernen und Politische Bildung in der Deutschschweiz auf der Sekundarstufe I," in *Wiener Beiträge zur politischen Bildung. Band 4: Fächerkombination und Flächenfächer*, eds. Thomas Hellmuth, Wolfgang Sander, and Manfred Wirtitsch (Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2017).

11 Der SVP Lehrplan. Papier der Lehrerarbeitsgruppe der SVP. November 2010. Available on the website of the SVP: www.svp.ch/de/documents/custom/web/Papier%20Volksschule%20-%20Lehrplan_d.pdf (accessed on 15 September 2015)

12 Ibid, 2.

13 Ibid, 77-82.

“Swiss People's Party Curriculum” in the following – the sense of history teaching is pointed out in its introduction. The focus is set on three aspects:

1. The process of how the present has come into existence
2. The great importance of knowledge
3. The contribution to the integration of migrants

What seems particularly interesting is the argumentation as to why the process of how the present has come into existence gains so much importance:

In this age of globalization and mechanization, of rapid social development and change triggering some or even deep uncertainty with many people, it is especially important to young people to recognize that all that exists today and all that is taken for granted at one point in time came into existence or was created – not seldom with a lot of efforts, upheavals and contradictions. In contrast to the demand nourished by today's ‘zeitgeist’ expressing that “everything is for free and right away” there have never been times in which one could get anything for free. Everything always has its cost, sometimes even claiming one's own life when people fought for new or defended existing things. If thus complaints arise today as to how laborious and not always enjoyable everyday life is, growing knowledge about how things have come into existence in the past has a healing effect.¹⁴

History thus serves the purpose of coming to terms with the hard present times and realizing that there is no enjoyable everyday life at all. Life means hardship, nothing is for free, whoever wants to get something has to work hard and fight for what is important to him. This is the crucial lesson to be learnt from how the present has come into existence in the past.

Knowledge is in the first place needed to realize that history does not repeat itself constantly. In the “Swiss People's Party Curriculum” it says that whoever “disposes of profound knowledge understands that history does not repeat itself constantly and that a lot can be learnt from history. Knowledge causes enthusiasm and ‘a fire’ for history.”¹⁵

A third aspect of the sense it makes to deal with history consist in the fact that migrants “whose roots are not in Switzerland”¹⁶ can better be integrated into the local society. History creates understanding for “our culture, way of life and system of values”.¹⁷ History helps form identities.

¹⁴ Ibid, 77.

¹⁵ Ibid, 78.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

When it comes to how to design teaching lessons two points are particularly emphasized: First of all, the curriculum contains a plea for historical culture:

There are innumerable didactically valuably designed museums and real objects which document the changes in society and technology. It is all there, it only has to be used skillfully for teaching. Such lively teaching also impresses today's young people, triggers concernment and removes the blemish of mustiness, of dreary data collection and dead knowledge from teaching.¹⁸

Apart from demanding this encounter with historical culture, history teaching should as a second point ensure an understandable and comprehensible broader context. Whoever possesses such overview knowledge is able to recognize how great things could be achieved with moderate resources in the past.

The core of the “Swiss People’s Party Curriculum” consists of a program of subject contents. It is divided up into school years and distinguishes the two areas “Switzerland” and “Europe, World”. Both these areas are again chronologically structured. The program of subject contents includes the following three rubrics:

1. Topics and contents
2. Learning objectives and skills
3. Terminology and people

A comparison with Curriculum 21, which at that time was only just sketched out in the form of rough benchmark parameters in 2010 when the “Swiss People’s Party Curriculum” was already available and not finalized before 2014, yields an astonishing picture:

As already mentioned above the “Swiss People’s Party Curriculum” consists of three rubrics that characterize the program in more detail (topics and contents, learning objectives and skills, terminology and people). The rough concept of Curriculum 21 available in 2010 contained only one rubric concerning competences which, with respect to key words and formulations, corresponded to the second rubric “learning objectives and skills” of the “Swiss People’s Party Curriculum”.

