

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

The accession to a supranational organisation leads to the disintegration of the Swiss political system

by Thomas Kaiser, historian

When we elect a new parliament on 18 October, it is at the citizens' hands who is going to be member of parliament in Berne as the people's representative. Therefore, it is important to think well to whom you are giving your vote. The times in which we find ourselves, are presenting us with major challenges. There are major problems in Europe and the EU countries, and the conflict in Ukraine has suddenly brought the risk of a European war within the bounds of possibility. It ultimately depends on us, the citizens, where and how Switzerland is going to position itself in this situation. Do we want to remain independent, keep our budget in order and protect our political system against attacks from outside, or do we want to offer our services to the EU? This step would have far-reaching consequences for us and for our system of government.

If candidates are asked about the peculiarities of the Swiss political system in a civics examination, they usually name direct democracy first of all, and neutrality, federalism or multilingualism of Switzerland come second. This is no coincidence, because there is no other country on earth where the population has so many political participation rights as in Switzerland. This is conspicuous. To be sure there are other states, for example Germany, that offer possibilities to subject certain political decisions to a referendum at the level of the municipalities or the "Länder" (federal states). This is notably the case in Ba-

varia, because here the Social Democrat Wilhelm Hoegner was the Chairman of the Constitutional Council which drafted a new constitution for Bavaria after the Second World War. Wilhelm Hoegner had been living in exile in Switzerland during the war.¹ But there is no country with as extensive possibilities of participation as there are in Switzerland. The citizens can participate in decisions right up to the national level. In the countries of the European Union we find only presidential or parliamentary democracies, in which the people are directly involved in political decisions other than the periodically held elections, only in the rarest exceptional cases. None of these countries knows the right of initiative at the national level. Therefore it is indeed direct democracy which makes Switzerland unique.

We can say that seen from this perspective, Switzerland is a special case with a system that prevents it from fitting in any supranational entity in which citizens are above all administrated.

Farmers were the rightful source of political power

You can only understand Switzerland if you start with its citizens. Because ever since the founding of the Swiss Confederation in the Middle Ages its citizens have enjoyed a high degree of freedom, and this manifests itself in the delegation of a lot of responsibility to the individual.

This transfer of responsibility rests on the conviction that, as a rule, citizens will not abuse the trust placed in them but sup-

port their community in a positive way. This way of looking at things can already be found in the Middle Ages. So for example in Grisons it was the farmers who actively participated in the development of the political system. They were the rightful holders of political power here. They were also responsible for defending their communes against attacks. This sort of peasant army proved to be more powerful than foreign mercenary armies.² They knew what to defend, namely their relatively high degree of freedom and self-determination.

In the world of today the distinction between tax evasion and tax fraud, which is not understood in countries like Germany, France, Italy and so on, is an example that shows us quite plainly the fundamental confidence of the state in its citizens. The fellow citizen is seen as a fellow human being, who has an interest in the common good. Thus, the taxpayer is not eyed with suspicion and seen as a potential tax evader, as is customary in other countries. If we compare this tax system with that of other countries, we come to realise that this view is more promising. In spite of repeated attempts to spend more than has been collected, Switzerland has had its finances under control up to the present day. When the voters said yes to the "Schuldenbremse" (debt brake) they put a stop to any irresponsible money handling.

The inner attitude of the citizens is characterised by equity

Direct democracy will only work if there are citizens who have been influenced by school and education so as to make them take an interest in the fate of their country and to come to grips constructively with the political affairs concerning it. We must have the will to participate in political decision-making if we are to continue to safeguard and to live direct democracy.

It took great efforts and tenacious struggle until the direct democratic elements were established both at cantonal and federal level in Switzerland's consti-

Framework agreement – an EU diktat

"A framework agreement would mean a close entanglement with the EU. The expected EU diktat would be recognized to its full extent only at a late point of time and finally the Framework Agreement would yet be regarded as impractical and unworthy for Switzerland. [...] Those who advocate a comprehensive Framework Agreement and with it the prospect of a later accession to the EU, renounce neutrality, sovereignty and in-

dependence for the future and help to undermine direct democracy, federalism and communal autonomy. Switzerland in the EU would be a significantly different Switzerland than that of today. The (institutional) Framework Agreement expected by the EU must be evaluated from this perspective."

Carlo Jagmetti

Source: "Neue Zürcher Zeitung"
from 6.10.2015

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tutions – for who would like to surrender power? There was an uphill struggle in the individual cantons until the privileged were willing to allow "their subjects" to participate in the government.³

Nevertheless, the Swiss culture and tradition was different from for instance that in the German Empire or in the later German experiments to establish a democratic form of government. For not only a good education is a basic component of the functioning of direct democracy, but also an attitude of the citizens among themselves which is characterised by equity, as well as a militia system which ensures that even politicians remain part of the general society in their feelings and behaviour, and that they do not drift away out of touch with reality feeling superior to their constituents, as we see it in other parliamentary democracies. Apart from the fact that you can meet our parliamentarians regularly in means of public transport during the sessions – it is not uncommon that on a stroll through Berne you may meet one of our Federal Councillors – instead of being surrounded by bodyguards as seen in other countries. This would be impossible in our neighbouring countries. There politicians are chauffeured to parliament in black limousines, shielded from the public and remote from their voters. Citizens do not get to see their elected representatives except on TV or at election rallies.

No aggressive foreign policy

Direct democracy allows you to make decisions that are supported by the majority of citizens. Likewise, Switzerland has no system of government and opposition, as is common in parliamentary democracies, but a concordance system, even though this has lately been whirled slightly off balance. But for a long time the Federal Council, the Swiss government, was made up of delegates of all those major parties which directed the destinies of the country. This has proved to be a stabilising factor for our country and also acted as a brake on individual political power cravings.

For centuries Switzerland has not pursued an aggressive foreign policy but catered mainly for the stability and security within the country. When you think of the "Sonderbund" War in 1847, you will see that this was a highly challenging task. Whether the Battle of Marignano is crucial to this insight, is not the subject of the dispute here.⁴ Sufficient to say only this: The rejection of power politics is a fundamental component of modern Switzerland, and this fact cannot be argued away, not even by calling individual historical

events into question. Those who aim at a total revocation regarding this issue have other intentions with Switzerland than to strengthen its role as a sovereign, neutral, direct democratic small state, which, because of its active neutrality, is often the only state left on the international stage which is able to offer a place for negotiations.

Everlasting armed neutrality

Switzerland's multilingualism and its location in the heart of Europe have supported the idea to walk the path of neutrality. Unlike other "neutral" countries, Switzerland has not only invoked neutrality for its own advantage, but neutrality is a fundamental component of the Swiss conception of state and it belongs to Switzerland like direct democracy and federalism. In regular surveys nearly one hundred per cent of the Swiss population regularly confirm their consent to neutrality. Last year it was 96 per cent.⁵ It would be a flight of fancy to imagine that a country could be neutral without being armed. For this reason the forefathers of the Swiss federal state stipulated that everlasting armed neutrality be one of the pillars of our political system. Those who call this into question with the spurious argument that they believe it to be antiquated in today's world are following their own agenda. The recent years' conflicts have confirmed the importance of neutrality, more than ever.

Yet, neutrality does not only have an outside function but it also gives reassurance inside the country, which is no mean feat when you consider our different linguistic and cultural regions. Thus the spirit of the Red Cross "Tutti fratelli", all are brothers, arises precisely from this conception.⁶ The Red Cross movement, as it has evolved since its establishment in 1863, would not have been possible but

"If Switzerland were an EU member, it would have to back the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)"

"The Union's competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence."

Source: EU treaty art. 24, par. 1

"The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the Union's action in this area."

Source: EU treaty art. 24, par. 3

"If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power..."

Source: EU treaty art. 42, par. 7

thing extraordinary in the interplay of nations, something which the international community can not do without. Were Switzerland to be a member of the EU, it would have to support the *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CFSP), which embodies nothing less than a military assistance pact and which demands solidarity in action of its member states in the event of war. There is not a trace of neutrality.⁷

If we look at Switzerland's national policy foundations and contrast them with the challenges we are facing, one thing has to be noted: The merging of Switzerland in a supranational organisation such as the EU or the NATO would lead to a loss of its

"The merging of Switzerland in a supranational organisation such as the EU or the NATO would lead to a loss of its basic specific features."

for this basis. While neutrality is complied with, both the ICRC and Switzerland can fulfil their special role with respect to humanitarian commitment. This means that the ICRC may be active in political contexts that allow no other relief agencies to be on site. The same also applies to Switzerland, which was clearly demonstrated last year when Switzerland held the presidency of the OSCE. Thanks to its neutral negotiating position it was possible to adopt the *Minsk agreement*, thus launching a process which does bring – however small – benefits today, i.e. a year later. Switzerland's neutrality is therefore some-

basic specific features. The developments of recent years and particularly of recent weeks and months have demonstrated to many sceptics how the EU works. The arguing of EU advocates that if Switzerland was a member of the EU, it could then contribute and help shape the future is a weak argument. The sanctions against Russia and the crisis in Greece as well as the refugee crisis have shown that the small EU countries have no voice at all. The larger countries, the Big Boys, determine the course according to the old undemocratic princi-

Is Switzerland a sovereign state?

