

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,
and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

USA – By way of Ukraine-crisis to “regime change” in Russia

by James George Jatras, JD, Vice Chairman of the “American Institute in Ukraine”, Washington DC,
speech on the occasion of the panel discussion “Impact of the crisis in Ukraine on Europe, and
Switzerland’s contribution to a peaceful solution”, 15 September, in Berne

cc. On 15 and 16 September two events took place with the lawyer James George Jatras (cf. *Current Concerns* No 23/24 of 23 September 2014). Below we publish the speech he held in Berne.



James G. Jatras
(picture thk)

The announcement of a “permanent ceasefire” on September 5 in Minsk, agreed to both by the Kiev administration of President Petro Poroshenko and representatives of the Donetsk and Lugansk republics,

raised hopes for a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Under any realistic set of expectations, this will be a long, complicated negotiating process in which success is far from certain.

Distinct but related issues include:

- The status and extent of the republics or other entity (such as “Novorossiya”): autonomy within Ukraine, independence, confederation? Will other oblasts be allowed to join?

– Humanitarian and financial assistance from the West and Russia. Repairing the damage caused by the civil war: rebuilding the republics and their infrastructure, pulling Ukraine out of its economic tailspin.

- The balance of economic ties between the European Union (EU) and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, both of Ukraine as a whole and of the republics, including energy supply and price.
- The status of the Russian language.
- Perhaps most importantly, Ukraine’s security status and potential NATO candidacy.

It is hard to be optimistic about the Ukraine crisis. If things were left entirely to Ukrainians themselves, a peaceful resolution would be difficult enough. Since its birth in 1991, the Ukrainian state has always been fragile, both because of the undue influence of corrupt oligarchic interests and regional differences over the very questions of “What is Ukraine? Who are Ukrainians?” The unconstitutional ouster of Viktor Yanukovich in February shattered Ukraine’s delicate unity and installed a regime that was convinced that the authority and identity of “pro-Europe” “democratic” part of Ukraine could be imposed by force on the “dirt” and “para-

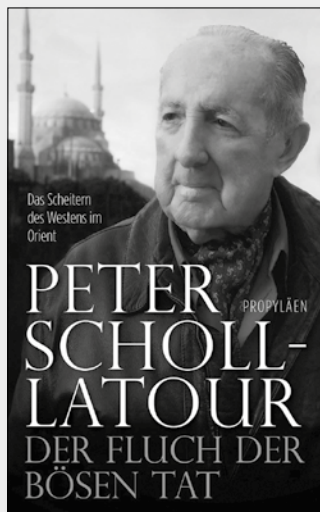
sites” in the east. Even if that effort seems to have failed for now, the thinking behind it has not disappeared.

Perhaps one could be more hopeful about the international aspect of this problem if this were entirely a question between Russia on the one hand and the EU (which primarily means Germany) on the other hand. Unfortunately, there are other influences. The policy of “the West” not only has been skewed by internal issues within the EU but, even more ruinously, by the role of the United States and NATO (which largely means the same thing).

A few thoughts on the EU, NATO and the U.S., and finally a question about Switzerland:

First, the EU itself has not been blameless in unleashing and then perpetuating the Ukraine crisis. Brussels (and Berlin) irresponsibly allowed a “coalition of the willing” – the most interested regional members (Poland, Sweden, the Baltic States, to some extent Romania) – to drive the so-called “Eastern Partnership” (EaP) which developed a zero-sum mentality of roping Ukraine (as well as Georgia and

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“Helmut Kohl can confirm, that the western alliance during the relinquishment of the GDR, gave a ceremonial consent to the Secretary General of the KPdSU Mikhail Gorbachev, that an entry of the former Warsaw Pact states to Nato would remain impossible, though this was not documented in writing.”

Peter Scholl-Latour. “Der Fluch der bösen Tat. Das Scheitern des Westens im Orient.” (The curse of evil doing. The failure of the West in the Orient). Berlin 2014, ISBN 978-3-549-07412-1, p. 22)

“The USA as a role model of morality is long gone, since with

their global ‘Counter-Insurgency’ against terrorism they have trodden the path to the ‘dirty war’ of the future, to the deployment of murderous drones, ruthless mercenary troops and torture excesses like ‘water boarding’. But it sounds much too hypocritical if one tries to constrict Russia as well as China with a ‘cordon sanitaire’ (barrier of buffer states), and at the same time accusing their potential opponents of wanting to protect themselves with an impediment strategy.”

(Scholl-Latour, p. 28-29)

"USA – By way of Ukraine-crisis ..."

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Moldova) into the "Euro-Atlantic" camp as a "civilizational choice."

Their approach mirrored the concept from between the world wars known as "Prometheism"¹ or "the Intermarium"² to construct a string of anti-Russian countries across eastern Europe. The message to Ukraine and other EaP countries was (and remains): Russia can never be "Europe"; to "choose Europe" means being apart from (really, against) Russia; you must make the "right" choice. Forcing this choice on Ukraine was a recipe for tearing the country apart. Where was the "adult supervision" in the EU? This approach did nothing to advance EU members' interest but in fact has profoundly harmed them.

Second, Europe's policy has been badly damaged because of the EU's deference to NATO and the U.S. When in the mid-1990s the EU floated its "European Security and Defence Policy" (now the "Common Security and Defence Policy") as a totally European mechanism that did not include the U.S., Washington made it clear that EU security policy could only be a handmaid to NATO, as codified in the 2002 "Berlin Plus" agreement and NATO's "right of first refusal."³ This means that NATO (that is, Washington) retains the commanding voice on security issues with the EU in an auxiliary role. (As in Libya, that can mean the U.S. and NATO act as "Daddy" (breaking things) and the EU acts as "Mommy" (cleaning up afterwards): we see how well that worked out.) Berlin Plus and NATO dominance of the EU's security policy means in the Ukraine that under the political sections of the Association Agreement (that Yanukovich declined to sign but was the first order of business after his removal), Kiev would harmonize its policies with the EU's, which in turn means with NATO. Ukraine would be part of NATO in all but name (as Finland and Sweden are as of this month's Wales summit, where they signed so-called "Host Nation Support" memoranda). In any case, the official declaration at NATO's 2008 Bucharest summit regarding Ukraine (and Georgia) that "these countries will become members of NATO" never has been rescinded.

More could be said on the role of the United States both through NATO and directly in helping to create and exacer-

bate the Ukraine crisis. It is enough to note Assistant Secretary of State *Victoria Nuland's* "hands-on" role in the "regime change" in Kiev, including even naming (in her notorious "F--- the EU" phone call) *Arseny "Yats" Yatsenyuk* as our preferred Prime Minister.

Even though the U.S. really has no direct interest in Ukraine – much less than Europe's and certainly far, far less than Russia's – Washington has insisted on being the driving force behind western policy. This has meant during the disorders in Kiev threatening Yanukovich with sanctions if he used force against "peaceful protesters" attacking police with Molotov cocktails, clubs, and yes, guns – behavior that in Washington would get you shot down in two minutes. It has meant carte blanche support for Kiev's military offensive against the east and opposing both European calls for a ceasefire or even delivery of humanitarian aid (unlike our unilateral right to carry out "humanitarian" bombing of various countries) – right up until Kiev's offensive collapsed at the beginning of this month.

And it has meant dogged insistence that the only solution to the crisis must be to blame the whole mess on Russia and ratchet up sanctions on Moscow until any aid being given to the eastern republics is cut off, so Kiev can crush them. Despite the fact that no one expects this to work, Washington also bullied Europe into adopting sanctions that would hurt Russia but not change Moscow's policy. These also hurt Europe significantly – though the U.S. only minimally. As stated by a former German ambassador to the U.S., whose observation could be applied by degrees to Europe generally: "We are by far the country that would suffer the most" from a worsening of the crisis aggravated by sanctions. "Not a single dollar will be lost in Arizona," he continued, a reference to a noted Republican Senator advocating strong NATO action.

In any case, despite the ceasefire, don't assume the Washington establishment has given up on its broader agenda of trying to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia, destabilization and "regime change" in Moscow, and reducing Russia to the vassal state it was under *Boris Yeltsin*. For the U.S., Ukraine is simply a means to that end.

Briefly with respect to Switzerland, as an American I have pointed out what I regard as the errors of my own coun-

try's policies. I am hesitant to be as critical of your country's decisions. But I do confess to be somewhat puzzled. Your country is a member of neither NATO nor the EU. As far as I know, Switzerland isn't contemplating a "Host Nation Support" memorandum though you have been part of NATO's "Partnership for Peace" since 1996 (well, so is Russia). You are part of Schengen and have a free trade agreement with the EU but are the only EFTA member that is not part of the European Economic Area. In short, in keeping with your legendary love of freedom and zealous protection of your independence, it seems the Swiss could resist the made-in-Washington pressures imposed on smaller members of the EU and NATO. And of course too, Switzerland is not exactly "small" in the world of finance. Still, your country has seen fit to join in some aspects of the sanctions regime. This most recently includes, on August 27, the decision of the Federal Council to adopt measures said to be designed to prevent Switzerland from being used by Russia to bypass sanctions imposed by the EU and requiring Russian banks to get authorization to issue new long-term financial instruments. There are some military and energy-related restrictions as well, but clearly the financial sanctions are most important. I can't help but notice a little irony. As far as I know, Moscow never has threatened to use any financial weapon against Switzerland. But Washington has threatened you with deadly sanctions, in the form of U.S. Justice Department accusations of criminal activity by Swiss banks and even more so under the infamous FATCA law. This makes no sense to me. Perhaps we can address this during discussion. •

¹ Prometheism (Polish: Prometeizm) was a political movement in Poland and Ukraine, which was directed against the expansion of the Soviet Union's of geo-political influence (editor's note)

² Miedzymorze (lat. 'Intermarum') was a proposal submitted by the Polish President Jozef Pilsudski after the First World War, suggesting a confederate, mainly Slavic state formation spreading from the Black Sea up to the Baltic Sea, therefore the name. Sometimes the Latin term 'Intermarum' was used, meaning the same. (editor's note)

³ NATO has the "right of first refusal", which is recognized by the EU. (Berlin Plus agreement, 2003) That means that if the worst comes to the worst, NATO is permitted to be the first to intervene, in case this was decided on by politics. (editor's note)

“The Crisis in Ukraine is complex, critical and continues”

“Humanitarian aspects of the crisis in Ukraine – Briefing of the Russian UN mission in Geneva

by Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller



Podium of the briefing at the UN. (picture ma)

Last week the Russian mission to the United Nations in Geneva dealt with the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and organized a briefing at the UN in Geneva on 1 October under the title “Humanitarian aspects in Ukraine”.

