

Current Concerns

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Institutional framework agreement as an instrument of European state-building Prominent Swiss figures on the framework agreement

Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Recently, the draft for a framework agreement between Switzerland and the EU has finally been published in German¹ (original text in French), which has obviously triggered a reading boom among the German-speaking majority of the Swiss population – at any rate, the number of critical statements is increasing and the objections are becoming more concrete.

While the Federal Council has been carrying out an “internal consultation” with cantons, political parties and social partners since the beginning of December, voices can also be heard from unusual quarters, and they have raised a number of serious concerns from the standpoints of constitutional law, democracy, federalism and sovereignty policy. These would be reason enough to end the project.

I will here put forward some clear statements concerning various contents and some questions of constitutional law, sorted by topic for the readers’ easier orientation.

“Anyone who says that the treaty is tailor-made, has not read the text”

The statement by *Hans Hess*, President of the leading association for SMEs and large companies in Switzerland’s *mechanical and electrical engineering industries* and related technology-oriented sectors (*Swissmem*), that the framework agreement (InstA) was “tailor-made for the needs of Switzerland”,² went through all the Swiss media and met with sharply worded objections. Particularly gratifying is the statement by *Hans-Ulrich Bigler*, FDP National Councillor and director of the “*Schweizerischer Gewerbeverband*” (SGV) (*Swiss Trade Association*), which represents the vast majority of Swiss companies, the SMEs: “Anyone who says that the treaty is tailor-made has not read the text, or is not good enough at French.”³ He indicated some unacceptable weak points, such as the intended imposition of the *Citizens’ Rights Directive* or the problematic settlement of disputes and announced that the SGV would deal with the text in detail by the end of January and then issue



The Swiss model is strong enough to withstand the ravages of time, international pressures and global challenges. (picture mt)

an initial positioning. This was then done by Hans-Ulrich Bigler on 2 February in the “*Echo der Zeit*” (Radio SRF), where he stated that the executive committee of

the Swiss Trade Association rejected the framework agreement in its current form.

Another positive surprise was granted us by *Carl Baudenbacher*, former President of the EFTA Court for many years and Professor Emeritus of the HSG (University of St Gallen). He had repeatedly reprimanded the Swiss for not wanting to join the EEA and thus submit to his court. In his statement on the treaty draft, Baudenbacher now openly and honestly changed sides. In the hearing of the National Council Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC-N)⁴ broadcast by SRF television, he stated that the arbitral tribunal was “not tailor-made, but off the shelf”, as it was not created at Switzerland’s insistence, as the Federal Council claims. On the contrary, it was brought into play by EU Commission President *Juncker* in autumn 2018, following the example of the EU’s association agreements with Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, so that the EU could interpret all four treaties uniformly.

The Citizens’ Rights Directive

mw. The Citizens’ Rights Directive extends the right of citizens of the EU Member States and their family members to residence and social assistance far beyond the rules in the Switzerland-EU Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons: permanent right of residence after five years of residence for the Union citizen and his family members (Art. 16), right of residence for social assistance recipients “as long as they do not unreasonably claim the social assistance benefits of the host member state” (Art. 14), expulsion “only for serious reasons of public order or public security” (Art. 28).¹

¹ Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States [...].

"Institutional framework agreement ..."

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After reading the German draft with its bureaucratic language and its many pitfalls, one can only agree with Hans-Ulrich Bigler: Those who describe this construct as "tailor-made" have not read it.

"We have problems with what is written in it, with what is not written in it, and with its intention"

According to *Paul Widmer*, former ambassador and lecturer at the HSG, at the FAC-N hearing on 15 January: "The contract in its present form is not good because it leaves too much open, or takes the wrong approach. The Federal Council declared it was glad to say that only five treaties – plus any future ones – were subject to the InstA. In other words, it would be best if the agreement were not there at all. First of all, we have difficulties with what is in it: the free movement of persons, the accompanying measures; we also have problems with what is not explicitly excluded, namely the Citizens' Rights Directive; and we have issues with what is intended [...]" Here Paul Widmer mentions the *1972 Free Trade Agreement*, because the EU intends to make this subject to the framework agreement in future, and therefore also more than 100 other agreements that follow on from it. These agreements cover all freight transport (except agriculture) and insurance. This would enable the EU to subject these currently purely economic agreements to its ongoing legal changes. This must be avoided. By the way, Great Britain also wants to regulate its relationship with the EU by agreements such as the *Free Trade Agreement of 1972*.

With regard to the exclusion of the Citizens' Rights Directive, SGV director Hans-Ulrich Bigler also said: "From my point of view, the Citizens' Rights Directive is crucial. The fact that its non-applicability for Switzerland is not anchored in the framework agreement is a trick that will allow the EU to put the directive back on the table three years after the entry into force of an institutional agreement. So the problem has not been solved, it has just been postponed. It is to be feared that one day we will have to pay a high price for it", for example hundreds of millions of Swiss francs for facilitating access to social security for EU citizens ("*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*" of 21 January).

"The argument about legal certainty amazes me. The opposite is true, there will be more uncertainty, but at the same time more economic freedom, from which the strong will benefit – that is why the trade unions are opposed to the framework agreement." Professor of constitutional law *Andreas Glaser*

Carl Baudenbacher added: "The fact that it has been possible to limit the area concerned to five agreements is one thing. But the electricity agreement is in the pipeline, and there may be enormous movements in the area of subsidies, which we are not even able to envisage at the moment. For example, the EU is currently attempting to apply state aid law globally in international taxation [...]. Then there are also deliberations on a new service agreement, where cases would have a completely different scope than when it comes to whether a Swiss hunter has to pay a discriminatory hunting fee in Austria" (Television SRF of 15 January).

In summary, it must be emphasised that, once the framework agreement had been concluded, Brussels would spare no effort to include other areas of Swiss law – it is only partially known today, which ones that would be. In view of these imponderables, instead of tackling the stony path of a termination of the InstA at a later date (see Brexit!), we would do better not to join in the first place.

"The social partnership is a Swiss institution which we do not want to surrender under pressure from the EU"

The director of the Trade Association, Hans-Ulrich Bigler, responded to the interviewer's comment that, according to the think tank *Avenir Suisse*, posted workers⁵ from EU countries play only a very minor role in the Swiss labour market: "I am afraid this is faulty reasoning on the part of *Avenir Suisse*. The deposit obligation and the accompanying measures are the result of social partnership negotiations, without which the Bilateral Agreements would not have been able to achieve a majority in Switzerland. I do not want to deny that the accompanying measures have a certain protectionist character. However, the strong social partnership as it is known in Switzerland has guaranteed us peaceful industrial relations for almost 100 years." And he continued: "The question is not whether the registration period for foreign companies can be reduced from eight to four days. The question is

whether Switzerland will have to dynamically adopt the EU's posting and enforcement directives in future. This is out of the question for the trade unions as well as the employers."

The provocative statement of his interviewers, "Walking arm in arm with the trade union confederation must be unusual for you", was answered by Bigler as follows: "No, that is not the case. As the director of the Trade Association, I am involved in interest-driven politics for SMEs. Being able to forge coalitions is inherent in the system. [...] The social partnership is a Swiss institution that we don't want to surrender under pressure from the EU."⁶

Here Hans-Ulrich Bigler showed most beautifully that the Swiss social structure is based on cooperative principles: In all areas, including the relationship between employee and employer associations, dialogue and, whenever possible, consensus should be sought. We must not allow yet another monumental construct of a great power to disrupt this cohesion among all sections of the population, which had been alive until the EEA referendum in 1992.

"This Court of Arbitration is essentially a fig leaf"

On the issue of dispute resolution and monitoring the application of the law, we leave the floor to Professor Carl Baudenbacher, before all others. He has 22 years of practical experience in EU case law and, as president of the so-called "EFTA Court", he has had to pass on the rulings of the ECJ to the EEA states of Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. At the FAC-N hearing of 15 January, he commented on the question of dispute settlement as follows: "As far as the application of the law is concerned, I am of the opinion that this arbitral tribunal is essentially a fig leaf. [...] In my opinion, it is crystal-clear that the arbitral tribunal was set up to hide the fact that a unilateral dependence on the ECJ is being created here." And further: "I do not at all share these academic considerations [of the three law professors *Christa Tobler*, *Astrid Epiney*, and *Matthias Oesch*, present at the hearing] that the arbitral tribunal would have the practical freedom of referral [i.e. could decide for itself whether or not to consult the ECJ for interpretation], and that there would even

"The social partnership is a Swiss institution that we don't want to surrender under pressure from the EU." *Hans-Ulrich Bigler*, director of the "Schweizerische Gewerbeverband" SGV

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then still be room for manoeuvre in the implementation of the ruling of the ECJ."⁷

On surveillance: "Surveillance by Switzerland itself is of course a bit of a self-deception, because if the EU can unilaterally appeal to the arbitral tribunal, i.e. the ECJ, at any time, it is the de facto surveillance authority for Switzerland".

One of the "academic considerations" of Professor Matthias Oesch: "The composition of the arbitral tribunal [...] is impartial; the European Court of Justice is a respected court that decides on the basis of an internal logic. Switzerland does not have to be afraid of the European Court of Justice, if one day, in the few cases that are to be expected, it will be referred to by an arbitral tribunal". Baudenbacher in reply: "Nobody denies, Mr Oesch, that the ECJ is a very much respected court. We have worked very well together for 22 years. But the point is: the ECJ is the court of the opposing side, and the court of the opposing side is not neutral to the parties. This may be immaterial when it is a matter of any normal legal problem. But when it comes to big things, where politics also play a role, the prior understanding comes into play. And there it makes a difference whether I am the court of one side or not."