Considerations to the federal elections

by Reinhard Koradi, President "Komitee selbstbewusste freie Schweiz" (Committee for a confident and free Switzerland)

Switzerland, a sovereign state? Why the question mark? Simply, because our sovereignty, our freedom and independence are massively threatened.

Switzerland is no island, but it has borders

Switzerland with its backbone of independence, it's still here:

- direct democracy
- armed neutrality/ability to put up a fight
- freedom and self-responsibility
- decentralised structures (autonomy for communes and federalism)
- militia system
- our values
- and a sufficient provision of healthy foods.

These foundations of a free, independent Switzerland are being undermined by the *zeitgeist*, as well as by interventions from

within and attacks from outside on our internal affairs and not rarely by greed of power and claims to power from individual exponents in our own country. Thus a later female Federal Councillor said: "Switzerland doesn't exist any longer!"

For today and tomorrow there is no reason for political apathy or even resignation. Maybe we are still too well off but the course for our well-being tomorrow is being set today.

Time is ripe: to seriously reflect on the protection of our own – to my opinion existential – interests and to act accordingly.

We are not locking our doors. Yes, we are installing intricate security systems to protect our lives and property – why then this unforgivable neglect concerning our border control? Borders fulfil a function that cannot be suspended without any damage.

Empty granaries a security risk

What do you think would happen in our densely populated country, if the population starved or even be threatened by death of starvation?

Social unrest would be certain and the government would be under pressure – with all the negative effects for the inner cohesion and thus for home security. The trust bearing stability of our country, the social security and the ability to put up a fight if necessary would seriously be weakened. Along with the pressure exerted within our own country the pressure from outside would increase. It would result in unimaginable dynamics if we became dependent on help from other countries. Those starving and struggling for their survival would hardly be able to fight for independence and freedom for their country, neither for their civil rights.

Therefore, a secure situation of food provisions will be a precondition for the continuance of a free and independent Switzerland! And we will only succeed to accomplish this security by means of an intact, producing agriculture in our own country – an agriculture with a well diversified and decentralised enterprise structure, the way we still have it today, at least in parts. A diversified enterprise must consist of decentralised production structures and some ranges of products (dairy farming, cultivation of land, cultivation of fruit and vegetables etc).

No less important are the supplying and the processing industries (seeding material, fertilisers, farm machinery respectively milling, dairy production, bakeries, butcheries etc).

We know that we are not able to reach a 100 % food self sufficiency based on population figures and the scarce cultural lands still at our disposal. Thus Switzerland must take effective measures to comprehensively fulfil the state political task – to protect and defend the sovereignty of our country. Among others, this again calls for implementing political strategies for provisions based on the highest possible degree of self-sufficiency through domestic production and additionally aligned to crisis proof agreements on obligations for supplies from reliable contract partners. (The EU and also the USA will supposedly not be those partners, as shown in the past.)

The Federal Council and the federal administration are taking another path. Promoted passively or actively by the majority in parliament, the Federal Council is pursuing agricultural policies that expose the producing agricultural sector to a great disadvantage and by which they are consciously pursuing a consolidation. Every day three agricultural enterprises are disappearing. Concerning food provisions for our country, the fathers and mothers of our country are also building on the so called "free market".

There is no difference to a beginner's tight rope walking on a lofty tight rope without sufficient safety measures. The "free market" will, with absolute certainty, dictate conditions of supply and price – which means the same as "surrender to the enemy" in an emergency situation.

Full granaries are an instrument of power but only for those possessing them. This taught us already the Old Testament. And the USA are doing everything conceivable to empty the granaries of the rest of the world, to build and sustain their own unique position of power as sole "world provider".

With reasonable agriculture and provisions policies, in terms of state and security interests, we do stand a chance to at least partly, elude the claims for power from abroad.

The world has changed

Yet we live in a "fair-weather nostalgia". Our neighbours are good friends. The "United States as protecting power" will put their protective hand over our country.

We have done everything to keep our friends happy: Anticipatory obedience, the acquisition of foreign law, the perforation of banking secrecy, the weakening of the

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ple: He who pays the piper calls the tune. It is certainly no mistaken policy for Switzerland to keep on the right side of its neighbours, but when it gets straight down to the nitty-gritty for our country, we need personalities who stand up again and say, thus far and no further.

Direct democracy thrives on the activity of the citizenship. It is entirely in their hands where the journey will go. Whether Switzerland will continue to be a sovereign, federal, direct democratic, and neutral state solving problems in a temperate way and for the benefit of its citizens, ultimately depends on us, the citizens, ourselves. Let us use our voice and speak up when it is a matter of our country and ultimately of our freedom. This is easily lost, but to recover it would take decades, if indeed it were ever to succeed. •

¹ cf. Wilfried Scharnagel. "Bayern kann es auch alleine" (Bavaria Can Also Do It Alone), p. 64

² cf. Rudolph C. Head. "Demokratie im frühneuzeitlichen Graubünden", (Early Modern Democracy in the Grisons), pp. 13.

³ cf. Benjamin Adler. "Entstehung der direkten Demokratie", (Emergence of direct democracy), pp. 102.

⁴ cf. Current Concerns no 9/10 , 31.3.2015

⁵ cf. "Sicherheitsbericht ETH 2014" (Safety Report ETH 2014).

⁶ cf. Henri Dunant. "Eine Erinnerung an Solferino" (A Memory of Solferino).

⁷ cf. box

International criminal courts must not be misused

Interview with Dick Marty *, conducted on 2 October 2015 – the morning show of the French Swiss RTS – “Radio Télévision Suisse”



Dick Marty
(picture wikipedia)

Simon Matthey-Doret (RTS): It is a great premiere for international justice. Two weeks ago the prosecutor of Paris opened a criminal investigation into crimes against humanity against the Syrian regime of Presi-

dent Bashar al-Assad. As yesterday officially confirmed, this investigation is based mainly on photos of corpses who had been tortured; a former photographer of the Syrian military police had delivered them. For the French diplomacy, this is about nothing less than the responsibility to take action against impunity. Our guest will certainly not deny this principle, but instead will confirm it. Live from the studio in Geneva, we are pleased to welcome the former President of the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commission: Dick Marty, good morning.

Dick Marty: Good morning.

sary of the Fondation Hironnelle, which supports independent media in war-torn countries or countries with violent conflicts, mainly in Africa. You are member of this organisation's board of trustees. We'll talk about this later, in particular about the information on conflicts and the freedom of information.

But with respect to the opening of the French criminal investigation into crimes against humanity against the government of Bashar al-Assad: Is this not an important signal against impunity? Have you welcomed this step, although there is probably little chance of success?

You will probably be surprised, but I'm very little convinced by this approach. I believe that it is rather part of the French strategy of throwing itself into a pose, since – so my impression – it is desperately trying to play a certain role in the Syr-

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* Dick Marty, born in 1945, is a Swiss politician and former state prosecutor of the Canton of Ticino. From 1995 to 2011 he represented the Canton of Ticino in the Swiss Council of State. He is a former member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and a member of the OSCE-Commission on Human Rights. As a special investigator of the Council of Europe on the CIA, Dick Marty uncovered the CIA secret prisons in Europe.

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financial and business location Switzerland, voluntary payments and the generous offer to contribute to the solution of refugee problems.

Loud promises without internal emergency – what if there really is a fire?

Today, it is important to build a position of strength and defend it.

We are no superpower, but we certainly have values and trumps in our hand that sting when they are used strategically (keywords: Alpine Transversal, Water Reservoir, etc.).

Why not deliberately position ourselves as a sovereign state? Switzerland, “borstiges Stachelschwein” (bristly porcupine) – why not? That goes with a self-governed foreign policy and an economic and trade policy, based among other things on a high security of supply with native foods for the population.

We create this security alone by means of a productive agriculture. This means rewriting the Swiss agricultural policy.

Existing structures must be preserved and promoted. The operating variety is the best guarantee for high security of supply, also in times of crisis. The risk of concentration, which is inherent in centralisation, must be reduced by delicate production and distribution networks.

It's not by coincidence that the World Agriculture Report (left 2008) recommended local and regional production and dis-

tribution structures on the basis of family farms in the fight against hunger and poverty. These are superior to industrial agricultural production in many ways. What is true for the less developed countries has also its validity for Switzerland when it comes to feed its own population.

Our farmers can fill the granaries in case they are not hindered in their work. Ecology and animal welfare Yes, but not so far that doing nothing is more rewarding than producing. As originally conceived direct payments should again compensate the income gap for farmers caused by the not cost-oriented product prices. A next step would then be to think seriously about the value of healthy and natural foods.

Open supply gaps can be compensated with intergovernmental agreements to the

benefit of both parties. It would perhaps be better to look east and not west.

State and security goals have to be more weighted than economic considerations. Not the free market access, the maximum rate of return, but the security of existence has first priority for our country. In other words: The policy must rethink and give a higher weight to food security than competitiveness and growth prospects. The domestic production must be protected from cheapest imports if necessary.

Freedom and independence, armed neutrality and our democratic rights and obligations will prevail only if we credibly and resolutely fight at all levels against the shrinking process of our sovereignty.