It now is interesting that the other two rubrics of the “Swiss People’s Party Curriculum” were also gradually integrated into Curriculum 21 in the years 2010 to 2014. On the one hand, a planning example was namely added to Curriculum 21, and this planning example now also contained clearly signposted “topics and contents” being chronologically structured. The rubric “terminology and people” was added as well, though not in a special and separate column but becoming part of the competences. Whether these changes from the rough structure of

¹⁸ Ibid.

Curriculum 21 to the final version of Curriculum 21 is due to the “Swiss People's Party's position paper” is hard to prove, and probably difficult to reconstruct from the files but quite plausible and likely.

The comparison of the topics and contents, the learning objectives and skills as well as the terminology shows considerable similarities. Both proposals, namely the older “Swiss People's Party Curriculum” as well as the 4 years younger Curriculum 21 start the topic “world history” with looking at the modern times first. Both structure chronologically, both take into account the fundamental dimensions by Wehler.¹⁹ It has, however, to be noted here that this was already the case in the rough structure of Curriculum 21. Here the “Swiss People's Party Curriculum” might possibly have adapted itself to Curriculum 21.

Content-related differences become apparent though when it comes to the people mentioned in both the curricula. The entire “Swiss People's Party Curriculum” does not refer to a single woman at all, but the names of men, however, not appearing in Curriculum 21 find mention, such as e.g. *Emperor Wilhelm II, Hindenburg, Trotzki, the Federal Councilors von Steiger and Minger, Friedrich Ebert, Elvis Presley, Saddam Hussein, Honecker, Genscher, Kohl*.

Differences between both the curricula become also obvious in the rough structure – at least at first glance. Whereas Curriculum 21 includes four so-called competence areas – 1. Understanding Switzerland in its tradition and change; 2. Explaining world-historical continuities and radical changes; 3. Analyzing and using historical culture; 4. Understanding democracy and human rights and committing oneself for them – the “Swiss People's Party Curriculum” only contains the two sections focusing on Swiss and world history. At second glance it, however, becomes clear that the “Swiss People's Party Curriculum” also repeatedly and prominently mentions the historical culture and then also emphasizes it once again in the program of subject contents: “The primary objective at this level is that history shall be concretely experienced and perceptible. Spread all over Switzerland there are enough objects, locations, museums and media that allow this to happen.”²⁰

Political education appears to be of less importance in the “Swiss People's Party Curriculum”. The terms democracy and human rights which are of great significance in Curriculum 21 do not find any mention in the “Swiss People's Party Curriculum”. Whereas this is astonishing with respect to the term “democracy” that is positively connoted in the Swiss People's Party's program, it does not

¹⁹ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Band 1*. 4th. ed. (München: C.H. Beck, 2007), 7.

²⁰ As footnote 11, p. 80.

come as a surprise that the human rights are blinded out. They are permanently discredited in the current political discourse by the Swiss People's Party as can be proven from different campaigns.²¹

In contrast to Curriculum 21 which does not say anything about school structures the "Swiss People's Party Curriculum" takes a clear position on this issue and demands a structured three-level secondary school. Level C shall allow students to learn simple manual professions. Level B shall allow students to learn more demanding manual professions and to make commercial apprenticeships. Level A is aimed at acquiring a vocational diploma that is a "vocational Matura" and a grammar school diploma that is a "grammar school Matura". This structuring mainly has its effects on the foreign languages as well as on the number of history lessons offered. Whereas at level B and A the total of four annual hours of history teaching is offered, that is exactly the same number of lessons as in Curriculum 21, at level C then aimed at students with basic standards the total of six annual hours of history teaching is offered, that is two weekly hours in all three of the secondary school years, which is clearly more than is planned in Curriculum 21. The less gifted students, in particular those with a migrant background need fewer foreign languages but more history lessons.

With a view to historical learning the most significant difference between the two curricula, however, lies in the fact that the "Swiss People's Party Curriculum" requires a specific subject history being offered already from the fourth grade of intermediate primary school on, this with a total of two annual lessons per week for each year. Here it becomes apparent that the main difference between both the curricula consists in the fact that the "Swiss People's Party Curriculum" makes a clear plea for subject specification whereas Curriculum 21 promotes subject combination.