“The information war continues. The news embargo is still effective. It is difficult to get the news to Western media”, *Konstantin Dolgov*, Russian Foreign Ministry’s Special Representative for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, told the approximately 200 participants of the briefing.

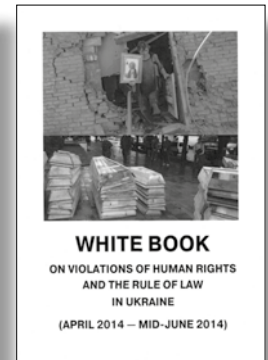
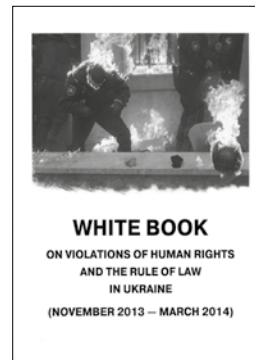
Apart from – mainly Russian – media professionals, several missions and international organizations such as Thailand, Kuwait, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Armenia, Cambodia, Belarus, Myanmar, Iraq, Great Britain, Indonesia, Bulgaria, the European Union, Tadshikistan, Austria, Algeria, the USA, Italy, Luxembourg, Germany, Ukraine, the UN world food programme (WFP), the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) among others sent their representatives.

Konstantin Dolgov, Deputy Minister for Civil Defense *Vladimir Stepanov* from the ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM) as well as Deputy Head of the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation (FMS) *Nikolai Smorodin*, commented on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The briefing was chaired by *Alexey Borodavkin*, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN Office and other International Organisations in Geneva. When opening the session he mentioned a high number of questions regarding the situation in Ukraine by journal-

ists and non-governmental organizations as the reason to have this event. He emphasized the humanitarian challenges and the sincere wish for peace.

Vladimir Stepanov summarized the situation of the refugees, especially those from southeastern Ukraine. He pointed out that all people who had fled to Russia were welcomed; so far 926 field camps have been made available for them. The refugees receive all kinds of humanitarian aid there. Their number had been in the hundreds of thousands during the summer months, travelling by foot or by train, or rescued from Ukraine via airlifts. At the moment there are still 55,000 refugees living in the field camps. Russia has also sent tens of thousands of aid parcels to Donetsk and Lugansk. Now the content of those parcels has been adapted to the ensuing winter time. According to the Russian Ministry of Health about 200,000 refugees have been seeking medical aid, including many children and 5,000 pregnant and breast-feeding women. The population in Russia feel strongly about the welfare of the refugees and give whatever they can.

Vladimir Stepanov’s account was complemented by the presentation of Deputy Head of the Federal Migration Services, *Nikolai Smorodin*. His statistics enabled even lay people to comprehend what it means to sustain refugees in a country. At the beginning he emphasized that the Ukrainian refugees will be well cared for even during the winter. Apart from medical and psychological care they are offered legal support, pre-school and schooling facilities were made available (so far 25,000, including apprenticeships). Full medical care is offered to all refugees including



pensioners, the handicapped and the sick. According to his records approximately 200,000 Ukrainians have applied for temporary asylum in Russia so far. It has been granted to 158,000. The Russian Immigration Office expects another 400,000 applications for asylum until the end of the year. The legal proceedings of asylum seeking have been facilitated since the beginning of August. By now 64,000 immigrants with granted asylum status have been distributed throughout Russia to find places for them to stay. Every day between 2,000 and 2,500 refugees cross the border despite the ceasefire. About 43,000 refugees have applied for Russian citizenship so far. This procedure has been facilitated, too, since July of this year. As Ambassador Borodavkin commented, financial aid for this programme is not only offered by the Russian federation but also by non-governmental organizations and public endowments- “it could become a pan-Russian movement”.

Human rights envoy Konstantin Dolgov started his talk by saying: “The crisis in Ukraine is complex, critical and continues”. Massive human rights violations, violations of international law and international humanitarian law were taking place.

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"The Crisis in Ukraine is ..."

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"Thousands of people, mainly civilians are being killed by the official Ukrainian authorities – although the school year begins today, bombs are being dropped on schools as we speak." (He referred to the bombing of a school on 1 October which left 10 people dead, author's note). There were real hopes when the cease-fire was declared. "What about the right to live", he asked. "This has to stop." He went on to say that mass graves were found in Donetsk after Ukrainian authorities had lost control of the area, with people killed by head shots with their hands tied at their backs. He also mentioned the incident of the arson attack on the trade union house in Odessa and the snipers at the Euromaidan, who had fired indiscriminately at police and demonstrators, as examples of criminal offences that had to be legally investigated and brought to justice. He warned that similar things could happen again anywhere at any time and referred to these incidents as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Mainly civilians died, since the civilian population was targeted. The rights of the individuals had to be respected. Moreover, the freedom of the press was massively violated in Ukraine: 15 Russian TV-channels were banned and shut down. Journalists were killed. "What about the reluctance of many Western colleagues to speak up about this? Don't they see what is going on?", Dolgov asked. Fascists and Neo-Nazis were active in Ukraine, creating social tensions. Members of parliament were harassed. Dolgov reminded the

audience that Ukraine had signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He pleaded the international community should act, all violations of international law had to be persecuted. "Documentation is not enough, action is needed". To this day no investigative results of Ukrainian authorities into all these incidents were available. The same is true for the downing of Malaysian airline flight MH17. Dolgov referred to the Nuremberg principles: "We do have the pictures of 'fighters' attacking civilians", the facts are on the table. He concluded by referring to the two volume documentation of the incidents in Ukraine since November 2013, the "White book – On Violations of Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Ukraine" which lists a wide range of human rights violations and violations of the rule of law. There were no impunity for those crimes committed, this being a matter of conscience for the international community. He reminded the audience of what the European Union had stated after the war in former Yugoslavia: Something similar must never again happen on our continent. He demanded an international response to the incidents, all necessary instruments were at the disposal of the international community.

In the following discussion ambassador Borodavkin appreciated the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and stressed the importance of the OSCE's fact-finding mission on the ground.

The representative of the Ukrainian mission pointed out that any humanitarian aid had to be distributed by recognised international organizations and complained about anti-Ukrainian propaganda from the

ARD and Spiegel reprimanded

ef. The Western commentatorship in the mainstream media is mostly one-sided and sharply directed against Russia in a striking manner. After the pressure of citizens became stronger and stronger in Germany, now at least the public broadcaster ARD has apologized for a false reporting in May of this year in which the killing of two civilians had been blamed on the so-called separatists. The ARD took this media article off the Internet. The program committee of the ARD had seriously criticized the coverage of the Ukraine-conflict at its meeting in June. The broadcast contents bore "a tendency against Russia and the Russian position". It was "fragmentary", "biased", "deficient" and "one-sided". "Der Spiegel" had already been reprimanded by the German Press Council because of a coarse anti-Russian article.

Russian side. She demanded that Russia should pull out completely and as soon as this was the case aid would be delivered.

Ambassador Borodavkin stressed that *Wladimir Putin* and *Petro Poroshenko* had achieved a consensus in Minsk.

The EU representative started polemically: He hoped, that the Russian mission had invited all media alike... He demanded that Russia should end all kinds of military support and all Russian soldiers should leave the country. Fast humanitarian convoys (sic!) were not necessary. His question as to whether Russia would pay to the international community was answered by the Russian ambassador with the assertion that Russia provided a lot of bilateral aid and co-operated with the International Red Cross and relevant UN organisations regarding Ukraine.

The representative of the USA singled the separatists out to be blamed for the disaster and demanded cash-contributions for humanitarian aid. Dolgov replied he had doubts as to whether this money would be justly distributed especially in view of the ensuing winter.

The representative of Belarus inquired about the Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly contact group on the Ukrainian conflict settlement, which Russia had called for. Ambassador Borodavkin answered he had just been informed that Ukraine had declined to attend (as had Poland, the USA, France and Turkey, author's note).

Replying to the question of a representative of the Russian news agency *Ria Novosti*, as to whether Russia would launch an investigation into breaches of the cease-fire, Dolgov said that Russia would closely monitor any incidents but he emphasized that a joint effort of the international community was required to investigate *everything*.

UN warns against devastating humanitarian consequences

ef. Despite the ceasefire, signed on 5 September, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and especially in eastern Ukraine is still devastating. According to UN figures more than 3,500 people have already died in the conflict. The ongoing fighting led to a mass exodus. Already in early September the United Nations estimated over one million people who had fled the fighting. 814,000 people have already sought refuge in Russia and about 260,000 people, so the probably understated estimates, were fleeing in the country to escape the fighting. The actual number of displaced persons is much higher, according to UN estimates, because many are staying with friends and relatives and do not report to the authorities. The figures were reported by the Refugee Agency of the United Nations (UNHCR). *Antonio Guterres*, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, expressed his concern: Without a rapid termination of the crisis "devastating humanitarian consequences" would be imminent. The crisis had "the potential to destabilize the whole region." On

9 September, the WHO warned against a looming health emergency in eastern Ukraine as hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced due to the armed conflict in the east of the country. Many of them had to live in non-winterized homes in precarious hygienic conditions. It was reported that the hospitals were not fully functioning and medicines and vaccines were in short supply. The WHO were preparing an emergency health care for the population.

Meanwhile there are reports on mass graves with four hundred dead in some of them mostly civilians. Many have such grave injuries that they can hardly be identified. The graves were in areas that were previously controlled by the Ukrainian army. On 1 October, 10 civilians were killed in the shelling of a school, on 2 October a Swiss ICRC staff member in Donetsk was killed by grenade shelling. The UN Security Council sharply condemned the murder in its meeting of 4 October and demanded an objective, thorough investigation of the circumstances of his death.

John McCain, Conductor of the “Arab Spring” and the Caliph of the “Islamic State”

by Thierry Meyssan

Everyone has noticed the contradiction of those who recently characterized the Islamic Emirate as “freedom fighters” in Syria and who are indignant today faced with its abuses in Iraq. But if that speech is incoherent in itself, it makes perfect sense in the strategic plan: the same individuals were to be presented as allies yesterday and must be as enemies today, even if they are still on orders from Washington. Thierry Meyssan reveals below US policy through the particular case of Senator John McCain, conductor of the “Arab Spring” and longtime partner of Caliph Ibrahim.