Only a sovereign Switzerland can live up to its values and contribute to the well-being of the world community. •

Letter to  the Editor

“Assistance on-site as a Swiss principle”

What kind of world do we leave to our children and grandchildren and what will they themselves have to take charge of one day if they can? (Keyword education, for instance). In our vulnerable times a contribution to peace as that of *Luzi Stamm* (last edition of *Current Concerns*) is extremely valuable. It deserves to be discussed in many Swiss media. The motion for quitting the NATO instrument “Partnership for Peace” (PfP), has appealed to me in its reasoning. “Our nation has cre-

ated for itself the great reputation ... just to help”, instead of allowing the warring parties to use it for their objectives. The good reputation of the small state Switzerland as a neutral country that doesn't take part in crisis regions but tries to mediate and to help must be carefully preserved. Initiatives such as the motion of *Luzi Stamm* give hope in our difficult time. Thank you for publishing the interview.

Renate Dünki, Oberwangen

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ian dossier. Undeniably, absolutely horrifying crimes have been and are being committed in Syria every day. But to say the perpetrator was only *Bashar al-Assad*, is a completely arbitrary constrictio. I also believe that we must admit that we are very ill-informed about this conflict, and that the information at our disposal is often one-sided and very often manipulated.

"Throwing oneself into a pose" is a pretty strong expression. The position of President Hollande is known: We must not negotiate with Bashar al-Assad – even if the Russians and maybe even the Americans have a different view. But that does not mean that, because he is not the only offender, he should not be taken to court? Or would you say that no such measure, no criminal investigations into crimes against humanity should be opened because Bashar al-Assad is not the only one?

There definitely must be a criminal investigation into the events in Syria. However, everybody knows that there is not only one perpetrator. So, if an investigation is initiated against one culprit only, the affair becomes a one-sided process, a process which is hardly objective. That's all. I think the first thing to do is to collect information and to try to find evidence, but with respect to the actions of all those involved. I am speaking of the French throwing themselves into a pose, because I am quite shocked by the attitude of France. The Socialist *Hollande*, who went head over heels to the Saudi King's funeral, who sold *Rafale* warplanes to the Saudis – he is now selling the *Rafale* planes and warships to Egypt, as well as other aircrafts to Qatar. These are all dictatorial regimes, where basic human rights are seriously violated. This kind of doublespeak really annoys me.

This is very interesting. What is behind this doublespeak, these double standards? Actually, you are right, he sold weapons to Saudi Arabia, however he does not want to negotiate with Bashar al-Assad – this is precisely an example for performing "realpolitik", isn't it. What interest should France have to speak with two tongues?

I think he has a "complex of the little man" who is left behind sitting in a corner. He is desperately trying to find attention. I do not think that this is *realpolitik*. In my opinion, *realpolitik* is made especially by the Russians and the Americans, today. I am of the opinion that we should learn the lessons from what has happened in Iraq and Libya. Unquestionably, two ty-

rants ruled there. Previously we spoke of tyrants, these two were truly tyrants!

Bashar al-Assad is not a tyrant, Dick Marty?

I shall come back to that.

Sorry.

But what did they do with these two tyrants? The country was bombed. There was never a lot of talking about this, but it was a huge business for the arms manufacturers. They blew them off, and what is the result? It is tragic to have to say that, it's really tragic: The people of Iraq and in Libya had a better life before, better than today! That's the result! So if you want to intervene in these countries, it must be done with tact and in an intelligent way, without believing that everything can be solved with bombs.

So the Americans are drawing lessons from the events in Iraq, Libya, etc.

I hope so.

I am now returning to my question. Is Bashar al-Assad a tyrant, yes or no? We have just talked about the term dictator and its significance. Would you call Bashar al-Assad a tyrant?

Listen, I just don't know. I was in Syria four or five years ago. I met Bashar al-Assad. I talked to him for an hour. Of course, not all monsters look like monsters. He is an ophthalmologist. He had no intention of becoming head of state. You know the story: It was his brother who was to take over this task. But he had a fatal accident. Bashar al-Assad, the ophthalmologist from London, had to return in a hurry to take over this task. He is of course a dictator...

He shot his own people...

...yes, but how many people are shooting their own peoples these days. He is an actor on the Syrian stage. And if one wants to achieve something and not just destroy things, one has to talk with these people.

This is exactly what they call "realpolitik", even if you do not like this term. Returning to François Hollande, could one say that his behaviour in this conflict demonstrates that he has no idea of history in a comprehensive sense?

I don't know... I admit, between *Sarkozy* and *Hollande* I would have voted for *Hollande*, eventually. But I find him disappointing. He is just sadly mediocre, that is all.

What a terrible statement! Dick Marty, if we return to this criminal investigation, if he was ever convicted in the case – what would be the significance of it?

First there would have to be a court qualified to do this. We do not yet have such a court. I think the women, children and men living in Syria should have top priority – there has to be a solution to stop the bombing and the massacres. This is top priority. We should not resort to the judiciary in order to show off. Since before going to court – a trial can only be conducted quietly and dispassionately – we first have to address the humanitarian problem.

So a mission with ground troops on site is needed? I am asking this question knowing that you are not an expert on military matters. But from a political viewpoint: Do we need a ground intervention in Syria – in consensus between the East and the West?

Yes, I think that such an intervention, with the task to protect the civil population, is necessary.

And doing so without misusing the judiciary. That is what you are telling us, Dick Marty. Is justice possible? Is it possible to enforce international law against these crimes or will the perpetrators go unpunished forever?

This is really the question. Because an international judiciary bound to conflicts is often tinctured with victor's justice. And victor's justice is not a real justice. Of course there were the Nuremberg trials which were positive overall, but even they left a bitter aftertaste. In the last weeks of World War II, the allied bombed the town centres of the most important German cities. These were no military goals. They were directed against the civil population. It was a war crime...

And there was also Hiroshima...

...and there was also Hiroshima, of course. And rationales were constructed in order to justify these acts. However, these are war crimes which remained completely unpunished, because they were committed by the victors. The victors' acts are always motivated by military reasons while the defeated are murderers by definition. In Nuremberg the convicted were horrible murderers, we do not have to discuss this. Remember that *Churchill* did not want a trial. He wanted to execute them immediately.

That was his view as a fighter in the war in India. But finally, Dick Marty, can we imagine that one Bashar al-Assad remains unpunished, for several years, just like this, as the leader of Syria or in some golden exile country? Can we imagine this?

No, I do not think so. But it is most important to find a transition solution, a con-

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“Moscow sticks to the rules”

by Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer
(picture uk)

Actually, the UN super summit in New York has passed by much too fast. No wonder certain images had no time to catch the attention of the viewers as they had deserved, drowned as they were in an excess of “refugees welcome” images

broadcast every evening. In fact some very important images could be seen in New York and they should be remembered. They involved the Russian President *Putin* and became ever more impressive the more the American President was drawn into the picture as well. The difference was hard to miss and even the increasingly streamlined German press could not hide how contrite President *Obama* presented himself. His Russian colleague was the exact opposite. *Putin* looked as if he had enjoyed the time a lot since the G8 had thrown him out in a fit of self-isolationism. Even in today’s media

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trolled transition, avoiding the mistakes of Iraq where everything was destroyed. Libya does no longer exist. Previously, there had been hundreds, thousands, millions of people who had lived quite well in Iraq and in Libya...

But with little freedom. Little freedom of the press, little freedom to demonstrate... ..but they had something to eat. They could walk outside without getting hit by a bomb. They could go to work on their fields without being hurt or even killed by landmines. All this does no longer exist. There is no government, no administration in Libya... and this is the result of the bombings. At that time it was Sarkozy who wanted this.

[In the following the interview turns away from the situation in Syria, turning to the Swiss Hironelle Foundation, an NGO by journalists and experts for humanitarian aid which, in cooperation with the UN, supports independent radio stations in crisis and war regions. Editor’s note]

Source: RTS – Radio Télévision Suisse [SRF – Swiss Radio and TV], “*Journal du matin*”, 2 Oct. 2015

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“President Putin filled the vacuum that has been especially created by the United States’ half-hearted operation in the Syria conflict. Admittedly Washington also attacks Jihadists’ positions, however, its intensity creates doubt on its seriousness.”

Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger commenting in the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” from 8 October 2015

environment, images tell you more than a thousand words. It looks like *Putin* has used his time off US patronization very well. He was relaxed and had no problem showing it to the world.

Russia is back on stage

The contrast to Western behavior after the pro-Western putsch in Ukraine was more than obvious. Especially considering the role of the Russian president at the Ukraine conference in Paris, which took place a few days after the UN super summit. Things have apparently been re-evaluated after the G7 meeting in Bavaria. In addition to NATO, the G7/8 meetings had always underscored the role of those events as promotions for US leadership and interests, as the “only remaining superpower” and the “indispensable nation”. When kicking the Russian federation out of this circle, the West finished this unnatural spook themselves. The world has changed since then, and visibly so.

The alternative to murder and slaughter takes shape: Russia grows into her role as the hegemon of international law

Sad as it is, the recent murderous attack of the US air-force in the North Afghan city of Kunduz against a hospital, which was protected by international law, was not even necessary any more to convince people that the US stand for murder and slaughter in our part of the world – it is well-known and has been a world-political reality for two decades. The world patron of global misery, basically. It was outrageous to hear the US President lament the misdeeds of *Assad* before the UN. He himself and his drone murders should be measured by his own standards. He should also refer his two predecessors to the *International Court* in The Hague. The incessant telephone calls from Washington to *Angela Merkel* regarding the migration development makes one suspect that the orders from Washington are more willingly listened to in Berlin than the complaints from all parts of the country about the lawless state created by the government.