In the same programme, former ambassador Paul Widmer said on the subject of the Arbitration Court: "We Swiss have enormous experience with arbitration courts [...]; in the OSCE no country has been as active as Switzerland in the settlement of disputes. But when you see that this arbitral tribunal [...] has to get the rules of interpretation from someone who is a party himself, it is clear that this is no longer an independent arbitral tribunal. We cannot say yes to that."

Andreas Glaser, Professor of Constitutional, Administrative and European Law at the University of Zurich, expresses his appraisal of the "impartial composition" of the arbitral tribunal: "The problem lies in the fact that the arbitral tribunal would ultimately decide whether Switzerland would, for example, have to adopt the Citizens' Rights Directive, which would have enormous repercussions right up to the introduction of voting rights for foreigners at communal level. For Switzerland, everything would depend on who sits

"The ECJ is the court of the opposing side, and the court of the opposing side is not neutral to the parties." Professor *Carl Baudenbacher*, former President of the EFTA Court

on this three-member body and who represents Switzerland – whether the person in question is cautious in his decisions or rather willing to integrate. All experiences with the ECJ, the Human Rights Court, or the EFTA Court, suggest that it should not be left to [...] the Swiss judge [...] to become the guardian of Switzerland"⁸

Less legal certainty for citizens and SMEs – more economic freedom for large corporations

In recent years, Brussels has repeatedly punished Switzerland with sanctions which were contrary to contract and unrelated to subject matter, in cases where the voters did not make their decisions according to EU ideas. We have seen the expulsion from the *Erasmus+* student exchange programme, the delay in updating the agreement on technical barriers to trade, the only provisional extension of stock exchange equivalence (recognition of Swiss stock exchange regulation as equivalent), which is still in limbo. Such disruptive manoeuvres are unpleasant for the Swiss business location with its cosmopolitan orientation – although they can be mastered by a sovereign and innovative country under its own steam, as remains to be shown.

The leaders of *economiesuisse* – which represents above all the larger corporations – now claim that the application of the framework agreement would finally bring the hoped-for legal certainty to Swiss companies. *Hans Hess*, Vice-President of *economiesuisse*: "If we had a framework agreement, the EU would no longer be able to take punitive measures just like that". *Monika Rühl*, Director of *economiesuisse*: "Legal certainty would be created for companies and market access secured" (*media release* of 31 January 2019).

In the same spirit, Professor Matthias Oesch said in the live broadcast from the Federal Palace on 15 January: "The transfer of rights will now take place within a clear framework. This will provide legal certainty for all those involved. [...] The

experience we repeatedly made in recent years, of being blocked out by the EU, sometimes on the basis of unrelated issues not even covered by an agreement, will no longer be possible in the future. [...]"

Not true! With the framework agreement, the EU would now explicitly have the right "to take compensatory measures up to and including the partial or complete suspension of the agreements concerned"⁹ The expert Andreas Glaser voices his opinion that many of the provisions which are difficult to read are also hardly comprehensible in terms of content: "The framework agreement means a risk for Switzerland – not as great as in the case of EEA or EU accession, yet a risk. Unlike the previous Bilateral Agreements, the content of which is regulated in detail, the framework agreement is formulated in a 'rubbery' fashion, and one does not really know what to expect.

So if we cannot know what to expect, why do most large corporations and university professors speak of "more legal certainty"? Professor Andreas Glaser clarifies this question: "The argument about legal certainty amazes me. The opposite is true, there will be more uncertainty, but at the same time more economic freedom, from which the strong will benefit – that is why the trade unions are opposed to the framework agreement. EU proceedings are dynamic; the EU Commission and the ECJ have a lot of political leeway which they can use in one way or another" (*Weltwoche* of 31 January 2019).

In a nutshell: More free access to the EU internal market for large corporations, but more uncertainty for SMEs, for the citizens and for our directdemocratic rights. This view, purged of fog, is confirmed by a call for support for the framework agreement from the chairmen of the boards of directors of the two globalised major banks based in Switzerland: "An integrated financial market is equally important to Switzerland and Europe for their future success as a globally competitive economic area". The proposed framework agreement would create a "solid and reliable legal basis" for "open and integrated financial markets", while "isolation and denial of market access" would only create losers. As the article progresses, it is less and less a question of Switzerland and more and more a question of a "clear EU commitment to open markets" in order to

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"strengthen Europe's competitive edge in comparison with the US and China".¹⁰

In Professor Glaser's words: More economic freedom, from which the strong will benefit ... From the point of view of UBS and CS the Federal Council's task is "to present an agreement with majority appeal in Switzerland and the EU". No matter how contrary the whole construct may be to the Swiss climate – the main thing is to get it approved in the referendum. The financially strong supporters of the next referendum campaign are ready and willing.

Serious consequences for direct democratic rights

Provisional application of EU law – but not without parliament and the people!

The supporters of the framework agreement "reassure" us: The right of initiative and referendum would be respected. Formally that is true. According to Article 14 of the draft, Switzerland would have two years time to implement an EU legal act through parliament, and three years in the case of a referendum. But even before the parliamentary debate, Switzerland would have to provisionally apply the EU amendment. Should parliament wish to try and prevent this provisional application, a complicated procedure would be needed.¹¹ To put it very strongly: If our referendum right is not to degenerate into a mere alibi exercise, the provisional implementation of an EU legal act before the end of the referendum period is completely out of the question.

Right of initiative – to continue as before?

Andreas Glaser: "There shouldn't be any major changes in the right of initiative. Even today, Parliament does not implement popular initiatives that contradict the Bilateral Agreements, or implements them only ostensibly; this has been seen in the case of mass immigration or Alpine protection. This should remain the same under the framework agreement." It should, however, be noted here, that the non-implementation of popular initiatives is unconstitutional. It was in order to gloss over these factual violations of the law by parliament, that the EU turbos put so much effort into bringing down the self-determination initiative. But even if it has now not been explicitly written into the Federal Constitution that its provisions are superior to the treaties: Accepted initiatives are and remain constitutional law and must be applied.

"[...] but in effect it will only be the last possible veto to refuse the adoption of new EU law just only in the nick of time. One has to ask oneself whether this is still a worthy framework showing respect for the freedom to vote." Professor of constitutional law *Andreas Glaser*

Referendum right: gross drafting defect in framework contract

Professor Andreas Glaser: "This is the crucial point: the dynamic adoption of the law leaves the referendum formally untouched, but in effect it will only be the last possible veto to refuse the adoption of new EU law just only in the nick of time. One has to ask oneself whether this is still a worthy framework showing respect for the freedom to vote. In my opinion, this is a gross error in the drafting of the treaty" (*Weltwoche*, 31 January 2019). We as the voters can only draw the consequence that the Mixed Committees of the Bilateral Agreements with their often flexible solutions would be preferable to a new treaty that dilutes our people's rights.

In view of the clear statements of experts on the subject quoted here, the best way for us will be to take a stand for ensuring that there will be no referendum at all, but that the framework agreement is kicked into the long grass beforehand. If our politicians and association leaders really do read the draft text, this will surely be the case after the consultation at the end of March 2019 or in parliament at the latest.

¹ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Swiss European policy. Institutional issues. <https://www.eda.admin.ch/dea/en/home/verhandlungen-offene-themen/verhandlungen>

² Interview with Swissmem President Hans Hess "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 27 December 2018 Authors: Christina Neuhaus and Michael Schoenenberger (in German)

³ "Dieses Resultat muss man weiterverhandeln" (This result must be further negotiated). Interview with SGV director Hans-Ulrich Bigler. "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 21 January 2019. Authors: Christina Neuhaus and Michael Schoenenberger (in German)

⁴ "Umstrittenes Rahmenabkommen – Ja oder Nein zum Abkommen mit der EU? Experten sind sich uneinig" (Controversial framework agreement – Yes or No to the Agreement with the EU? Experts are in disagreement). Public hearing of the National Council Foreign Affairs Committee. *Television SRF* of 15 January 2019

⁵ Employees temporarily carrying out an assignment in another country by order and on account of their employer

⁶ "Dieses Resultat muss man weiterverhandeln" (This result must be further negotiated). Interview with SGV director *Hans-Ulrich Bigler*.

"Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 21 January 2019. Authors: Christina Neuhaus and Michael Schoenenberger (in German)

⁷ Controversial framework agreement" Public hearing of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council. *Television SRF* of 15 January 2019

⁸ "Ein Kulturschock" (A culture shock). Interview with Zurich professor of constitutional law Andreas Glaser. *Weltwoche* No. 5 of 31 January 2019. Author: Katharina Fontana

⁹ Article 10 Procedure for disputes concerning interpretation or application, paragraph 6

¹⁰ "Für einen engen Dialog mit der EU auf Augenhöhe" (For a close dialogue with the EU at eye level). Guest commentary by Lukas Gähwiler (Chairman of the Board UBS Switzerland AG) and Alexandre Zeller (Chairman of the Board Credit Suisse Schweiz) AG. "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 25 January 2019

¹¹ "Ein Kulturschock (A culture shock)." Interview with Zurich professor of constitutional law Andreas Glaser. *Weltwoche* No. 5 of 31 January 2019. Author: Katharina Fontana

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The planned attack on the “Caribbean Basin”

by Thierry Meyssan

President Trump has announced the withdrawal of US combat troops from the “Greater Middle East”, but the Pentagon is still pursuing the implementation of the Rumsfeld-Cebrowski plan. This time the aim is to destroy the states of the “Caribbean Basin”. This is nothing like the overthrow of pro-Soviet regimes, as in the 1970’s, but the destruction of all regional state structures, without consideration for friends or political enemies.

In a series of previous articles, we presented the *SouthCom* plan to provoke wars between the Latin-American nations in order to destroy the structures of all the states in the “Caribbean Basin”¹.

Preparations for wars of this magnitude, intended to follow on from the conflicts in the “Greater Middle East” according to the *Rumsfeld-Cebrowski* strategy, requires a decade².