John McCain is known as the leader of the Republicans and unhappy 2008 US presidential candidate. This is, we will see, only the real part of his biography, which serves as a cover to conduct covert actions on behalf of his government.

When I was in Libya during the “Western” attack, I was able to view a report of the foreign intelligence services. It stated that, on February 4, 2011 in Cairo, NATO organized a meeting to launch the “Arab Spring” in Libya and Syria. According to this document, the meeting was chaired by John McCain. The report detailed the list of Libyan participants, whose delegation was led by the No. 2 man of the government of the day, *Mahmoud Jibril*, who abruptly switched sides at the entrance of the meeting to become the opposition leader in exile. I remember that, among the French delegates present, the report quoted *Bernard-Henry Lévy*, although officially he had never exercised functions within the French government. Many other personalities attended the symposium, including a large delegation of Syrians living abroad.

“But, at the latest since the second Iraq campaign, we have been falling victim to a most comprehensive disinformation implemented in the United States, Great Britain and Israel by perfectly organised institutions.”
(Scholl-Latour, p. 17)

Emerging from the meeting, the mysterious Syrian Revolution 2011 Facebook account called for demonstrations outside the People’s Council (National Assembly) in Damascus on February 11. Although this Facebook account at the time claimed to have more than 40,000 followers, only a dozen people responded to its call before the flashes of pho-



John McCain and the heads of the Free Syrian Army. In the left foreground, Ibrahim al-Badri, with which the Senator is talking. Next, Brigadier General Salim Idris (with glasses).

tographers and hundreds of police. The demonstration dispersed peacefully and clashes only began more than a month later in Deraa [Town in southwest Syria at the Jordanian border]¹.

On February 16, 2011, a demonstration underway in Benghazi, in memory of members of the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya² massacred in 1996 in the Abu Selim prison, degenerated into shooting. The next day, a second event, this time in memory of those who died by attacking the Danish consulate during the Muhammad cartoons affair, also degenerated into shooting. At the same time, members of the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya, coming from Egypt and coordinated by unidentified, hooded individuals, simultaneously attacked four military bases in four different cities. After three days of fighting and atrocities, the rebels launched the uprising of Cyrenaica against Tripolitania³; a terrorist attack that the western press falsely presented as a “democratic revolution” against “the regime” of *Muammar el-Qaddafi*.

On February 22nd, John McCain was in Lebanon. He met members of the Future Movement (the party of Saad Hariri) whom he charged to oversee the transfer of arms to Syria around the MP *Okab Sakr*⁴. Then, leaving Beirut, he inspected the Syrian border and the selected villages including Ersal, which were used as a basis to back mercenaries in the war to come.

The meetings chaired by John McCain were clearly the trigger point for a long-prepared Washington plan; the plan that would have the UK and France attack Libya and Syria simultaneously, following the doctrine of “leadership from behind” and the annex of the Treaty of Lancaster House of November 2010.⁵

The Illegal Trip to Syria, April 2013

In May 2013, Senator John McCain made his way illegally to near Idlib in Syria via Turkey to meet with leaders of the “armed opposition”. His trip was not made public until his return to Washington.⁶

This movement was organized by the Syrian Emergency Task Force, which, contrary to its title, is a Zionist Organization led by a Palestinian employee of AIPAC⁷.

In photographs released at that time, one noticed the presence of *Mohammad Nour*, a spokesman for the Northern Storm Brigade (of the Al-Nusra Front, that is to say, al-Qaeda in Syria), who kidnapped and held 11 Lebanese Shiite pilgrims in Azaz.⁸ Asked about his proximity to al-Qaeda kidnappers, the Senator claimed not to know Mohammad Nour who would have invited himself into this photo.

The affair made a great noise and the families of the abducted pilgrims lodged a complaint before the Lebanese judiciary against Senator McCain for complicity in kidnapping. Ultimately, an agreement was reached and the pilgrims were released.

Let’s suppose that Senator McCain had told the truth and that he was abused by Mohammad Nour. The object of his illegal trip to Syria was to meet the chiefs of staff of the Free Syrian Army. According to him, the organization was composed “exclusively of Syrians” fighting for “their freedom” against the “Alouite dictatorship” (sic). The tour organizers published this photograph to attest to the meeting.

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"John McCain, Conductor of ..."

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If we can see Brigadier General *Salem Idriss*, head of the Free Syrian Army, one can also see *Ibrahim al-Badri* (foreground on the left) with whom the senator is talking. Back from the surprise trip, John McCain claimed that all those responsible for the Free Syrian Army were "moderates who can be trusted" (sic).

However, since October 4, 2011, Ibrahim al-Badri (also known as Abu Du'a) was on the list of the five terrorists most wanted by the United States (Rewards for Justice). A premium of up to \$ 10 million was offered to anyone who would assist in his capture.⁹ The next day, October 5, 2011, Ibrahim al-Badri was included in the list of the Sanctions Committee of the UN as a member of al-Qaeda.¹⁰

In addition, a month before receiving Senator McCain, Ibrahim al-Badri, known under his nom de guerre as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, created the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ÉIIL) – all the while still belonging to the staff of the very "moderate" Free Syrian Army. He claimed as his own the attack on the Taj and Abu Ghraib prisons in Iraq, from which he helped between 500 and 1,000 jihadists escape who then joined his organization. This attack was coordinated with other almost simultaneous operations in eight other countries. Each time, the escapees joined the jihadist organizations fighting in Syria. This case is so strange that Interpol issued a note and requested the assistance of the 190 member countries.¹¹

For my part, I have always said that there was no difference on the ground between the Free Syrian Army, Al-Nosra Front, the Islamic Emirate etc ... All these organizations are composed of the same individuals who continuously change flag. When they pose as the Free Syrian Army, they fly the flag of French colonization and speak only of overthrowing the "dog Bashar." When they say they belong to Al-Nosra Front, they carry the flag of al-Qaeda and declare their intention to spread Islam in the world. Finally when they say they are the Islamic Emirate, they brandish the flag of the Caliphate and announce that they will clean the area of all infidels. But whatever the label, they proceed to the same abuses: rape, torture, beheadings, crucifixions.

Yet neither Senator McCain nor his companions of the Syrian Emergency Task Force provided the information in their possession on Ibrahim al-Badri to the State Department, nor have they asked for the reward. Nor have they informed the anti-terrorism Committee of the UN.

In no country in the world, regardless of their political system, would one ac-

cept that the opposition leader be in direct contact, and publicly friendly, with a very dangerous wanted terrorist.

Who then is Senator McCain?

But John McCain is not just the leader of the political opposition to President Obama, he is also one of his senior officials!

He is in fact President of the *International Republican Institute* (IRI), the republican branch of *New Endowment for Democracy* NED/CIA¹², since January 1993. This so-called "NGO" was officially established by President Ronald Reagan to extend certain activities of the CIA, in connection with the British, Canadian and Australian secret services. Contrary to its claims, it is indeed an inter-governmental agency. Its budget is approved by Congress in a budget line dependent of the Secretary of State.

It is also because it is a joint agency of the Anglo-Saxon secret services that several states in the world prohibit it from any activity on their territory.

The list of interventions by John McCain on behalf of the State Department is impressive. He participated in all the color revolutions of the last twenty years.

To take only a few examples, ever in the name of "democracy", he prepared the failed coup against constitutional president *Hugo Chávez* in Venezuela,¹³ the overthrow of constitutionally elected president *Jean-Bertrand Aristide* in Haiti¹⁴, the attempt to overthrow the constitutional President *Mwai Kibaki* in Kenya¹⁵ and, more recently, the ousting of the constitutional president of Ukraine, *Viktor Yanukovich*.

In any state in the world, when a citizen takes initiative to topple the regime of another State, he may be appreciated if successful and the new regime proves an ally, but he will be severely condemned when his initiatives have negative consequences for his own country. Now, Senator McCain never was harassed because of his anti-democratic actions in states where it has failed and who have turned against Washington. In Venezuela, for example. That is because, for the United States, John McCain is not a traitor, but an agent.

And an agent that has the best coverage imaginable: he is the official opponent of Barack Obama. As such, he can travel anywhere in the world (he is the most traveled US senator) and meet whoever he wants without fear. If his interlocutors approve Washington policy, he promised them to continue it, if they fight it, he hands over the responsibility to President Obama.

John McCain is known to have been a prisoner of war in Vietnam for five years, where he was tortured. He was involved in a program designed not to extract in-

formation but to instill speech. This was to transform his personality in order that he make statements against his own country. This program, studied based on the Korean experience for the Rand Corporation by Professor *Albert D. Biderman*, served as the basis for research at Guantánamo and elsewhere by *Dr Martin Seligman*¹⁶.

Applied under *George W. Bush* to more than 80,000 prisoners, it has transformed many of them into real fighters serving Washington. John McCain, who had cracked in Vietnam, therefore understands. He knows how to unscrupulously manipulate jihadists.

What is the US strategy with the jihadists in the Levant?

In 1990, the United States decided to destroy its former Iraqi ally. Having suggested to President *Saddam Hussein* that they would consider the attack of Kuwait as an Iraqi internal affair, they used this attack as an excuse to mobilize a broad coalition against Iraq. However, because of the opposition of the USSR, they did not overthrow the regime, but were content to administer a no-fly zone.

"At the same time, the revolting 'holy warriors' leant onto the supply of arms by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates, onto the logistical support of Turkey under its Prime Minister *Erdogan* and even of the American CIA. In Europe, in turn, systematic propaganda and disinformation caused public opinion, politicians, and the media to give their sympathy and their engagement to the supposedly 'liberal and democratic' activists."
(Scholl-Latour, pp. 56-57)

In 2003, France's opposition was not enough to offset the influence of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. The United States attacked the country again and this time overthrew President Hussein. Of course, John McCain was a major contributor to the Committee. After handing to a private company the care of plundering the country for a year¹⁷, they tried to partition Iraq into three separate states, but had to give it up due to the resistance of the population. They tried again in 2007, around the Biden-Brownback resolution, but again failed.¹⁸ Hence the current strategy that attempts to achieve this by means of a non-state actor: the Islamic Emirate.

