

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Neutral Switzerland needs an operational air force Yes to the Gripen-Funding-Act

Interview with National Councillor Jakob Büchler



Jakob Büchler
(picture thk)

thk. Two months from now we will vote in Switzerland on the purchase of a new fighter jet, the Gripen. The Swiss Air Force urgently needs a new fighter jet in order to fulfil its constitu-

tional mandate and to be equipped according to today's requirements.

The current development in Eastern Europe shows that nothing is sure for all eternity and that changes in the political situation can happen very quickly, even in Western Europe, and thus in the immediate vicinity of our country.

In the following interview the security policymaker and National Councillor Jakob Büchler answers the question why it is important for our country to acquire a new fighter jet and why the Saab Gripen is the best aircraft for our country.

Current Concerns: Why does Switzerland need a new fighter jet and specifically the Gripen?

Jakob Büchler: We need the Gripen in order to maintain security in the Swiss air space for the next 20 years. We will only have 32 F/A-18 jets after the 54 Tigers jets will have been immobilized. We will no longer be able to maintain air superiority as a neutral state in an extraordinary situation with 32 F/A-18. With 32 F/A-18 and 22 Gripen E we will then have 54 fighter planes in service. The Gripen is therefore the right jet, because it is the best in price-performance ratio. It fulfils the tasks it must perform for Switzerland and purchasing this fighter now is therefore absolutely correct and necessary.

There are those who say the Tiger would only have to be revised and upgraded and then it could easily be deployed.

We have already examined this fact at a very early stage. Modernizing the Tiger

would be the same as taking out the Boxer engine of a VW Beetle and fitting in a Mercedes engine, according to today's state of the art. First of all, the space for a new engine does not exist. Of course the Tiger can fly, it has given proof of that until today, but what would have to be replaced are the radar systems, the communication systems, the weapons and all this would be an eternal patchwork that would cost much more and yet would not provide the required performance in the end. We would then have an old chassis and an old body in which the new parts you could not be incorporated due to the missing space.

A repeatedly heard opinion, by the way from those who want to abolish the army, is that the Gripen had only one engine and that this was problematic.

These are statements of people who have no idea of the technology at all. I have discussed this issue with different jet pilots for several times and all have confirmed clearly that up to now not a single fighter jet crashed because the engine stopped working. The jets have a great stability in the air and if, in fact, an engine failed, in an extreme emergency the pilot could still save himself with the ejector seat. The allegation that a twin-engine aircraft offers more security is a claim that is not true.

There are other countries such as Brazil and of course Sweden that use the Gripen themselves. These arguments are unfounded and unconvincing arguments by those opponents who have not the faintest idea about the matter.

To what extent is the funding feasible for our country?

Since there are no good arguments against the plane, the issue of finances is pushed forward. This is a completely baseless assertion. If we look at the Gripen-Funding-Act, we add an annual 300 million francs to the Gripen Funding. This is 0.5 percent of the total budget of the Federal Government. In addition, the funding is done within the DDPS', the Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection and Sport's budget, and if we have the 5 billion for the army available from 2016 on – what I myself have always fought for –



then we will be able to finance it entirely from the budget of the defense household. The argument that it was too expensive and we could not afford it is pure invention.

What is the strategic significance of the Gripen? Were there any other systems that would be cheaper and could also undertake the task?

The Swiss Air Force has several tasks. On the one hand there is the defense of the airspace. You can only do this with a fighter jet; a drone would be much too slow. A drone is suitable for aerial reconnaissance duties. Introducing a drone system à la United States would cost us billions and would definitely be too costly. The result would be a complete system change, because drones must be directed from the ground and you should establish appropriate stations first. Besides that, these drones are partially satellite-guided which would entail a huge effort and is no longer financially viable. In addition, you cannot perform air police missions with drones. An unmanned aircraft cannot accompany an airliner; it would be irresponsible for security reasons. The air police use is another important task of the

continued on page 2

"Neutral Switzerland needs ..."

continued from page 1

air force. And you can do these operations only with a fighter jet, a helicopter would be far too slow, as well as a drone. You should know that there is at least one police air deployment per day. We have live-ly air traffic over our country, more than 2'500 planes a day cross our airspace. This is a dense network of air transport. The tasks that the police fulfils on highways or in cities must be done in the air, namely to ensure peace and order. This is the task of the air force and who else should do it? Therefore we need our fighter jets.

How do we have to imagine an air police operation?

An air police operation is announced to the pilot by radio. There it says, for example, the flight with the number 123 needs to be escorted because there is a diplomat on board. Then jets escort the other passenger plane. One fighter jet flies ahead and one behind. These operations are also carried out in case a Federal Councillor or a minister is under way. This is the so-called security escort. This is, so to speak, to safeguard the person who sits in the escorted airplane. These are real routine operations. Then, however, there are also those operations with airplanes which have, for example, radio or navigation problems and do not know any more where they are at the moment or have already lost their route. They need assistance and it is the air force that undertakes this task. With 2,500 movements in the air, there are airplanes over and over again which have technical or electronic problems and those are the ones who get assistance.

So this would actually mean that the TCS was in the air.

Absolutely right, one could say so. But also more serious incidents belong to it like plane hijackings or threats by undefined flight routes. In an emergency an airplane must also be forced to land which is also done by our air force. In an exercise in which such a case just has already been simulated the *Defence Committee* (DefC) was once involved. So quite specifically, such scenarios are practiced.

Which airplanes are concerned?

Those planes which have not announced their flights or do not identify, that is those who have penetrated illegally into Swiss airspace, or in case of plane hijackings.

What performances does the Gripen achieve within the scope of defence?

With the Mirage we were outstandingly able to cover the air reconnaissance that

is so essential for survival. Since we do not have this airplane any more for reasons of age, we lack it. Within the scope of defence the Gripen now has quite clearly the mission to take over this air reconnaissance. The F/A-18 also does not have enough capacity for this purpose. This is quite an important mission. We cannot intervene militarily somewhere on the ground if we do not know what happens there. The Gripen is needed, however, quite clearly for air defence, thus the classical air fight. Ground targets can also be aimed at with its help, and it offers a direct support for the army. This is quite an important reason because we have massively reduced our artillery. Besides, it is not about area-covering bombardments but about fighting against single ground targets and this is a task the Gripen can perform very well.

Are there also national policy reasons in addition to military ones?

Switzerland is a neutral state. We need an army which must be operational on the ground as well as in the air. If we want to maintain this for the next 30 years, we must have 22 Gripen jets. We can rely on no defensive alliance; we must accomplish all that as a neutral country on our own. Therefore, we need a fully operational air force. The Federal Constitution requires from our army to protect our country and hence our sovereignty. Our army defends the people and the country, also in the air.

In other words, the Gripen is an important part of the entire defence.

Yes, this is correct, it raises the defensive ability of our country. If we cannot defend the airspace any longer, we have a vacuum, then something very crucial is missing, and that must not be.

Why was the Gripen chosen?

From the three types of fighter jets which we have evaluated, the Gripen is the one that fulfils the requirements best of all. The price-performance ratio is right. Purchase is one thing, operating costs the other. The French *Rafale* and the *Eurofighter* have extremely higher operating costs. Reproaching it to be a paper plane is of course not correct at all. We have tested the *Gripen C/D* and do now get the technically advanced Gripen E. With the F/A-18 it was similar; this airplane has been advanced throughout the years. It has also been modernised and its performance has been strengthened. If we do not buy the airplane now, we will have a much bigger problem from 2030 on. Then F/A-18 will have aged, and then we would have to renew the entire air force. This would include enormous costs.

Is the number of about 50 machines enough for our security?

22 Gripen will be purchased; these are exactly two aviator squadrons with 11 machines each. This means that the existing 3 F/A-18 squadrons are supplemented by 2 additional jets. With this number we could constantly be in the air in extraordinary situations for 5 to 6 weeks. Now we are not capable of doing so. Although the Tiger can fly at night, however, it does see nothing. In bad weather it remains in the hangar. The Tiger will be withdrawn from service in 2016, because it is to no avail to us. We do not only have to defend our country in nice weather and in bad weather we do not ask the enemy not to attack. Simply the Tiger is worn-out now. We bought the Tiger in 1980, this is the time of the *Hermes-ball* head typewriter, and one should combine that now with a modern computer. This is impossible, it does not work. If we want to defend freedom and security, neutrality and our state sovereignty, we must support the purchase of the Gripen, anything else would be irresponsible.

Mr Büchler, many thanks for this interview.

(Interview by Thomas Kaiser)

Current Concerns

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

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

Editor: Erika Vögeli

Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

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

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-

for all other countries.

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

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters to the editor. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *Current Concerns*.

© 2014. All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

Swiss referendum on 18 May 2014

No to the bluff package “Federal Decree on primary health care”

by Dr med Susanne Lippmann

On 18 May 2014, the Swiss people will vote on the “Federal Decree on primary health care.” This decree is the direct counter proposal to the popular initiative “Yes to Family Medicine” that was signed by 200,000 citizens who want to ensure that also in future there will be enough family doctors in Switzerland. In fact, the counter proposal, which is now going to be put to the vote, does in no way meet these concerns. On the contrary, it is part of Federal Councillor Berset’s political agenda and that of his predecessors, who used the opportunity to force the central-

ist reform recommendations of OECD and WHO – alien to our nature – on the Swiss health system. This means giving the federal administration, i.e. the “Bundesamt für Gesundheit, BAG” (Federal Office of Public Health, FOPH), the power to define what the public is to expect of our health care system in the future. Do we want this drastic measures of the FOPH on every local surgery?