After the period of economic destabilisation³ and that of military preparation, the actual operation should begin in the years to come by an attack on Venezuela by Brazil (supported by Israel), Colombia (an ally of the United States) and Guyana (in other words, the United Kingdom). It will be followed by others, beginning with Cuba and Nicaragua (the “troika of tyranny” according to *John Bolton*).

However, the original plan may be modified, particularly because of the return of the imperial ambitions of the Unit-



ed Kingdom⁴ which may influence the Pentagon.

The evolution of Venezuela

Venezuelan President *Hugo Chávez* had developed relations with the “Greater Middle East” on an ideological basis. He had in particular grown closer to Iranian President *Mahmoud Ahmadinejad* and Syrian President *Bachar el-Assad*. Together, they had imagined the possibility of founding an intergovernmental organisation, the “Free Allies Movement”, on the model of the “Non-Aligned Movement”, which was paralysed by the align-

ment with the United States, over time, of certain of its members⁵.

Although *Nicolas Maduro* adopted the same language as *Hugo Chávez*, he chose a very different foreign policy. It is true that he continued the rapprochement with Russia and, in his turn welcomed Russian bombers to Venezuela. He signed a contract to import 600,000 tonnes of wheat in order to deal with starvation in his country. Above all, he prepared to receive six billion dollars of investments, including five in the oil sector. Russian engineers took over the posts which were intended for Venezuelan workers but which they had abandoned.

Nicolas Maduro reorganised the alliances of his country on new foundations. He wove close links with Turkey, which is a member of NATO and whose army presently occupies Northern Syria. *Maduro* went to Istanbul on four occasions and *Erdogan* went once to Caracas.

Switzerland was an ally of *Hugo Chávez*, and had advised him for the composition of his Constitution. Fearing that he would be unable to refine his country’s gold in Switzerland, *Nicolas Maduro* looked to Turkey, which transformed the raw material into bullion. In the past, this gold had remained in Swiss banks as a guarantee for oil contracts. From now on, the liquid assets were transferred to Turkey, while the newly treated gold returned to Venezuela. This orientation may be interpreted as being no longer founded on ideology, but on interest. Everything depends on who benefits.

Simultaneously, Venezuela became the target of a destabilisation campaign which began with the *guarimbas* demonstrations, continued with the attempted coup d’état

“Wall Street Journal”: The regime change in Venezuela is to be only the prelude to reshape Latin America

km. The US government’s attempt to overthrow Venezuelan President *Maduro* is only the first step towards a realignment of Latin America. This was announced by the *Wall Street Journal* on 30 January. The US newspaper headlined: “U.S. Push to Oust Venezuela’s *Maduro* Marks First Shot in Plan to Reshape Latin America”. The aim is to reduce the influence of Russia, China and Iran in the region.

The new strategy was outlined in November 2018 by National Security Advisor *John Bolton*, who declared Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua the “Troika of Tyranny”. The US administration looked forward to watching each corner of this troika fall.

However, the “*Wall Street Journal*” also pointed out the risks of this strategy. If, for example, *Maduro*’s fall in Venezuela fails and the situation in the country continues to deteriorate, the US government will be even more blamed for the country’s crisis than before.

The *Moon of Alabama* blog on 31 January drew parallels with the 2006 plan to reshape the Middle East under US Secretary of State *Condoleezza Rice*, which failed but left severely damaged states behind. This could now be repeated in Latin America. According to *Moon of Alabama*, the US government is relying on the use of force: either in the form of a coup d’état by the Venezuelan armed forces - or from outside. This is also indicated by the appointment of *Elliott Abrams* as special envoy for Venezuela. In the 1980s, *Abrams* gained a great deal of experience in Central America with covert and violent US operations.

Sources: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-push-to-oust-venezuelas-maduro-marks-first-shot-in-plan-to-reshape-latin-america-11548888252>;
<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2019/01/venezuela-coup-attempt-part-of-a-larger-project-military-intervention-likely-to-fail.html#more>

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on 12 February 2015 ("Operation Jericho"), then by a series of attacks on the national currency, and organised emigration. In this context, Turkey offered Venezuela the possibility of avoiding US sanctions. The exchanges between the two countries multiplied fifteen-fold in 2018.

Whatever the evolution of the Venezuelan regime, nothing can justify what is being prepared against its population.

Coordination of logistical means

From 31 July to 12 August 2017, *South-Com* organised a vast exercise with more than 3,000 men from 25 allied states, including France and the United Kingdom. The goal was to prepare a swift landing for troops in Venezuela⁶.

Colombia

Colombia is a state, but not a nation. Its population lives geographically separate according to social class, with enormous differences in the quality of life. Almost no Colombian has ever spent time in a neighbourhood attributed to another social class than their own. This strict separation has made possible the multiplication of paramilitary forces and consequently armed interior conflicts which have caused more than 220,000 victims in thirty years.

In power since August 2018, President *Iván Duque* has challenged the fragile peace concluded with the FARC by his predecessor, *Juan Manuel Santos* – but not with the ELN. He has not dismissed the option of a military intervention against Venezuela. According to Nicolas Maduro, the United States are currently training 734 mercenaries in a training camp situated in Tona with a view to carrying out a false flag operation intended to spark a war with Venezuela. Taking into account the sociological particularity of Colombia, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether or not the training camp is controlled by Bogota.

Guyana

In the 19th century, the colonial powers agreed to a frontier between British Guyana (presently Guyana) and Dutch Guyana (presently Surinam). but no text has ever defined the frontier between the British zone and the Spanish zone (presently Venezuela). Consequently, Guyana administers 160,000 km² of forest which is still a source of dispute with its larger neighbour. By virtue of the Geneva agreement of 17 February 1966, the two states deferred to the Secretary General of the UNO (at that time the Burmese *U Thant*). Nothing has changed since then – Guyana has proposed to bring the case before

the UNO Permanent Court of Arbitration, while Venezuela prefers direct negotiations.

This territorial dispute does not seem particularly urgent, because the contested area is an uninhabited forest which was believed to be without value – however, it is a huge area which represents two thirds of Guyana. The Geneva agreement has been violated 15 times by Guyana, which specifically authorised the exploitation of a gold mine. Above all, the stakes were raised in 2015 with the discovery by *ExxonMobil* of oil deposits in the Atlantic Ocean, particularly in the territorial waters of the contested zone.

The population of Guyana is composed of 40 % Indians, 30 % Africans, 20 % mixed race and 10 % American Indians. The Indians are a strong presence in the civil services and the Africans in the army.

On 21 December, a vote of no confidence was lodged against the government of President *David Granger*, a pro-British, anti-Venezuelan General, in power since 2015. To everyone's surprise, a deputy, *Charrandas Persaud*, voted against his own party, and in an atmosphere of indescribable chaos, provoked the fall of the government which had only a one-vote majority. Since then, the country is in a state of great instability – we do not know whether President Granger, who is presently undergoing chemotherapy, will be able to handle current affairs, while *Charrandas Persaud* left Parliament with an escort, via a back door, and has fled to Canada.

On 22 December 2018, in the absence of a government, the *Ramform Tethys* (under the flag of the Bahamas) and the *Delta Monarch* (Trinidad and Tobago) undertook submarine explorations in the contested zone on behalf of *Exxon-Mobil*. Considering that this intrusion violated the Geneva agreement, the Venezuelan army chased the two ships away. The Guyanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, working with current affairs, declared it a hostile act.

The United Kingdom Minister for Defense, *Gavin Williamson*, declared to the *Sunday Telegraph* on 30 December 2018 that the Crown was putting an end to decolonisation, which had been Whitehall's doctrine since the Suez affair in 1956. London is preparing to open a new military base in the Caribbean (for the moment the UK has bases only in Gibraltar, Cyprus, Diego Garcia and on the Falkland islands). The new base could be situated on Montserrat (West Indies), or more probably in Guyana, and should be operational in 2022⁷.

Guyana is a neighbour of Surinam (Dutch Guyana). Its President, *Desi Bouterse*, is wanted in Europe for drug trafficking – an affair which pre-dated his election. But his son, *Dino*, was arrested in

Panama in 2013, despite the fact that he entered that country under a diplomatic passport. He was extradited to the United States where he was sentenced to 16 years of prison for drug trafficking – in reality because he was setting up the Lebanese Hezbollah in Surinam.

Brazil

In May 2016, *Henrique Meirelles*, the Minister of Finance for the transitional government of Libano-Brazilian *Michel Temer*, nominated Israelo-Brazilian *Ilan Goldfajn* as director of the Central Bank. Meirelles had also presided the Committee for the preparation of the Olympic Games, calling on *Tsahal* to coordinate the Brazilian army and police, thus guaranteeing the security of the Games. Simultaneously controlling the Central Bank, the army and the police of Brazil, Israel had no difficulty in supporting the popular movement of dissatisfaction in the face of the incompetence of the Workers-Party.

Believing – without any solid proof – that President *Dilma Rousseff* had fudged the public accounts in the context of the Petrobras scandal, the parliamentarians impeached her in August 2016.

During the Presidential election of 2018, candidate *Jair Bolsonaro* went to Israel to be baptised in the waters of the Jordan, and consequently obtained a massive percentage of the evangelical vote. He was elected with General *Hamilton Mourão* as his Vice-President. During the period of transition, Mourão declared that Brazil should prepare to send men to Venezuela as a "peace force" once President Maduro had been overthrown – comments which constitute a barely-disguised threat which President Bolsonaro attempted to downplay.

In an interview on 3 January 2019, on the TV channel SBT, President Bolsonaro spoke of negotiations with the Pentagon concerning the possibility of creating a US military base in Brazil.⁸ This declaration raised powerful opposition within the armed forces, for whom their country is capable of defending itself without assistance.