The operation was planned well in advance, even before the meeting between John McCain and Ibrahim al-Badri. For example, internal correspondence from the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published by my friends *James* and *Joanne Moriarty*¹⁹, shows that 5,000

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"John McCain, Conductor of ..."

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jihadis were trained at the expense of Qatar in NATO's Libya in 2012, and 2,5 million dollars was paid at the same time to the future Caliph.

In January of 2014, the Congress of the United States held a secret meeting at which it voted, in violation of international law, to approve funding for the Al-Nosra Front (al-Qaeda) and the Islamic emirate in Iraq and the Levant until September 2014.²⁰ Although it is unclear precisely what was really agreed to during this meeting revealed by the British Reuters news agency²¹, and no media US media dared bypass censorship, it is highly probable that the law includes a section on arming and training jihadists.

Proud of this US funding, Saudi Arabia has claimed on its public television channel, Al-Arabiya, that the Islamic Emirate was headed by Prince *Abdul Rahman al-Faisal*, brother of Prince *Saud al Faisal* (Foreign Minister) and Prince *Turki al-Faisal* (Saudi ambassador to the United States and the United Kingdom)²².

The Islamic Emirate represents a new step in the world of mercenaries. Unlike jihadi groups who fought in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya around *Osama bin Laden*, it does not constitute a residual force but actually an army in itself. Unlike previous groups in Iraq, Libya and Syria, around Prince *Bandar bin Sultan*, they have sophisticated communication services at their disposal for recruitment and civilian officials trained in large western schools capable of instantly taking over the administration of a territory.

Brand new Ukrainian weapons were purchased by Saudi Arabia and conveyed by the Turkish secret services who gave them to the Islamic Emirate. Final details were coordinated with the *Barzani* family at a meeting of jihadist groups in Amman on 1 June 2014.²³ The joint attack on Iraq by the Islamic Emirate and the Kurdistan Regional Government began four days later. The Islamic Emirate seized the Sunni part of the country, while the Kurdistan Regional Government increased its territory by over 40%. Fleeing the atrocities of jihadists, religious minorities left the Sunni area, paving the way for the three-way partition of the country.

Violating the Iraqi-US Defense agreement, the Pentagon did not intervene and allowed the Islamic Emirate to continue its conquest and massacres. A month later, while the Kurdish Peshmerga Regional Government had retreated without a fight, and when the emotions of world

public opinion became too strong, President Obama gave the order to bomb some positions of the Islamic Emirate. However, according to General *William Mayville*, director of operations at the headquarters, "These bombings are unlikely to affect the overall capacity of the Islamic Emirate and its activities in other areas of Iraq or Syria".²⁴ Obviously, they are not meant to destroy the jihadist army, but only to ensure that each player does not overlap the territory that has been assigned. Moreover, for the moment, they are symbolic and have destroyed only a handful of vehicles. It was ultimately the intervention of the Kurds of the Turkish and Syrian Kurdish PKK which halted the progress of the Islamic Emirate and opened a corridor to allow civilians to escape the massacre.

Much disinformation is circulating about the Islamic Emirate and its caliph. The Gulf Daily News newspaper claimed that *Edward Snowden* had made revelations about it.²⁵ However, after verification, the former US spy published nothing about it. Gulf Daily News is published in Bahrain, a state occupied by Saudi troops. The article aims to clear only Saudi Arabia and Prince *Abdul Rahman al-Faisal* of their responsibilities.

The Islamic Emirate is comparable to the mercenary armies of the European sixteenth century. They were conducting religious wars on behalf of the lords who paid them, sometimes in one camp, sometimes in another. Caliph Ibrahim is a modern condottiere. Although he is under the orders of Prince Abdul Rahman (Member of Sudeiris clan), it would not be surprising if he continued his epic in Saudi Arabia (after a brief detour in Lebanon or Kuwait) and determine the Royal succession favoring the Sudeiris clan over Prince *Mithab* (son, not brother of King Abdullah).

John McCain and the Caliph

Ibrahim al-Badri, also known as Abu Du'a, also known as Abu Bakr al-Bagh-

"As part of a systematic disinformation campaign, politicians and media of the West had agreed that any infringement on international law whatsoever could only be due to terrorist intentions of the Syrian *Assad* regime. NATO circles obviously did not seriously consider the by all means more credible theory that the rebels supported by the West would have every interest in staging such incidents so as to inflame international public opinion and notably the *Erdogan* Government further against the ostracised regime in Damascus. The elementary question 'cui bono' – who benefits? – was not asked. (Scholl-Latour, pp. 47-48).

"It is probable that behind this lies a controlled world-wide disinformation, as was already explained by *Nicolas Sarkozy*, the present President *François Hollande's* predecessor. Former Foreign Minister *Alain Juppé* had had the effrontery of appearing in an interview on television next to his Saudi colleague *Saud Ben Feisal* – of all people – to call on the Syrians, jointly with this representative of the most reactionary and totally intolerant Islamic theocracy, to respect and observe human rights and democracy. Certainly the Damascus Government did not comply with the ideas of Western party diversity and freedom of expression, but there certainly were much worse despots, and religious tolerance had nowhere been as highly respected as between Damascus and Aleppo." (Scholl-Latour, p. 105)

dadi, aka Caliph Ibrahim, mercenary of Prince Abdul Rahman al-Faisal, funded by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United States. He can commit all the horrors that are forbidden to states by the Geneva Conventions.

In the latest issue of its magazine, the Islamic Emirate devoted two pages to denounce Senator John McCain as "the enemy" and "double-crosser", recalling his

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Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility, and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

Editor: Erika Vögeli

Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-

for all other countries.

Account: Postscheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4

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Once more they say the “good” fought the “evil”

by Karl Müller

Sometimes it just takes a few words to reveal with what clumsy methods they are trying to convince us citizens that war is a good thing. The Republican speaker of the US House of Representatives, *John Boehner*, asked for – at least that was what the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” reported on 30 September – the deployment of US ground troops in the war against the IS, the “Islamic State”. The United States had no other choice, he claimed: “They are barbarians. They want to kill us. If we do not destroy them first, we will have to pay the price.”

That does not merely sound like the “Wild West”, it is also meant. Of course Boehner avoided to mention that the human suffering in the Near and Middle East, which has been going on for years now, is “the curse of the evil deed” (*Peter Scholl-Latour, Friedrich Schiller*) and that the “evil deed” has many initiators in the Western states, for example the CIA with its flights to Syria with Libyan fighters. This was what a political scientist at the University of Bonn revealed in an interview with the “Deutschlandfunk”, who otherwise fuloy advocates the war. High-ranking US politicians enjoyed cooperat-

ing with the “barbarians”, when it seemed opportune – as *Thierry Meyssan*’s article shows. Mr Boehner also forgot to mention that there was a US military journal that demanded to draw new borders, so-called “blood borders” in the Near and Middle East; and not by peaceful means.

Mr Bohner claims to “destroy” the “barbarians” of the IS. Hasn’t mass murderer Lenin once said: “[Our] common aim [is] to clean the land of Russia of all vermin.” How wide is the step from such a martial language to dehumanisation? It can not be the point to trivialize crimes in the name of the IS or even to “understand” them. But is a “campaign of destruction” the right way to prevent future crimes that actually exist today? Pankaj Mishra in his book “From The Ruins Of Empire. The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia”, told us impressively about the injustice that the West has committed in this part of the world, as well, and about the desperate revolt against it. Are we really capable of stopping the violence in the Near and Middle East, as long as we do not really understand the people there and their tragic history?

Finally: Cui bono? The interesting public knows that no, really no war

was fought for the benefit of mankind. The same is true for the war against the IS. But what’s the point of this war? Where’s the logic in it? You may think about that, as well. Is it about what failed in 2013, trying to introduce the war against Syria now by the back door, now? The Turkish Parliament allowed the use of troops in Syria – as the government wanted it. Or is the point that they want to show the whole world that this war is but a good thing – after mankind could not be convinced despite all the propaganda.

A prediction may be ventured: The war against IS is nothing better. On the contrary – thousands of people will die again, there will be endless suffering and massive destructions. “War is obsolete,” said an American war veteran a few years ago after the US-led wars against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq. The destructions that were done there, and the human victims of deprivation, of humiliation and of slaughter can never be put right again. All three countries are contaminated by radiation to eternity. Surely these wars were no less “barbaric” than the methods of IS. •

“John McCain, Conductor of ...”

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support for the US invasion of Iraq. Let this accusation remain unknown in the United States, Senator immediately issued a statement calling the Emirate the “most dangerous Islamist terrorist group in the world”²⁶.

This controversy is there only to distract the gallery. One would like to believe it ... if it weren’t for this photograph from May 2013. •

Source: <http://www.voltairenet.org/article185085.html>

¹ We relayed press reports assuring that the demonstration in Deraa was a protest after the arrest and torture of students who tagged hostile slogans about the Republic. However, many colleagues have attempted to establish the identity of these students and meet their families. None was able to do so, the only witnesses who spoke did so for the British press, but anonymously, thus unverifiably. We are now convinced that this event never existed. The study of Syrian contemporary documents shows that the event was really about an increase in civil servants’ salaries and pensions. It obtained satisfaction from the government. At that point, no newspaper had mentioned these students, this story having been invented by Al-Jazeera two weeks later.

² The members of the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya, that is to say, al-Qaeda in Libya, tried to assassinate Muammar el-Qaddafi on behalf of the British MI6. The case was revealed by an offic-

er of British counter-espionage, David Shyler. See “David Shyler: ‘I left the British secret service when the MI6 decided to fund Osama bin Laden’”, Voltaire Network, November 18, 2005.

³ Report of the Fact Finding Mission on the current crisis in Libya, June 2011.

⁴ “Lebanese MP directing arms traffic to Syria”, Translation Pete Kimberley, Voltaire Network, December 13, 2012.

⁵ In this regard, reference is made to my six-part series “10 years of resistance, the war of the United States against Syria.”

⁶ “McCain enters Syria illegally”, Voltaire Network, May 30, 2013.

⁷ “La Syrian Emergency Task Force, faux-nez sioniste” (“The Syrian Emergency Task Force, Zionist sock puppet”), Réseau Voltaire, 7 juin 2013.

⁸ “John McCain meets with kidnappers in Syria”, Voltaire Network, June 1, 2013.