Everyone who wants to ensure that our well-proven excellent healthcare system remains as good as it is, will vote against this bluff package on 18 May.

The fact that the Swiss health care system is one of the best in the world, is well known to the OECD, the WHO and even the FOPH. Not such a long time ago, in January 2013, the “Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern” (Federal Department of Home Affairs) stated in “Health 2020”: “The people in Switzerland benefit from a good health care system. In October 2011, a detailed OECD and WHO analysis came to the same result. Not only international experts see many advantages and strengths in our health care system, the Swiss citizens themselves, too, have confirmed in several referendums that they do not want any radical changes. Also in an international survey by the Commonwealth Fund, 69 percent of the Swiss patients said that, overall, the health care system was working well – and should not be changed but only slightly to improve it further. Some other international comparative studies, too, show that the population is highly satisfied with the performance of our health system.”¹

Given these facts, it is strange that in the same paper (Health 2020) the FOPH under the leadership of Federal Councillor Berset, adopted a “health agenda”², which completely corrupts our health care system. The whole thing is to be pushed through without consulting the people. The “Federal Decree on primary health care” (counter-proposal to the Popular “Yes to Family Medicine” Initiative) is part of a comprehensive legislative package², included in the agenda.

What do all these innovations have in common? They disempower the cantons and lead to centralisation and concentration of power in the FOPH, i.e. in a centrally planned economy. They deprive the people of their sovereignty with respect to the organisation of health care.

In Switzerland, health care works fine, like everything established bottom up by the population. The recipe for success is simple: Direct democracy and federalism are the best means to a solid and sustainable organisation of a community. In the Swiss federal state, it is understood that health care, as well as education for example, is in the hands of the cantons. The principle of subsidiarity – the federal Government intervenes only if the cantons are unable to fulfill their duties – has proven its value since 1848. The Swiss deeply reject a centralised controller.

Federal Popular Initiative “Yes to Family Medicine”

The federal constitution is amended as follows:

Article 118b (new) Family Medicine

1. Within the scope of their powers the Confederation and Cantons endeavour to ensure a sufficient, comprehensively specialized medical health care of high quality for the population, accessible to all and provided by specialists of family medicine.
2. They maintain and promote family medicine as an essential part of primary health care and as a rule first contact point for the treatment of diseases and accidents and for questions of health education and disease prevention.
3. They strive for a balanced regional distribution, create favourable conditions for the practice of family medicine and support the cooperation with the other providers and institutions of the health and social services.
4. The Confederation issues regulations about:
 - a) university education, specialist training as well as clinical research in the field of family medicine;
 - b) secured access to the profession and facilitation of practice;
 - c) expansion and appropriate compensation of diagnostic, therapeutic and preventive services of family medicine;
 - d) recognition and appreciation of special counselling and coordination of activities for the patients;
 - e) simplification of administrative procedures and contemporary forms of professional practice.
5. In its health politics the Confederation takes into account the efforts of cantons and communities and of the economy in the field of family medicine. It supports them in their efforts at an economical use of funds and quality assurance of services.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Counter-proposal: Federal decree on primary health care

(Direct counter-proposal to the Federal Popular Initiative “Yes to Family Medicine”) of 19 September 2013

The Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, taking into account Article 139 (5) of the Federal Constitution, after examination of the Federal Popular Initiative “Yes to Family Medicine” submitted 1 April 2010, after access to the Federal Council Dispatch of 16 September 2011, decides:

- I. The Federal Constitution is amended as follows:

Article 117a (new) Primary Health Care

1. Within the scope of their powers the Confederation and the cantons provide a sufficient primary health care of high quality accessible to all. They acknowledge and promote family medicine as an essential part of this primary health care.
2. The Confederation issues regulations about:
 - a. Training and further education for the professions of primary health care and standards for practising these professions;
 - b. appropriate compensation for the services of family medicine.
- II. This counter-proposal is to be submitted to the vote of the people and the cantons [...]

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Statement of Hans Hess in the Council of States on 11 March 2014

Hans Hess (The Liberals, Canton of Obwalden): “All of us here in this hall will probably agree that Switzerland has a very well functioning health system. As FOPH and OECD reports confirm, the population is quite satisfied with this system and doesn’t wish any radical changes. In the proposal now to be dealt with, foundations for far-reaching rearrangement of our well-established health system are supposed to be laid. New phrases are introduced in order to replace well-established terms – the implications and actual meaning of this new terminology is not really clear to me and I find it puzzling that the category ‘self-employment’ is supposed to be replaced by ‘private professional entrepreneurship’, I refer to the message at page 6206.¹

Another suspicious point is the euphemistic term ‘basic health care’, which is supposed to become constitutional law according to the counter proposal to the people’s initiative ‘Yes to Family Medicine’. Nobody could argue against this term, but neither does anybody know what it really means. This term is a cover-up for crucial changes. Our traditional concept, that a well educated, responsible family medicine makes a careful diagnosis and offers state of the art treatment will no longer included here. Instead, basic health care as defined by some old WHO model of the 1970ies, originally designed for developing countries, is being propagated as the future concept. In future, advanced practice nurses are supposed to coordinate an inter-professional team, free of hierarchies, which takes the decisions regarding the health competent patient.

This model of inter-professionality is propagated by the education centre of our Swiss nurses and by Careum Zürich, this proposed law would introduce it into Swiss university training.

Looking at them against this background, these new proposed articles can

be understood more easily, such as article 4 paragraph 2 letter d. The Federal Council’s comments regarding this section explain that the medical professions are supposed to be redefined as ‘competencies’, according to the Canadian CanMEDS model. The CanMEDS model splits medical professional health care activities into seven roles: Medical expert (central role), but also communicator, collaborator, health advocate, manager, scholar and professional. I haven’t made this up, you can check it out in the messages on page 6215.

The term ‘physician’ is not even mentioned any longer. But who are they actually talking about? This is further elaborated in the message regarding article 8 letter k; it reads: ‘Basic health care is provided not only by medical doctors, but by interdisciplinary teams consisting of several other medical university personnel, such as pharmacists or chiro-practitioners, as well as other health professionals, for instance specialized nurses, physiotherapists, midwives, nutritionists, ergo-therapists and podologists.’ Again I am merely citing the message referring to page 6216. Here it is announced quite clearly that in the proposed basic health care concept a whole bunch of health professions including podologists are supposed to be competent at the same level as the physician, and that the person the patient would actually talk to is no longer a medical doctor but any one of these professionals.

The European and Swiss understanding of the physician acting in the Hippocratic tradition, in a co-operation with the patient based on trust and responsibility, is supposed to be replaced by some technocratically decorated Anglo-American model of competence. Similar models have already been introduced in the Scandinavian countries. If a patient comes to see a doctor and states at the reception that he has diarrhoea he will be trans-

ferred to a diarrhoea specialist nurse who confirms the diagnosis, orders lab tests, gives the patient therapeutic advice and hands him a prescription. These patients have no longer a chance to actually see a doctor. The proposed law amendment goes even further: the Council of States Commission suggests introducing a complete medical professional register in article 33a. This anticipates the decision on the electronic health record of patients.

The strategy paper ‘Health 2020’ is actually a completely restructured health policy programme, which would enforce WHO and OECD regulation from the federal and cantonal level down to every practice and surgery. The responsibility of the cantons for health policy, and in fact federalism itself, is weakened without actually admitting it. We should demand a moratorium regarding further health care reforms and at first study the Federal Council paper ‘Health 2020’ very carefully. In my opinion this is a trojan horse, its contents need to be scrutinized.

Based on my comments a motion for annulment would have been indicated. However, I am aware that such a motion had no chance to pass, with only two members of the Swiss health commission endorsing my views. In my opinion the Secondary Council should deal with all these questions that I have raised very intensely now. I may say it frankly: all the reservations I have voiced here today were brought to my attention by concerned general practitioners from the Canton of Obwalden. I firmly maintain my position: I am a federalist, even in the health care system.”

¹ “Botschaft des Bundesrates zur Änderung des Medizinalberufegesetzes (MedBG)” (Message of the Federal Council on the amendment of the Law on Medical Professions) from 3 July 2013

(Translation Current Concerns)

“No to the bluff package ...”

continued from page 3

In addition, it is no longer about a cohesive healthcare for the benefit of all but about cost-benefit considerations and profitability. To this end the doctor-patient relationship is to be radically broken up. The Careum, responsible for the training of the Swiss health personnel, on this issue: “The individual physician or therapist relationship with the patient is going to be normalised to the effect that they, like other services in the health care sector, basically follow the rules of our consumer world.”⁴ Such radical changes must be declared openly.

On 11 March 2014 the Council of States as the first chamber treated the template “Amendment Medical Professions (MedBG)”. In the following we publish the outstanding statement by Councillor *Hans Hess*, who also commented the counter-proposal to the GP initiative “Yes to Family Medicine” in an illuminating way. In that commentary he analysed the fundamental difference between the “Yes to Family Medicine” initiative and the counterproposal.

¹ “Die gesundheitspolitischen Prioritäten des Bundesrates” Report “Health 2020”, Federal Department of Home Affairs (Legal Informa-

tion Federal Office of Public Health, FOPH, January 2013, p. 4)

² Ibid, p. 3

³ This includes, in addition to the counter-proposal to the family medicine initiative, the following projects: the revised Law on Epidemics, proposed amendments to the Law on Medical Professions, the creation of a new Health Professions Act and also the planned Law on Electronic Patient Dossiers. Future plans include a quality institution and a HTA Institute (Health Technology Assessment, Agency and law on cost - benefit analysis).