During his investiture on 2 January 2019, the new President welcomed Israeli Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu*. This was the first time that an Israeli personality of this importance had been to Brazil. On this occasion, President Bolsonaro announced the coming transfer of the Brazilian embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem.

US Secretary of State *Mike Pompeo*, who also went to the investiture, where he met Peruvian Minister for Foreign Affairs *Néstor Popolizio*, announced with President Bolsonaro his intention to

"The planned attack on the ..."

continued from page 6

fight with him against the "authoritarian regimes" of Venezuela and Cuba. Returning to the United States, he stopped over in Bogota to meet with Colombian President Iván Duque. The two men agreed to work for the diplomatic isolation of Venezuela. On 4 January 2019, the 14 States of the *Lima Group* (including Brazil, Colombia and Guyana) met to agree that Nicolas Maduro's new mandate, which begins on 10 January, is "illegitimate"⁹. This communiqué has not been signed by Mexico. Apart from this, six of the member-States lodged a complaint with the International Criminal Tribunal against President Nicolas Maduro for crimes against humanity.

It is perfectly clear today that the process towards war is under way. Enormous forces are in play, and there is little that can be done to stop them now. It is in this context that Russia is studying the possibility of setting up a permanent aero-naval base in Venezuela. The island of La Orchila – where President Hugo Chávez was held prisoner during the coup d'état of April 2002 – would enable the storing of strategic bombers. This would constitute a much greater threat to the United States than the Soviet missiles stationed in Cuba in 1962.

(Translation *Pete Kimberley*)Source: www.voltairenet.org/article204656.html; Mint Press News (USA)

¹ "Plan to overthrow the Venezuelan Dictatorship – 'Masterstroke'", Admiral Kurt W. Tidd, *Voltaire Network*, 23 février 2018. "The United States 'Master Stroke' against Venezuela", by Stella Calloni; "The United States are preparing a war between Latin-American states", by Thierry Meyssan, Translation Pete Kimberley, *Voltaire Network*, 17 May and 18 December 2018.

² The Pentagon's New Map, Thomas P. M. Barnett, Putnam Publishing Group, 2004. "The US military project for the world", by Thierry Meyssan, Translation Pete Kimberley, *Voltaire Network*, 22 August 2017.

³ "Declaration of a National Emergency with Respect to Venezuela", "Executive Order – Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela", by Barack Obama, *Voltaire Network*, 9 March 2015.

⁴ "Brexit : Londres assume sa nouvelle politique coloniale", *Réseau Voltaire*, 3 janvier 2019.

⁵ "Assad and Chávez call for the creation of a Free Allied Movement", *Voltaire Network*, 29 June 2010.

⁶ "Large-scale manoeuvres encircling Venezuela", by Manlio Dinucci, Translation Anoocha Boralessa, *Il Manifesto* (Italy), *Voltaire Network*, 23 August 2017.

⁷ "We are opening new overseas bases to boost Britain", Christopher Hope, *Sunday Telegraph*, 30 Decembre 2018.

⁸ Cantanhêde, Eliane. "Ficamos satisfeitos com a oferta da base militar", diz Pompeo", *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 6/1/19.

⁹ "Declaration of the Lima Group", Translation Anoocha Boralessa, *Voltaire Network*, 4 January 2019.

**SOLIDARITY STATEMENT WITH THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA**

ISSUED BY THE SADC CHAIRPERSON, HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

10 FEBRUARY, 2019

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) notes with concern the attempts by the leaders of some countries to interfere in the affairs and sovereignty of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In particular, these countries have sought to undermine a democratically elected Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela led by His Excellency President Nicolas Maduro Moros by proclaiming Mr. Juan Guaido Marquez as Interim-President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

SADC condemns such violations of the principles of International Law, especially, the respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

SADC notes that the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expressed their political choices through Parliamentary Elections and Presidential Elections held in December 2015 and May 2018 respectively, and urges the international community and all stakeholders to respect the outcomes of these elections.

Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, and Chairperson of SADC
10 February 2019.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is an inter-governmental organisation headquartered in Gaborone, Botswana. The 16 southern African states are: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Eswatini (Swaziland), Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, South Africa and United Republic of Tanzania.

Source: www.sadc.int/files/8415/4980/4167/Solidarity_statement_with_the_Bolivarian_Republic_of_Venezuela_by_SADC_Chairperson.pdf

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War is getting more likely – who will counteract this development?

by Karl Müller

The risk of war is rising. But still the peace movement is weak. Some observations and fundamental considerations.

It needs to be repeated like the famous “*ceterum censeo*”: The confrontation between the NATO states on the one hand and Russia and China on the other hand is increasing. The presidency of *Donald Trump* has not changed this. Sometimes a glance at just one week is enough to see how bad things are.

The governments of the USA and then of Russia have abrogated the 1987 treaty between the USA and the Soviet Union on the destruction and prohibition of all land-based medium-range nuclear weapons (INF).

The German Defence Minister *Ursula von der Leyen* has visited Bundeswehr and NATO troops in Lithuania. The Germans are in command there. Von der Leyen justified the advance of the German and NATO soldiers with the statement: “We are reacting on Russia’s aggressive policy.” The Lithuanian city *Rukla*, where the German and NATO troops are deployed, is only 100 kilometres from the Russian border. The NATO has called its advance “Enhanced Forward Presence”.

Following the US, some EU governments, including the German government, have also acknowledged a non-elected Venezuelan politician as the country’s interim president, thus turning the escalation spiral even further. The goal is to overturn the country’s ruling president. It is quite obvious that this is not about Venezuela’s further development and not just about raw materials but also an attempt to smash the Venezuelan alliance with Russia and China.

On 6 February representatives of the current 29 member states have signed the Protocol of Accession for North Macedonia as 30th NATO member state. In order to push back Russia’s influence on the Balkans, as was officially stated.

“The level of conflict has reached a very dangerous point”

Die Bundeswehr, the magazine of the German Armed Forces Association – this is the professional association of the Bundeswehr soldiers – headlined on its February 2019 issue: “Security policy. The rifts are deepening”. And, finally: On 30 January in Beijing during a meeting of the five nuclear powers USA, Russia, China, United Kingdom and France, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister *Sergei Ryabkov*

stated: “With respect to international security, the situation has not stabilised and has even aggravated. The level of conflict has reached a very dangerous point.” ...

... But unlike in the fall 1962, when during the Cuba crisis the world narrowly escaped a nuclear war, there are no responsible personalities to be found in the NATO states who recognise the gravity of the situation and take decisive counter-measures.

More oil is being added to the fire daily

On the contrary, more oil is being added to the fire daily. Those who want to counteract are attacked and slandered. The “Integrity Initiative” starting from Great Britain is an example (cf. *Current Concerns* No. 3 from 5 February 2019). Just read the leaked interim report of the German “branch manager” *Hannes Adomeit* to his British “agent handler” on the “German Cluster” of 3 October 2018 (<https://edoc.site/-interim-report-pdf-free.html>) and his dismissive characterisation of all forces in Germany championing better German-Russian relations. In Germany, where resistance to the NATO enemy stereotype is still the strongest, some opposition can be expected in the coming weeks and months.

The sinister role of the mass media

The mass media are playing a sinister role. They are in the vanguard of cheap propaganda. Thus on 4 February 2019 a Swiss daily ran the title “People are no longer afraid of *Maduro*. The Venezuelan regime is tottering as never before. *Guaidó* feels protected by the people.” The article contrasts *Guaidó* and *Maduro*: *Guaidó* as “hero of liberation” who “does not feel threatened by the people but protected” and not only is supported by the US president but “by the free world.” *Maduro* also had tried to mobilise his supporters – “what is left of them”, according to the newspaper. But: “In order to prevent the celebrations [of the 10th anniversary of *Hugo Chávez*’ assumption of office] from looking too poor, the claqueurs had to be hauled in busses.” What a contrast – just like in a theatre play: Here the shining hero of the NATO states, there the falling shady puppet of Russia and China.¹

But not only private media are beating the drums of war. Also public broadcasting has said goodbye to objective reporting and balanced commenting. In Germany, for example, the *Deutschlandfunk* is leading the way.²

What’s the matter with our youth?

But our youth? Hasn’t it been the hope for peace and the peace movement? Many young people in Europe are on the streets again – during school hours, demonstrating against the climate politics of their governments. It is strange that these young people, whose motives may generally be good, are abusing their school hours and are well fostered by the mainstream media. Even the WEF in Davos was hearing them. What kind of alliance is forming here?

And why are these young people not also demonstrating for peace, against the increasing warmongering by the NATO states, against power and politics of the globalist imperialists, for a sovereign democratic and liberal state of law and for respect for the UN Charter? ... And for really good education?

Any idea what’s in the UN Charter?

Have they ever heard from their teachers what is written in the UN Charter? For example in Article 2, paragraph 4: “All [UN] Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.” Have the demonstrating pupils learned that Article 2 of the UN Charter is prohibiting interference in internal national affairs of states, that Article 1 calls for peaceful and equal relationships within the community of states and that Article 1 of the two legally binding International Covenants on Political and Cultural Rights of 1966 guarantees all peoples the right to self-determination?

“Immaturity” is no law of nature

It would probably be easy to win the pupils for the cause of peace. Just like for any human, the wish for peace would be most natural. One hundred years ago, after the end of World War I, the individual psychologist *Alfred Adler* wrote an article that is still worth reading: “Die andere Seite. Eine massenpsychologische Studie über die Schuld des Volkes [The other side. A mass psychological study on the people’s guilt]”.³ Adler was one of the few thinkers of his time who opposed the idea of a human aggression drive and who did not see war as founded in human nature. He wrote: “Who has seen and understood this gagged people that was driven to the slaughtering block will not tire of shouting into the world: This people was immature and was kept in immaturity with cunning

The answer to the “yellow vests”?