For some time now the political decisions of the Russian federation may be viewed as an alternative to all of this.

One may look at the state of affairs from all conceivable perspectives, be it the insufficient investigation of the Malaysian airline plane downed over the Ukraine or the conduct of the Russian troops in Syria. Moscow sticks to the rules that had been imposed on Europe and the world after a murderous world war in order to prevent a third one from happening. On the other hand, one can only listen in horror to Washington’s statements from a European perspective. In a country which is totally bewitched by and dependent on the terrible potentials of their weapons, the Republican presidential candidates advise us of the imminent third world war. Considering how these people phrase their messages, the once proud and responsibly acting America must be all but finished. Murder and slaughter is the perspective should the disciples of *Bush*, *Cheney* and *McCain* get elected. Their democratic rivals, however, offer no hope either – after all everything started with *Bill* and *Madeleine* 16 years ago. Before that, however, there was *Henry Kissinger* and the attempt not only to overthrow international law in its accepted form, but to replace it by a new one tailored to American interests.

The pathetic remains of the once proud department of international law at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs say it all.

Just a few days after the anniversary celebrations of the German unification, it is more than necessary to remind ourselves of the crucial role international law had played on the road to re-unification. From the *Helsinki-Conference* of the year 1975 to the *Charter of Paris* in November 1990: It had been the framework of international law which made all this possible. There was a lot we could be proud of. Most of all the “crown jewels” of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the department of international law, together with famous Austrian lawyers, Bonn proved their expertise in international law and became successful. Today probably almost nobody would even know this department still exists. This political void is unfortunately symptomatic for the whole country. The attitude to-

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"Moscow sticks to the rules"

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wards law and order can by now only be described as Czarist. Like a biblical plague, a migration movement has hit our country, following the principle: no borders, no state. Only the imminent collapse of Bavaria resulted in something vague-

ly reminiscent of governmental activity. There had been times when we were actually proud of our constitutional democracy. Looks like we just missed how our political order was replaced by some "welcoming-cultural mood swings". This will finish us off in terms of internal affairs, and as far as foreign affairs are concerned will make us look like lunatics.

"Relying on international law, we must create a genuinely broad international coalition against terrorism"

by Vladimir Putin*

Power vacuum in some countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa obviously resulted in the emergence of areas of anarchy, which were quickly filled with extremists and terrorists. The so-called Islamic State has tens of thousands of militants fighting for it, including former Iraqi soldiers who were left on the street after the 2003 invasion. Many recruits come from Libya whose statehood was destroyed as a result of a gross violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1973. And now radical groups are joined by members of the so-called "moderate" Syrian opposition backed by the West. They get weapons and training, and then they defect and join the so-called Islamic State.

In fact, the Islamic State itself did not come out of nowhere. It was initially developed as a weapon against undesirable secular regimes. Having established control over parts of Syria and Iraq, Islamic State now aggressively expands into other regions. It seeks dominance in the Muslim world and beyond. Their plans go further.

The situation is extremely dangerous. In these circumstances, it is hypocritical and irresponsible to make declarations about the threat of terrorism and at the same time turn a blind eye to the channels used to finance and support terrorists, including revenues from drug trafficking, the illegal oil trade and the arms trade.

It is equally irresponsible to manipulate extremist groups and use them to achieve your political goals, hoping that later you'll find a way to get rid of them or somehow eliminate them. [...]

Russia has consistently opposed terrorism in all its forms. Today, we provide military-technical assistance to Iraq, Syria and other regional countries fighting terrorist groups. We think it's a big mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian authorities and government forces who valiantly fight terrorists on the ground. [...]

We should finally admit that President Assad's government forces and the Kurdish militia are the only forces really

fighting terrorists in Syria. Yes, we are aware of all the problems and conflicts in the region, but we definitely have to consider the actual situation on the ground. [...]

Relying on international law, we must join efforts to address the problems that all of us are facing, and create a genuinely broad international coalition against terrorism. [...]

In the days to come, Russia, as the current President of the UN Security Council, will convene a ministerial meeting to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the threats in the Middle East. First of all, we propose exploring opportunities for adopting a resolution that would serve to coordinate the efforts of all parties that oppose Islamic State and other terrorist groups. Once again, such coordination should be based upon the principles of the UN Charter. [...]

Dear colleagues, ensuring peace and global and regional stability remains a key task for the international community guided by the United Nations. We believe this means creating an equal and indivisible security environment that would not serve a privileged few, but everyone. Indeed, it is a challenging, complicated and time-consuming task, but there is simply no alternative. [...]

Russia is confident of the United Nations' enormous potential, which should help us avoid a new confrontation and embrace a strategy of cooperation. Hand in hand with other nations, we will consistently work to strengthen the UN's central, coordinating role. I am convinced that by working together, we will make the world stable and safe, and provide an enabling environment for the development of all nations and peoples. [...]

*Extract of the speech delivered by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, at the UN General Assembly on 28 September 2015

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>

How to keep pace with Moscow under these circumstances?

Moscow stands with their politics on a stage of world politics which longs for predictable developments once again. Washington stands for the destruction of the world as we know it and offers "misery for all". Moscow sends signals of hope which we cannot expect any longer from Washington. We have to adjust to this new antagonism, sensational as it may seem, in order not to be crushed. Internally we have to get back to a democratic state of law and order again and get rid of the regime of personal emergency rulings issued by the still serving chancellor. In foreign affairs we will have to regain respectability by means of international law and readjust our policies. Right now utter chaos reigns in both our internal and foreign state of affairs. Going on like this we are unable to respond to Russian politics. We had been able to do so in the past when our legal culture was still functioning. Unlike ourselves, Moscow has used those years well. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**Current Concerns**

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Press Release 13th Rhodes Forum

The World beyond Global Disorder

Vladimir Yakunin, Founding President of the World Public Forum "Dialogue of Civilizations" (WPFDoC) on Friday opened the 13th annual Rhodes Forum and announced the launch of a major new global think tank.

Dr Yakunin said that the board of WPF "DoC" has agreed to create a research institute focused on infrastructure as a possible basis for new economic development and conflict prevention. The think tank will be based on the foundations laid by the organization over the past 13 years.

Dr Yakunin, who for a decade led Russian Railways, one of the world's largest transport companies, said that it was his intention to devote the majority of his time to WPF "DoC" as it moves to the next stage of its development.

Over 350 delegates are attending this year's Rhodes Forum. They include:

- *Vaclav Klaus*, former President of the Czech Republic
- *Alfred Gusenbauer*, former Federal Chancellor of Austria
- *Ionnis Amanatidis*, deputy Foreign Minister of Greece
- *Karl-Theodor von und zu Guttenberg*, former Defence Minister and Economics Minister of Germany
- Prof *Hans Köchler*, President, International Progress Organization
- Prof *Fred Dallmayr*, Co-Chairman, WPF "DoC", Professor, Department of

Philosophy and Political Science, University of Notre Dame

Other participants include *Cynthia McKinney*, US human rights activist and former member of the US House of Representatives, *Ali Allawi*, former Minister of Finance of Iraq, *Jayati Ghosh*, Professor of Economics, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi as well as other politicians, academics and civic leaders from more than 50 countries.

Amid the backdrop of escalating military action in Syria and the refugee crisis in Europe, the Rhodes Forum, which runs from Friday, October 9th until Sunday, October 11th, offers an open platform for people from around the world to discuss the roots of and solutions to pressing global problems.

Dr Yakunin reaffirmed the core values at the heart of dialogue of civilizations and underlined the importance of constructive dialogue to find peaceful solutions to current global conflicts.

He said: "Our organization is about embark on a period of major change and development. Having dedicated the last 13 years to promoting dialogue between different civilizations in the broadest sense, I now want to use this base to create a world class think tank that will make practical policy recommendations."

"We have seen that a world dominated by a single civilization does not work. Recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya

and Syria have demonstrated the failings of Western interventionist foreign policy."

"It is clear from the current state of conflict throughout the world that intercultural dialogue is vital. This view has recently been endorsed by the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, *Richard Haas*, who stated that the over dominance of American foreign policy over the last century has been the root of many of the most difficult struggles that exist today."

Dr Yakunin added: "In a world driven by consumerism, people are brought up only to care about satisfying individual needs. This is at the expense of the cultural values that make up different civilizations. If we do not try to control this we will lose the principles and moral standards of society." •

Source: World Public Forum, Dialogue of Civilizations; www.wpfdc.org

The World Public Forum "Dialogue of Civilizations" is an international, independent, non-governmental, non-profit organization. Founding President and initiator of the WPF "Dialogue of Civilizations" is Dr *Vladimir Yakunin*. Since its foundation in 2002, the Forum has annually organized an international conference in Rhodes, the "Rhodes Forum". This year's issue has been "The World beyond Global disorder".

