

# 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

## The Way Out of the Financial and Economic Crisis Is to Invigorate the National State

by Reinhard Koradi, Dietlikon

*Economic sovereignty entails the right of a sovereign state's citizens to decide on the arrangement of their national economy. Aims, strategies and methods of economies are defined in a democratic decision process. Moreover, economic sovereignty means that every state should control the relevant instruments of its national economy.*

In recent years the number of people without paid employment has dramatically increased. That is why World Economic Forum (WEF) founder Klaus Schwab warns against the financial and economic crisis resulting in a social one. Similar apprehensions are voiced by various members of government, albeit only in private. Possibly citizens are to get accustomed eventually to the fact, that the states' coffers are empty due to rigorous support worth several thousands of billions of dollars for privately owned corporations. After generously throwing away national wealth and after building up immense amounts of debt, there is no money left to avert – or at least to ease – social catastrophes.

It is extremely alarming that this raid on the tax income of sovereign states was mainly initiated by supra-national organizations (G7 and G20) and was used as a doping measure for free capital transactions only, without any benefit for real economies of the concerned countries. On top of this impertinence the global originators – the arsonists and profiteers – are supposed to set up a global solution for a new financial and economic order leading out of the crisis. Really a clever system, the perpetrators are hailed as the saviours and feather their own nests. Part of this system is the Economic Government, the installation of which in the EU by 2020 was recently announced by Mrs Merkel and Mr Sarkozy.

Instead of strengthening domestic economy and restoring economic sovereignty to the hands of the national state, the globalism track is propagated once more, regardless of the only too obvious experience of the past that problems are never solved on a global level. Instead they are merely relocated, at best. On the other hand coercive and controlling mechanisms are introduced to secure unlimited capital flow for the benefit of capital owners. The sooner people grasp the idea that strictly speaking a "global crisis" does not exist but that each crisis results from precisely traceable erroneous developments, the faster we can develop effective ways out of the crisis.

### Setting boundaries

He who wants to get big fires under control will draw an aisle to prevent the fire from spreading. Global economy entails an enormous correlation risk, threatening to make other national economies plummet into the abyss due to insufficient boundaries between or differentiation from each other. The danger of this domino effect may be minimized by "security distances". Such security dams consist of effective home rule concerning all aspects of state, economy, financial and social matters in addition to sufficient border control (territorial sovereignty).

Anybody suspecting hidden nationalism, protectionism or isolationism behind this demand denies both reality as it is revealed by this crisis, as well as the right to self-defence. Every economic circuit is a closed, limited system, the natural conditions of which cannot be ignored, broken down, redirected or even lumped together unnaturally with other systems; unless one intends to provoke the collapse on purpose. Mainly the various con-



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stitutions of the different states included in treaties and alliances create a fragile balance which can get out of control with the slightest tremor. In the interest of stability and security every single contract, treaty and membership in transnational organizations should be set up in a way that all partners or members are on an equal footing with each other and neither democratic rules nor the purpose of the state – which is the enhancement of common welfare – are endangered.

In all contractual bodies and transnational entities the supreme principle should be: *Political sovereignty is undividable und unalienable.*

In practice however, most transnational agreements are subject to the neoconservative ideology which rules that independent states have no right to exist. They rather work towards super-state centralism and violate indefeasibility of political sovereignty to a considerable degree; for the benefit of the rich and to the disadvantage of the people. There is no denying that the majority of today's alliances and transnational organizations violate the principle of undividable sovereignty of the national state. Regarding national economies, the introduction of the common currency (Euro), the WTO treaty (opening of the borders, most-favoured nation clause, abolishment of capital flow and currency controls at the borders) and IWF sanctions for debtor states should be mentioned, privatisation of public enterprises, reduction of subsidies (education, health care, agriculture) wage reduction in the public sector, cuts in social welfare, tax increases and much more.

Not much fantasy is required to understand that a state is weakened by such paternalism and people feel the rug is pulled out from under their feet. Following the world agriculture report, international relations and transnational constructs and alliances, too, should be re-evaluated without restraint. A rigorous U-turn seems necessary. Global commercialization of all aspects of life has to be replaced by serving the common good on the national level. This includes a drastic reduction of third states', foreign bodies' and organizations' influence on the fate of sovereign states.