⁹ “Wanted for Terrorism,” Rewards for Justice Program, Department of State.

¹⁰ The Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) October 15, 1999 is also known as the “Committee for sanctions against Al-Qaida.” Record registration Ibrahim al-Badri (this time with the nom de guerre of al-Samarrai).

¹¹ “Simultaneous jail-break of jihadists in 9 countries”, Translation Alizée Ville, Voltaire Network, August 7, 2013.

¹² “La NED, vitrine légale de la CIA” (“The NED, legal storefront of the CIA”), par Thierry Meyssan, Odnako (Russie), Réseau Voltaire, 6 octobre 2010.

¹³ “Opération manquée au Venezuela” (“Operation failed in Venezuela”), par Thierry Meyssan, Réseau Voltaire, 18 mai 2002.

¹⁴ “La CIA déstabilise Haïti” (“The CIA destabilizes Haiti”), Réseau Voltaire, 14 janvier 2004. “Coup d’Etat en Haïti”, par Thierry Meyssan, Voltaire Network, 5 mars 2004.

¹⁵ “L’expérience politique africaine de Barack Obama” (“Barack Obama’s African Political experience”), par Thierry Meyssan, Réseau Voltaire, 9 mars 2013.

¹⁶ “The secret behind Guantánamo”, by Thierry Meyssan, Odnako (Russia), Voltaire Network, May 20, 2010.

¹⁷ “Who Rules Iraq?”, by Thierry Meyssan, Voltaire Network, May 13, 2004.

¹⁸ “La balkanisation de l’Irak” (“The Balkanization of Iraq”), par Manlio Dinucci, Traduction Marie-Ange Patrizio, Il Manifesto (Italie), Réseau Voltaire, 17 juin 2014.

¹⁹ “Official Document of the Qatar Embassy: Tripoli Confirms Sending 1800 Islamic Extremists in Trained in Libya to Fight in Syria,” The Truth Libyan War, September 20, 2013.

²⁰ “Les États-Unis, premiers financiers mondiaux du terrorisme” (“The United States, the world’s leading financier of terrorism”), par Thierry Meyssan, Al-Watan (Syrie), Réseau Voltaire, 3 février 2014.

²¹ “Congress Approves Secret US weapons flow to ‘moderate’ Syrian rebels” by Mark Hosenball, Reuters, January 27, 2014.

²² “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant led by Prince Abdul Rahman”, Translation Alizée Ville, Voltaire Network, February 4, 2014.

²³ “PKK revelations on ISIL attack and creation of ‘Kurdistan’”, Voltaire Network, July 8, 2014.

²⁴ “U.S. Air Strikes Are Having a Limited Effect on ISIL” by Ben Watson, Defense One, August 11, 2014.

²⁵ “Baghdadi ‘Mossad trained,’” Gulf Daily News, July 15, 2014.

²⁶ “Statement by Senator John McCain on being targeted by terrorist group ISIL as ‘the enemy’ and ‘the crusader’”, Office of John McCain, July 28, 2014.

Riots in Hong Kong

by Willy Wimmer

Rioting in China is of a special quality. It can impact the head of state with such a vehemence, as it is true for only few other States. There is no need to tell the Chinese government. They are aware of it. At the latest since the events of 1989 at Tiananmen Square in Beijing it is clear what it is all about in China. Some former head of government was made responsible for the terrible consequences. Here, names were mentioned, too. But as a matter of fact, Comrade *Deng Xiao Ping*, the former and undisputed leader of the People's Republic of China, had to send his emissaries searching in distant regions of the huge Empire for still-loyal military units, so that they could be used against Beijing and the huge demonstrating crowds. The student demonstrators were too closely linked with China's ruling elite. The highest officials in Beijing and the major cities of China knew their children were on the streets of Beijing. They refused to follow the State Government in its effort to get the development on the famous Beijing square under control. The army and large parts of the security apparatus were simply not deployable against children of the decision-making top of the military and the security apparatus.

Deng and the other leaders searched for a way out after the bloody events by opening the floodgates for China's economic development. He was successful in this unlike in his dealing with the Beijing victims. China unleashed its economic potential to such a degree that even after the collapse of Lehmann Brothers Bank and Western financial chaos China could mobilize a large part of those forces, that also protected Germany against the worst. China persevered. In China as

well as in multi-ethnic India, there is an almost panicking fear of conceding quite legitimate concerns to different parts of the country, as one is afraid of the collapse of the giant empires of China and India. And certainly there are quite significant approaches from outside to maneuver China into such a situation. There are many influential forces in Japan, who could imagine a China consisting of seven to eight smaller Chinas. We take to the *Dalai Lama* as an admirable person; many are following the Lama's every word, when he speaks in the arenas of the German Republic to them. This completely hides the Indian intensive trials to resolve Tibet out of the Chinese State Federation because of its strategic position important for India. The Tibetan uprising, at the end of which the *Dalai Lama* escaped to India, has been instigated by just this India. There is quite a number of American publications, who complain about the lack of a vigorous American engagement to create a Tibet independent from China during the Cold War.

Today's remedy is visible in the co-operation between Washington and Munich with the Uighur forces. Neighbours of the western province Singkiang, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and others, have reassured China that they do not intend a separation of the province Singkiang from China, because the Uighurs living there have their relatives in countries such as Kazakhstan and other states. By far, this might not be valid considering the interest of the United States. It is conspicuous even for the "*Spiegel*" who the instigators were that might have triggered the assault series in Singkiangs capital Urum-

qi or in Kunming or in other areas of the country. It is striking, in any case, that whenever the threat of war grows in Europe, bombs go off in China. No one will put aside these signals in Beijing. It was like this in the run-up to the war in Yugoslavia and also before the civil war in the Ukraine started.

One can't help feeling sorry for the spokeswoman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, when she announced a warning to other states in front of the international press, not to interfere in Hong Kong's and China's affairs. This had to be said, but it was like preaching to the wind. Today it's a different question given the development already established before the hand-over of Hong Kong by the British colonial power in China. To what extent has Beijing an influence on Hong Kong? This concerns Hong Kong for sure: before the colony was handed over, those, who could afford it set off, especially to Canadian Vancouver or to Los Angeles in California. Things have evolved better after the return of Hong Kong to the motherland, as it had been feared. But Hong Kong cannot be separated from Vancouver or Los Angeles, and there the barn doors are open. Constitutionally, Hong Kong is connected to the mother country in the sense of "one country and two systems", but it is more open than ever during the British time, because of this development. Many things were achieved in the course of the British rule, but a democratic legacy of significant importance has not been left. Hong Kong concerns all of us. Because the basic considerations of the protesters are corresponding with the bad mood in our states almost up to the last detail. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Today's illusory boom is similar to that of the years 1923-1929 in many ways

by Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer

It is always good to try to understand today's situation by looking back at similarities of past developments, because this could also clarify the course of today's economic development.

If we compare the illusory boom of the years 1923 to 1929, which arose after the inflation and currency reform of 1920-1923, with today's specious prosperity following the first financial crisis from 2008 to 2011, we will find the following parallels referring to this aspect:

- In both cases, global financial crises caused individual nations – back then most notably Germany – to skid into in-

solveny, currency reform and impoverishment of large parts of the middle class, and especially pensioners – as is happening again now in Argentina and the bankrupt states of Europe.

- The national financial crashes from 1920 to 1923 in Germany and from 2008 to 2012 in Argentina and in the bankrupt states of Europe did not lead to a global financial crisis, because in both cases the Anglo-Saxon high finance did not want to lose its credit-domination and was therefore able to extend debt bondage by new loans.

- In both cases, the illusory boom was financed with paper money without being backed by a gold standard. After the First World War, the victorious powers had the gold, therefore Germany and Austria had no currency basis. Today, the European central banks have lent their gold to the Anglo-Saxon financiers and those have embezzled it and probably even have no more gold themselves, so again, a sham prosperity is being financed by the printers of paper money (the Federal Reserve System) with an increasing amount of paper money, of which the world still believes that it is

"Today's illusory boom ..."

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based on a corresponding gold standard, while in actual fact the latter does no longer exist.

- In both specified times of specious prosperity, companies and states financed their long-term credit needs in the form of short and medium term financing, and thus amassed an irresponsibly growing credit deficit, so that the financial collapse of one single bank eventually led to a global financial crisis.
- Above all, business and politics have led the people to believe that the factitious current wealth increase based on the exchange of bank bills was real, manageable and might be continued without any inhibition whatsoever, i.e. that money is irrelevant. In the decadent roaring twenties nobody – namely not the average population – spared a thought on debt relief and nobody does so in this equally corrupted new century.
- The press and the politicians are rejoicing that "the debt problem has been got under control," by means of "bailout funds" and the European Stability Mechanism, they point to the all-time peak in stock market prices, to falling zero-interest rates, the booming labour market and full social security funds. FED and ECB seem to have overlaid all financial problems with a money supply increase. Since 2011 people have again believed what they believed in 1923, namely, that the crisis was over.

Currently nobody is envisaging a second crisis level – this is the same situation as in 2002, when the author published his book "What should we do when the crash comes", then only raising a laugh with it (afterwards everybody had known all the time what was to come).

In fact, the pending financial crisis is not resolved, but only covered up. The unrestrained money supply increase supplied by Fed and ECB has in no way remedied the financial imbalance of states, banks and the economy, it has in no way reduced the excessive indebtedness, but

- Both in the USA and in European countries, debt has continued to grow by leaps and bounds since 2008 – in Greece, it even increased threefold.
- The financial bubbles (real estate bubble, derivatives bubble, credit card bubble) have not been reduced, but massively inflated further.
- Corrections to the economy, the social systems and society, which are long overdue from a market economy perspective, have been negated.

Only by artificial market interventions such as the zero interest rate and comprehensive guarantees and without offering any real solutions has the world's financial industry

been able to keep up the currently ongoing specious prosperity based on growing debts. No one should, however, believe that "the market can be cheated" on a permanent basis, that an anti-competitive money supply increase and a ride on zero-interest credits can be kept up indefinitely.