The principle of the same rule for all

by Chantal Delsol, France*

Concord will only be restored if the same principles apply to all French people with regard to work, old-age provision and social benefits, the professor of political philosophy analyses.

One has the impression that one does not really understand what the “yellowvests” [“Gilets jaunes”] want exactly and why the movement continues, although the government has already made various concessions and is making further efforts for cooperative dialogues. But such a large, sustainable and comprehensive movement (supported by a majority of the population) owes nothing to chance or to whim. The causes are deeper, and *Emmanuel Macron* is likely to inherit the failures of his predecessors. This is alarming because it is a social drama revealing longstanding fractures that are deeply rooted and destructive.

One might be surprised that the occupiers of the roundabouts [“ronds-points”] demand social justice, participation and more equality between the richest and the poorest. France is undoubtedly the country in the world where there is the most redistribution. More than half of the pop-

ulation (which is enormous) does not pay income taxes. All inhabitants, whether citizens or not, benefit from free education, free health care and all kinds of other services that cannot all be listed. Many citizens of the world would dream of being French. This brings to mind the “Tocqueville paradox”¹: the more egalitarian a society is, the more members find the slightest inequality intolerable.

But we have to go further. The inequality engendering revolt is not only that of the purse, but also by the social position – advantages, securities, precedences – or simply: privileges. It seems that our social network society has revealed the extent of corporatism. This is where class contempt is incarnated and where discomfort and demands arise.

For France is not just a monarchist country, in which the president is giving himself ever greater power, to the detriment of the government and the chambers of parliament. The president has recently snatched from the local authorities the last autonomy they had: the possibility to raise taxes, in this case the housing tax [“taxe d’habitation”]. France is also a country in



Chantal Delsol (picture ma)

war, and in particular during the economic boom [“les Trente Glorieuses”]. The advantages of these regulations are sometimes outrageous, always profitable, absolutely inviolable and hidden. The most important advantage, and not the slightest one, is guaranteed employment.

The beneficiaries of corporations often work less, sometimes much less than others, they do not have to fear dismissal, and enjoy all-round protection. The top of this system is the class of “mandarins” [senior civil servants], who, after passing an examination at the age of about 25, receive a lifelong salary from the state with all the associated benefits, even outside periods of work. Since the beginning of the 21st century, this social group has become a “caste”. The figures show that today, unlike in the past, in order to become one, you must be the son or the daughter of such a “mandarin”. When the salary of *Chantal Jouanno*² became known the outcry of the “Gilets jaunes” was only the tip of the iceberg.

The other characteristic of this corporatism is its secrecy: it is surrounded by silence and darkness. There is probably a kind of shame in the “Bercy”, the French finance ministry in Paris, when it comes to uncovering the enormous costs of these lifelong jobs and all the benefits associated therewith. It is clearly undemocratic and more like an oligarchic banana republic. Secrecy, of course, promotes a lot of misinformation: Every discovered advantage gives rise to the suspicion of a thousand others not known, and a thousand others just invented – which makes the “fake news” flourish. This is less a result of “people’s stupidity” than of the opacity of the privileges. In the face of an over-indebted and largely bankrupt state the “Gilets jaunes” now know, that at the same time a group of lucky people, whose exact number is unknown, lives comfortably and without fear of unemployment and of the

“This is alarming because it is a social drama revealing longstanding fractures that are deeply rooted and destructive.”

which a quarter of the population benefits from corporatist regimes obtained in the last 75 years separating us from the

and equal relationship, for an exchange of information and opinions committed to a search for truth.

So, who will counteract? •

* Chantal Delsol, born in Paris in 1947, is a French historian, philosopher, writer and professor of philosophy at the University of Marne-La-Vallée. She received her doctorate from the Sorbonne University in Paris in 1982. In 1993 she founded the Hannah Arendt Institute. In 2007 she became a member of the renowned Académie des Sciences morales et politiques, founded in 1795. Since the 1980s she has published a large number of essays and four novels, which have made her famous in German-speaking countries.

“War is getting more likely...”

continued from page 8

and violence!” [Translation of all quotes: *Current Concerns*]

And, further down: “No! Who has lived among these people will acquit them from any guilt for the war. [...] It was pulled, kicked, driven to the slaughtering block. Nobody told them the truth. Its writers and reporters stood in awe of or were paid by the military power. Out of shame for its defilement it tried to rally under the flag of its oppressor. Out of shame for previous and current defilements it is still silent.”

Will this also be a description of our generation?

Mankind has progressed. The “immaturity” of the people 100 years ago is no law of nature. More than for flattery and bullying of power, humans are open for a free

¹ Such hymns of praise on Juan Guaidó contradict research by authors such as Dan Cohen and Max Blumenthal. According to them, this politician can certainly be described as a kind of political criminal. See grayzoneproject.com/2019/01/29/the-making-of-juan-guaido-how-the-us-regime-change-laboratory-created-venezuelas-coup-leader/.

² Thus again with a comment of 9 February 2019. Completely unproven it says there: „Putin has been escalating for years“, Russia is swinging the „nuclear club“, Russia is „aggressive“, Russia’s „threatening weapons“ are „long since there“, Russia’s „government has long been waging war ... With weapons in Ukraine, with other means in Europe, with poison in Salisbury“, etc.

³ The German text can be found i.a. in: Bruder-Bezel, Almut (Ed.). Adler, Alfred. Society and Culture. Volume 7 of the Alfred Adler Studienausgabe, edited by Karl Heinz Witte, 2009, p. 120ff.

"The answer to the ..."

continued from page 9

future. They can obtain a loan from a bank at any time and go to the dentist without financial worries.

It was certainly correct that in the spring of 2018 Emmanuel Macron tack-

"The top of this system is the class of 'mandarins' [senior civil servants], who, after passing an examination at the age of about 25, receive a lifelong salary from the state with all the associated benefits, even outside periods of work."

led the problems associated with the railway workers' special status, which was an example of French corporatism. The idea was good, but one should have started from the top! The ruling forces cannot decide to deprive certain groups of unjustified advantages without depriving themselves of them at first. This is the ABC of every leadership. Otherwise one will fail. And in the concrete case the class war is still spreading.

Some measures have been taken which expressed the will of the new government. Personally, I was very pleased to note that in the first few months after the presidential election, the SNCF's free, life-long (1st class, of course) general season ticket for former parliamentarians was abolished. This was an example of an unjustified and unfair advantage that was not painless for the nation. Mr. President, we expect further steps in this direction!

"The ruling forces cannot decide to deprive certain groups of unjustified advantages without depriving themselves of them at first. This is the ABC of every leadership."

The revolution-like Saturdays we have witnessed for two months are an expression of the fury of a population that realises that enormous taxes are being raised to finance corporatism. As in all the surrounding countries, the raised taxes should be used to finance public services, which have become massively worse in France because of over-indebtedness. The demand for democracy means not only the

"The occupiers of the roundabouts (ronds-points) are people who work and do not want to beg. They only demand that taxpayers' money be used in the right place."

"Référendum d'initiative citoyen" (RIC) [popular initiative and referendum], but also the abolition of these privileges.

This is probably partly for this reason that the French elite is so reserved in the face of this revolt – and in private, so contemptuous. She begins to understand that it is she who is challenged, not in her authority, but in her privileges. In the first days of the conflict, political leaders had begun to offer some additional allowances to nip the uprising in the bud: We recall the announcement that in some schools breakfast would be served to the children ... pathetic! The occupiers of the roundabouts (ronds-points) are people who work and do not want to beg. They only demand that taxpayers' money be used in the right place.

Since our elite gave up Marxism, they have not cheered and hardly defended the people. She no longer sees in it a crowd of oppressed people carrying the future of the world, but a population of white trash, of vengeful and frustrated petty-bourgeois populists ["poujadistes,"] who are closer to the voters of Le Pen than to the glori-

ous proletariat of former years. Hence her reserve.

Today it is delicate to see the left-wing media siding with law and order. The obsolete ideological cleavages have been replaced by class antagonisms. The misfortune is that if the former at least hold some convictions, the latter are downright disgusting. We would need a night of August 4 as soon as possible.³ That would be the real answer to the "Yellow vests". •

Footnotes 1-3: Translator's notes

- ¹ Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), a French philosopher, historian and politician elaborated and discussed various social paradoxes in his book of 1830 "De la démocratie en Amérique" [On Democracy in America].
- ² Chantal Jouanno (born 1969) is a French politician. She studied politics and completed the elite university Ecole nationale d'administration (ENA), held management positions in various local authorities, was a consultant to President Nicolas Sarkozy, later Secretary of State and then Minister of Sport and Senator. In March 2018, Emmanuel Macron appointed her President of the Commission nationale du débat public (CNDP). In this position, she should have led the national civil dialogue with the yellow vest movement. A few days before it began on 15 January 2019, however, she withdrew from the mandate after criticism had been levelled at her salary of just under 15,000 euros per month.
- ³ "Night of 4 August 1789" means the meeting of the constituent National Assembly held in Versailles. As a result of the storm on the Bastille on 14 July 1789 and the pressure from the population, the Parliament decided to abolish the privileges of the clergy and the nobility, the corporations of the cities and the provinces by various decrees.

Source: © Chantal Delsol/Le Figaro from 15 January 2019

(Translation Current Concerns)

State generosity for the elites

jp.v. Four French people cost the French state 10 million euros per year. One of them received an additional 85 million euros for his pension, according to the figures compiled by René Dosière, a former member of the National Assembly. And the following gentleman costs an additional 2.5 million euros per year: Yes, the former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who has been retired for 38 years, costs the state 6849 euros per day! The other three are also former presidents: Jacques Chirac with 1.5 million euros, Nicolas Sarkozy with 2.2 million euros and François Hollande. He has been retired early since May 2017 and receives 5184 euros per month as a former resident of the Elysée Palace, 6208 euros as a former member of the National Assembly and 3473 euros as a former referent at the Court of Audit. But that is not all. The generosity of the French state seems immeasurable, as the treasurer of the Constitutional Council will give him a monthly check of 12,000 euros gross for the rest of his life. All in all, he will receive around 27,000 euros per month. Mr Hollande receives an annu-

al pension of 324,000 euros. Much smaller benefits such as police protection, a secretariat with several employees, a car with a chauffeur, etc. are also provided by the state.