### Redefining the value of labour

The boldness of private actors (Federal reserve system, i.e. US central bank) and in-

ternational organizations (world bank, WTO, OECD, IWF) interfering with domestic affairs, is apparent mainly in economics and extremely painful for the affected countries (at present Greece, Latvia, Iceland) and their population, respectively. Although these institutions have implemented their "rescue plans" for decades now – usually putting those suffering states under tremendous pressure –, almost never any signs of improvement were noted with credibly and sustainably better living conditions for the people.

The reasons for all those failures are dishonest objectives and a lack of differentiation. Each national economy faces its own specific problems, and the "rescue measures" result primarily in higher profits for the already wealthy rather than enhancement of the common good in the affected countries. That is because the rescue programs always demand the destruction of jobs and national wealth, thereby driving domestic economy into ruin. *What we really need in future are specifically tailored measures to meet local conditions and strengthen primarily domestic economy.* In order to achieve that, states have to re-obtain their competence to tackle economic crises.

The creation of jobs has absolute priority. Full employment is so important because it contributes decisively to social peace within a country. Whoever is capable to work should be allowed to actually do work, in the country where he or she lives. By now we got accustomed to nearly double-digit unemployment figures in the industrialized countries, too. With the argument to improve competitiveness of enterprises or rescue failed ones people are fired and driven into poverty. As long as human work is viewed as a mere cost factor and is sacrificed for global competitiveness or a financially oriented fitness program, economy fails to fulfill its inherent task – enabling people to meet the responsibility to secure their existence within society. So the question arises: in whose interest is global competitiveness actually?

Instead of enhancing this competitiveness all available resources should be used today to overcome unemployment. A problem-oriented and up-to-date approach is viewing people who are capable to work as an extremely valuable economic resource which should be handled or utilized with prudence – abiding by

the law of sustainability. Human labour must not be reduced to the term "cost factor" any longer, and neither should it be concealed any more that labour actually creates value.

Time has really come to contemplate the value of labour. Apart from land, capital and knowledge labour constitutes one of the essential productive factors which every economy rests upon. All four of them contribute to the performance of a national economy – the gross domestic product. If the so-called resources (productive factors) are not utilized in an optimal and balanced manner then economic potentials of a country are wasted. Its economic performance decreases with negative consequences for the population. No country – no national economy – can afford to ignore the potential of value creation which rests latent in its human capital. That is why the abolition of unemployment has first priority within an economic policy leading out of the crisis.

However, in order to achieve that, states need suitable economic instruments. Not too long ago the "magic pentagram" was taught in national economics. The magic pentagram demands an equilibrium of the determinant corner stones of national economics. Corner 1: full employment, corner 2: price stability (maintenance of peoples' buying power), corner 3: adequate economic growth, corner 4: just distribution of incomes and capital ownership, and corner 5: balanced foreign trade (balance between import and export).

This ideal may be difficult to achieve, but it is regarded as a framework for orientation towards a balanced economic policy. Globalization and liberalization ideologues made sure this approach disappeared from the textbooks. The magic pentagram was ideal for a regionally oriented economic theory, but it is useless in a global context. What actually speaks in favour of regional economic practice and against a global one.

### Economic Sovereignty calls for a renaissance of the nation state

Anybody who might get nervous when reading this statement should be reminded, that intellectual freedom never must be blocked by ideology. An invigorated and competent nation state cannot be vilified with terms like nationalism or isolationism. The matter of concern is, in plain words, the right and duty of any state or sovereign people, respectively, to sort out its domestic affairs and foreign relations in a responsible manner. This does not exclude mutual aid between the states.

Economic sovereignty entails the right of citizens of a sovereign state to decide about the arrangement of their national economy. In a democratic decision process aims, strategies and methods of economics are defined.

Moreover, economic sovereignty means that every state should be able to control the relevant instruments of national economics. Apart from a regional currency with an independent issuing bank, regulation and control mechanisms are required regarding fiscal and financial politics, employment politics, foreign exchange and capital transfer as well as foreign trade (customs, contingents). Also the state needs the competence and freedom to sign mutual agreements with other states, respecting economic interests of both sides.