⁴ Careum working paper 2, “Woher kommen die Besten? Globaler Wettbewerb in der Ausbildung – Wer bildet zukunftsfähige Health Professionals aus?”, FHS St.Gallen 2009, p 8, see also Careum working paper 7, 2013, “Die Gesundheitswelt der Zukunft denken – Umriss einer neuen Gesundheitsbildungspolitik”.

In the crisis over Ukraine Switzerland must remain absolutely neutral!

by Gotthard Frick

“The West” is not the “International community”!

“The 1.3 billion Muslims place their hopes in us.”... “They [i.e. “the West”] attack us, kill us, occupy our country, overthrow our governments whether Sunni, Shiite, Alawite, Druz or whatever.” (Source: *Organisation of the Islamic Conference*, the speaker was *Mohammad Mahathir*, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, highly respected in Asia, on the 10th Islamic Summit, 16 October 2003.) Anybody who actively travels in the world, knows how deep the wounds are, how huge the resentment against “the West” still is among many people in Africa, Asia and South America.

However, if we believe our politicians and our media, everything “the West” does, for example, bombing other countries into submission or changing the government by means of covert operations, is done on behalf of the “international community”, “the international law”, “to the protection of human life”, “for democracy”, etc. Outside this “West”, the allegedly noble motives justifying these actions were and are taken for what they mostly are: excuses to ruthlessly enforce the interests of the United States and other participating forces.

By supporting “the West” in conflicts, for example with sanctions, we – as a country that has been reasonably neutral up to now – become a member of one of the conflict parties and thereby abandon neutrality completely.

The end of Swiss neutrality?

I already pointed out earlier that Switzerland is gradually abandoning its neutrality step by step (*Current Concerns* No 12, 2013, ASMZ 07/2013) by taking part in the NATO’s “Partnership for Peace”, for example. In China’s English party press, you could read that this “partnership” is one of the United States’ instruments for imposing its global strategic interests.

Due to the advanced abolition of our unique militia, probably all influential General Staffs took note of, and recently due to the story of the hijacked Ethiopian plane, that has made one of the richest countries’ national defense a laughing stock throughout the world even for ordinary people, we have – within just a few years – destroyed the image of Switzerland as a peaceable and strictly neutral country that is, however, capable of defending itself.

The crisis over Ukraine is the most serious conflict since the Cold War

If now we do not want to gamble away what is left of confidence in our neutrality, Swit-

zerland must by no means contribute to sanctions or other measures directed against Russia by “the West”, and even less must we resolve on own penalty measures.

Taking note of the other party’s view

Switzerland must perceive and take seriously the view of the other party to the conflict.

Russia feels in the right. It accuses the “West” of having advanced ever closer to Russia with the military alliance NATO and thus of increasingly threatening and encircling it – in violation of earlier contrary promises made at the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They say, that now the red line has been overstepped.

If you believe the English daily newspaper of China’s Communist Party, this great power sees the “case Ukraine” also differently to “the West”. All media comment on the West’s double standard and thus on its hypocrisy and call to mind that for example in the case of Kosovo the “West” then argued, that the self-determination of nations takes precedence over territorial integrity, and that now, in the case of Crimea, the “West” claims the opposite. In the case of Ukraine “the West” had supported the fall of a “democratically elected but corrupt” government.

The “People’s Daily” of 19 March 2013 concludes that such double standards are based on the fact that the “Western values” are defined on the basis of Western self-interest. (*Mohammad Mahathir* made this accusation of linking western economic interests with pretextual “Western values” even much earlier.) In an article about the “Hypocritical Western Concern for the Ukraine” the “Global Times” and “People’s Daily” of 17 March listed seven countries in which the “West” had intervened militarily in the recent past and then added that, what Russia and the “rest of the world”, i.e. the non-Western world, had worried most, was the absence of understanding for Russia’s legitimate security needs.

The paper then concludes that the “smug West” was ignoring the lessons of history, which was leading to conflicts. So the “West” did not keep in mind that during the Cold War even the architect of the Western containment policy against the Soviet bloc, *George Kennan*, had recognized the legitimate security needs of Russia as it had been attacked twice from the West (*Napoleon* and *Hitler*).

From China’s point of view, Russia’s regaining strength is more beneficial than a resulting threat

In this context the considerations of the Chinese press about Russia’s new

strength with respect to China are interesting. Thus, for example, it is claimed that China should take Russia as an example and also resist Western pressure. It is then noted with regret that the Chinese armed forces are currently weaker than that



Gotthard Frick
(picture ma)

of the United States. It is also quite factually called to mind that in the past a strong Russia used its superior strength against China to its own advantage and that it now – that it has regained strength – could be threatening again. The Chinese people think this way. (The Chinese have no illusions about “exurbs of friends”.) Since *Putin* still clings to the “outmoded way of thinking in spheres of influence”, this might lead to frictions with China. But today China is much stronger than in the 19th and 20th century and its strategic cooperation with Russia and Russia’s integration into the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* precluded a real threat, it is maintained. In the foreseeable future the greatest geopolitical, but also ideological strategic pressure comes from the US-led “West”. China promotes a multipolar world. A strong Russia might speed up this process, thus leading to a much better world than a unipolar, US-led world.

The “West’s” interference with the coup in Ukraine

The intercepted telephone conversation between US Deputy Secretary of State *Victoria Nuland* and US ambassador in Kiev *Jeffrey Payette* on 8 February 2014, which was published on the Internet, shows how the US pulled the strings in the coup. According to their script only one of the “three servants”, namely *Yatsenyuk*, was to enter into the new government, because he had been well positioned by Nuland. (Today he is the head of the interim government.) The boxer *Vitali Klitschko* had to be “bludgeoned” yet, she said. He is supposed to mobilize the Ukrainian masses and then to “take care of his homework”. Nuland also said “Fuck the EU” and “lackeys *Ban Ki-moon* (UN Secretary General) and *Robert Serry* (UN Special Envoy for the Crimea)” were use-

continued on page 6

"In the crisis over Ukraine ..."

continued from page 5

ful to unite the Ukrainian opposition. An "international personality" was supposed to "be found" to support the conspiracy. (Klitschkos *Democratic Alliance for Reforms* has now rejected a participation in the government – an indication of the growing alienation with Jazenjuk's party.)

The self-evidence or rather impudence of high exponents of the "West" as they rushed to the demonstrations in the Ukraine, immediately after their start is indeed amazing. Equally amazing is how President *Obama* and other Western leaders, delivered explanations to support the groups initially appearing as opposition. The US, the EU, *NATO*, all argued that Ukraine should decide themselves whether or not they wanted to join this or that Western organization, including *NATO*.

The other bugged and published telephone conversation between EU foreign representative *Catherine Ashton* and Estonian Foreign Minister *Urmas Paet* indicates that probably the former President *Viktor Yanukovich* was not responsible for the shooting on the Maidan, but people of today's transitional government were to be suspected to have instructed the sniper or snipers to shoot at the police (15 deaths) and simultaneously at the demonstrators (several dozen deaths), (probably in order to drive the public anger against President *Yanukovich*). The Estonian foreign minister said literally. "It's really disturbing that the new coalition does not want to investigate what really happened". Whereupon *Ashton* replied rather confused, "I think we want an investigation. I mean, I do not know. My goodness!"

The Foreign Ministry of Estonia has confirmed the authenticity of the phone call, but it was noted that the statement of the Foreign Minister did not indicate that the opposition was responsible for the assassinations. Up to now it failed to have the dead bodies of the policemen examined by neutral experts, which would have allowed identifying whether they were shot with the same firearms as the demonstrators. Thus, the transitional government is only suspected.

The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" found it "embarrassing" that the foreign ministers of Germany and France did not participate in this visible support of the rebellion.

The loudest and most violent opponents of the government included amongst others the *Swoboda*, a far-right party, whose leader, *Oleh Tjahnybok*, 2003, according to "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" dated 14.3.2013, is said to have issued the appeal: "Grab the guns, fight the Russian bastards, the Germans, the Jewish bastards and other sub-species of this type."

In addition the correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" added that he who has seen *Tjahnybok* in recent weeks, has hardly any reason to assume that he has seen the light.¹

In December 2013, US Senator *McCain* visited the Ukraine, as one of numerous other personalities from the "West". He had a friendly meeting with *Oleh Tjahnybok* and other members of the *Swoboda* leadership. It is unlikely that he gave a lecture on democracy. Very likely he discussed with them the procedures for the government's removal from power and how his foundation and the US could contribute to it financially and with what help and advice.

The US ambassador mentioned before said to have to exerted massive pressure on all groups to ensure that the development was proceeding in the desired direction and observers from the West, who wanted to observe the election in the Crimea, were seriously intimidated so they did not go there. (*Putin* had invited the OSCE to dispatch observers.)

Swoboda fills the posts of the Deputy Prime Minister and two additional Ministers (of in total 21 members of the transitional government) and several senior officials, including the Attorney General. (Source: *Kyiv Post* dated 27.2.2014). In Parliament, the movement has 36 of 450 seats. Another minister is a member of another very right-wing party.

The also very right-wing sector presented its President *Dimitri Jarosch* as candidate for president of Ukraine. This movement was also actively involved in the coup with the paramilitary organization *UNA-UNSO* who already fought in *Chechnya* and *Moldova* against the Russians.