These numbers of the IFRAP Foundation (*Fondation pour la recherche sur les administrations et les politiques publiques*) cannot be refuted and show how much can be earned in politics. The dissatisfaction of large sections of the French population is understandable in view of such massive privileges, which are not limited to the "highest civil servants" but are also granted to a "cast" of thousands of senior civil servants (some of whom earn more than 300,000 euros per year), deputies, senators and commission presidents, etc.

Source: Excerpts from the article: "Scandales des rémunérations: et si les anciens Présidents montraient l'exemple? [Scandal about compensation: And if the former presidents set a good example?] by Floris de Bonneville, published on www.bvoltaire.fr, 13 January 2019

“Borders – territorial and social dividing lines in the course of time”

Review of a historical analysis of a timeless phenomenon

by Dr Manfred Strankmann

The publishing house Promedia issues an excellent non-fiction book to the current European situation by Andrea Komlosy* about borders in a global perspective. The Viennese professor of economic and social history criticises one-sidedly stylising borders either as an ideal or a bogeyman. She signposts the historical development of borders and their volatile utilisation, thereby examining their capability to dominate as well as to protect and extricate. Analysing borders is for Andrea Komlosy not only a topic, but also a method: “Method to recognise inequality, its enforcement and concealment and method in developing and implementing social justice” (p. 10). In this sense, she sums up: “A central task is to replace heteronomy by border with self-determination of the border” (p. 10). With her book “Grenzen” (Borders), Andrea Komlosy has presented a historical analysis of a timeless phenomenon that is well worth reading, which contributes fundamentally to the objective and well-founded reflection and discussion on a highly topical theme.

“Closed border” versus “no border.”

The book “Grenzen” is structured as follows: It begins with a preface and a short introduction to the history of the term, followed by the three main chapters “Chronology of Territoriality”, “Typology of Borders” and “Border Regime and Politics on Border” as well as an outlook.

In the introduction, Andrea Komlosy describes the antagonisms of the current discussion about borders and states that the “proclaimed no borders” (p. 7) has not prevailed. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the ideology of no borders triumphed in Europe. System barriers between capitalism and communism had fallen. Within the EU-Schengen Area the internal borders were abolished. It seemed as if there would soon be no borders at all in the world.

But soon the euphoria about the proclaimed no borders toppled, followed by calls to re-establish borders: With regard to migrants, with regard to foreign company takeovers, with regard to the Islami-

sation of European society and many other “foreign” influences.

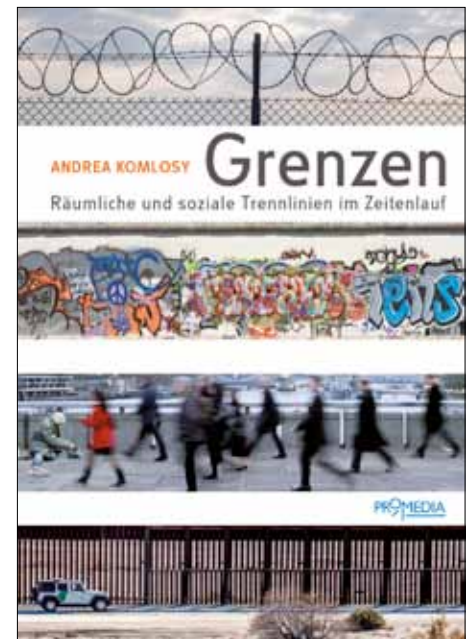
According to Andrea Komlosy, during the period of open borders, there was at the same time a rigid isolation against people from third countries. The borders were not really removed; they were merely moved to the EU’s external border. Conversely, the current revival of borders means in no way an end to the limitless Western interference everywhere in the world, both economically and militarily. The West’s dominant international financial and trade organisations (IMF, World Bank, WTO) impose the free movement of capital and free trade. This would deprive the countries of the global South of the instruments they need to protect their own markets and provide their citizens with jobs and incomes. Any attempts to catch up on development and supra regional integration in these countries are fought against by all available means. As a result of this struggle, more and more victims seek refuge in flight to the rich north. There, locks for migrants would be established to choose the best educated and most obedient, while others would end up on the illegal labour market or forced to return.

However, this development also has repercussions within our societies. Andrea Komlosy writes: “Against this background, the divide is also deepening in the welfare societies of the global north. In all ideological factions a conflict breaks out between two groups: “Closed borders” are demanded by some, “open borders” is chanted by others. [...] Behind the different ideologies there are concrete interests: Entrepreneurs welcome the deregulation of the labour market; the new middle class is pleased with the multi culturalisation of gastronomy and the low-cost availability of domestic services; the old workers, who are threatened by competition on the labour market, hope that higher border fences will keep away the unwanted” (p. 7). Whether hostility or friendliness towards foreigners, both factions would have one thing in common: They exploit the border with respect to benefits for the well-being of their own group in society – by fortifying or dismantling.

People need borders and boundaries

Andrea Komlosy opposes the idea of stylising borders one-sidedly as ideals or concept of enemy.

Both are an overestimation of what fences, walls, visas and immigration-, la-



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bour market- or asylum quotas can achieve or abolish. Borders, as well as boundlessness, can project hopes that they could never fulfil. Conversely, borders actually provide mechanisms by which states can set an economic and political course and bring about advantages or disadvantages for citizens and workers.

The practical application of borders is much more complex than the wishful thinking of “closed borders” and “no borders” might suggest. Andrea Komlosy highlights to the reader that people need boundaries. For her, boundaries are an instrument in shaping human relationships and they cannot be abolished no more than the need for territorial ties and identification. Borders or boundaries are a basic constant in the coexistence of people and communities. There are political-administrative, military, economic, social, cultural, gender and ideological borders or boundaries, to name only the most important. All these borders are subject of conflicts of interest and political shaping. Everywhere the issue of establishing borders and violating borders is concerned. Without borders nothing can be preserved and nothing can be violated.

Territoriality in historical perspective

The territorial manifestation of borders is called territoriality. Territoriality serves Andrea Komlosy as a generic term, “in which people in general, but above all

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social groups and political communities connect their ideas of community with a certain territory” (p. 13). In the first main chapter “*Chronology of Territoriality*” the author elaborates five spatial orders: 1. the territoriality of supra-regionally active tribal societies, city states and empires up to the 13th century, 2. the medieval kaleidoscope of overlapping territoriality from the 13th to the 15th century, 3. the territoriality of the early modern territorial state expanded by imperial or colonial activities from the 16th to the 19th century, 4. the sovereignty order of the nation states from the 18th to the 20th century and 5. the system of statehood denationalised by *global governance* at the turn of the 20th to the 21st century. The five orders did not simply replace each other in the course of time; rather, the older and newer orders overlapped.

The territoriality of supra-regional tribal societies, city states (Greek Polis, Maya, Aztecs, etc.) and empires (Assyrian, Persian, Roman, etc.) is based on the expansion of rule by military means. It was not a question of territorial unity in the form of a certain area or external borders, but of locations, connections and networks that covered a certain area. Andrea Komlosy characterises the Middle Ages by a kaleidoscope. This “was characterised by dynasties, church and nobility, bourgeois urban culture, merchants and long-distance traders as well as travelling lower classes, which were interconnected by networks (e.g. Hanseatic League) and patchwork-like” (p. 227). In the 16th century, a tendency towards an areawise shaping of the political and social order in the European mother countries and their non-European expansion areas and colonies had begun. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, large parts of the Eastern and non-European world were successively integrated into a world system dominat-

ed by Western Europe. The right of the colonised and dependent world regions to implement their own border policies had been restricted or suspended. In the course of the transformation of the old empires into national constitutional states in the 19th century and through gradual decolonisation (19th and 20th centuries), the colonial state order was transformed into an international state order. With the onset of *globalisation* (transformation of the centralised mode of production into global supply chains with production sites spread across the globe), this order then came into conflict with national sovereignty and their safeguarding under international law. Andrea Komlosy puts it this way: “Although states and international institutions still exist, since the 1980s they have been in a state of flux towards *global governance*, in which the interests of states and the balance of interests in their democratic institutions take a back seat to a global order in the interests of capital. The Western states are developing from welfare states toward competitive states, committed to restructuring institutions geared to the common good in the interest of capital exploitation and are increasingly taking on authoritarian forms” (p. 228).

The author notes the following simultaneity: “The Western states are moving away from the principle of state sovereignty and its safeguarding under international law at the very moment when the emerging countries of the global South made claims to equal participation in the international order on the basis of the successes of their catching-up economic development. According to Andrea Komlosy, “the demanded democratisation of international relations in the sense of a multipolar world order has so far failed because of the vehemence with which the large Western corporations combine the freedom of unhindered capital and goods trade that they call free trade with the protection of their own markets against the competition of the emerging threshold

countries and make this protective free trade a condition for participation in the world economy” (p. 229).

Which borders and boundaries are involved?

In the second main chapter “*Typology of borders*” Andrea Komlosy brings order to the multitude of borders. *Elementary boundaries* of human existence are explored as well as *political, military, cultural, economic and social boundaries*. It is not limited to the spatial manifestation of borders alone. Borders can be visible (recognisable by border signs, buildings, fortifications) or invisible (language, legal, currency, poverty, etc.). The boundaries described by the author as elementary occur in *human personality development*, in the *relationship between man and nature* and in *social differentiation*. According to Andrea Komlosy, developmental psychology shows the stages in which the child begins to see himself as an independent personality and thus sets a first boundary between himself, his neighbour and his environment. To bring this demarcation of the individual into balance with the bond in the community accompanies the human being until the end of his life. Thinking and speaking are further acts of setting boundaries in human development. With reason, which enables man to think, man can distinguish things from each other. “In order to differentiate, to compare, to define, to limit, to confront, to terminate, to assign facts and to classify them into contexts, one needs the ability of analytical separation, thus the setting of boundaries” (p. 93). In order to be able to live in society, man must also learn *moral boundaries* such as values, moral standards and rules of behaviour.