No country with economic sovereignty will necessarily retire into isolationism. The fact that natural resources are distributed quite unequally on our planet will bring

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# The International Finance System Needs to Become Democratic

## How the world can learn from Ecuador’s example

by Karl Müller, Germany

Long before the industrial nations were concerned, third world states experienced that national debts may lead to doubtful excesses and may soon become an injustice through their constantly renewed debt conversions and interest or compound interest payments. This injustice can lead a country to the verge of ruin, unless it defends itself. Perhaps the formerly “rich” industrial nations can learn from those countries that have been hit by the problem for a long time that they should defend themselves and how to do so – and they can also realize that today’s violently implemented world financial order requires thorough correction. A view on Ecuador is particularly worthwhile.

In mid-December of 2008, the government of the South American state of Ecuador stopped payments of interest for a part of its foreign debts. These debts are based on Ecuadorian state bonds issued by the previous government. These state loans or “Global” bonds were issued until 2006 to pay off the state’s old bank loans, or in other words, to refinance. The bonds in question amount to US\$ 3.8 billion. On 15 December interest payments of about US\$ 30 million would have been due.

By raising new credits to pay off due loans, Ecuador’s debts had grown from the initial US\$ 200 million to now over 11 billion, almost 20 percent of the annual gross domestic product. In June 2007, Ecuador’s new government under its President *Rafael Correa* installed a commission for the examination of the legality of the foreign debts, the national “Auditoria” Commission (“Comisión para la Auditoria Integral del Crédito Público”, CAIC). In addition, the commission was to investigate the social and economic consequences of debt payments.

### Ecuador’s foreign debts “illegal and immoral”

The commission’s final report presented in November 2008 concluded that a large part of the debts accumulated in the years between 1976 and 2006 were “illegal and immoral” (Correa). The Commission stated that there were “serious indications for an unlawful behavior of the creditors” (press statement in *www.erlassjahr.de*, 13/12/2008).

For example, “In 2000, there had been agreements for a hasty and, for the state, unfavorable refinancing with unauthorized Ecuadorian officials” (ibid). The debt negotiations of the last years were marked by corruption. Excessive interest rates, irregular deals and belated contract changes were the order of the day – due to the pressure from banks, but also from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the summary of the final report on pages 149-152, it is stated that “extremely unfavorable agreements and conditions” had been discovered that “deprived the country of all means to defend its rights”.

On the whole, the commission concluded in its extensive report (the English version has 178 pages) that about US\$ 4 billion of the foreign debts were unlawful. Hence, the government of Ecuador is reported to prepare numerous lawsuits against creditors, including the banks Citigroup and JP Morgan.

### Correa: “We know that we are dealing with monsters”

Immediately after the government’s decision the rating agencies which are closely related

with international finance, graded the credit rating of Ecuador as “CCC”, the worst possible rating. This induced Correa to remark: “We know that we are dealing with real monsters who will try to crush our country.”

### Support for Ecuador

The country received support from the former chief economist of the World Bank and Nobel Prize Laureate, *Joseph Stiglitz*: “Does Ecuador have to pay, making his population poorer because of unjust agreements? I do not know, but we have to doubt more and to ask more questions.” (Cited according to the newspaper “tageszeitung”, 14 Dec., 2008). Support also came from an appeal by a network of intellectuals and artists from all over the world (*www.tlaxcala.es*, in 12 languages) and from Switzerland and Germany.

The Swiss Lutheran Church’s relief organization, “*Brot für alle* [Bread For All]”, declared that “the development organization of the Lutheran Church in Switzerland has been fostering the debt discussion in Ecuador for four years” and that “Ecuador’s distinction between legitimate and illegitimate debts could serve as an example for other countries” (*www.bfa-ppp.ch* of Dec. 4, 2008). “Brot für alle” reminds of how the hard-earned money of the poor countries is siphoned off into the rich countries: “Flight of capital, excessive invoicing by multinational groups, and debt service”. During the military dictatorship in the seventies, about one billion US\$ in foreign money had been spent on Ecuador’s military forces. Even though the country was struck by a natural disaster in 1992 and 1993, the government had not taken advantage of its right to a deferment of payment.

