



**25 Jahre All European Academies 9. Mai 2019, 14.00 Uhr  
Alec von Graffenried Kursaal**

*Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear guests

Who of you has not heard at least one of the following three statements?

Statement N° 1: Climate Change is a hoax. Ideological and financial reasons are behind the invention of the science behind it.

Statement N° 2: NASA staged the US moon landings in a film studio in Hollywood with the involvement of director Stanley Kubrick.

Statement N° 3: Our planet is not a sphere. Evidence supporting this theory has been suppressed to hide the fact that earth is instead a disc. Furthermore, GPS devices are rigged to make aircraft pilots wrongly believe they are flying around a globe.

These are neither my statements nor my opinions, of course! These are only three of too many Conspiracy Theories. There are currently disturbing amounts of weird people and even politicians worldwide not only supporting such nonsense, but also helping to spread

Conspiracy Theories only to push and promote their own political goals. Yes, spreading Conspiracy Theories is unfortunately «en vogue» again. Moreover, thanks to the modern ways of communication, spreading Conspiracy Theories has never been easier before than today.

Let me tell you something: This should be of great concern to all of us! Because we do not live in the dark ages anymore! Almost everybody has access to any kind of knowledge today – so we all should know better. Manipulating people and promoting obscure and false theories is an act of complete irresponsibility of a few individuals.

My name is Alec von Graffenried, I am the Mayor of the City of Bern and I am a fan of the Age of Enlightenment. I believe society evolves through scientific progress and philosophical debate. I believe in Democracy, in the rule of law and in a society committed to education. Good politics should always rely on the evidence of statistics and on scientific research. Scientific evidence should always serve as the base for any important political decision.

The city Bern and its government are committed to education. The city is not only an important local center of education, but also the home of the University of Bern – an important center for study and research in Europe with a long tradition and history.

In the year of 1848, many republican revolutions took place all over Europe. All of them failed, except the Swiss revolution. Modern Switzerland was founded and Bern became the capital of modern, democratic Switzerland. With the adoption of the Swiss constitution on the 12 of September 1848, Switzerland became an island of freedom and democracy in the middle of Europe's monarchies. The freedom of scientific research was very attractive for researchers from all over the world.

The University of Bern had been founded in 1834. As there were very little Swiss professors, the majority of professors came from abroad.

One part of the University's history is the emancipation of women as researchers and academics. Women too came to Switzerland to study, because it was possible. Anna Tumarkin, born in 1875 in Russia, a natu-

ralized Swiss philosopher, was the first woman to become a professor at the University of Bern in 1906. She was also the first woman in Europe who examined doctoral candidates and the first woman to become a member of the Senate of a University in Europe, at the University of Bern.

The most important scientific moment in the history of Bern, however, just had happened when Anna Tumarkin became a professor. The year of 1905 was the Annus Mirabilis, the miracle year for sciences in Bern. It was the year when Albert Einstein published four articles in the «Annalen der Physik», a scientific journal. These four articles contributed substantially to the foundation of modern physics and changed views on space, time, mass and energy. He wrote the four articles within half a year. The four articles, one of them treated for the first time the theory of relativity, were among the 10 articles in physics with the most citations in the 20th century. Many years have passed, but Einstein's theories remain valid and continue to be a great value to scientific research. Go visit the Einstein House in the City or the Einstein Museum in the Bern historical Museum.

The University of Bern has academic activities in many areas. 50 years after Einsteins activities in Bern Professor Johannes Geiss was making Astrophysics a priority at Berns University. As you certainly know, we are currently celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Landing on the Moon. Therefore, the Moon landing is not only a subject for conspiracy theorists; the moon landing was also a game-changing event for the University of Bern. Our university was the only non-US University participating with experiments in all moon landings after Apollo 11. Professor Johannes Geiss had developed a foil, a solar sail, with which the solar wind on the moon could be measured.

Space Research is still one of the main focuses of high end research in Bern today. The division of Space Research and Planetology participates in NASA, ESA and Roscosmos spacecraft missions.

At the end of June 2019 we will celebrate the 50 years anniversary of the landing on the moon with astronauts and researchers from all over the world, and a summit meeting of the Directors of NASA and ESA space agencies in Bern.

In my opinion, the city of Bern is a perfect place to study, to work and to live: You have all you need but there is not too much. In Bern, you have time to think, to talk and to read, three essential things to lead a balanced life – in return, you are not stuck in traffic for hours every day for example. In Bern everything you need to live is easy to reach and within a short distance.

I confess: I love the city of Bern and I love Switzerland. I love Europe, too. I also believe that the European Union is not perfect.

But let me tell you one thing: The European Union is the best thing that ever happened to Europe.

Up to this day, Switzerland does not belong to the European Union. Some Swiss think this is fortunate, others think it is rather unfortunate. I belong to the second group.

Whatever side we may be on, concerning the European question, most Swiss agree upon one thing: We think that Switzerland is the geographical center of Europe: We are partly northern Europe and partly southern Europe; we are situated between East and

West. We share languages with our neighbors in the North, the South, the East and the West.

Just as Switzerland is in the heart of Europe, Bern is the heart of Switzerland. Hence, Bern is in the heart of Europe! And this, dear ladies and gentlemen, is neither a scientific fact nor a conspiracy theory – it is nothing more than the strong belief of a proud mayor!

Therefore, let me say it loud and clear:

Welcome to Bern, welcome to the heart of Europe!

Thank you for your attention and enjoy your stay!