There are also, of course, genuine democratic groups, which are represented by ministers in the government. The majority comes from the environment of Prime Minister *Yatsenyuk*, chosen by the USA and elected by the Parliament.

Provocating final questions

Is it "shameful" that the Russian foreign minister has not visited and encouraged the parties to strive for Scotland's independence from the United Kingdom or the exit of England from the EU or the secession of Catalonia from Spain? Why is it that President *Putin* does not repeatedly utter statements on these internal problems of three sovereign states? How would the "West" have responded to such interference?

How would the US and *NATO* react if Russia had founded the *CATO* (*Caribbean Treaty Organization*), and *Venezuela*, *Bolivia* and *Cuba* would have become members and Russia had set up, a missile

defense system to a fend off "Iranian missiles" in *Cuba*? (Remember: When the Soviet Union installed nuclear missiles on *Cuba* in 1962, that is at the door of America, the US threatened with war; everybody understood this reaction.)

Is there any fundamental difference between the behavior of the "West" in the case of Ukraine and that one of *Russia*, shown in the constructed examples? It is obvious that a neutral Switzerland must not take part in the action of one of the parties in the current crisis.

Even if this mandatory neutral-political situation did not exist, Switzerland wouldn't have any reason to provide the United States with any assistance in this conflict. For several years we have had the experience, how ruthlessly they use their enormous economic power for blackmailing with the target that we take on their laws and apply them on us.

Therefore the author's hope is that the multipolar world order that *China* is striving for will become reality as soon as possible. He had even been able to express his opinion in the Chinese press. •

Sources: <http://www.mmo-champion.com/threads/1444332-Ukraine/page3>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/john-mccain-meets-oleh-tyahnybok-in-ukraine-2013-12>

The Red Phoenix

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4452331,00.html>

<http://defendinghistory.com/24818/24818#more-24818>

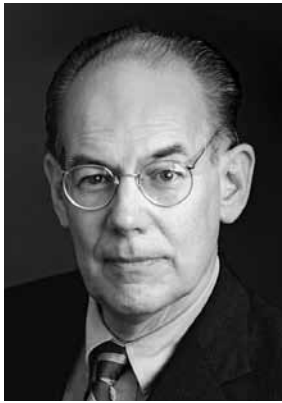
<http://gatesofvienna.net/2013/12/things-are-not-what-they-seem/>

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Gotthard Frick studied civilization française, political economy and business administration at the University of Paris (Sorbonne and "Sciences Po"). For many years he was concerned with large infrastructure projects (power plants, power lines, roads, tunnels, irrigation systems) in Switzerland and overseas. From 1968 to 2004 he devoted himself to the establishment and management of a consultancy, management and training company with an attached English-speaking University for Applied Sciences, which was active for all development banks, for UN agencies (ILO, WTO, UNDP), the OECD, the Swiss and several other governments and businesses all over the world. Today he often visits China. He was an infantry battalion commander. Thanks to his visits to foreign armies (Germany, Pakistan), to *NATO* and the US Air Force Bases in Germany and Panama, he has a broad military background knowledge. *Gotthard Frick* is member of the *Social Democratic Party of Switzerland* (SP).

President Putin's view is understandable

by Prof Dr John J. Mearsheimer*



John J. Mearsheimer
(picture ma)

President Obama has decided to get tough with Russia by imposing sanctions and increasing support for Ukraine's new government. This is a big mistake. This response is based on the same faulty

logic that helped precipitate the crisis. Instead of resolving the dispute, it will lead to more trouble.

The White House view, widely shared by Beltway insiders [Personalities an institutions in the political environment of Washington, such as federal officers, lobbyists media commentators, contractors], is that the United States bears no responsibility for causing the current crisis. In their eyes, it's all President *Vladimir V. Putin's* fault – and his motives are illegitimate. This is wrong. Washington played a key role in precipitating this dangerous situation, and Mr. Putin's behavior is motivated by the same geopolitical considerations that influence all great powers, including the United States.

The taproot of the current crisis is NATO expansion and Washington's commitment to move Ukraine out of Moscow's orbit and integrate it into the West. The Russians have intensely disliked but tolerated substantial NATO expansion, including the accession of Poland and the Baltic countries. But when NATO announced in 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine "will become members of NATO," Russia drew a line in the sand. Georgia and Ukraine are not just states in Russia's neighborhood; they are on its doorstep. Indeed, Russia's forceful response in its August 2008 war with Georgia was driven in large part by Moscow's desire to prevent Georgia from joining NATO and integrating into the West.

Fast forward to last November, when it seemed that President *Viktor F. Yanukovich* would sign an agreement with the European Union that was designed to deepen Ukraine's integration with the West and greatly reduce Moscow's influence there. Mr. Putin offered Ukraine a better deal in response, which Mr. Yanukovich accepted. That decision led to pro-

"The taproot of the current crisis is NATO expansion and Washington's commitment to move Ukraine out of Moscow's orbit and integrate it into the West. The Russians have intensely disliked but tolerated substantial NATO expansion, including the accession of Poland and the Baltic countries. But when NATO announced in 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine "will become members of NATO," Russia drew a line in the sand. Georgia and Ukraine are not just states in Russia's neighborhood; they are on its doorstep."

tests in western Ukraine, where there is strong pro-Western sentiment and much hostility to Moscow.

The Obama administration then made a fatal mistake by backing the protesters, which helped escalate the crisis and eventually led to the toppling of Mr. Yanukovich. A pro-Western government then took over in Kiev. The United States ambassador to Ukraine, who had been encouraging the protesters, proclaimed it "a day for the history books."

Mr. Putin, of course, didn't see things that way. He viewed these developments as a direct threat to Russia's core strategic interests.

Who can blame him? After all, the United States, which has been unable to leave the Cold War behind, has treated Russia as a potential threat since the early 1990s and ignored its protests about NATO's expansion and its objections to America's plan to build missile defense systems in Eastern Europe.

One might expect American policymakers to understand Russia's concerns about Ukraine joining a hostile alliance. After all, the United States is deeply committed to the Monroe Doctrine, which warns other great powers to stay out of the Western Hemisphere.

But few American policymakers are capable of putting themselves in Mr. Putin's shoes. This is why they were so surprised when he moved additional troops into Crimea, threatened to invade eastern Ukraine, and made it clear Moscow would use its considerable economic leverage to undermine any regime in Kiev that was hostile to Russia.

When Mr. Putin explained why he was playing hardball, Mr. Obama responded that the Russian leader "seems to have a different set of lawyers making a different set of interpretations." But the Russian leader is obviously not talking with law-

yers; he sees this conflict in geopolitical, not legal terms.

Mr. Putin's view is understandable. Because there is no world government to protect states from one another, major powers are acutely sensitive to threats — especially near their borders — and they sometimes act ruthlessly to address potential dangers. International law and human rights concerns take a back seat when vital security issues are at stake.

Mr. Obama would be advised to stop talking to lawyers and start thinking like a strategist. If he did, he would realize that punishing the Russians while trying to pull Ukraine into the West's camp will only make matters worse.

The West has few options for inflicting pain on Russia, while Moscow has many cards to play against Ukraine and the West. It could invade eastern Ukraine or annex Crimea, because Ukraine regrettably relinquished the nuclear arsenal it inherited when the Soviet Union broke up and thus has no counter to Russia's conventional superiority.

Furthermore, Russia could stop cooperating with America over Iran and Syria; it could badly damage Ukraine's struggling economy and even cause serious economic problems in the European Union due to its role as a major gas supplier. Not surprisingly, most Europeans aren't very enthusiastic about employing costly sanctions against Russia.

But even if the West could impose significant costs on Russia, Mr. Putin is unlikely to back down. When vital interests are at stake, countries are invariably willing to suffer great pain to ensure their security. There is no reason to think Russia, given its history, is an exception.

Mr. Obama should adopt a new policy toward Russia and Ukraine — one

* John J. Mearsheimer is a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, and author of "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics."

Günther Verheugen: "It is a fatal breaching of a taboo, to tolerate – for the first time in this century – nationalist ideologues, downright fascists, in a government."

km. The "West" that consists mainly of the US and the EU and must not be equated with the "world community" is supposed to act "with one voice" against Russia. Especially the US-Americans want it that way. This also sheds some light on the opinions of well-known European politicians, who have expressed themselves differently as in terms of the US-policy. The latter has rewarded the illegitimate seizure of power in Ukraine after a very short time with a diplomatic recognition.

Quite different judged *Günther Verheugen*, former EU-Commissioner, responsible for the EU Enlargement, and SPD politician, the situation in an interview with the *Deutschlandfunk* of 18 March:

"What makes the current situation so difficult as well as the dialogue, has a cause in Kiev itself, namely the fact that a fatal breaching of a taboo was committed, to which we are even applauding. Namely the breaching of the taboo, that is to tolerate – for the first time in this century – nationalist ideologues, downright fascists in a government, is a step too far. [...] The website of *Swoboda* is a veritable treasure trove

of nationalist ideology. They are driven by hatred for Russians, hatred for Jews and hatred for Poles. It is sheer nationalism, exaggerated excessive nationalism. They call for nuclear weapons for Ukraine. [...] And I struggle against this harmless sounding thesis that there are only a few, or against this classic theory of integration. This issue with the integration of radical forces has terribly, terribly gone wrong, more than once, throughout European history. We should not forget that." Verheugen is asked whether the new leadership team in Kiev had come into being legitimately. Then he replied, "No, it is not. This can of course hardly be denied, now. The Ukrainian Constitution is very clear concerning this matter. The constitutional majority was not there, and there also was no duly elected president."