### Norway’s shady way of lending

The same press announcement points out the exemplary conduct of Norway: “Norway’s government has admitted to having worked with shady credits when selling Norwegian cargo ships to Ecuador. The credits had not been in the interest of Ecuador but had served the only goal of opening new markets for Norway’s shipyards. Norway drew its consequences and remitted Ecuador’s debts originating from this transaction.”

“*erlassjahr.de* – Entwicklung braucht Entschuldung [Development needs Debt Relief]” is a German alliance with 850 member organizations of which many are connected with the Lutheran and Catholic churches. In its presentation, it writes: “*erlassjahr.de* works for just financial relationships between the countries of the North and the South, a far-reaching release from debts for developing countries deep in debt, the deletion of illegitimate debts, so-called odious debts, and the introduction of a fair and transparent arbitration process (an international insolvency procedure) instead of the process hitherto dominated by the creditor.”

In an interview with the newspaper “*Neues Deutschland*” published on 20 January, the political coordinator of the alliance, *Jürgen Kaiser*, made the case for the measures the Ecuadorian government had taken and stated that this decision “had a new quality”. It was the first time that a country refused to serve illegitimate debts while financially it would have been able to do so. And with good reason! The government of Ecuador only tried “to enforce the rules for protection of debtors, which are taken for granted in nation-

al credit business, to an international level. According to this, credits can be contested if they have been influenced by corruption or if the creditors had behaved inappropriately.”

### In the stranglehold of the rich countries’ financial institutes

With its decision the Ecuadorian Government has given a signal for an urgently necessary debate on the stranglehold in which the poor countries and also some newly industrialized countries have been taken by the financial institutes of the rich countries. Today’s President of Ecuador explained this in detail as early as September 2005, using his country as an example.

This speech is a must-read for everybody who still cherishes some illusions about the methods of some globally acting financial institutes. Reading this speech he may learn some details about how countries like Ecuador are taken in a chokehold and what happened to those countries that resisted. Correa, who had been Finance Minister of his country in 2005 and who had wanted to free his country from the debt trap as early as that, had to step down from his office after a short time, then.

### Driven into the debt trap step by step

Features of the chokehold are the same everywhere: Even countries that did not require large amounts of credit in the beginning were driven into dependency on international financial institutes – the IMF and the World Bank, dominated by the West, at the front line. This is done by means of extortionate rates of interest (Ecuador had to pay 20% interest even before the government had taken the decision), so-called debt restructurings and enforced credits for pointless mega-projects from which merely a few big enterprises in the credit grantor’s country profited. In the end these debtor countries had to concentrate their whole policy on paying ever more interest and compounded interest.

### Growing neo-liberal requirements

Cornered, the afflicted countries were burdened by ever more neo-liberal requirements which served two ends: First, the healthy structures of an independent economy were to be destroyed, the natural resources and the money of the peoples were to be handed over to a few international profiteers (e.g. by “opening” the market for foreign business, “privatisation” and reduction of the generally accessible public services and welfare). Second, everything was to be regulated in such a way that the debts drew ever higher interests – even if the people in the country were to perish. And if necessary, corrupt governments were installed or even dictatorships, who arranged everything to the gusto of the profiteers, and who, if there arose some resistance, would crash it brutally, if necessary.

It is hardly surprising when we read the following: “Many poor countries spend more money on debt repayments than for the expenditure on healthcare and education. The developing countries pay more than 300 billion US dollar of interests and redemption to foreign countries annually, – that means almost four times as much as the sum they are receiving as developing aid.” (*www.deine-stimme-gegen-armut.de*)

### External debt – one of the greatest impediments to development

Indeed external debt is one of the greatest impediments to the development of the poor countries. All previous declarations and resolutions of the rich countries (1999 at the Cologne G7 Summit: HIPC Initiative – HIPC is short for “Heavily Indebted Poor Countries”; 2005 at the Gleneagles G8 Summit: MDRI Initiative – MDRI is short for “Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative”) have changed hardly anything for the better. On the contrary: It was stipulated that, in case of debt relief, the poor countries reorganize their economic and financial policy according to neo-liberal standards. For some countries whose debts had been abated in the scope of MDRI, development aid was cut to the same extent. It is still only the



creditors, who decide in an autocratic manner what they intend to concede and what they will not grant. This is the mindset of the old and the new colonial masters.