Harbingers of a natural correction of the ongoing artificial and illusory boom are already looming:

- The dollar is already teetering. Behind it stands the US, overloaded with debts at an all-time high, 80% of which are funded by debt monetization of the US American FED, so that the dollar now has only a military rather than an economic coverage.
- The zero interest rate policy distorts the asset price structure and allows massive loan fraud and forgery, insider trading and drug money laundering – and in the public sector the unrestrained contracting of additional debts without any prospect of repayment.
- The dollar, which was previously backed by a golden treasure, has lost its gold coverage. Not only the Fed, but also its European satellites (for example, the German Federal Bank) long ago lost their gold long ago, sold or mortgaged it, and it is at best "available" as a useless claim for repayment. In actual fact, it is by now privately owned and in Asia. So our Western monetary system does no longer rest on a foundation of trust, so that not only China and Russia but more recently also the oil states are founding new clearing-and-settlement-systems based on gold and not on the dollar. The collapse of the dollar empire is inexorably ongoing.
- Up to now, the initiators of the money supply increase (FED, ECB) have been able to control inflation despite zero interest rates by using ploys which entail buying up their own funds. But never yet has any country or institution been able to keep the evil spirit of a gigantic amount of money multiplication in the bottle. In some sectors (real estate, gold, food) we are already seeing price pressure rise, and this will enforce a rise in interest rates. If interest rates rise even only by 2%, banks, funds and states will be sinking in a maelstrom of debt. Not deflation, but inflation is the market economy's upcoming lie.
- As soon as the inflationary spiral begins to turn, we will see that all the previous crisis symptoms were only covered and extended instead of solved.
- Public debt will turn into inflation.
- The housing bubble will burst. Financial assets will be devalued including provisions for old age.
- And finally the necessary correction of money supply increase will follow in the

form of forced monetary contraction, i.e. currency reform.

If you ask me, when the second major financial crisis will come, I believe that the ongoing, of course artificial, situation cannot be maintained in the long or even medium term. So I expect a short-term forced correction and a new global financial crisis in the next three years – sooner rather than later.

What should be done now?

What the state, business, politics, the social systems and the security organs are preparing and should implement later, is described in detail in my "crash-book"².

And here are some hints for your private provision:

1. Pay off your debts, at the latest in the inflation phase at the beginning of the crash. If you come out of the crash free of debt, reconstruction will be easier.
2. Change your monetary assets to material assets in time. The unsecured and inflated money will lose its value, material assets, on the other hand, will hold their value.
3. Money-denominated "securities" such as stocks and bonds, funds, and similar financial assets will also devalue, but precious metals (gold, silver, etc.) will not do so. Gold and silver coins have always kept their purchasing power, whether in or after a crash.
4. During the crash, all government benefits such as salaries, benefits, pensions, old-age pensions will also dwindle. If you want to secure a standard of living above the minimum subsistence level, you must make sure to have an income financed by material assets like rents or leases.
5. If you can professionally provide necessary services after the crash (craft services, health care or others), you will be able to keep a higher standard of living than others.
6. This is also true for business owners who are able to provide necessary products after the crash (agriculture, manufacturing industry).

Many of those who do not see the second financial crash come and are not prepared, will suffer economic deprivation, they will be impoverished, in despair, they will perhaps rise up in revolution – but they will not be able to get at the financial fraudsters, the political seducers and the habitual public debtors – those will long since have made a bolt for it. •

¹ Obtainable at: Mittelstandsinstitut (SME Institute) Niedersachsen, Augustinerweg 20, D-30419 Hannover, Tel + Fax.: 0049 511 79 13 03, Price: 30,- Euro

² Hamer, Eberhard. What happens when the crash occurs? Obtainable at: Mittelstandsinstitut (SME Institute) Niedersachsen, Augustinerweg 20, D-30419 Hannover, Tel + Fax.: 0049 511 79 13 03.

The complexity of the hunger problem

Since it is caused by humans, it can be eliminated by humans

by Thomas Kaiser

Those who deal with the issue of inadequate nutrition on earth and especially with its causes are facing a multitude of factors that are responsible for the misery of hunger on our planet. While the focus of the media usually lies on the crises, the international community is only little interested in the quiet and agonizing death of the hungry. The UN declared 11 September an official commemorative day, while at the same time more people die from hunger every day than were killed in the collapse of the New York twin towers. Both disasters are the result of human action and therefore not inevitable. For the media, however, 11 September was something spectacular, which filled the newspapers and allowed them to keep people on the go, to stir up fear and fuel speculation. Dozens of books have been written, analyses and investigations, to date the issue remains virulent. The hunger of the people, which has since claimed millions of victims, however, is marked by a shadowy existence. Two books have made an outstanding contribution to the analysis of the hunger problem: on the one hand Jean Feyder's "Mordshunger. Wer profitiert vom Elend der armen Länder?" (Murdering hunger. Who benefits from the misery of the poor countries?) and Jean Ziegler's "Wir lassen sie verhungern" (We let them starve). Both books leave the reader with an imprint and a concern that must lead to action. But what has to be done?



ISBN 978-3938060-53-7

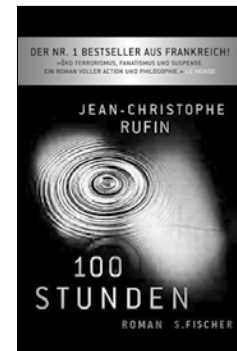
Thus, both authors conclude from different, but not contradictory perspectives that hunger is man-made and there should be no hunger on our green earth; as the whole problem is man-made it can also be solved by man, if – and this is crucial – there is the political will to do so. There are enough fertile soils and there are enough people who would like to cultivate them, too. But one cannot help thinking that certain political and economic circles tacitly accept the death of millions of people, if money can be made of it. Is this compatible with the human conscience?

The English Pastor Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) claimed to have recognized that humanity is growing faster than sufficient food can be supplied. He thought that it was a kind of natural law that humanity was heading towards misery. According to this view, it is essential for the survival of mankind to reduce the size of the world population, which happens when people die from disease or starvation – in many cases both factors are closely related and mutually dependent. Does this hideous vision still show an effect today, even though Malthus died over 200 years ago? Jean Ziegler writes: "Probably without meaning to, he [Malthus] relieved the inhabitants of the ruling states in the West from their bad conscience. Unless he has a severe mental disorder, no one is able to stand the sight of a fellow human being killed by starvation. By making the massacre a familiar idea, by referring to the realm of necessity, Malthus relieved the Western residents from their moral responsibility." (p. 102) Mankind is thus faced with the choice either to make great long-term efforts to ban the hunger from our planet, or to accept the death of thousands of innocent people in fateful allegiance, if not even secretly promoting it without knowing, because this death, according to Malthus' theory, ensures the survival of humanity.



ISBN 978-3570101261

A Swiss daily newspaper with a very large edition headlined a few weeks ago: "Liberia and Sierra Leone are lost." Here, the Journal cites a virologist named Jonas Schmidt-Chanasit, who said in the radio channel Deutsche Welle: "The right time to intervene was missed. Now, it's too late." He concluded that half of the population of Sierra Leone and Liberia would die. A scenario that, should it become reality, would exceed every horror film. Why has the disease spread so uncontrollably? Why does this virus strain mutate constantly and is so hard to fight as hard as the AIDS virus? Where does the virus come from all of a sudden? What are the people dying from, given that the Director of the WHO, Margaret Chan, states that we do not know the actual cause of death in many cases.



ISBN 978-3100685097

When reading the novel "100 Stunden", written by the French diplomat and writer Jean-Christophe Rufin, and the epilogue in particular, cannot help thinking that there is something going on which is not accidental or can be shrugged away as a freak of nature. It might go back to the ideas of Thomas Malthus and the ideological heirs of his views, the deep ecologists, who consider mankind a kind of cancer destroying Gaia, our Mother Earth, regarding man no longer as a part of nature but a leprosy that has to be decimated, if nature is to be saved. The founder of Deep Ecology Arne Naess argues in favour of a population reduction to an "acceptable level" and considers the migration of the poor into the rich countries an ecological problem. These people do not consider the fight against poverty and hunger the solution to the hunger problem, instead they fight the poor and the hungry. In their system of thought they regard each famine or plague as something positive. Even if such ideas and forces have only minimal influence, with their fatalistic view they contribute – despite all protestations – to the situation that not everything is being done to fight hunger, and thus to see to it that hungry people become an episode in the history of mankind, which could be overcome, at least in our modern technological age.

In several chapters Jean Ziegler shows, how malnutrition and hunger can lead to severe mental and physical illness. People who had to go hungry for a longer period of time or could only eat very poorly, have too little antibodies and a weakened immune system so that diseases, which would be curable in other circumstances, can lead increasingly to death. It is obvious that the solution of malnutrition would also make a significant contribution to the health of the affected population. The situation that the Ebola disease spreads in developing countries is related to this fact.

It is undisputed that agricultural policy makes a significant contribution to solving the problem of hunger and thus the health of the affected people. What Jean

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"The complexity of the hunger ..."

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Feyder clearly shows, however, is that the subsidized free trade of industrial countries drives the destruction of local agriculture on, especially in economically weak countries. The cheap subsidised imported goods may undercut domestic prices and prevent the establishment of a regionally-based agriculture. Thus, the profit of the industrial nations is regarded prior to the solution to the hunger problem. Since the publication of the World Agriculture Report it has been obvious that especially the small family farm – it was not accidental that the United Nations made 2014 the "Year of the Family Farming" – may offer a way out of the hunger crisis. The fact that China takes on the role as a trailblazer here, is causing a stir. Through the support of family farms they were able to increase their own production and enhance it, so that the number of undernourished people declined dramatically. The Chinese government also hopes for a dynamic agriculture by means of the promotion and enlargement of family farms, which today have 6.7 hectares of land on average.

A conversation with a vegetable gardener and trader in East Germany, who witnessed the ratios of the former GDR, revealed (cf. interview on the last page), that the GDR leadership once realised

that the big corporate agriculture had not achieved the desired yield of certain products and therefore, the state held a protective hand over the "private" small farmers to promote and maintain this form of cultivation. Now large enterprises are kept alive with state subsidy, since EU agricultural policy refuses all the support to small businesses, and this is systematic and belongs to the above-mentioned strategy.