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“The identity of Sri Lanka must be redefined”

We need a reconciliation process in the relationship between Tamils and Singhalese

Interview with Professor SJ. Emmanuel, President of the Global Tamil Forum



Father SJ. Emmanuel
(picture thk)

When in 1948, in the context of de-colonisation, the British left the former island Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, they left the country without offering a common political perspective to the two ethnic groups, the Singhalese majority and the Tamil minority. By introducing the British Westminster system, the majoritarian system, they conveyed the power to the Singhalese. This legacy was the main reason for the subsequent clashes between the two ethnic groups, which were above all characterised by a high level of discrimination against Tamils. Over time, a Civil War evolved from the Tamils' initially peaceful protests against the oppression, that was fought with great severity. Periodic ceasefire agreements did not lead to solving the problem, because on the part of the Singhalese, there was no willingness for a political solution. In May 2009 after a terrible battle, the Civil War that had lasted for almost 30 years, ended with a victory of the Singhalese army. Since that time there have been efforts on the part of the USA as well as other countries to examine the war final period with respect to possible war crimes. In the course of its autumn session in Geneva the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution, which was supposed to shed light on the darkness here. On the sidelines of this conference, Current Concerns talked to Father SJ Emmanuel, President of the Global Tamil Forum, and asked him about his assessment of the situation in and around Sri Lanka.

Current Concerns: Parliamentary elections were held in Sri Lanka, recently, Rajapaxa intended to become Prime Minister. These were anxious times for the Tamils. What is the political situation today?

Professor SJ. Emmanuel: Rajapaxa could be prevented, fortunately. However, he holds a seat in parliament as an ordinary representative, and with him there are 95 other parliamentarians who support this position. The so-called coalition government between the United National Party (UNP), a Western-oriented party, and Sri

Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) that regards itself as a national party, has been established in a common agreement and in the next two years we will see how the situation will develop. Both parties work together for the first time. That may be positive, but they have to do something concrete within the two years.

Of what are you thinking?

I am speaking about the relationship between Tamils and Singhalese. A reconciliation process is urgently required. Symbolically, the new government has already done something. They stopped Rajapaxa's policy and thus terminated the expulsions of Tamils. They also returned a small part of the territory to the affected Tamils. Furthermore the newly elected parliament appointed a Tamil parliamentarian as opposition leader. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is represented with 16 members in parliament. This is the first time in over thirty years that a Tamil parliamentarian is opposition leader. President Sirisena wanted it that way. That was an important sign. However, it is a difficult task for the opposition leader.

Why that?

On the one hand he has to represent his people, on the other hand he has a general task. He has to lead the opposition in parliament. Fortunately, he is a person with a lot of experience. He is 82 years old, and he will cope with the task. Another sign, indicating that the new president is interested in a reconciliation with the Tamils, is the fact that the President and the Foreign Minister have asked me to come to Sri Lanka to assist in this process of reconciliation.

Will you do that?

I have accepted the invitation. Some young people immediately said: You have to go. But it will take time to see how the country is developing now. In order to contribute to reconciliation I will continue to speak and to write. As a religious person – when I travel to Sri Lanka – I want to encourage all Christians towards reconciliation. I am convinced that the whole affair is a big challenge for both sides. For example, the victims, the affected people, who are complaining that their family members have still not returned home, although the war came to an end 6 years ago, and that the territory continues to remain under military control. Sinhala politicians have the task to calm the mood in the country and to change the attitude to-

wards the Tamils. During 60, 70 years one or the other political party has pursued their policies at the expense of the Tamils.

How must we understand that?

The parties were convinced that it was necessary to suppress the Tamils in order to protect themselves against them. UNP and SLFP have managed to completely defeat the Tamils, but we Tamils have been suffering severely during all these years. In 1983 the UNP started the great pogroms, and during the reign of the SLFP under Bandaranaike all this developed to a war, and the territories of the Tamils were bombed. For us Tamils that means that both parties are responsible.

The victory in 2009 over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is celebrated as a fundamental victory over the Tamils. But on 4 February the National Day, the acting president said for the first time: “We have won the war, but it was a cruel war.” That was very brave, indeed.

Why is this courageous?

The Singhalese celebrated (the victory) as a great success and heroic victory with military parades, while the Tamils were weeping for their relatives that had been killed in that war. Now they hear from the new president, that the war was cruel. This means that the Singhalese may start considering that not everything was right what happened then. By that remark he gave rise to a little hope for us Tamils.

How does the new prime minister conduct himself?

For a long time Ranil Wickremasinghe had been the leader of the UNP and, with the help of the Norwegian government he had performed peace talks with the LTTE, but the then President of the SLFP, Bandaranaike, interfered. It is hard for Ranil to explain the new attitude towards the Tamils to his people. Bandaranaike is an important person in the process. Although she does not hold a seat in parliament, she played a very important role in the election of the new president. She was later appointed as head of the Reconciliation Committee.

What is the mood like in the Singhalese population?

For the Singhalese, the LTTE [Tamil Liberation Organization, which has long fought for a separate Tamil state, editor's note] was the opponent. The soldiers are

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the heroes, they ended the war, they saved them and brought peace back to them. They see themselves as a peaceful nation. This is the image that the majority of the Sinhalese have. But the truth is quite different. The war is over, but there is no real peace, and above all, no understanding. This means that the challenges for the political parties are great, and we Tamils understand the difficulties that this entails.

What contribution can the Tamils make to this goal of reconciliation?

If possible we want to assist. We can write and encourage people to explain the truth about the whole story to the Sinhalese. We Tamils have not done so in the past. We have never edited a newspaper in Sinhalese or English in Colombo to explain to people in Sri Lanka what the Tamils want. That's a problem. We only had newspapers for the Tamil people, but not for everybody in Sri Lanka. So we Tamils were always outsiders to the entire population, and that was a big problem. The majority in Sri Lanka think: We are Buddhist Sinhalese, we are the owners of the country, and all the rest are minorities and thus second class citizens. In order to change this perception and to understand the country as a multi-ethnic and a multi-religious country we will take a lot of time and courage. Whether the current government has this perseverance, we do not know.

But you have some hope that the situation might improve.

The way the new government is taking small steps forward gives cause for hope. But whether it will be able to comprehensively revise the existing attitude towards the Tamils, whether it will change the constitution etc., we cannot say now, but it has taken the first steps in this direction. Now some intellectual Sinhalese write about this development in Colombo. But the people around the former president of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaxa, are opponents. There are efforts of the government to integrate the Tamils into the state, with a common flag, a common un-

derstanding that the Tamils also belong to it. The identity of Sri Lanka needs to be redefined. The Sinhalese say we are Sri Lankans, but they talk about the Tamils as Tamils. I told the Foreign Minister that I would never accept the national flag without the Tamils being represented on it. That would not work. That would be a big mistake.

At the UN Human Rights Council the United States made some efforts to investigate into the war crimes at the end of the Civil War. How do you assess the new resolution?

Before the end of the war the United States had mobilised more than 50 countries to give money and weapons for the war against terrorism. The United States had hoped that afterwards Sri Lanka would become ally with the United States. But the president turned away from the US and towards China. That is why the United States then tried to propose a resolution against the Sri Lankan government for war crimes after the war. But the other states voted against the US and the Western world and celebrated the end of the war as a victory over terrorism. The United States were humiliated. That was the first time that a resolution introduced by the US was rejected here in this building in Geneva.

What was the reaction of the United States?

They introduced another resolution, which was also rejected. Finally, the US were successful in 2014. The Human Rights Council instructed the High Commissioner for Human Rights to carry out an investigation of the war crimes within a year. Shortly before the report of the High Commissioner, there was a change of government in Sri Lanka. The USA then hoped for the possibility of a rapprochement, they have their own agenda. In September 2015, the report on the war crimes came out. The Tamils were satisfied. The new government took note of this report. But they rejected the proposed “mixed Court”.

What do we have to understand by a mixed Court?

A court, composed of national and international judges.

Why do we need it, what is its purpose?

The Tamils have no confidence in the national judges. All Tamils request at least one internationalised court. The new resolution, which was introduced by both the United States and Sri Lanka, was adopted without one dissenting vote in the UN Human Rights Council. We Tamils took this decision with a certain caution. The government promised that they would cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. That is new. It is open how they want to make their own people understand this move and to what extent they will actually cooperate.

What does this mean for the government?

They are now facing the task of adapting their constitution so that this court can become active. Government officials and military officers are under suspicion of having committed war crimes. So far they have celebrated the victory, now they are under suspicion of having committed war crimes.

How do you see this new development at the UN?

The UN has literally twice apologised that they did not stop the massacres of the civilians. Now this is a new opportunity. The UN must now remain vigilant and observe the new developments closely. The latest resolution demands that Sri Lanka must publish a report on its efforts within 18 months. Thus, the UN has taken on an important task. It is the only hope for the Tamils that the government is put under pressure to take further steps here. For the first time in history, a coalition of the two parties takes over this difficult task in order to build up a new Sri Lanka. We wish it a lot of courage and honesty. We Tamils also demand an honest attempt at finding a political solution in addition to the reparations to those affected. Thereafter the reconciliation process can be realised.

Professor Emmanuel, thank you very much for this interview. •

(Interview: Thomas Kaiser)

The string-pullers behind the scenes

How transatlantic networks are secretly subverting democracy

Interview with Hermann Ploppa, author of the book "Die Macher hinter den Kulissen" (The string-pullers behind the scenes)



Hermann Ploppa
(picture ma)

In 2014, Hermann Ploppa, journalist and author from Germany, published a book entitled "Die Macher hinter den Kulissen. Wie transatlantische Netzwerke heimlich die Demokratie unterwandern"

(The string-pullers behind the scenes. How transatlantic networks are secretly subverting democracy). As early as in 2008 the author attracted attention by a book that was not in line with the mainstream: "Hitlers amerikanische Lehrer. Die Eliten der USA als Geburtshelfer des Nationalsozialismus" (Hitler's American teachers. US elites as midwives of Nazism). During a visit to Switzerland, there was the opportunity to talk with the author about his new book. The book comprises about 200 pages, and naturally in an interview one can address only a few aspects. The interview may stimulate the reading of the book.