And to the sanctions against Russia, already adopted or planned by the US and EU governments, he said, he was concerned "that the once taken path of punitive measures leads us further and further away from what we really want, from a policy of partnership and understanding, and that it is increasingly difficult to go this way back again, once you

have started out in this direction. For we have not reached the end, further decisions will indeed be taken, decisions that do not fit us, decisions that do not fit Russia. Where will this lead to?"

Pro memoria: Even the German Foreign Minister *Steinmeier* originally was in favor of a different approach in Ukraine. On 22 February, he said: "It will now be important that the parties in the conflict – both the side of the government and the side of the opposition – stick to what was agreed with each other, and begin to build trust. The question is whether this will succeed." At that time the agreement between the President of Ukraine and representatives of the political opposition was just signed, which – a few hours later – was broken by the opposition. And the *Spiegel* published an interview with the German Foreign Minister, who said: "Our roadmap is supported by Russia. On that very Thursday, President *Putin* sent an emissary to Kiev, who in the same night participated in the negotiations in a very constructive manner. The Russian representative has helped to build bridges and initialed the text, after all. The termination of the bloodshed is also in Russia's interest."

"President Putin's view is ..."

continued from page 7

that seeks to prevent war by recognizing Russia's security interests and upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity.

To achieve those goals, the United States should emphasize that Georgia and Ukraine will not become NATO members. It should make clear that America will not interfere in future Ukrainian elections or

be sympathetic to a virulently anti-Russian government in Kiev. And it should demand that future Ukrainian governments respect minority rights, especially regarding the status of Russian as an official language. In short, Ukraine should remain neutral between East and West.

Some might say these policy prescriptions amount to a defeat for America. On the contrary, Washington has a deep-seated interest in ending this con-

flict and maintaining Ukraine as a sovereign buffer state between Russia and NATO. Furthermore, good relations with Russia are essential, because the United States needs Moscow's help to deal with Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, and eventually to help counter China, the only genuine potential rival to the United States. •

Source: © *The International New York Times* on 14 March 2014

Current Concerns

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

Subscribe to Current Concerns – The journal of an independent cooperative

The cooperative *Zeit-Fragen* is a politically and financially independent organisation. All of its members work on a voluntary and honorary basis. The journal does not accept commercial advertisements of any kind and receives no financial support from business organisations. The journal *Current Concerns* is financed exclusively by its subscribers. We warmly recommend our model of free and independent press coverage to other journals.

Annual subscription rate of
CHF 40,-; Euro 30,-; USD 40,-; GBP 25,-
for the following countries:

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

Annual subscription rate of
CHF 20,-; Euro 15,-; USD 20,-; GBP 12,50
for all other countries.

Please choose one of the following ways of payment:

- send a cheque to *Current Concerns*, P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich, or
- send us your credit card details (only *Visa*), or
- pay into one of the following accounts:

CH:	Postscheck-Konto (CHF):	87-644472-4	IBAN CH91 0900 0000 8764 4472 4	BIC POFICHBEXXX
CH:	Postscheck-Konto (Euro):	91-738798-6	IBAN CH83 0900 0000 9173 8798 6	BIC POFICHBEXXX
D:	Volksbank Tübingen, Kto. 67 517 005, BLZ 64190110		IBAN DE12 6419 0110 0067 5170 05	BIC GENODES1TUE
A:	Raiffeisen Landesbank, Kto. 1-05.713.599, BLZ 37000		IBAN AT55 3700 0001 0571 3599	BIC RVVGAT2B

President Putin's address on the accession of Crimea

Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin on 18 March 2014 concerning the Republic of Crimea's and Sevastopol's request for accession to the Russian Federation



Vladimir Putin
(picture ma)

Federation Council members, State Duma deputies, good afternoon. Representatives of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol are here among us, citizens of Russia, residents of Crimea and Sevastopol!

Dear friends, we have gathered here today in connection with an issue that is of vital, historic significance to all of us. A referendum was held in Crimea on 16 March in full compliance with democratic procedures and international norms.

More than 82 percent of the electorate took part in the vote. Over 96 percent of them spoke out in favour of reuniting with Russia. These numbers speak for themselves.

To understand the reason behind such a choice it is enough to know the history of Crimea and what Russia and Crimea have always meant for each other.

Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Kherones, where *Prince Vladimir* was baptised. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilisation and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea. This is also Sevastopol – a legendary city with an outstanding history, a fortress that serves as the birthplace of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Crimea is Balaklava and Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Sapun Ridge. Each one of these plac-

es is dear to our hearts, symbolising Russian military glory and outstanding valour.

Crimea is a unique blend of different peoples' cultures and traditions. This makes it similar to Russia as a whole, where not a single ethnic group has been lost over the centuries. Russians and Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and people of other ethnic groups have lived side by side in Crimea, retaining their own identity, traditions, languages and faith.

Incidentally, the total population of the Crimean Peninsula today is 2.2 million people, of whom almost 1.5 million are Russians, 350,000 are Ukrainians who predominantly consider Russian their native language, and about 290,000–300,000 are Crimean Tatars, who, as the referendum has shown, also lean towards Russia.

True, there was a time when Crimean Tatars were treated unfairly, just as a number of other peoples in the USSR. There is only one thing I can say here: millions of people of various ethnicities suffered during those repressions, and primarily Russians. Crimean Tatars returned to their homeland. I believe we should make all the necessary political and legislative decisions to finalise the rehabilitation of Crimean Tatars, restore them in their rights and clear their good name.

We have great respect for people of all the ethnic groups living in Crimea. This is their common home, their motherland, and it would be right – I know the local population supports this – for Crimea to have three equal national languages: Russian, Ukrainian and Tatar.

Colleagues,

In people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia. This firm conviction is based on truth and justice and was passed from generation to generation, over time, under any circumstances, despite all the dramat-

ic changes our country went through during the entire 20th century.

After the revolution, the Bolsheviks, for a number of reasons – may God judge them – added large sections of the historical South of Russia to the Republic of Ukraine. This was done with no consideration for the ethnic make-up of the population, and today these areas form the southeast of Ukraine. Then, in 1954, a decision was made to transfer Crimean Region to Ukraine, along with Sevastopol, despite the fact that it was a federal city. This was the personal initiative of the *Communist Party* head *Nikita Khrushchev*. What stood behind this decision of his – a desire to win the support of the Ukrainian political establishment or to atone for the mass repressions of the 1930's in Ukraine – is for historians to figure out.

What matters now is that this decision was made in clear violation of the constitutional norms that were in place even then. The decision was made behind the scenes. Naturally, in a totalitarian state nobody bothered to ask the citizens of Crimea and Sevastopol. They were faced with the fact. People, of course, wondered why all of a sudden Crimea became part of Ukraine. But on the whole – and we must state this clearly, we all know it – this decision was treated as a formality of sorts because the territory was transferred within the boundaries of a single state. Back then, it was impossible to imagine that Ukraine and Russia may split up and become two separate states. However, this has happened.

Unfortunately, what seemed impossible became a reality. The USSR fell apart. Things developed so swiftly that few people realised how truly dramatic those events and their consequences

continued on page 10



Source: Map Resources (Grafic: Current Concerns RoHo)

"President Putin's address on the ..."

continued from page 9

would be. Many people both in Russia and in Ukraine, as well as in other republics hoped that the *Commonwealth of Independent States* that was created at the time would become the new common form of statehood. They were told that there would be a single currency, a single economic space, joint armed forces; however, all this remained empty promises, while the big country was gone. It was only when Crimea ended up as part of a different country that Russia realised that it was not simply robbed, it was plundered.

At the same time, we have to admit that by launching the sovereignty parade Russia itself aided in the collapse of the Soviet Union. And as this collapse was legalised, everyone forgot about Crimea and Sevastopol – the main base of the Black Sea Fleet. Millions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, overnight becoming ethnic minorities in former Union republics, while the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders.

Now, many years later, I heard residents of Crimea say that back in 1991 they were handed over like a sack of potatoes. This is hard to disagree with. And what about the Russian state? What about Russia? It humbly accepted the situation. This country was going through such hard times then that realistically it was incapable of protecting its interests. However, the people could not reconcile themselves to this outrageous historical injustice. All these years, citizens and many public figures came back to this issue, saying that Crimea is historically Russian land and Sevastopol is a Russian city. Yes, we all knew this in our hearts and minds, but we had to proceed from the existing reality and build our good-neighbourly relations with independent Ukraine on a new basis. Meanwhile, our relations with Ukraine, with the fraternal Ukrainian people have always been and will remain of foremost importance for us.

Today we can speak about it openly, and I would like to share with you some details of the negotiations that took place in the early 2000s. The then President of Ukraine Mr *Kuchma* asked me to expedite the process of delimiting the Russian-Ukrainian border. At that time, the process was practically at a standstill. Russia seemed to have recognised Crimea as part of Ukraine, but there were no negotiations on delimiting the borders. Despite the complexity of the situation, I immediately issued instructions to Russian government agencies to speed up their work to document the borders, so that everyone had a

clear understanding that by agreeing to delimit the border we admitted de facto and de jure that Crimea was Ukrainian territory, thereby closing the issue.