This orientation of Curriculum 21 towards interdisciplinary nature, by the way, was diminished in the course of the development of Curriculum 21 due to different circumstances. To what extent the "Swiss People's Party Curriculum" contributed to this is hard to prove too, and probably not to reconstruct from the files, but once more plausible and likely.

But the initial interdisciplinary condition that a subject "history" must not exist in Curriculum 21 and that historical learning in a subject area with the adventurous title "Spaces, Times, Societies" shall take place, was not put in question by the Cantonal Directors of Education despite the fierce discussions and demands from the part of different organizations such as the Swiss Historical Society or the

²¹ Cf. e.g. www.svp.ch/kampagnen/uebersicht/selbstbestimmungsinitiative/argumentarium/ (accessed on 15 September 2015).

Swiss-German Society for History Didactics. This is only one of the reasons that the Swiss People's Party launched people's initiatives in several cantons with the purpose of anchoring the subject designation "history" in the school law and thus to ensure subject-specific history teaching.

A people's initiative for subject-specific history teaching

Curriculum 21 has been developed by teachers and didactics in a large-scale project over several years, and this happened on behalf of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education, a body consisting of the executive members of the different cantons who are responsible for education. This body also approved and adopted Curriculum 21 and thus brought the project to a successful end. It is now up to the individual cantons to implement this curriculum. As a rule, this happens at the decree level and thus by the executive authority.

In several cantons the Swiss People's Party has now tried to transfer the competence for the implementation of curricula from the executive to the legislative authority, which has, however, mostly failed. This has now led to the attempt by the Swiss People's Party to impede or even to prevent the implementation of the curriculum. These initiatives have to be submitted in each individual canton due to the federalism that assigns the educational sovereignty to the cantons.

In the Canton of Aargau the people's initiative is for example worded as follows: "*Yes' to a good education – 'No' to Curriculum 21!*"²² The initiative demands to replace paragraph 13 in the school law which stipulates that the government has the legislative power to pass the curriculum. The Swiss People's Party wants to have the law text changed as follows:

"Firstly: The curriculum serves the purpose of implementing the educational task in schools. Thereby the youth's right for education, knowledge and ability forms the basis in compliance with the Cantonal Constitution and the preamble of the school law."²³ – Here it is striking in the first place that the term competence which is otherwise predominant in all the papers on educational policy and school development is lacking. The Swiss People's Party is not able to deal with the term "competence".

²² www.lehrplan21-nein.ch/ (accessed on 15 September 2015)

²³ *Ibid.*

“Secondly: The curriculum is based on the canon of school subjects. After having heard the Educational Council the Cantonal Council determines the number of school lessons and their length as well as the learning objectives of each grade.”²⁴ – Here it is particularly significant that the learning objectives of each grade find mention whereas in Curriculum 21 the latter are removed and replaced for basic competences for the respective cycles.

A decisive point then follows in section three where newly the subjects shall be determined in the school law. The passage here says:

“The canon of school subjects encompasses the subjects German, foreign languages, mathematics, computer science, physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, music, ethics and religion, creative design, textiles as well as handicrafts, sports and home economics.”²⁵ – Now then, in contrast to Curriculum 21 the orientation towards the disciplines and the demand for subjects rather than subject areas as planned in Curriculum 21 becomes clear here.

What this would mean to Curriculum 21 if such a passage was fixed in the school law by the Swiss voters, would still have to be clarified. I myself as a co-author of Curriculum 21 took into consideration with respect to the areas of geography and history that Curriculum 21 would be suitable for subject teaching as well. It is also conceivable that this passage demanded by the Swiss People’s Party would be included into a school law, but in the areas of geography and history one could still teach according to Curriculum 21.

By the way, as a fourth point it should be stipulated in the law that inter-cantonal agreements on harmonization of the curriculum and school matters was going to be approved by the legislative authority and subject to an optional referendum. Here the intention to shift competences for designing schools and history teaching from the executive to the legislative authority becomes apparent, logically because the Swiss People’s Party generally reaches majority decisions being favorable for them more easily by a legislative process and popular votes than by an executive process.