Andrea Komlosy also considers the *relationship between man and nature*, which has changed numerous times over the course of evolutionary history, to be one of the elementary limits. The early humans lived for many thousands of years as hunters and gatherers and saw themselves as an integral part of nature. They had not drawn any dividing lines between themselves and their natural environment. Only with agro-cultural technology did men free himself from this unity and opposed culture to nature, which was now defined wilderness. Humans built permanent settlements surrounded by ramparts. According to Andrea Komlosy, the village was defined as the endosphere, the world of its inhabitants, which differed from the outside, the exosphere. The following quote illustrates just how vital this distinction was: “Until the Middle ages it was a worse punishment to be banished to the exosphere than the death penalty” (p. 94).

“Although states and international institutions still exist, since the 1980s they have been in a state of flux towards *global governance*, in which the interests of states and the balance of interests in their democratic institutions take a back seat to a global order in the interests of capital. The Western states are developing from welfare states toward competitive states, committed to restructuring institutions geared to the common good in the interest of capital exploitation and are increasingly taking on authoritarian forms’ (p. 228). [...] ‘The Western states are moving away from the principle of state sovereignty and its safeguarding under international law at the very moment when the emerging countries of the global South made claims to equal participation in the international order on the basis of the successes of their catching-up economic development.’”

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The *separation of man and nature* also found its expression in the Christian message on dealing with nature: “Replenish the earth and subdue it” (Genesis I, p. 28). For Andrea Komlosy, the clear hierarchy on which this demarcation is based on, could only be fully implemented through the secularisation associated with the Enlightenment. Through the development of the sciences, the relationship of man to nature was restructured with the help of technology. The boundary between the endosphere and the exosphere was torn down and the “development, colonisation and taming of nature was elevated to the epitome of human progress, which itself would no longer know any limits” (p. 96). With the aim of adapting nature in the service of its utilisation, exploitation and use, boundaries of power were extended. This happened both in their own settlement areas and in areas of colonial conquest, “whose indigenous inhabitants were quickly declared savages because of their symbiotic relationship with nature” (p. 96).

According to Andrea Komlosy, *elementary boundaries* are also set in the *sphere of society*. Horizontal boundaries become visible by doors, thresholds, fences, walls, barriers and signs. Vertical boundaries exist between sexes, age groups, rich and poor, occupational groups, status groups, classes, members of a religion or ethnic groups. The focus here is not on spatial boundaries, but on *social belonging*. In his everyday life, each person continuously makes class distinctions in which he assigns himself and others in relation to his own or other groups. This classification anchors in practice and experience and is often looked at being so self-evident that it is not perceived as an act of consciously putting boundaries but as natural behaviour. Horizontal and vertical boundaries could also overlap. Thus, “the prosperity gap between poor and rich inhabitants of a city can cause a socio-spatial polarisation, so that the social becomes the spatial boundary” (p. 97). In extreme cases, excessive social differentiation could lead to a concentration of power, conflicts or even wars.

Political borders

Andrea Komlosy deals with political borders as central to the understanding of borders. She argues that political borders define communities in terms of the scope of law and order in spatial and personal terms. The nature of communities can range from small to large units of self-determination and self-government with varying degrees of political participation. “Village, city, district, province, state, confederation of states, union are

such spatial units as long as they have political self-determination and self-administration and are not simply executive organs of higher political instances” (p. 98).

Boundaries between authorities (e.g. federal government, cantons, states, municipalities) are political boundaries. Whether these were external or internal boundaries depends on which unit of measurement serves as reference value. “The external boundary of a commune is a political boundary that represents an internal boundary from the perspective of the district, canton or state to which the commune belongs” (p. 99).

Political boundaries are also set during the founding, disintegration, secession, re-formation of states and the re-composition into confederations of states or blocs. These political boundaries often interacted with social, economic and cultural boundaries: “Status, prosperity and cultural identity also provide justifications for spatial boundaries: Desire for unity, for remaining, for secession, separation, rejection of sub-regions or unification with other states or regions” (p. 229).

For Andrea Komlosy, the *transfer of political powers* to supranational EU bodies intervenes in the relationships between internal and external borders. In the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997, in force since 1999), which incorporated the *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CFSP) into the EU Treaty, the member states transferred more and more decision-making powers to a higher level than their own parliament. For Andrea Komlosy, this transfer of authority is questionable from a democratic political point of view because the legislative level, the Council of the EU has no democratic legitimisation, but is composed of the governments (the executive branches) of the member states. With the Schengen Agreement as part of the Treaty of Amsterdam, the *abolition of internal borders* became part of the legal framework of the EU. “The dismantling of frontier stations and the abolition of border controls on persons were propagated and celebrated as milestones on the road to borderlessness” (p. 105). Never mentioned was the fact that the state border did not disappear through this, but merely moved to the external border of the EU. In addition, according to Andrea Komlosy, the state borders of the EU member states were transformed into “the outer walls of a fortress Europe, which appear all the more attractive as the crossing of the outer border gave people entry into the supposedly borderless Europe” (p. 105).

Shaping borders through border politics

The third main chapter is devoted to *border regimes* and the controversies surrounding the design of a *border politics*.

Andrea Komlosy explains that border politics takes place constantly in all areas in which borders are maintained, crossed, abolished or changed in their effect. This applies not only to the spatial aspect of borders, but also to social, economic and cultural boundaries. Border politics manifests itself in certain border regimes, understood as norms, rules and usual practices in the maintenance and management of borders. For Andrea Komlosy, politics and borders influence each other. She writes: “Politics of the border, border as politics means more than the changeability of territory, state sovereignty and the associated types of border. Border as politics refers to border as process, as task, as activity. Acting agents are not only governments of the various levels of statehood, but also all those persons and institutions who use the diverse and manifold overlapping and complementary borders” (p. 230).

According to Andrea Komlosy, governments and citizens have different possibilities for shaping borders. Governments provide the legal preconditions “to regulate and, where possible, control the handling of external state borders and all types of boundaries within the state. The citizens concerned shape the boundaries found by dealing with them: By acceptance, undermining, transgressing, overcoming or also by endeavouring to redesign the boundaries or the rules for dealing with them” (p. 230). However, the citizens’ room for manoeuvre is more limited than that of the government.

Example refugee politics: from the welcome phase to migration management

On 31 August, 2015, *Angela Merkel* announced the opening of German borders for refugees with the formula “We can do it” and thus heralded the “welcome phase”. Germany and Austria initiated the suspension of the Schengen and Dublin regulations by abolishing border controls at the EU’s external borders and allowing refugees to transit freely to the country of asylum of their choice. With this practice, which spread like wildfire in the social media, those responsible had triggered a hitherto unprecedented influx of refugees, which questioned the continued existence of public and social security. And the more the situation got out of hand, the greater would be the willingness of the responsible politicians and citizens to implement or accept a new refugee and migration management. In retrospect, according to Andrea Komlosy, the welcome phase in autumn and winter 2015/16 proved to be a test. Thus, not only the authorities and the executive had learned

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from coping with the transport, accommodation and care of refugee masses, but also the refugee industry, in whose hands the administration was increasingly outsourced. According to Andrea Komlosy, refugees in the crisis regions of the world have long been subjects for digitalised, biometric forms of registration, control and administration. Since 2002, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) has been practising biometric registration for people living in its camps. In concrete terms, for example, in the Jordanian Zaatari refugee camp since 2016, they would have been experimenting with purchasing credits deducted automatically from the refugee by means of an iris scan while purchasing from monopolists designated as authorised camp supermarkets. With every purchase made by a refugee, one per cent goes to the company that supplies the eye scanner and has its headquarters on the tax-saving Cayman Islands. If the test is successful, the technology would be introduced to regular payment transactions.

UNO summits on migration and refugee issues include trade shows offering products such as drones, surveillance technology, camp infrastructure as well as financial solutions. The respective private companies would sponsor the UNHCR and in exchange receive the corresponding mandate. The biggest donor in 2016 was *IKEA*; in return, *IKEA* could deliver 30 million tents.

According to Andrea Komlosy, the European states also experienced a test phase with regard to the reactions of the population due to the challenge of the welcome phase. It split into enthusiasts and sceptics. From March 2016, consequences were drawn. Meanwhile, according to Andrea Komlosy, across the political camps, a consent is emerging to optimise the EU's external border as an insurmountable rampart. This perspective, too, would be in the tradition of Western superiority in securing its wealth gained from its historic dominance of the world economy through colonialism and post-colonial free trade regimes.

**Solving border conflicts
by balance of interests**

At the end of her book, as an outlook, Andrea Komlosy deals with border conflicts and gives *recommendations for resolving conflicts*. Since each border has at least

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two sides, it can be designed and implemented differently from either side.

If different groups and interests clash, *border conflicts* can arise. These can be tackled either confrontatively or in a spirit of compromise. Andrea Komlosy's indispensable condition for a solution in the case of conflict is to concede to the other side their position and to acknowledge that they also want to use the border in their sense. Both sides should then seek a balance in interests, with which both sides can live. International law offers certain dealings to the solution of border conflicts between sovereign states, even if they are undermined regularly by wars of aggression and military interventions. However, international law offers no means against undermining and exploiting the economic sovereignty of other states through the intervention of transnationally acting capital. On the contrary, Andrea Komlosy argues that the WTO and international financial organisations ban the non-dominant states (developing countries, threshold countries and others) to implement their own border politics: “They ban it under the guise of free competition and free world trade and enforce that prohibition with the threat that promotion and protection of domestic businesses and economic development would result in exclusion from international trade and capital flows” (p. 232).