We accommodated Ukraine not only regarding Crimea, but also on such a complicated matter as the maritime boundary in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. What we proceeded from back then was that good relations with Ukraine matter most for us and they should not fall hostage to deadlock territorial disputes. However, we expected Ukraine to remain our good neighbour, we hoped that Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Ukraine, especially its southeast and Crimea, would live in a friendly, democratic and civilised state that would protect their rights in line with the norms of international law.

However, this is not how the situation developed. Time and time again attempts were made to deprive Russians of their historical memory, even of their language and to subject them to forced assimilation. Moreover, Russians, just as other citizens of Ukraine are suffering from the constant political and state crisis that has been rocking the country for over 20 years.

I understand why Ukrainian people wanted change. They have had enough of the authorities in power during the years of Ukraine's independence. Presidents, prime ministers and parliamentarians changed, but their attitude to the country and its people remained the same. They milked the country, fought among themselves for power, assets and cash flows and did not care much about the ordinary people. They did not wonder why it was that millions of Ukrainian citizens saw no prospects at home and went to other countries to work as day labourers. I would like to stress this: it was not some Silicon Valley they fled to, but to become day labourers. Last year alone almost 3 million people found such jobs in Russia. According to some sources, in 2013 their earnings in Russia totalled over \$20 billion, which is about 12% of Ukraine's GDP.

I would like to reiterate that I understand those who came out on Maidan with peaceful slogans against corruption, inefficient state management and poverty. The right to peaceful protest, democratic procedures and elections exist for the sole purpose of replacing the authorities that do not satisfy the people. However, those who stood behind the latest events in Ukraine had a different agenda: they were preparing yet another government takeover; they wanted to seize power and would stop short of nothing. They resorted to terror, murder and riots. Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites executed this coup. They continue to set the tone in Ukraine to this day.

The new so-called authorities began by introducing a draft law to revise the lan-

guage policy, which was a direct infringement on the rights of ethnic minorities. However, they were immediately 'disciplined' by the foreign sponsors of these so-called politicians. One has to admit that the mentors of these current authorities are smart and know well what such attempts to build a purely Ukrainian state may lead to. The draft law was set aside, but clearly reserved for the future. Hardly any mention is made of this attempt now, probably on the presumption that people have a short memory. Nevertheless, we can all clearly see the intentions of these ideological heirs of *Bandera*, *Hitler's* accomplice during World War II.

It is also obvious that there is no legitimate executive authority in Ukraine now, nobody to talk to. Many government agencies have been taken over by the imposers, but they do not have any control in the country, while they themselves – and I would like to stress this – are often controlled by radicals. In some cases, you need a special permit from the militants on Maidan to meet with certain ministers of the current government. This is not a joke – this is reality.

Those who opposed the coup were immediately threatened with repression. Naturally, the first in line here was Crimea, the Russian-speaking Crimea. In view of this, the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol turned to Russia for help in defending their rights and lives, in preventing the events that were unfolding and are still underway in Kiev, Donetsk, Kharkov and other Ukrainian cities.

Naturally, we could not leave this plea unheeded; we could not abandon Crimea and its residents in distress. This would have been betrayal on our part.

First, we had to help create conditions so that the residents of Crimea for the first time in history were able to peacefully express their free will regarding their own future. However, what do we hear from our colleagues in Western Europe and North America? They say we are violating norms of international law. Firstly, it's a good thing that they at least remember that there exists such a thing as international law – better late than never.

Secondly, and most importantly – what exactly are we violating? True, the President of the Russian Federation received permission from the Upper House of Parliament to use the Armed Forces in Ukraine. However, strictly speaking, nobody has acted on this permission yet. Russia's Armed Forces never entered Crimea; they were there already in line with an international agreement. True, we did enhance our forces there; however – this is something I would like everyone to hear and know – we did not exceed

continued on page 11



"President Putin's address on the ..."

continued from page 10

the personnel limit of our Armed Forces in Crimea, which is set at 25,000, because there was no need to do so.

Next. As it declared independence and decided to hold a referendum, the Supreme Council of Crimea referred to the United Nations Charter, which speaks of the right of nations to self-determination. Incidentally, I would like to remind you that when Ukraine seceded from the USSR it did exactly the same thing, almost word for word. Ukraine used this right, yet the residents of Crimea are denied it. Why is that?

Moreover, the Crimean authorities referred to the well-known Kosovo precedent – a precedent our western colleagues created with their own hands in a very similar situation, when they agreed that the unilateral separation of Kosovo from Serbia, exactly what Crimea is doing now, was legitimate and did not require any permission from the country's central authorities. Pursuant to Article 2, Chapter 1 of the United Nations Charter, the UN *International Court* agreed with this approach and made the following comment in its ruling of 22 July 2010, and I quote: "No general prohibition may be inferred from the practice of the Security Council with regard to declarations of independ-

ence," and "General international law contains no prohibition on declarations of independence." Crystal clear, as they say.

I do not like to resort to quotes, but in this case, I cannot help it. Here is a quote from another official document: the Written Statement of the United States America of 17 April 2009, submitted to the same UN International Court in connection with the hearings on Kosovo. Again, I quote: "Declarations of independence may, and often do, violate domestic legislation. However, this does not make them violations of international law." End of quote. They wrote this, disseminated it all over the world, had everyone agree and now they are outraged. Over what? The actions of Crimean people completely fit in with these instructions, as it were. For some reason, things that Kosovo Albanians (and we have full respect for them) were permitted to do, Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea are not allowed. Again, one wonders why.

We keep hearing from the United States and Western Europe that Kosovo is some special case. What makes it so special in the eyes of our colleagues? It turns out that it is the fact that the conflict in Kosovo resulted in so many human casualties. Is this a legal argument? The ruling of the International Court says nothing about this. This is not even double standards; this is amazing, primitive, blunt

cynicism. One should not try so crudely to make everything suit their interests, calling the same thing "white" today and "black" tomorrow. According to this logic, we have to make sure every conflict leads to human losses.

I will state clearly – if the Crimean local self-defence units had not taken the situation under control, there could have been casualties as well. Fortunately this did not happen. There was not a single armed confrontation in Crimea and no casualties. Why do you think this was so? The answer is simple: because it is very difficult, practically impossible to fight against the will of the people. Here I would like to thank the Ukrainian military – and this is 22,000 fully armed servicemen. I would like to thank those Ukrainian service members who refrained from bloodshed and did not smear their uniforms in blood.

Other thoughts come to mind in this connection. They keep talking of some Russian intervention in Crimea, some sort of aggression. This is strange to hear. I cannot recall a single case in history of an intervention without a single shot being fired and with no human casualties.

Colleagues,

Like a mirror, the situation in Ukraine reflects what is going on and what has

continued on page 12

"President Putin's address on the ..."

continued from page 11

been happening in the world over the past several decades. After the dissolution of bipolarity on the planet, we no longer have stability. Key international institutions are not getting any stronger; on the contrary, in many cases, they are sadly degrading. Our western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle "If you are not with us, you are against us." To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organisations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall.

This happened in Yugoslavia; we remember 1999 very well. It was hard to believe, even seeing it with my own eyes, that at the end of the 20th century, one of Europe's capitals, Belgrade, was under missile attack for several weeks, and then came the real intervention. Was there a UN Security Council resolution on this matter, allowing for these actions? Nothing of the sort. And then, they hit Afghanistan, Iraq, and frankly violated the UN Security Council resolution on Libya, when instead of imposing the so-called no-fly zone over it they started bombing it, too.

There was a whole series of controlled "colour" revolutions. Clearly, the people in those nations, where these events took place, were sick of tyranny and poverty, of their lack of prospects; but these feelings were taken advantage of cynically. Standards were imposed on these nations that did not in any way correspond to their way of life, traditions, or these peoples' cultures. As a result, instead of democracy and freedom, there was chaos, outbreaks in violence and a series of upheavals. The "Arab Spring" turned into the "Arab Winter".

A similar situation unfolded in Ukraine. In 2004, to push the necessary candidate through at the presidential elections, they thought up some sort of third round that was not stipulated by the law. It was absurd and a mockery of the constitution. And now, they have thrown in an organised and well-equipped army of militants.

We understand what is happening; we understand that these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration. And all this while Russia strived to engage in dialogue with our colleagues in the West. We are constantly proposing cooperation on all key

issues; we want to strengthen our level of trust and for our relations to be equal, open and fair. But we saw no reciprocal steps.

On the contrary, they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed us before an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO's expansion to the East, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders. They kept telling us the same thing: "Well, this does not concern you." That's easy to say.

It happened with the deployment of a missile defence system. In spite of all our apprehensions, the project is working and moving forward. It happened with the endless foot-dragging in the talks on visa issues, promises of fair competition and free access to global markets.

Today, we are being threatened with sanctions, but we already experience many limitations, that are quite significant for us, our economy and our nation. For example, still during the times of the Cold War, the US and subsequently other nations restricted a large list of technologies and equipment from being sold to the USSR, creating the *Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls* list. Today, they have formally been eliminated, but only formally; and in reality, many limitations are still in effect.

In short, we have every reason to assume that the infamous policy of containment, led in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, continues today. They are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner because we have an independent position, because we maintain it and because we call things like they are and do not engage in hypocrisy. But there is a limit to everything. And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally.

After all, they were fully aware that there are millions of Russians living in Ukraine and in Crimea. They must have really lacked political instinct and common sense not to foresee all the consequences of their actions. Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard. You must always remember this.

Today, it is imperative to end this hysteria, to refute the rhetoric of the cold war and to accept the obvious fact: Russia is an independent, active participant in international affairs; like other countries, it has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected.