But the poor countries are still waiting for what should in fact come naturally amongst human beings: that it is reprehensible and not to be tolerated to exact repayments of debts, when at the same time the people in the paying countries are dying of hunger and of curable diseases by the millions.

### “The financial system has been dysfunctional for a long time”

Answering the question which lessons can be learned from the current disastrous policy of the financial world, the spokesman for the “Brot für die Welt” Campaign, *Björn Lampe*, has tellingly chosen the title “Nothing new under the sun – the financial system has been dysfunctional for a long time” for his article in the supplement of no 4/09 of the Reformed Press. Lampe criticizes that the controls of capital transactions were abolished in the seventies and eighties under the pressure of multinational companies and of internationally active high street banks: “The consequences were felt pretty quickly by the poorest countries of the world: At that time, the banks had enormous amounts of surplus money at their disposal, and they gave very generous credits to emerging and developing nations. Due to high interest rates, the banks were able to thus generate high profits. In these countries, the money was not used in a way to promise well for the future, and they fell into the debt trap, i.e. they had to take up more and more money to be able to also pay the interest.” And even today, quote Lampe, the poorest countries are hit the hardest.

### Demands of “erlassjahr.de”

At the end of his article, Lampe repeats the four demands of the group “*Erlassjahr.de*”\*, which are also rendered here to form the end of this article and a basis for further discussion.

1. The international financial order must be democratized. This should happen within the framework of the UN where smaller developing countries can contribute, and not in small circles.
2. The Bretton-Woods-Institutions IMF and *World Bank* must be reformed. In restructuring the right to vote, the developing countries must be taken into higher account. Moreover, the conditions for loans and financial aid must consider the long-term economic and sociopolitical developments and necessities.
3. Illegitimate debts of developing countries must be abated, such as debts of dictators or credit debts for senseless megaprojects. In future, fixed regulations must enable a responsible lending practice.
4. An international procedure for declaring bankruptcy is required for over-indebted countries. An independent court of arbitration should decide on credit repayment while at the same time making the provision with basic supplies for the debtor nation’s population its highest priority.

\*The alliance *erlassjahr.de* is part of a worldwide movement that demands the debt relief for the poor countries in the world. The alliance had its widest appeal prior to *Jubilee 2000* when 24 million signatures from 166 countries for debt relief were collected within a period of two years.

### “Titel ...”

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about open economic models. Different production conditions in various countries (natural resources, knowledge, production capacities etc.) causes foreign trade activities, too – but self-determined instead of dictated ones. This openness will correspond with the needs of the population and the enhancement of its common good, rather than the verdicts of supranational organizations or syndicates.

Ways out of the crisis start at the local level and demand the self-determined competence about the measures to be implement-

ed. Countries have to re-conquer their economic sovereignty. Nations tied in currency unions or too closely linked to the dollar will not be able to avoid a resurrection of their own local currencies. The ability of a country to plan and perform economic measures is the pre-condition for effective job creation programs and the relief of social need. Transnational institutions can best contribute to crisis management by abandoning their paternalism towards the nations and spending the still available capital for help project to support self-help, as well as a debt moratorium for the affected countries.



13<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council March 2010

## Are the EU Countries Trying to Distract from the Financial Collapse by Means of Bush-American War Rhetoric?

*ef./thk.* During the first three days – the so-called “High Level Segment” – of the Human Rights Council’s spring session in Geneva, the representatives of UN member states took a stand on human rights and their significance as well as on the role and tasks of the Human Rights Council. Usually, the speakers are the deputy prime ministers, deputy foreign ministers or deputy ministers of justice of their countries. Their statements reflect the official view of the respective governments indicate the political course and the roles the countries play on the world stage.

The statements of EU countries, acting like the masters of the world and reminding of the sinister times of colonialism in their tone and content, were very striking.

Obama’s policy is the program for western countries. Besides other issues women liberation is on the agenda, for this always sells well. This is what the West can boast off, covering up the devastating social consequences of the financial crisis. It will not be easy for the other countries to brace themselves for

this new form of discrimination and accusation. This way, western states are practising racism under the guise of human rights.

Women’s liberation was already a pretext for the Afghanistan war, lasting for more than eight years now and leaving a wake of destruction.