Current Concerns: Mr Ploppa, you have written a new book. What are the core ideas of your book?

Hermann Ploppa: The central topic of the book is that organisations in Germany, which cannot be challenged by the public, change the political paradigm and the political agenda. They do so by bypassing the public. Passing by electoral decisions of citizens and the majority of the population, they determine political agendas and paradigms.

On the one hand, this concerns domestic policy, social policy. Up to two thirds of the population repeatedly say in surveys: We want a system that combines the advantages of capitalism and socialism. In fact, we see an ever increasing economisation of all areas of life. We are experiencing a pressure to rethink and understand everything in economic terms, even in the social sphere.

The other field concerned is foreign policy. Polls have repeatedly shown that Germans want an independent German foreign policy which is friendly but distances itself from the power blocs. The people would like to see the interests of the German people realised by an own catalogue of measures. In fact, howev-

er, it happens that our foreign policy is becoming more and more adapted to the US-American interests, going as far as getting under noticeable pressure to offensively represent US interests in the Ukraine crisis against Russia, something that we cannot justify from our own objective interests.

This did not happen from one day to the other. In your book you go back into history for decades.

Yes, we are talking about an intergenerational elite project which was developed in the USA. Crystallisation point of this development is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Foreign Affairs Council, which aims at remoulding the entire reachable world according to the US model and integrating it into the American Pax Americana. All this has happened since 1921 – intensified after the Second World War by various branch organisations in over 170 countries around the world. In Germany for example, there was first the "Atlantic Bridge", which established the contact between the German elites and those of the United States, and, secondly, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP), which in the Anglo-Saxon countries is called German Council on Foreign Relations and which in turn is the one think tank that provides expert reports for the US hegemony.

The subtitle of your book says that it is about a secret undermining of democracy. If I take the German "Grundgesetz" (Basic Law) as a standard of German democracy: Why are the activities of these networks compatible to the German "Grundgesetz", and why do you say that everything is done in secret?

Since the French Revolution, it is self-evident – and it is so in all Western democracies and particularly in the central European democracies – that all policy measures which are taken should be decided and enforced by politicians as representatives of the people's will, that they should reflect the majority will of the population and should take into account what the population wants.

On the other hand it is about the public, the necessity of transparency. Everything that is discussed and that is implemented, must be open to the people's scrutiny. They must be able to verify, who represented something and how and why he did so. If now – circumventing all this – decisions are taken, for which in a procedure of democratic majority decision you would never

get a majority, it is already as much as clandestine infiltration. And that is incompatible with the "Grundgesetz".

You have already pointed out in answering the first question that radical free-market concepts are being enforced... Exactly!

Can you give examples that clearly show us: Here did transatlantic networks ensure that radical free-market concepts were enforced in Germany?

The most obvious example is that first of all our legislation in Germany was changed in such a way that foundations may retain a lot more money, that they now can develop an abundance of power by which they are able to dictate the agenda to the politicians. A famous example is the Bertelsmann Foundation. The Bertelsmann Foundation is the "power of two hearts". On the one hand there is the media group Bertelsmann with the TV channel RTL or the magazine Stern, etc., on the other hand there is the foundation, and the two assist each other in order to advance certain agenda items.

Specific items on the Bertelsmann Foundation's agenda are the privatisation and economisation of public services. There is, for example, the project "School & Co." in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia which in the meantime includes more than 250 schools that are organised like independent businesses. This aims at ultimately being able to operate schools according to economic criteria and some day, if possible, making profit and probably listing them on the stock market.

The same happened in the university system. The "Centre for Higher Education" (CHE) of the Bertelsmann Foundation promotes, also in cooperation with the West German Rectors' Conference, the privatisation of universities all over Germany, i.e. the downsizing of public funding and replacing it by external funding. In Germany the same applies to the Bertelsmann Foundation's "Center for Hospital Management". They conceptually prepared, for example, the privatisation of the university hospitals in Giessen and Marburg. Privatisation was implemented, and then the hospital became the property of Fresenius Medical Care, that is a private company aspiring to make profit.

For the average citizen, the Bertelsmann Foundation is first of all a purely German

"The string-pullers behind..."

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affair. How can you say that this foundation has something to do with transatlantic networks?

In fact, the Bertelsmann Foundation does not directly operate as a pro-American organisation. It is located in Gütersloh and originated from a Protestant mail-order bookselling business. But one must add that some organisations, some foundations that are not quite so closely involved in transatlantic networks and foundations, are thinking in a more American way than the Americans themselves. This is a very amazing phenomenon. The Bertelsmann Foundation itself, however, also works in Washington, has an office in Washington, where it closely networks with transatlantic US organisations.

Does the CEO of the group, Liz Mohn, hold a seat in such a transatlantic network?

Liz Mohn keeps more or less out of the whole business. These are rather her former subordinates like Mr *Middelhoff*, who in this respect were more noticeable, but she herself keeps out of the business. Rather, she is the coffee-girlfriend of *Angela Merkel*. People speak of the 'Feminate': *Friede Springer*, *Angela Merkel* and *Liz Mohn* as a Triumfeminate – in allusion to the Roman Triumvirate. For the networks themselves there are others whom they have the work done.

You have mentioned the radical-liberal market concept as a part of the network policy. Can you say more about foreign policy?

I would like to draw your attention to the *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, whose president *Volker Perthes*, a renowned orientalist – at a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations – proposed to take action against Iran by implanting the computer worm *Stuxnet* into the Iranian nuclear power plants control systems. In this way he actively participated in the US war against Iran.

Let us distance ourselves a little from Germany and look at the overall European situation. Is there even such a thing as a European-wide transatlantic network? What about the EU? What role does it play for US interests in Europe?

First of all, the US and European elites were and are brought together by the *Bilderbergers* on a purely social level. Already since 1954. The *Bilderbergers* are also considered the string-pullers behind the European unification. Or rather, even behind the *Bilderbergers* there was already an American initiative. Furthermore, the project of European integra-

tion is a top-down project. The geopolitical interests of the United States after the Second World War were to shut Western Europe off, to conclude a political land consolidation. The United States thought that the Soviet Union was on the verge of seizing Western Europe – by means of cultural hegemony.

Therefore – starting out from the CIA – they pumped money into Europe in a controlled way, also via US under cover organizations such as the *American Committee for a United Europe*, and then drove forth seeming grassroots movements in Europe such as the *Europa Union* giving this geopolitical project of the USA, the character of a popular movement.

For several years something new has been added now: via the construct European Union pressure is being put on the nations to think and plan in a radical liberal-market manner. And as can be seen from many papers, it is all about a favourable investment climate for corporate groups. This is the EU's very official doctrine, and – according to the principle of EU law dominating national law – is then imposed on the democratically elected governments. This is a deeply non-democratic process.

You mentioned Germany's relationship with Russia. Can we say that those transatlantic networks might become an existential threat for us?

By all means. The Ukraine crisis shows this clearly. It became obvious at once that the German media, who shortly before had referred to *Putin* as a partner worth discussing, began to attack him even below the belt and demonise him. If you seek the guilty party, you will soon realize that all the initiators of this campaign belong to transatlantic networks.

The attacks against *Putin* and *Russia* were simultaneously launched in all the mainstream media. One should expect that in a liberal media landscape one newspaper takes a stance rather in favour and the other rather against *Russia*, and the third might be neutral. However, only one opinion could be heard.

That was the point, however, when it became too much for the readership, for the hitherto loyal subscribers of *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit* or "Süddeutsche Zeitung" many of them cancelled their subscription and said: We do not accept this one-sidedness. *Der Spiegel* had also launched a survey, initiated a forum, with a leading question from the outset: How can we stop *Putin*? This forum was shut down again after a few hours, because it did not bring about the desired result, namely attacks on *Putin*. Indeed, the majority of the people spoke out in favour of a differentiated approach towards *Russia*.

Obviously transatlantic networks are exerting an extensive influence on German and European policies, in a manner and with results that are not in the interest of the Germans and the Europeans.

In no way, indeed.

What can we do to make a difference? So that the citizens' concerns will be heard? With foreign policy in view, we must emphasise, for example, that the emerging economies such as *Brazil*, *Russia*, *India*, *China* and *South Africa* are interesting markets for *Germany*. The fact that these countries are interesting partners and that we are cut off from them, if we unilaterally side with the *US* and as a consequence the whole *Asian*, the *Eurasian* sphere will no longer exist for us as an opportunity for growth.

That has already been understood in parts of the entrepreneurship. There were even forums where speakers clearly favoured opening up to the *BRICS* countries. At the moment we are amazed at hearing sounds from the federal government and from the *CSU*, which we have not heard for a long time: *Mr Putin* was yet an important, indispensable partner in the fight against terrorism. That is to translate by: We cannot do without the *Russian* gas and oil, and we also have the market for convenience products in *Russia*, for example. There is hope that the good sense of local entrepreneurs will gradually carry more weight and gets a stronger hearing.