At the same time, we are grateful to all those who understood our actions in Crimea; we are grateful to the people of China, whose leaders have always considered the situation in Ukraine and Crimea taking into account the full historical and

political context, and greatly appreciate India's reserve and objectivity.

Today, I would like to address the people of the United States of America, the people who, since the foundation of their nation and adoption of the Declaration of Independence, have been proud to hold freedom above all else. Isn't the desire of Crimea's residents to freely choose their fate such a value? Please understand us.

I believe that the Europeans, first and foremost, the Germans, will also understand me. Let me remind you that in the course of political consultations on the unification of East and West Germany, at the expert, though very high level, some nations that were then and are now Germany's allies did not support the idea of unification. Our nation, however, unequivocally supported the sincere, unstoppable desire of the Germans for national unity. I am confident that you have not forgotten this, and I expect that the citizens of Germany will also support the aspiration of the Russians, of historical Russia, to restore unity.

I also want to address the people of Ukraine. I sincerely want you to understand us: we do not want to harm you in any way, or to hurt your national feelings. We have always respected the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state, incidentally, unlike those who sacrificed Ukraine's unity for their political ambitions. They flaunt slogans about Ukraine's greatness, but they are the ones who did everything to divide the nation. Today's civil standoff is entirely on their conscience. I want you to hear me, my dear friends. Do not believe those who want you to fear Russia, shouting that other regions will follow Crimea. We do not want to divide Ukraine; we do not need that. As for Crimea, it was and remains a Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean-Tatar land.

I repeat, just as it has been for centuries, it will be a home to all the peoples living there. What it will never be and do is follow in Bandera's footsteps!

Crimea is our common historical legacy and a very important factor in regional stability. And this strategic territory should be part of a strong and stable sovereignty, which today can only be Russian. Otherwise, dear friends (I am addressing both Ukraine and Russia), you and we – the Russians and the Ukrainians – could lose Crimea completely, and that could happen in the near historical perspective. Please think about it.

Let me note, too, that we have already heard declarations from Kiev about Ukraine soon joining NATO. What would this have meant for Crimea and Sevastopol in the future? It would have meant that NATO's navy would be right there in this city of Russia's military glory, and

continued on page 13

Agreement on the Settlement of Crisis in the Ukraine

Concerned with the tragic loss of life in Ukraine, seeking an immediate end of bloodshed and determined to pave the way for a political resolution of the crisis, We, the signing parties, have agreed upon the following:

1. Within 48 hours of the signing of this agreement, a special law will be adopted, signed and promulgated, which will restore the Constitution of 2004 including amendments passed until now. Signatories declare their intention to create a coalition and form a national unity government within 10 days thereafter.
2. Constitutional reform, balancing the powers of the President, the government and parliament, will start immediately and be completed in September 2014.
3. Presidential elections will be held as soon as the new Constitution is adopted but no later than December 2014. New electoral laws will be passed and a new Central Election Commission will be formed on the basis of proportionality and in accordance with the OSCE & Venice commission rules.

4. Investigation into recent acts of violence will be conducted under joint monitoring from the authorities, the opposition and the Council of Europe.
5. The authorities will not impose a state of emergency. The authorities and the opposition will refrain from the use of violence. The Parliament will adopt the 3rd amnesty, covering the same range of illegal actions as the 17th February 2014 law.

Both parties will undertake serious efforts for the normalisation of life in the cities and villages by withdrawing from administrative and public buildings and unblocking streets, city parks and squares.

Illegal weapons should be handed over to the Ministry of Interior bodies within 24 hours of the special law, referred to in point 1 hereof, coming into force. After the aforementioned period, all cases of illegal carrying and storage of weapons will fall under the law of Ukraine. The forces of authorities and of the opposition will step back from confrontational posture. The Government will use law enforce-

ment forces exclusively for the physical protection of public buildings.

6. The Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Poland and the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation call for an immediate end to all violence and confrontation.

Kiev, 21 February 2014

Signatories

Viktor Yanukovich, president of Ukraine

For the Opposition:

Vitaliy Klichko, UDAR

Oleh Tyahnibok, Svoboda

Arsenij Yatseniuk, Batkivshchyna

Witnessed by:

For the EU:

Radoslaw Sikorski, Polish foreign minister

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German foreign minister

Laurent Fabius, French foreign minister

For the Russian Federation:

Vladimir Lukin, Russian special envoy

"President Putin's address on the ..."

continued from page 12

this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia. These are things that could have become reality were it not for the choice the Crimean people made, and I want to say thank you to them for this.

But let me say, too, that we are not opposed to cooperation with NATO, for this is certainly not the case. For all the internal processes within the organisation, NATO remains a military alliance, and we are against having a military alliance making itself at home right in our backyard or in our historic territory. I simply cannot imagine that we would travel to Sevastopol to visit NATO sailors. Of course, most of them are wonderful guys, but it would be better to have them come and visit us, be our guests, rather than the other way round.

Let me say quite frankly that it pains our hearts to see what is happening in Ukraine at the moment, see the people's suffering and their uncertainty about how to get through today and what awaits them tomorrow. Our concerns are understandable because we are not simply close neighbours but, as I have said many times already, we are one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source and we cannot live without each other.

Let me say one other thing, too. Millions of Russians and Russian-speaking people live in Ukraine and will continue

to do so. Russia will always defend their interests using political, diplomatic and legal means. But it should be above all in Ukraine's own interest to ensure that these people's rights and interests are fully protected. This is the guarantee of Ukraine's state stability and territorial integrity.

We want to be friends with Ukraine and we want Ukraine to be a strong, sovereign and self-sufficient country. Ukraine is one of our biggest partners, after all. We have many joint projects and I believe in their success no matter what the current difficulties. Most importantly, we want peace and harmony to reign in Ukraine, and we are ready to work together with other countries to do everything possible to facilitate and support this. But as I said, only Ukraine's own people can put their own house in order.

Residents of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, the whole of Russia admired your courage, dignity and bravery. It was you who decided Crimea's future. We were closer than ever over these days, supporting each other. These were sincere feelings of solidarity. It is at historic turning points such as these that a nation demonstrates its maturity and strength of spirit. The Russian people showed this maturity and strength through their united support for their compatriots.

Russia's foreign policy position on this matter drew its firmness from the will of millions of our people, our national unity and the support of our country's main political and public forces. I want to thank everyone for this patriotic spirit, everyone without exception. Now, we need to con-

tinue and maintain this kind of consolidation so as to resolve the tasks our country faces on its road ahead.

Obviously, we will encounter external opposition, but this is a decision that we need to make for ourselves. Are we ready to consistently defend our national interests, or will we forever give in, retreat to who knows where? Some Western politicians are already threatening us with not just sanctions but also the prospect of increasingly serious problems on the domestic front. I would like to know what it is they have in mind exactly: action by a "fifth column", this disparate bunch of "national traitors", or are they hoping to put us in a worsening social and economic situation so as to provoke public discontent? We consider such statements irresponsible and clearly aggressive in tone, and we will respond to them accordingly. At the same time, we will never seek confrontation with our partners, whether in the East or the West, but on the contrary, will do everything we can to build civilised and good-neighbourly relations as one is supposed to in the modern world.

Colleagues,

I understand the people of Crimea, who put the question in the clearest possible terms in the referendum: should Crimea be with Ukraine or with Russia? We can be sure in saying that the authorities in Crimea and Sevastopol, the legislative authorities, when they formulated the question, set aside group and political in-

continued on page 14

“As humans we are responsible for the well-being of all”

by Thomas Kaiser

The annual meeting of the *Humanitarian Aid* and the *Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit* demonstrated to a large audience, what official Switzerland as a nation has achieved in the area of national assistance in the international context. Switzerland is active in a fragile contexts, i.e. in countries in which the most basic functions of a state do no longer work or have never worked. The opening of a Swiss Embassy in Somalia is to be seen in this context. After nearly thirty years Switzerland opens an embassy in Mogadishu again and is active in a country which has been referred to as a *failed* state for many years.

But the *Swiss Aid* must not take place only in such fragile contexts, as Ambassador *Martin Dahinden* said, but one has to work as well to change that fragility. This means not only alleviating the misery, but also abolishing such states of emergency in the long term. The Humanitarian Aid of Switzerland is doing this in various regions of the world with consistency, endurance and success. Several examples of successful remedy were presented at this annual meeting. So Sri Lanka, hit by the years of civil war, is increasingly supported by the *SDC* and Switzerland's Humanitarian Aid.

Especially in the Tamil areas in the North of the island there are Swiss aid projects, which provide beneficial help in the reconstruction after the tsunami and the civil war. A drop in the ocean? No, even if the financial resources are limited, there are always people who are granted relief. And it touches you deeply to feel the gratitude of those people although the help is

only modest. On the one hand the focus is on building schools and houses. People who have lost everything by the tsunami or civil war and must live in unimaginable circumstances, regain hope, as they themselves expressed in a movie, although the situation is still extremely precarious for the Tamils according to experts. The reconciliation with the Tamils, promised

by *Mahinda Rajapaxa* to calm the global community down after the end of the civil war, did not take place. On the contrary, instead of giving the country federal (subsidiary) structures, he centralized the structures even more. It is in fact a dictatorship of the 5 Rajapaxa brothers who

continued on page 15

The humanitarian principle is part of our Swiss identity

Excerpt from a speech by Ambassador *Martin Dahinden*, Director-General of *SDC*, at the annual meeting of the *Humanitarian Aid* in Lausanne on 14 March 2014



Martin Dahinden
(picture thk)

the future as well. It is the core competence of humanitarian aid. In future it will also be important to work not only in conflict and fragility, but also on the conflict and on the fragility. In other words, we need to link various aspects of assistance and cooperation with each other in our work. We must – Mr President Burkhalter already said it – build bridges between instruments and measures. And we may and

"[...] Many of you have worked in conflicts and fragile contexts. You have thus enabled the survival of people and done something against the immediate distress of these people.