By means of a lot of printed argumentation and flyers these people’s initiatives are now promoted. They are in the first place directed against Curriculum 21 which in broad public is controversially discussed. Apart from the fragmentation of the educational comprehension into a thousand so-called competences the Swiss People’s Party’s main point of criticism against Curriculum 21 lies the lack of the subjects primarily. Here it for example says: “Many of the classic

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

subjects (amongst others history, physics and biology) disappear. Only part of their contents is, torn out of context, molded into competences and appears in new vessels, e.g. “Spaces, Times, Societies”. Thus, the structure of knowledge gets lost – which is the actual prerequisite for learning and understanding.”²⁶

Conclusion

History culture, in particular history policy, for example the Swiss People's Party, exerts influence on history teaching in order to solidify and strengthen one's own respective societal and political position. It campaigns against history textbooks, writes programmatic papers and curricula and launches people's initiatives.

This demonstrates a high degree of confidence in history teaching. History teaching is said to have an impact on individual youths and on society, and to contribute to forming identities, shaping attitudes and opinions, and history teaching is also said to ensure integration. Only little empirical research has so far been done on whether this is really the case, but the belief in the great significance of history teaching has not been shaken in large parts of society.

This makes clear that everybody dealing with history teaching is confronted with the question of what role history culture and history policy plays.

Already in 1926 this was pointed out by Erich Weniger in his basics for history teaching. In the conclusion of his book “Die Grundlagen des Geschichtsunterrichts” (The Basics of History Teaching) Erich Weniger writes in chapter “*Der Staat und der Geschichtsunterricht*” (The State and History Teaching): “Of course, schools must not become the scene of party-political influences. In reality it is often difficult to recognize where that kind of influencing begins. But as shown above the large contrasts of the parties must and can also have their place in schools.”²⁷ This, however, must not lead to the fact that educational powers such as science, economy and church – to say it with Weniger's terminology – gain the upper hand when educational plans are designed.

In case this happens or threatens, the teachers are called upon to search a shaped world which spares the child the shock of an immediate confrontation

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Erich Weniger, *Die Grundlagen des Geschichtsunterrichts. Untersuchungen zur geisteswissenschaftlichen Didaktik* (Leipzig: Verlag von B.G. Teubner, 1926), 241.

with the cruelty of life.²⁸ The following story elucidates this quotation and transfers it to our present time²⁹:

It happened in 2011: The Street Parade is going on in Zurich and the main station is packed with people. Right in the middle there the 62-year-old history teacher Lüthi is going ahead with his illegal action. He is in fact not willing to see how the Swiss People's Party, at such a prominent location, is able to exert influence with its posters saying things like: "Stop mass immigration" and "Swiss people vote for the Swiss People's Party" without being contested. In the eyes of the history teacher the visual language of the Swiss People's Party's posters has "many significant parallels to the visual language of the anti-Semitic propaganda of the National Socialists" and violates the human dignity of the foreign population. The black hands, for example, which "greedily" grasp at the Swiss passport strongly remind of the "greedy hands the way they could be found on posters in the 1930 – at the time they belonged to the Jews".

In late summer 2011 Lüthi, illegally and with penal consequences for himself, added his own feelings to the Swiss People's Party's posters in format A3. He glued prefabricated white notes onto the posters saying: "Profile of the Swiss People's Party: Inciting fear and hatred".

As long as history teachers like Lüthi exist in Switzerland who react so sensitively to influences on historical images attempted by political parties and, if necessary, also act with civil courage to protect higher interests, we can, with a certain degree of calm, look at what it says in school laws, curricula and history textbooks, and ask questions as to where these determinations and formulations come from, in any case this is certainly well worthwhile. Looking closely and questioning – that is what students, teachers, didactics and also actors of Public History have to do.

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²⁸ Cf. Erich Weniger. *Didaktik als Bildungslehre*. Weinheim: Beltz, 1960, 11.

²⁹ Cf. Simona Rau: „Aus Empörung überklebte der Geschichtslehrer SVP-Plakate.“ *Tages-Anzeiger*, April 19, 2012, 13.

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