Since the regime change in the US, diplomacy has changed its diction, from war mongering rhetoric to soft power. This means nothing else but turning away from open war propaganda to a more moderate tone, which is, however, just as dangerous. This change is striking and cannot only be explained by the fact that the US has to submit to the universal review of their human rights record (UPR) as well, i.e. if they comply with human rights. While the US reported on human rights in general and emphasised their commitment to them, they seemed to avoid naming particular states intentionally.

“The axis of evil” is no longer an issue, at least not in public. Instead, some EU countries adopted the US’ role, and did so even more distinctly. While Spain, which current-

ly presides the EU, did not mention Iran in its statement, other member states attacked Iran fiercely resorting to the poison cabinet of martial war rhetoric, especially Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and others. Some countries called into question whether Iran could become member of the Human Rights Council. Germany in particular, seemed to step into the breach and take on the US rhetoric. It fiercely attacked Iran and aired as the guardian of human rights.

The Dutch Foreign Minister *Verhagen*’s praise on Facebook, Twitter and other voluntary electronic surveillance programs granted deep insight into the background of the riots in Iran and other countries. Listening to the speakers, you receive an impression of what is to be expected politically in the near future, a sequel and aggravation of the clash of cultures.

Does the argument of human rights violations intend to prepare military interventions in developing countries and distract from the financial debacle and the exorbitant debts of

the economically leading nations? The US has to finance 50 percent of their national budget by credits, and it is only a question of time that the whole system will implode.

Which role is intended for the EU that crusaded against Iran in Geneva? For several times in history, the US have managed to stay out of wars themselves and let the other countries do the dirty work, until in the end they came off victoriously and took over the control of Europe. This way they could distract from their own disaster and subsequently let themselves be elegantly celebrated as the liberators.

There were, however, other voices, for instance Cuba’s Foreign Minister, who took on an independent and individual position, which ought to give food for thought for everybody in the West. And there was the voice of the representative of the Holy See at the Human Rights Council, Archbishop *Silvano M. Tomasi*, who contributed to the solution of the economic and financial crisis with fundamental and constructive considerations. •

## Protection and Respect of Human Dignity

*Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the General Segment of the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council*

*Mr President,*

My delegation joins previous speakers in expressing our condolences and solidarity to the people of Chile for the victims of the recent earthquake.

*Mr President,*

The Delegation of the Holy See wants to restate its conviction that the perspective of human rights provides a positive contribution for a solution to the current financial crisis. Even though some signs of recovery seem visible, the crisis continues to aggravate the conditions of millions of people in their access to the basic necessities of life and has adversely compromised the retirement plans of many. This situation, therefore, calls for new regulations and a sound global system of governance that ensures a sustainable and comprehensive path to development for all. In the establishment of new regulations and reliable governance there exists a unique opportunity to address the root causes of the crisis and to affirm an integrated approach to the implementation of all economic, social, civil and political human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

United Nations reports give plenty of evidence regarding the many negative consequences of the financial crisis: the scandal of hunger, the growing inequality worldwide, millions of unemployed people and millions of others reduced to extreme poverty, institutional failures, lack of social protection for countless vulnerable persons. These imbalances, the Holy Father reminds us in the recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, “are produced when economic action, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution”<sup>1</sup> Equity and justice are essential criteria in the management of the world economy.

The enjoyment of human rights becomes possible when States translate principles into law and make change on the ground a reality. While the State is the first actor in the implementation of human rights, it cannot fail to collaborate with all other players in its own civil society and with the international community, interconnected and interdependent as we are in today’s globalized world. In fact, the common goal is the protection and respect of human dignity that binds together the entire human family, a unity rooted on the four basic principles of the centrality of the human person, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good. In this context, the review of the Human Rights Council should aim also at making change on the ground a reality and

the concrete implementation of human rights, its priority.