This work will be important in the future as well. It is the core competence of humanitarian aid. In future it will also be important to work not only in conflict and fragility, but also on the conflict and on the fragility. In other words, we need to link various aspects of assistance and cooperation with each other in our work. We must – Mr President Burkhalter already said it – build bridges between instruments and measures. And we may and

should be more ambitious and set ourselves the goal, not only to ease the precarious conditions, but also to overcome them sustainably.

For this it is important that we think and work across borders when it comes to humanitarian aid. I am thinking in particular of the limits for long-term development cooperation. But I also think of the interfaces to other fields of foreign policy, especially diplomacy and conflict management.

[...]

The humanitarian principle is, as the President of the Federal Council emphasized with his words, a part of our Swiss identity. The humanitarian principles characterize our thinking and acting as Swiss citizens, even if it is not about humanitarian aid in the narrow sense of the word. The humanitarian principle is a part of our identity, and therefore also a big obligation."

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"President Putin's address on the ..."

continued from page 13

terests and made the people's fundamental interests alone the cornerstone of their work. The particular historic, population, political and economic circumstances of Crimea would have made any other proposed option - however tempting it could be at the first glance - only temporary and fragile and would have inevitably led to further worsening of the situation there, which would have had disastrous effects on people's lives. The people of Crimea thus decided to put the question in firm and uncompromising form, with no grey areas. The referendum was fair and transparent, and the people of Crimea clearly and convincingly expressed their will and stated that they want to be with Russia.

Russia will also have to make a difficult decision now, taking into account the various domestic and external considerations. What do people here in Russia

think? Here, like in any democratic country, people have different points of view, but I want to make the point that the absolute majority of our people clearly do support what is happening.

The most recent public opinion surveys conducted here in Russia show that 95 percent of people think that Russia should protect the interests of Russians and members of other ethnic groups living in Crimea – 95 percent of our citizens. More than 83 percent think that Russia should do this even if it will complicate our relations with some other countries. A total of 86 percent of our people see Crimea as still being Russian territory and part of our country's lands. And one particularly important figure, which corresponds exactly with the result in Crimea's referendum: almost 92 percent of our people support Crimea's reunification with Russia.

Thus we see that the overwhelming majority of people in Crimea and the absolute majority of the Russian Federa-

tion's people support the reunification of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol with Russia.

Now this is a matter for Russia's own political decision, and any decision here can be based only on the people's will, because the people is the ultimate source of all authority.

Members of the Federation Council, deputies of the State Duma, citizens of Russia, residents of Crimea and Sevastopol, today, in accordance with the people's will, I submit to the Federal Assembly a request to consider a Constitutional Law on the creation of two new constituent entities within the Russian Federation: the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, and to ratify the treaty on admitting to the Russian Federation Crimea and Sevastopol, which is already ready for signing. I stand assured of your support. •

Source: kremlin.ru

Link to this page: <http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/news/6889>

Humanitarian Services, the passionate heart of Switzerland since 150 years

thk. At the annual meeting of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, the head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, currently Didier Burkhalter, gives a speech as usual. Whereas as the head of the department and as Chairman of the OSCE he delivers an opinion on the situation in Ukraine that is incompatible with Swiss neutrality and is oriented on US policy, this speech here, however, conveys the humanitarian spirit of Switzerland. Therefore, Current Concerns prints some excerpts.

[...] The history of our country, especially the history of modern Switzerland since 1848, is closely connected with the history of humanitarian aid.

Exactly 150 years ago, the Federal Council invited eleven governments of European states to a conference. The impetus came from *Henry Dunant* and the "Geneva Committee," which had been created a year earlier and from which today's, "International Committee of the Red Cross" (ICRC) has arisen.

On 22 August 1864 this international conference culminated in the adoption of the *Geneva Convention for improving the lot of the sick and wounded soldiers of the armies in the field*. This very first *Geneva Convention* also forms the fundament for the international humanitarian law and is the birth certificate of Switzerland's humanitarian tradition, the emergence of the humanitarian heart of our country.

Since then, this heart has not stopped beating, often it struck up to the neck, to the rhythm of the crises, disasters and wars, but also the progress, the calming-downs and the peaceful developments in our world. It beats to the rhythm of humanity, it is the heart of mankind, born in Switzerland, this heart that still beats

so strongly here: a great humanitarian heart that unites the hearts of all individuals ...

More than any other institutions the *Geneva Committee*, which later became the ICRC, is the symbol for the deep bonds that connect Switzerland with the humanitarian spirit. The ICRC is the most important strategic partner of the Swiss Confederation in the humanitarian field. This close relationship is reflected even in the emblem of the ICRC, a Swiss flag with reversed colours: vice versa, but not contradictory at all ... recognized all over the world, this indicator has very quickly established itself as a real symbol of humanity – and we are proud of its Swiss origin. [...]

This humanitarian heart that beats in Switzerland and has strongly influenced our identity is, logically, one of the foundations of our Federal Constitution. A special mandate is given to our Confederation in order to counteract misery and poverty in the world, to actively provide help for the poorest.

The Confederation meets this constitutional mandate by making the humanitarian aid become a major concern of its foreign policy. In addition, the humanitarian aid of Switzerland is motivated by certain values; it respects the basics of humanity, of independence, of neutrality and of impartiality. Again, these are principles which fit the soul of Switzerland very well. It is what makes the humanitarian actions of Switzerland credible, predictable and effective. [...]

The "Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit" (SHA) is an important tool for our aid campaigns on site. This militia corps carries the spirit of solidarity of the Swiss people in it. This corps lives to the rhythm of the humanitarian heart of our country that beats in its chest. It is also an

expression of the close cooperation that exists between the public and private sector, an additional strength of our country.

In the areas of operation one thing is striking: The cantons are by far not the only ones to take on humanitarian responsibility. To a great extent, or better, for the most part, there are local communities, that themselves take the necessary care and organize mutual aid. [...]

More than we would like, the heart of the world beats to the rhythm of the crises, and has done so for 150 years. This is fully sufficient to bring the activities that Switzerland undertakes together with others, to bring some humanness, where civilization is seemingly collapsing, and where everything threatens to go down in the dark, in tears and in rage, to bring the flame of hope, love and dignity.

In this troubled world, neutral Switzerland wants to take on its responsibility and demonstrate its solidarity, especially by establishing answers to the new challenges with their partners. It wants to assume its historical role, it will try to play an exemplary role.

This humanitarian heart, born in Switzerland 150 years ago, this humanitarian heart that is part of Switzerland's DNA has every reason to beat fast in the next few years.

It beats thanks to you, ladies and gentlemen: *the members of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit*, the staff of the *Humanitarian Aid* – in *Köniz* or abroad – and all partner organizations.

On behalf of the Federal Council as well as in my own name I tell you quite simply, with all my heart: Thank you!

Source: www.news.admin.ch from 14 March 2014

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"As humans we are ..."

continued from page 14

share the power among them. To give hope to the people, in particular the Tamils, is a demanding task in this situation. The ap-



(picture SDC)

proach of Swiss foreign aid ultimately is derived from the three "selves", originating from the idea of the cooperatives: self-help, self-reliance and self-government. Actually the projects are conducted in cooperation with the population. People are closely involved in developing solutions as well as in implementing them. In this way 25 schools and 30 kindergartens have recently been built up in the North of Sri Lanka.

Promoting education is a fundamental approach within the Swiss development cooperation. Providing a future for the youth takes a good basic education and a serious occupational training. The dual education system, which has well prov-

en itself in our country, however, adapted

continued on page 16



(picture SDC)

“As humans we are ...”

continued from page 15

to the other country's needs and circumstances, can be successful in other countries as well.

Jordan, which is taking care of many children and teenagers due to the large number of Syrian refugees, is facing the challenge to integrate the many foreign children in its educational system, and to give them a proper education. Often the school buildings are in a poor condition and are usually used as emergency accommodations for refugees. The schools, which are used for teaching, are hopelessly overcrowded. As there will be last-

ing conflicts despite increasing success of the Syrian army in the fight against rebel groups that are financed mostly from abroad, the refugees should have a dignified life during this time. It is all the more important that reasonably tolerable conditions prevail. Here the Swiss development aid applies, supported by the Principality of Liechtenstein. Both countries provide assistance in building new and renovating existing schools in Jordan. If youth is to have a future, a good education is crucial.

The meeting illustrated in an impressive way how practical solidarity affects the welfare of the people. *Manuel Bessler*, head of the Humanitarian Aid Unit, described the signal effects which

the assistance of Switzerland locally has. Helping is contagious. In many areas, where Switzerland was active, locals joined and wanted to contribute as well. “The aid must come spontaneously and sincerely to be successful.” In this attitude Martin Dahinden sees a part of Swiss self-understanding. The phrase of “the drop in the ocean” is out of place in this self-understanding. Everyone who receives help, is one more human being suffering less distress. This is the motivation and this is what the Swiss development cooperation in the context of SDC and the humanitarian work of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit stand for. •