In addition to the debate on a sensible agricultural policy at parliamentary level and professional association level there is always the question how one can get especially the younger generation interested in this topic. The latest summer edition of *Globi* (a Swiss children's book) comes along just at the right moment, cleverly entitled "Globi, the Smart Farmer", dealing with this very topic. Globi, who gets a family farm into proper shape and does not consider himself too bad to even go to Africa and learn there, how to successfully perform bio-



ISBN 9783857030895

logical pest control, deals with the current issues of agriculture. His idea and desire is to find a life in harmony with nature, taking into account animal welfare and building up a profitable farm this way. Not expansion and profit are in the foreground, but keeping animals in their natural environment and doing environmentally friendly agriculture; these are the topics discussed. For children it is an excellent introduction to the exciting and varied world of agriculture. A child-friendly introduction that considers both the welfare of humans and animals. Had those responsible for today's (agricultural) economy been introduced in the world of agricultural policy with this children's book, much of the world food situation would probably look somewhat different.

The findings for the solution of the problem of hunger are available. It is absurd that we fly to Mars, take soil samples there and draw conclusions about our solar system, but are not able to help millions of people on our earth who are on the brink of starvation. Is humanity really not able to provide enough food for all? Hardly. It is up to us humans, to hold a public debate in order to prepare the ground for a meaningful political solution. It is, as always, on us humans. Once you have looked into this problem a little deeper, it will stay on your mind. •

Regional small-scale agriculture against global hunger

New Brochure: "Paths out of the hunger crisis. The insights and consequences of the World Agriculture Report (IAASTD) – Proposals for tomorrow's agriculture"

rt. In 2008, the World Agriculture Report of the IAASTD (*International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development*) created a stir. The report, compiled on a wide scientific base by 400 authors from 86 countries under the roof of the UN and the World Bank, noted that, in order to solve the problems of sustenance, pollution and poverty, a meaningful agricultural development has to be based on small-scale family agriculture (<http://www.globalagriculture.org/>). In a brochure "Paths out of the hunger crisis" (December 2013)¹, the further development since 2008 is outlined.

The situation is clear. "Close to 900 million people on this planet are starving while 1.4 billion are overweight or suffer from morbid obesity. 2.5 billion tons of crops have been harvested in 2013, more than ever. But only 45% of the crop serves as food. The rest is processed to animal food, fuel or industrial raw materials. Our food system is one of the most important

reasons for the climate change, the extinction of species, water shortage, pollution, avoidable illnesses, child labour, poverty and injustice. This system is sick." (<http://www.globalagriculture.org/>)

The report makes it clear that it is wrong to believe that the problems of global sustenance and unemployment could be solved by an industrialized agriculture. The report shows this explicitly. The publishing of the report in 2008 led to a reconsidering of agricultural politics in many countries. Especially Third World countries are trying to avoid the mistakes of industrial agriculture. Thus also the idea of food sovereignty was reconstituted as a worthwhile goal of national agricultural politics. Also for a growing part of the population in the so-called First World, the dependence on food from abroad, sometimes from overseas or industrially or genetically modified, is no longer an option.

In Switzerland, currently three initiatives are being launched which include this goal (cf. *Current Concerns* 16/17).

Currently, the plans for a free trade agreement between the US and the EU (TTIP) are indicating a more adverse development. Due to large direct and indirect subsidies, agricultural products generated on a large scale with doubtful industrial means (by genetic engineering, insecticides, herbicides etc.) are threatening to supersede traditional ways of cultivation. States which so far have successfully fought genetic engineering are thus to be forced to give up their protective measures.

The so-called liberalisation of the markets also fosters "land grabbing" in the Third World. Valuable arable land is snatched away from the poor countries in order to produce cheap agricultural products, but also raw material for ethanol ("bio" fuel). Especially the large multinational corporations in the agricultural or agricultural chemistry sectors are urging to "liberalise" agriculture globally. Since they often can exert their influence by various means of non-democratic institutions

For a humane, robust and sustainable economy

Reinhard Koradi, Dietlikon, Switzerland

The message is very captious: Free markets promote economic growth and competitiveness. They create new jobs and lead to more prosperity, since falling prices incite demand. The deregulated, unlimited market access is also a handy weapon against hunger and poverty. Seductive prospects for many – especially for people living in poverty and without a source of income. But what is reality like? Never before in Europe, have so many people been counted that are out of work, and the intended growth melts like butter in the sun. Developing countries are not really successful in their fight against hunger and poverty, and entire economies become prisoners of their exuberant investment policy with borrowed money. They are now forced to sell off national assets and originally public tasks to private investors and to neglect their duties and obligations towards the local population.

The financial and currency crisis (debt economy in the United States, the crisis of the dollar as reserve currency and of the euro as the European single currency) have led the world into a severe economic crisis and thus into a political crisis. The global dimension of economic and political destabilisation reveals only too clearly the threatening risk cluster of a limitless economic order. Anyone who still advocates unrestricted free trade today has based his judgement on wrong “facts” or pursues a deceptive path. What we experience today is a reality that has long since detached from the “liberating forces” of free trade and merely follows the

survival of the fittest. Under the guise of free trade and of market economy a bitter struggle for market domination has developed, which has long since degenerated into a comprehensive economic war with a potential that is threatening people’s existence, especially in smaller and less developed economies. Global cost factor leadership has resulted in irreversible cuts and slashes in many relatively well-functioning economies. Jobs, innovation skills, high quality products as well as product diversity have been sacrificed in favour of the lowest prices that are fictitious since distorted by subsidies.

The honest performance-based competition on the markets had to give in to market power and probably also to the political power of a minority. Hunger and poverty are spreading, and the struggle for survival is taking on ever more terrible dimensions. Both in the less developed countries and in the developed countries – although they are bursting with wealth – the ability to self-subsistence is getting lost, the longer the more. By cheapest imports and perverse incentives dependencies are being created that threaten the existence and go far beyond the supply of goods; an improvement is not (yet) in sight.

It is almost frightening how helplessly governments and central banks face the current economic and ultimately also political challenges. Instead of solutions we are presented with ever new hotspots. In Ukraine, the Middle East, in Africa wars are spreading, whose deeper roots have a geostrategic nature, including the strive for unlimited access to raw materials and unhindered access to key transit routes.

The crises are not yet over – they have reached a new dimension

If Europe entangles itself in a war with Russia, the European economy will be weakened significantly. This has already become obvious with the sanctions issued by the US. Hundreds of thousands of jobs in Europe are at stake because of these sanctions. The European farmers – struggling for survival even without sanctions – are left with their fruits and vegetables; yield losses that cannot be compensated easily. The question arises: Who benefits from the decline of the European economy?

Market cleansing – by whatever means – always prepare a market entry. The greatly weakened US economy, combined with an astronomical debt burden, is urgently looking for an escape route to avoid the disaster. The national debt of the United States is said to be at almost 17 trillion dollars. However, the actual debt is

significantly higher. If one includes corporate debts, mortgages and consumer loans in addition to the national debt, it actually amounts to 60 trillion dollars, which represent about a quarter of the world debt [Source: *Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten*, (German Economic News)].

“US rescue measures” as part of their economic, currency and monetary policy have always fallen back on foreign countries and did not even exclude wars. We will only be able to free ourselves from the spiral of violence if reasonable forces in our latitudes unite and develop an independent and humane economic order.

Courage to act

Why should we pursue interests that harm our own concepts? Would it not be reasonable to reconsider our positions and then draw the right conclusions? No one – especially not a sovereign state and not a government that feel accountable to their own people – may be forced to betray their own interests. A possible war in Europe is definitely not in the interests of the European states. What can Europe gain by sanctions or even by a war against Russia? Nothing – Europe can only lose. Therefore, nothing remains but the liberation from the dependence on America. The Europeans must bravely oppose the US world power claims, not in order to protect Russia but to protect themselves.

Outlining the future

Why should the countries of Europe not remember their values?

Based on the economic order, it is important to reaffirm the fundamental conditions for an economy to the benefit of the people. Terms such as: common good, security of supply, full employment, trust, reliability, stability, balance as some basic principles of economic policy, honesty and quality, fairness in competition need to be incorporated into the new order.

The purpose of economic activity is the contribution to the common good. Serving the people and thus firmly integrating the economy in society have priority before economic interests. This then means that the economy is committed to a powerful, strong and attractive workplace Switzerland.

As part of society, the economy will create jobs, provide for the widest possible employment of the working population.

Tailored to their branches, industry will make its contribution to the optimum security of supply in the domestic market. Competition as well undergoes an alteration by

“Regional small-scale ...”

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like the EU commission or the WTO, they increasingly succeed in avoiding democratic decisions. This is why it is time for us to increase the counter-measures by us citizens in order to win back the right to decide over our own food and its production means. We should increasingly insist on a high-quality agriculture which can also guarantee our food sovereignty.

The 2008 World Agriculture Report is a crucial building block for a fairer and more ecological world. It is a strong foundation for all citizens who are claiming their right for healthy food and a clean environment.●

¹ *Wege aus der Hungerkrise. Die Erkenntnisse und Folgen des Weltagrарberichts – Vorschläge für eine Landwirtschaft von morgen. (Paths out of the hunger crisis – Proposals for tomorrow’s agriculture)* Edited by Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft. Berlin, Dezember 2013, ISBN 978-3-00-044819-5

"For a humane, robust ..."

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not making the absolutely lowest price but the comprehensive efficiency the decisive factor. Instead of the principle of the power of the fittest (market power) there will be quality, reliability, innovation and sustainability, sustainability in the sense of longevity and product safety. Dumping and unfair competition practices are prohibited.

Foreign trade (exports and imports) shall be well-adjusted in the overall balance. Surpluses are to be avoided as much as possible both on the import and on the export side. Products that must be imported will be subjected to the same requirements as the Swiss production (destination country principle). If the requirements are not met, punitive tariffs or import bans are possible. From the point of view of supply, of social or economic interests it is permissible to protect domestic production.

The basic services (transport, energy, water, education and health) must be provided and funded by the public sector, for the entire population. Political conditions must be created that all matters connected to the basic services remain in the hands of the people.

Competitiveness and growth policies have to primarily consider the domestically available resources. A European or global market price (usually distorted by subsidies) cannot be a benchmark for the Swiss price level.

Small-scale production and supply structures are to be promoted in the interests of supply security and employment policy. The hampering or denial of market access for small and medium-sized enterprises is prohibited.

Basically, the quantitative growth is to be replaced by a qualitative growth. Quantitative growth (use-and-throw economy) is to be replaced by added value economy (durability, maintenance and repair). We as well as all other states will also focus on a demand economy adequate to the country and the natural environment and say goodbye to growth for growth's sake.