**Border as a method
and conclusive plea**

For Andrea Komlosy, dealing with borders and boundaries is not just a topic, but also a *method* for recognising inequality, its enforcement and concealment, and a method for developing and implementing social justice. She notes that the

discourses on global inequality prevalent today in the Western centres, because of their fixation on their own point of view, are not suited to discerning the historical destabilisations and distortions that arise daily from the structures and institutions of the world economy. Although the resulting impoverishment and uprooting of large parts of the world population are perceived as a threat to social peace in Europe, the European or Western responsibility for their situation is, however, ignored. And most of this would lead to wrong conclusions being drawn in the denial of the cause-and-effect relationships, in that more of what causes hunger, misery, flight and departure is ordered as a remedy – namely more international trade in goods (unequal exchange), more credits, more so-called development aid, more so-called partnership agreements, more military aid. Embarking on local needs in the global South is altogether uncommon in the North/West. It is merely about preserving one's own prosperity behind walls/borders. What happens in the home countries, remains disregarded, even by those who would like to accommodate more, all, or at least most refugees and poverty migrants.

Andrea Komlosy concludes her book with a *plea* to allow people, social movements, and governments in the global South to use the border in their own interests. However, that would also mean demanding and promoting an end to interferences that make a self-determined use impossible. For Andrea Komlosy, times have dawned when borders are increasingly a subject to renegotiations and it depends on “whoever tackles what border politics for a more socially just world order to arise from the emerging chaos” (p. 234). •

Nimble climbers with bushy tail

Squirrels – the goblins of the forest

by Heini Hofmann

The squirrel is one of the best-known and most popular wild animals in our country. Nonetheless, it is astonishing that it is one of the less researched representatives of the local fauna.

Its popularity has fourfold reasons: quite frequent occurrence, conspicuously cute behaviour, not too much respect for humans (like the swallow, blackbird, sparrow and rat) and a daily routine that corresponds to ours so that you may also catch sight of this forest goblin more easily than species that immediately flee or even nocturnal animals.

Summer siesta yes, hibernation no

Squirrels are distinct day animals with usually two phases of activity: At dawn they become lively, at noon they have siesta, in the afternoon they are active again, and before sunset they go to sleep. In autumn their midday rest shortens and finally disappears completely so that both phases of activity merge into one which shrinks as the winter progresses and is limited to the later morning.

Contrary to popular belief, the squirrel, unlike its relative the marmot, does not hibernate. However, it strongly limits its activity in the cold season and leaves the nest only late in the morning for a short time. It only executes the unavoidable on that occasion: search for food and nature's call. It does not back away from snow and low temperatures but it avoids stormy and rainy periods of bad weather.

Born to climb

Studies on squirrels in the open are not easy because the animals usually stay unobservable in treetops and male and female are difficult to distinguish in size, appearance, coloration and weight.

Their adaptation to life on the trees is impressive. The anatomical proportions with the supple body, the light bone structure, the very muscular hind legs and the extremely skilful forelegs with long, curved claws on toes and fingers make the squirrels real climbing artists, who rarely stay on the ground (except in parks, where, as tame animals they show atypical behaviour when begging for food).

Steering, balance and signal

We all know the squirrel in a typical calendar sheet pose: sitting upright, a hazelnut or a pine cone in the front paws and the bushy tail – like a parasol, S-shaped over the back. The ancient Greeks called



Thanks to its cute nature, the squirrel has become one of the most popular native wild animals; it is a pity that it has not yet been better researched. (picture AWT)

this living statuette “Skiouros” (the one with his tail giving shade). This poetic paraphrase has remained in the generic name (*Sciurus vulgaris*) until today.

However: Proving shade is probably the most unimportant task of this powerful tail. First of all it serves as a rudder for long jumps and as a balancing pole for climbing or as an optical signal during the courtship display (love foreplay) and finally as a protection against the cold in winter. Another typical feature are the neat tufts of hair on the ears. Among the native wild animals, only the lynx has similar ear tufts.

The Reds and the Blacks

The said calendar sheet usually depicts a ginger squirrel. In reality, the colouring varies from ginger to brown to black, but always with a white underbelly. In the lowlands, the ginger variety predominates, in the hilly and regions, however, the dark. The colouring also depends on the two moults in spring and autumn.

During the transition from summer to the winter coat not only the length and density of the hairs change, but also greyish-white hairs appear more often, whereby the colouring is subdued so that ginger animals appear greyer and brownish-black animals appear lighter in colour, with silver-grey zones especially on the flanks. On the other hand, the long hair on ear tufts and tail changes only once a year after the spring hair change of the body fur.

Their home – the spherical nest

The living area of a male is about ten hectares, that of a female about half the size. At about the centre of the nest, technically speaking the drey, a slightly flattened spherical nest with an outer diameter of twenty to fifty centimetres, usually in a strong forked branch directly on the trunk and five to ten metres above the ground.

The round nest consists of a roughly weaved branches and is padded inside with grass, moss and bast. The nest cavity has a diameter of ten to twenty centimetres and is accessible through a five centimetres wide loophole. The construction of such a nest takes a few days. In addition to the main nest, an animal has usually also reserve nests, which serve as shelter for disturbances around the main drey or in search of food.

Rough wedding customs

Squirrels are considered to be non-social animals that live as a solitary animal, with little contact to fellow species. Each adult animal has its own nest, which it defends against others. This behaviour changes only in the mating season. When winter no longer has its firm grip the forest becomes the scene of the crazy squirrel wedding. First, the female chases the wooing male away then flees from him, which is leading to wild chases over several days until the female copulates in her main nest. After mating, the female again

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chases away the male, and both live separately again.

Pink, naked and blind

After 38 days of gestation period, younger females kittens once a year two to three kits, older females often twice a year three to five so that litters can arrive from end of February until end of August. Squirrels are born as distinct nestlings, pink, naked, blind, barely six centimetres long and weighing just under ten grams. After a few days, they begin to colour; they do not grow complete juvenile hair before two weeks and their eyes only open after about a month.

Approximately six weeks old, the tiny squirrels, now weighing over a hundred grams, leave the nest, but still drink from their mother (for about nine weeks). They also learn what is edible when fishing for food lumps from her mouth. On their excursions, they explore the tree on which they were born, the neighbouring trees and finally the entire hunting ground. Then the mother abandons the squirrel kittens to their fate. At about seven months, they are adult, and at eight to ten months, young females are already sexually mature. They usually have their first litter not until the second year.



There are red and brown to black colored squirrels, but all with white belly. Reddish varieties are mainly found in lowlands, the dark ones in higher altitudes. (pictures Aita Gross)

Survival is a matter of luck

The apparently high rate of squirrel offspring is necessary because only about a quarter to a fifth of the young live to be one year old and apparently less than one percent (!) of all animals live to be five years old, while the "hereditary enemies", pine martens and hawks, have a regulating but not a decimating effect. More serious are manmade environmental changes and the road fatalities nowadays! Being a protected animal species, the forest goblins may not be hunted in Switzerland.

The optimal habitat for squirrels is a mixed forest with a tight canopy and dense shrub layer. The forests, which are segregated, poor in undergrowth and cut into plots, no longer provide a livelihood. Important is the presence of different old forest trees, because seeds (cones) grow after ten or more years and only at irregular intervals of several years. Species and age monocultures can actually become a snare for hunger.

Emergency supplies: planned coincidence

There's hardly anything in the woods that squirrels do not make use of: Stomach tests from the midlands show that the seeds (cones) of pines and spruces are most important all year round, supplemented by beechnuts at the end of summer and enriched by buds and blossoms of coniferous wood in winter and spring. The menu also includes berries, hazelnuts, mushrooms, leaves and roots, even ant pupae, beetles, insects of all kinds, rarely even birds' eggs or young birds.

In autumn, when the food supply is large, the squirrels diligently build up food reserves by burying them near their roots or storing them in tree hollows. Since they cannot remember all these hiding places, they search in typical places in the winter according to random principle. Sometimes they make a find, sometimes not, whereby, in passing they contribute to the seed distribution.

Grey squirrel ante portam

HH. The American counterpart to our squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) is the grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), but it is bigger, stronger and more dominant. In addition, it is the carrier of a virus (Pox virus, "squirrel pox") against which it is immune itself – in contrast to the native squirrel. Carelessly introduced and released grey squirrels were able to spread in the British Isles and in northern Italy and now increasingly displace the native reds.

In England, this displacement process – since the first evidence in 1876 – is already well advanced. Only in Northern England and Scotland were the reds able to survive. Throughout Great Britain, the ratio today is a good three million grey squirrels versus nearly 150,000 squirrels.

In Italy (Piedmont and Lombardy), the grey squirrel has been based since its release by private persons in the middle of the 20th century and today is represented by more than 30,000 individuals. Based on model calculations, it is assumed that the greys could occasion-

ally reach Ticino on their way north. Following the river Ticino, the grey squirrels are only 70 kilometres away from the Swiss border. Since the Alps are not an insurmountable obstacle to their further spread, they would also have access to Central Europe, theoretically.

This changed situation attracted a European squirrel initiative, which declared war on the greys. However, because mass killings have been prevented by animal protectionists, attempts are now being made to solve the problem by means of contraception in grey squirrels, i.e. by means of immuno-contraception. The immune system is vaccinated with antibodies that block important proteins on the surface of sperms and egg and thus prevent their fusion so that the grey squirrels are not able to reproduce any further.

However, it will be years before this method is ready for outdoor use. In the meantime, nature will solve the problem in its own way.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)