With regard to the entire population, we need to continue networking.

What made you write your book?

In 1998, many people hoped that the *Schröder/Fischer* administration would do much better, that they would in fact

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Judge at the German Constitutional Court warns: “The essence of the rule of law, the containment of politics by the law, has lost its effective power”

There is no alternative to more direct democracy

by Karl Müller

In the weeks and days around 3 October, the Germans commemorated the fact that there had been a historical turning point 25 years ago: The division of Germany into two parts, one of which had been considered and dealt with as occupation zones in 1945 by the four victorious powers, came to an end when the German Democratic Republic joined the scope of the “Grundgesetz” (Basic Law) of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Feature films and documentaries about the period immediately before 9 November 1989, the day of the opening of the Berlin Wall, and 3 October 1990, the date of the GDR’s accession, testified the widespread will of the people, to base their co-existence on a new fundament for democracy, freedom, social justice and the rule of law.

What has remained of it, 25 years later?

The “Grundgesetz” would have provided good opportunities for the fulfillment of the German people’s wishes. From the recognition of the inviolability of human dignity and the commitment to human rights (“Grundgesetz”, Article 1), results the obligation to establish a democratic and social federal state, a state under the rule of law with separation of powers and checks of balances (“Grundgesetz”, Article 20). The codification of these two articles in the so-called perpetuity clause (Article 79, paragraph 3) as well as the repeated appeal to right – not only to law – as the basis of each of the state’s actions give evidence of a constitution based on natural law, which goes beyond pure legal positivism – quite deliberately formulat-

ed with the historical experience of Nazi dictatorship in mind, which had trampled on all sorts of rights. Rule of law in the meaning of the “Grundgesetz” is more than binding all state action to the law and recognising the right of every citizen to take legal action against any step by the government that affects himself. Rule of law also means respect for and protection of human dignity and human rights, the realisation of sovereignty of the people and social justice.

National state constituted by the “Grundgesetz” experiences crisis of meaning

Nobody is asking for a political system’s perfection, but the degradation of democracy, freedom, social justice and the rule of law over the past 25 years has been so blatant that everybody should cry havoc.

Even a Judge at the German Constitutional Court is apparently of that opinion, even if he chooses rather moderate words. *Peter M. Huber* is a judge at the 2nd Senate of the Court; on 1 October 2015, he submitted an article for the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” a critical diagnosis of German constitutional reality.

Right at the beginning the constitutional judge writes: “A quarter of a century after the reunification, the national state with its constitution based on the ‘Grundgesetz’, suffers from an identity crisis, the rule of law shows erosional tendencies, democracy is being weakened, the structure of the separation of powers has further shifted in favour of the executive branch, and the development of the federal state lacks orientation.”

The “Grundgesetz” qualifies the Federal Republic of Germany as a “sovereign German nation-state respectively a German nation state capable of sovereignty and definitely binding autonomous action”. Its purpose is, “to ensure the Germans security both internally and externally, welfare, social justice and sustainability.” The oath obliges state organs, “to devote their efforts to the weal of the German people, to increase its benefits and to protect them from harm” – according to Peter M. Huber this is “not an empty phrase but a binding specification of the republican principle”.

The diagnosis of constitutional reality in contrast is quite sobering: “The long shadow of the Nazi dictatorship, globalisation, Europeanisation and individualisation have shaken the awareness of this self-evident matter-of-course”. The “understanding of the meaning and purpose of the nation-state that has to be at the service of its citizens” has vanished. “The essence of the rule of law, the containment of politics by the law (*Kant*) has lost its potency.” Even in jurisdiction there arises now “the demand for a relaxation of the rule of law”.

A great number of breaches of law by the state

Huber takes the handling of the euro crisis as a specific example. And rightly so!

Other examples in addition to Peter M. Huber’s may be added:

- The way in which West Germany dealt with the social rights of the new citi-

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“The string-pullers behind...”

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act more peacefully and also more socially than the previous governments. Both hopes did not come true. The exact opposite occurred. It makes you wonder why. Why can the traditional means of parliamentary democracy not enforce a change of policy? Why does it always take a completely different direction? I became curious and wanted to know what organizations they were actually members of, all of them.

Then it became rapidly obvious that Joschka Fischer had long been involved in transatlantic networks. Without the mas-

sive support of the Bertelsmann Foundation and the media group Bertelsmann Fischer and Schröder would never have become suitable for ministerial offices. In the last debates before the election, an amazing harmony could be observed between Fischer and the former Christian democratic defense minister *Volker Rühe*. Rühe was an advocate of “Bundeswehr” missions abroad and unlike his Chancellor *Helmut Kohl* in favour of the war against Yugoslavia.

Hardly were they in government, Joschka Fischer continued where *Hitler* had had to stop, namely at the bombing of Belgrade. In the meantime Fischer became co-founder of the *European Council on*

Foreign Relations. It would indeed have been nice if there had also been a Council on Foreign Relations, that would have been able to provide a counterbalance to US hegemony instruments based on a European, a genuinely European interest; but the opposite was the case. It became another branch of the transatlantic discourses and paradigms. For me, all that led to the fact that first of all I had to inform the public, since otherwise you just do not get anywhere.

Mr Ploppa, thank you very much for the interview.

(Interview Karl Müller)

"Judge at the German Constitutional ..."

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zens of the former GDR, where the principle that "ownership should also serve the common good" was nowhere respected, when the former "public property" was privatised by the "Treuhand";

- the multiple breaches of Articles 25 and 26 of the "Grundgesetz", according to which the general rules of international law are part of federal law, according to which the preparation of and all the more the participation in a war of aggression are unconstitutional and punishable, therefore the war of aggression against Yugoslavia was definitely a violation of international law;
- the disregard of the right to self-determination of the peoples by active participation in coups d'états, most recently in Ukraine in February 2014 – and thus the evocation of a violent confrontation in the east and southeast of the country;
- the governmental acceptance of legal vacuums, where only the "law of the jungle" prevailed. A situation that was pointed out again by a police officer – *Tania Kambouri* – in her book, "Deutschland im Blaulicht – Notruf einer Polizistin" [Germany in the flashing of blue light – emergency call of a police officer];
- the breakdown of existing legislation in dealing with the refugees entering the country; in a letter dated 7 October 2015 and addressed to German Chancellor *Angela Merkel* 34 CDU (Christian Democratic) politicians and CDU officials wrote: "The currently practised 'policy of open borders' corresponds neither to European or German law and is not in accordance with the CDU party programme."

Dangerous talk of "emergency situation" and "lack of alternative"

These and other violations of the law were always justified by the political leaders and their followers in the mainstream media by saying that Germany is in a kind of emergency state. But who does still remember, that this type of justification for political decisions beyond the law had once led to the descent into a totalitarian dictatorship in German's history? Where the state of law comes to an end, democracy has no chance. The repeated reference to the alleged "emergency situation" or to "lack of alternative" is part of dictatorship and does not comply with democracy.

In parallel to the erosion of the rule of law, the Judge at the German Constitutional Court envisages a threat to democracy, as well. This is exemplified,

for example, in the "outsourcing of government tasks to independent authorities and the private sector". Since the political programs of the major political parties are assimilating more and more "the voters have less and less opportunity to influence political decisions. Where there is no alternative, there is no choice." In addition, "electoral law, the structure of political party financing, the lack of direct democracy at the federal level as well as the organizational structures of political parties favour a self-referencing of the political system and deepen the lack of communication between citizens and politicians".

Huber's conclusion is twofold: On the one hand he summarises: "25 years of German unity under the 'Grundgesetz' have left their mark on it. Tensions between WHAT IS and WHAT OUGHT TO BE have increased while the understanding of fundamental decisions has not." On the other hand he offers his view: When the foundations of the constitutional system are eroding, "we are all called to action; here is one thing that we have learned from the successful revolution in East Germany: We are the people!"

There are voices in Germany who in this situation refer to the right of resistance in Article 20, paragraph 4, "Grundgesetz". It states: "Against anyone who undertakes to abolish this constitutional order, all Germans have the right to resist, in case no other remedy is possible."

How much sense does it make to invoke the right to resist?

But how useful and how feasible is the appeal to this provision in the "Grundgesetz"? The "right to resistance" was introduced into the "Grundgesetz" in the late sixties as a compensation for the severely criticized emergency law which was part of it. The wording is, however, little tangible. This is especially true for the condition, "if no other remedy is possible." Who determines that? And how constructive is this right to resist? What does "resistance" mean? Some think of 20 July 1944. At that time there was no codified "right to resistance". Should violence be allowed and should breaches of the law be allowed? How does breaking the law concur with the commitment to the rule of law? Or what else should resistance look like if it is to go beyond the already granted fundamental rights freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, etc.? What are the consequences of resistance? Who will take responsibility for potential victims when there is a call to "resistance"?

Judge Huber at the Constitutional Court formulated an interesting passage in his text: "The famous résumé by *Bärbel Bohley* 'We wanted justice and got the rule of law!' – that can not only be understood

as a laconic indication that there are cases of injustice and hardships under the rule of law, but as a justification for the right to override the rule of law in favour of individual interests of justice or morality – has also contributed to the erosion of the importance of form and procedural rules in jurisdiction. They [form and procedural rules] appear to many actors as legal trivia, while it is precisely these formal requirements that guarantee legitimacy and legal security. Since there is no mandatory morality in liberal constitutional states it is not possible to appeal to one's individual morality, and notions of justice or political expediency cannot justify the deviation from the law. The rule of law exists by law, or it does not exist at all."