Monetary policy is being subordinated to the needs of the real economy. Monetary growth has to serve the objective of stability, in the first place. Monetary policy should be designed according to both economic stability and its political needs and thus support the domestic economy.

The budgetary and fiscal policies, which are unilaterally being subordinated to economic policy objectives by the current crises, must adopt their original roles within the state again. The public sector – whether at local, cantonal or federal level – has to strictly maintain the balance between revenues and expenditures. In addition to the waiver of tax breaks in favour of site promotion this includes the restraint on "nice to have"-investments (for example, larger school facilities in order to build so-called learning environments, etc.).

Not playing domestic economy off against foreign trade

In our world of labour division, an economy must be open to the outside world. It would be shortsighted not to agree with like-minded sovereign countries in the context of international economic agreements. But the "common market" requires neither the loss of political independence nor the right to exclude one's own economic interests by contract. The EFTA (European Free Trade Association) should be used in this context as a model for the design of international

trade relations. Economic solidarity of the Alpine regions, or of neutral states would also be worth considering.

No call for more government, but for more personal responsibility, self-discipline and an honest value orientation

Freedom ends where the freedom of the one violates the freedom of others. This is also true in the business world. The state will only have to intervene where the private sector fails. The question is whether it is possible to develop and live a system of values (return to European culture) that breaks the power of money in favour of a humane, robust and sustainable economy. The aim is an economy that creates added value for everyone and not only for a small "elite". If we achieve this goal on a voluntary basis, it will hardly take management measures by the state. But if there is no insight, citizens will be asked to place a respective order with the state.

The responsibility of citizens

The lost innocence of free trade involves the unique opportunity for us to reflect on the significance of sovereign states. Derived from that is the question of the role of citizens in social and economic policy issues in our direct democracy. Do we as consumers – this is the role the economy is granting us – meet our responsibility as citizens, or does the claim to take on personal responsibility not apply for us, as well?

This means that responsibility also includes the effort to seek answers to the question: How do we establish an economy that serves the people instead of those in power, and what role should the state adopt in this new economic order?

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“The small farmers worked much more effectively”

“Inspiring the next generation to continue this tradition”

Interview with marketer, perennial plant gardener and greengrocer Harald Fickardt from Heldrungen/Thuringia

Heldrungen, located about 60 kilometers east of Weimar at the river Unstrut, is a small town with a big fortress, the core of which originated in the 16th century and expanded later on. Already in the 17th century Heldrungen was known for its vegetable production. Soldiers in the Elector of Saxony's service were paid with land on which a remarkable cultivation activity developed. This led to the situation that growing vegetables became the main income source for the Heldrungen population. On the fertile alluvial soil of the river Unstrut cultivation steadily increased reaching its peak between 1860 and 1870. Of course, in times past, driving to the individual markets of the environment happened under the most difficult conditions. Those owning a horse and cart, were comfortably on their way, someone, who not even owned a hand cart had to carry the goods to the next vegetable market. At the time, all the family members helped to secure the livelihood that way. An important always sought-after objective is the participation in the “Viehe- and Zippelmarckt” (live-stock and onion market), annually conducted at Weimar, which was mentioned in 1653 for the first time in writing. This year it took place from 10 to 12 October. This onion market – just as the Bernese “Zibelemärit” (Onion Market) – is like a folk festival. The Heldrungen onion traders have contacts up to Berne, as well. The following interview was conducted with a Heldrungen marketer in Weimar, who sells his pretty floral wreaths and lovingly braided bunches of onions daily on different markets. He tells about his work as a marketer and about the development of this craft and the role it played in GDR times.

Where do these beautiful braided onion bunches come from?

The onions braid, as we see it here, was developed about 400 years ago, in a small place called Heldrungen at the river Unstrut. Now the town has 1300 inhabitants and this tradition is still carried on by 20 families. Formerly they were many more families, but for reasons of age, they have become less. It is not easy to inspire the next generation to continue this tradition.

How is the onion braid formed?

It is produced in small family businesses. The grandparents help, the children help, everybody who can lend a hand. We have small market gardens or small agricultur-



Harald Fickardt from Heldrungen in front of his market stall in Weimar (picture thk)

al holdings with 2 to 6 acres of land, no one has more here. It is sufficient. Everything is grown here: onions, dried flowers and straw. When time has come, all sit together, cleaning and wrapping. Before that, of course, everything must be hung



(picture thk)

and dried under the roof. On the second weekend in October, we have our onion market here in Weimar, which enjoys European reputation, it is the 361st market. It takes place every year, it was cancelled only at times of war. About 250,000 visitors come here to this market and several 10,000 onion braids are sold during this time.

How did you form these neatly braided bunches of onions here?

My whole family helps. My mother and my father, both of whom are already retired, my wife and me, we are self-employed and run the business, and my daughter also helps occasionally. Then I have two seasonal workers who are already older, unfortunately it is difficult to get young people enthused for it.

It would be a shame if this tradition would not go on.

In our village we try both in kindergarten and in primary school to teach the craft to the children and to get them interested in this custom. Whether this is going to be successful, we cannot say yet, we will see. Of course, also in the families we try to introduce the children into this tradition and to inspire them. This is not always easy, but I hope that they will develop more pleasure in it, the older they get.

I come from Switzerland, and there we have the Berne “Onion Market”. Is there any connection between these traditions? Some families from Heldrungen, this is the place where I come from, go to Berne every year to offer their braided bunches of onions there. This has to do with the fact that in Switzerland too, they have some recruitment problems and they feel supported this way. I know from the Heldrungen people that their onion braids are greatly appreciated by the Swiss people.

It would really be a pity if such a traditional craft was no longer continued.

Yes, of course, but it is also a cost-benefit question. There is an awful lot of work, and you don't get rich from it. Somebody who works on it full time, must also have the possibility to live on it. For a person who has a regular income, it is easier to do this on the side. But for many this is very difficult. For me, e.g. it is my autumn

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“The small farmers worked ...”

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business. I own a perennial market garden and in spring I plant perennials in rock gardens, which is less in demand in autumn. But the sale of the onion braids is running quite well.

Contrary to agriculture this is probably not subsidised?

Certainly not, this is not subsidised. This is really sad that the big companies are always subsidised but not the small ones, although we are just as affected by weather changes such as heavy rain, hail and whatever else may happen to us. Therefore, we had already very difficult years. Actually, small firms should be supported in the same way because they have the biggest difficulties to survive.

You come from Heldrungen. When did you get up this morning to come here?

Every morning it takes an hour to go to Weimar. I have adopted this tradition from my parents. They started in the 60s to go to Weimar regularly. As long as I can remember, my grandmother was always on the onion market, as well. I took the business over from my parents in 1999, because my father retired for reasons of health. I do this seven days a week and every morning I get up at 5.30 am (laughing).

You certainly have many people here who are enthused by this hand work?

On the whole, I am satisfied. Of course, it always depends on the weather, how many people will come to the market, of course, here in Weimar this are always tourists, as well. It is interesting, that the South Germans are more eager to buy than the North Germans.

Did this tradition exist during the communist era as well, or had it been abolished at that time?

No, during the communist era the braided bunches of onions were a real cult.

The onion market did always take place. The state subsidised and organised this onion market, and the families who had maintained this tradition for decades, were always present. People did it practically as a side-job, because everyone had a regular work. Self-employment in the modern sense did not exist. You did your work, and afterwards you braided onion bunches for the market. After 2 to 3 hours everything was sold out on the market.

Who owned the land, where you grew the onions and flowers?

It was our own land. We had 3 to 4 acres of land. The state left it to us because they had realised that the small farmers worked much more effectively than the large “LPGs” (landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft – agricultural co-operatives). Such niche products never came from “LPGs”, because they could not produce this quality. Such products always came from the small farmers.

Why was this knowledge not been included in today's economic development?

Yes, that really is the question. Lettuce, carrots, cucumbers, in the GDR era everything was always produced by small businesses with outstanding quality, and it was always encouraged by the state. We got good money for delivering the products there. You brought the products to the state's reception offices and you were able to live comfortably from the proceeds. Today, the small farmers can no longer make a living therefrom. For the cucumbers you got 160 marks for the quintal. That was an awful lot of money. If you were hardworking and you had cultivated the land well, you could make a very good living. Today this is no longer possible.

Actually, the whole thing is a plea for the small family farm. Just meeting the spirit of the UN Year of Family Farming.

Yes, in the 60s they tried to force the farmers into the “LPGs”. But that was only possible for the large production of corn, grain or potatoes. The small farmers, like us, who made these braided bunches of onions or grew vegetables were actually left alone, because the state had realised that they were more efficient. Then, the state held the hand over them and protected these small businesses. If you



were small, if you owned 3, 4, 5 acres of land, you could live in peace. In GDR times you lived better with these small fields than today. Today you are constantly put under pressure. People who have nothing to do with this business, do not know anything about it. Also it was a wrong idea then to believe that our people had little money. That's not true. The hardworking people had more money than today. Someone, who had a job like we had and even if he grew vegetables only on the side, could live relatively well. The problem was, in fact, that you could not do much with the money, because not all products were available. But there was no lack of money.

Thank you very much for the interesting conversation.

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)

The onion – one of the oldest crop plants

The common onion is one of the oldest cultivated plants of mankind and has been cultivated as a medicinal, spice and vegetable plant for over 5,000 years. In Ancient Egypt the Gods were served onions as a sacrifice, onions were also a kind of payment for the workers who built the pyramids and the dead were provided with onions for their journey to afterlife. This became evident by the remains of onions found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. An over 4,000 years old Sumerian cuneiform contains information on cucumber and onion fields and in the Code of Hammu-

rabi bread and onion allocations for the poor were defined.

For the Romans onions were staple food, especially for the less fortunate. And it was by the Roman legions that the “cepula” was spread in Central Europe. There it became one of the most popular vegetables, not to be missed at any meal of the time and in the Middle Ages it also served as an amulet against the plague. From about the 15th century onwards breeding of selected varieties differing in shape, colour and taste started in Holland.

In terms of cultivation methods, there is a distinction between “summer onions” and “winter onions”. Summer onions (the actual cooking onions) are sown in early spring or, in case of bulbs, planted and harvested from August to October; particular varieties of solid consistency can be stored until March of the following year. The somewhat juicier and milder winter onions – rather overwintering cultivated onions – are sown in August, ripen in the following spring and can be harvested from June, however, they cannot be stored for long.

Source: Wikipedia