One must not share this view in all points, but also the legitimate criticism of legal positivism, which shines through these lines, must not lead to disrespecting the law with the argument that it was contrary to natural law. Should it not rather be the goal to peacefully change the law or its interpretation in such a way that it becomes congruent with natural law, where this is not the case? Pure voluntarism, may it be claimed to be moral and well founded, cannot be a basis for living together. And who will distinguish between legitimate "resistance" and the all too familiar colour revolutions and their consequences? Should we again head towards a spring of "resistance" and a subsequent fall and winter? In that respect the Judge at the Constitutional Court is definitely right by stating that "the rule of law exists by law, or it does not exist at all."

Instead of this – direct democracy

"All state authority emanates from the people." The people can exercise their state power by "voting". This is put down in the "Grundgesetz". Rightfully, Peter M. Huber complains about "the lack of direct democracy at the federal level." The "Grundgesetz" requirements are so far withheld from the German people. Until 2012 Huber, as a member of the CDU, was a member of the Board of Trustees of the association "Mehr Demokratie e. V." This association is committed to enable popular initiatives, petitions and referendums at the federal level. In addition, they want to introduce referendums that give the people the power to reject laws adopted by the Parliament under certain conditions. Enabling people as active legislators and supervisory body of parliamentary legislation would be the guarantor that justice and law would approximate. It would be a guarantee that democracy, freedom, social justice and the rule of law could be realized. Swiss History teaches this, but also

Now everything is clear again: La Suiza exista!

“Alphorns instead of halberds” – the Expo Milano hit

by Heini Hofmann

At the World Expo 2015 in Milan the alphorn record concert was the biggest highlight with far most intensive media coverage, where the nest-fouling on the Expo in Seville was clearly corrected: La Suisse existe – yesterday, today and tomorrow!

Who ever could witness the event on site, was fascinated: In brightest sunshine first an appearance of 425 alphorn blowers (a surprising number of women among them) at the Swiss Pavillion of the *Milano Expo* and then the *exploit* on the majestic Piazza della Madonnina of the Duomo, adorned by flag-wavers, drummers and (unarmed) halberds, all in costume – a monster concert of superlatives with an entry in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Switzerland crowned the Expo 2015 with a highlight of greatest public appeal.

A psychedelic sound experience

A sound-technically more suitable open-air stage than the Duomo Square in Milan would have been hard to find: In front the sky-striving facade of the Gothic construction wonder as well as the magnificent monumental buildings arranged in a rectangular manner around the square. In this open-air concert hall, open only to the sky, the 425 cult instruments from the Swiss mountains produced a literally ar-



Impressions at an alphorn concert performed at the Swiss Pavillion at the 2015 World Expo in Milan, which will continue till the end of October. (picture swiss-image/Andy Mettler)

chaic-psychedelic sound column never before experienced in such concentration.

Hence, a similar outdoor sound effect as in Switzerland – not in its tonality, but with respect to its intensity – can probably only be experienced on one event, namely, when all lights are extinguished at four o'clock in the morning of the Basel Fasnacht and the word is: “Morgestraich – vorwärts marsch!”, and the drumbeats and sound of many Piccolo flutes are simultaneously sounded from all streets and roads throughout the entire city centre in a thick skyward sound column. The highest enjoyment of such concentrated sound experiences would probably be possible only from a captive balloon high above.

In Milan, opposite the cathedral, from a colossal equestrian statue King *Vittorio Emanuele II* overlooked the events. The only reason probably why he, the *Re cacciatore* looked down with magnanimous benevolence on the many Swiss whose ancestors had stolen three steinbuck fawns from the royal hunting grounds of his successor in 1906 is that the ibex remained preserved until today all over the Alps. Thus, the offense mutated into a good deed retrospectively...

Positive signals with impact

Now, on 26 September 2015, 500 years after the lost Battle of Marignano a Swiss contingent has again invaded the Lombardy. This time, however, with peaceful intention, with alphorns instead of halberds, with music instead of weapons. Never before has there been a concert abroad with that many alphorn blowers. Since our national instrument

works not only distinctively, but also long-established and thus genuine and familiar, it generates sympathy and goodwill for our country, a welcome effect in the difficult times of the presence.

With this gigantic alphorn event organisers at the Expo Milano did not only want to draw Italy's attention, but that of the whole world onto four important milestones of the Confederation: 500 years of neutrality (Marignano/Milan, 1515) 200 years of peace and independence (Congress of Vienna, 1815), and – looking ahead to the future – 725 years Switzerland (2016) and the opening of the 57-km-long railway tunnel, the longest in the world (Gotthard, 2016).

“Tü-ta-too” – “Post-au-too”

Both concerts – the one at the Expo and the one on Cathedral Square – began with the overture to the opera “William Tell” by *Gioachino Rossini*, one of the greatest Italian composers who first performed several of his works at La Scala in Milan. The famous triad originates from the Andante of this overture with the sound sequence cis-e-a in A major; since 1923 it has been known as “Tü-ta-too” – the catchy-tune from the signal horn of the yellow Swiss post buses.

In addition to Rossini's “San Gottardo” two more pieces were first performed, namely “Expo Milano” and “The Battle of Marignano”. The entry into the Guinness Book of World Records that only has to overcome some formal hurdles should be guaranteed. But this is less important to

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that the path towards more direct democracy is a long and winding road.

After 1990, there has been considerable progress on the way towards more direct democracy in Germany, especially at the community level. However, at the federal level, there were – after many hopeful signs before the last general election – major setbacks with the new government. But why have the demands for more direct democracy become so much quieter than in previous years? There is no compelling reason for this! Why not re-start again? Because: We are the people! And we will not rest; because direct democracy is our right!

The sovereignty of the people starts with the fact that every citizen acts that way: as the real sovereign. That requires changes in the manner of thinking and feeling. And it requires support. But that is an indispensable “conditio sine qua non”. Other nations such as the Swiss have led the way. The Germans are able to achieve the same as well.

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"Now everything is clear ..."

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the entire alphorn family than the personal pride of every individual to have contributed to the success.

Performance of logistical tour de force

The crazy thing is that all 425 alphorn blowers could never rehearse together before the two Milan concerts. However, there were mandatory rehearsals in the different parts of the country for all participants in larger organisations. But the two concerts in Milan therefore were a crucial test and live performance in one. But it worked perfectly well because everybody

gave their best, disciplined in appearance and strong in tone.

And equally amazing the organisation: motley traditional people from all cantons of Switzerland, accompanied by Federal Councillor *Ueli Maurer* in "Küh-ermutz", showed the world what a nation established by the will of the people is capable of at its very basis. Together with the Swiss icons alphorn, SBB and *Post-Auto* they had traveled in one day (some had had to start off at four o'clock in the morning) with a lot of goodwill and a sponsored "Znünisäckli" to participate in the monster concert in Milan and get happily home again with public transportation in the evening – without incident.

Counterfait recommended

The idea for this simple but very efficient event of value creation did not originate on tourism management floors, but came from the people. Initiator was the *Alphorn Ensemble Engiadina St. Moritz* with *Hans Peter Danuser*, the former health resort director of St. Moritz.

The patronage rested on *Karin Niederberger* from Malix, the President of the Swiss Yodeling Association. *Christian Durisch* from Chur, conversant with foreign expedition (2008 "Grisons in Berlin" – with more than 300 alp goats) was responsible for the project management. That the *Assessore alla Cultura* (Councillor for Culture), who welcomed the Swiss buglers in Milan, was called *Filippo del Corno*, was probably just the icing on the cake of a well-conceived brand management ...

In short: This peaceful Swiss demo "Alphorns instead of halberds", initiated from the Engadin, at the World Expo in Milan has drawn by far the biggest media coverage at minimal cost and broad-based volunteerism worldwide. It might be a hint at reflecting our own fundamental values again – even at future regional and world exhibitions. It is more sustainable than many intellectually contrived suction luddism. Instead of "La Suiza no exista" the word is now again internationally, "La Suisse existe – more than ever!"

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

From a calling- to a musical instrument

HH. Before the alphorn became a music instrument and tourist attraction, it served as a calling instrument to fetch the cows from the pasture and to guide them to the barn. Old craftsmanship is needed to produce it: The alphorn makers look for a fir on a hillside that has grown in a curved way. It is peeled and cut into halves, then the two halves are hollowed out with a carpenter's plane and gouge until a wall thickness of about three millimeters is attained. Afterwards, the two sides are glued together and wrapped with rattan cane.

A wooden trumpet mouthpiece facilitates the transfer of vibrations of the lips to the air trapped in the tube of the alphorn. Slow oscillation causes a low tone. The faster the vibration of the lips, the higher the sound of the horn. The audible range of the alphorn is – you will be amazed – 8 km. In order to transport the horn with a length of more than 3 m and a weight of 2-3 kg it can be dissected into three pieces. Most recently, there is the production of greyish black and lightweight carbon horns (10 parts and nearly ½ kg); but they lack the homely effect of timber.



One could hardly have chosen a more impressive open-air stage for a giant alphorn concert due for a listing in the Guinness book of records. (picture swiss-image/Andy Mettler)