*Mr President,*

An important message conveyed by Pope *Benedict XVI* in *Caritas in Veritate* (CV) in this moment of economic crisis is the invitation to overcome the obsolete dichotomy between the economic, social and ecological spheres. Markets and freedom are important requirements in building a healthy society, but the context within which they operate is global and must include the universal principles of honesty, justice, solidarity and in addition the principles of “reciprocity and gift”<sup>2</sup>. The focus of concern in the reform of the financial system, and the economic models that are operative in government programs and corporate policies, should shift from goods and services to the persons who are recipients of these services; in this way, they have access to the resources to improve their position in life and thus place their talents at the service of their local community and the universal common good. The social doctrine of the Church has always pursued such a goal with special care for the more vulnerable members of society. In fact, by giving priority to human beings and the created order that supports them on their earthly journey, we can modify the rules that govern the financial system to serve concrete change, to move away from old habits of greed that led to the present crisis, and to promote effective integral development and the implementation of human rights since “the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is the human person in his or her integrity.” (CV, 25) •

<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate*, 36

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. “The great challenge before us, accentuated by the problems of development in this global era and made even more urgent by the economic and financial crisis, is to demonstrate, in thinking and behaviour, not only that traditional principles of social ethics like transparency, honesty and responsibility cannot be ignored or attenuated, but also that in commercial relationships the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity. This is a human demand at the present time, but it is also demanded by economic logic. It is a demand both of charity and of truth.” (CV, 36)

Source: *Permanent Mission of the Holy See*, Geneva, 3 March 2010

## “Human Rights Council Must Preserve its Independent Course”

*Speech delivered by Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, at the High Level Segment of the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 3 March, 2010.*



(picture thk)

*Mr President;*

It took 60 million deadly casualties during World War II to develop the concept of human rights, particularly the right to life and human dignity.

Much progress has been made in developing the human rights concept; very little has been done to guarantee its implementation. This issue has become one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations, as well as international development, peace and security. However, this is the area where the ideological manipulation, political hypocrisy and double standards of industrialized countries have caused most ravages.

Those who take upon themselves the role of watchdogs of human rights and attempt to question others, are precisely the ones who are directly responsible for the most serious, systematic and flagrant violations of human rights, particularly the right to life.

They were the ones who masterminded the colonial system that was imposed to plunder the countries of the South and doom them to live in underdevelopment. They are the ones who bear responsibility for the present international economic order that silently murders tens of millions of human beings who fall victims of starvation, poverty and preventable and curable diseases. They are the ones who

impose the modern wars of conquest that kill millions, mostly civilians, whom they amazingly call “collateral damages.”

They are also the beneficiaries of single thought, exclusive models and values, media warfare, the creation of immanent truths, the subculture of commercial advertisement, the imposition of conditioned reflexes, the deceitful, docile, stultifying embedded press that justifies or conceals massacres.

The US and its European allies resorted to the manipulation of terrorism to launch the wars whose aim was to control and conquer the energy resources in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have taken a toll on two million human lives and also served to justify involuntary disappearance, torture, secret renditions and detention centers where there is no recognition for International Humanitarian Law or the human being condition. It was the pretext to pass laws such as the “Patriot Act” whose implementation has just been extended by the US government, which encroaches on the liberties and guarantees conquered by the civil rights movement after several centuries of struggle.

Who will take responsibility for the brutal acts committed in Abu Ghraib, Bagram, Guantanamo and other centers of torture and death? When will the responsible face trial, thus putting an end to impunity? Who will take responsibility in European countries for the secret renditions, the clandestine prisons

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On the waterfront of Havanna. (Bild cub)

# Switzerland’s Law of Neutrality

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

According to a newspaper article the federal government has granted 180000 francs to the Afghan National Army, which are to flow into a NATO fund. The Head of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the University of Zurich, Professor Albert A. Stahel, and National Councillor Josef Lang (GP) have rejected this type of financial assistance by Switzerland for reasons of neutrality law. Instead, they demand that Switzerland uses its forces for the launch of a peace initiative in Afghanistan, which is suffering under war and corruption. This proposal is to tread the path to a sustainable solution that was inexplicably rejected already in September 2009 by the DFA (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs). Reason: Switzerland does not wish “to do it on its own in the case of the Afghan peace process” (“Neue Luzerner Zeitung”, 30 January) To clarify the legal situation we want to show what the meaning of the Swiss law of neutrality really is.

Neutrality is an important characteristic of Switzerland. And it is anchored in the hearts and minds of the Swiss population. Since decades surveys have consistently shown that between 80 and 90% of the citizens back the perpetuation of neutrality.

The Neutrality of Switzerland,  
www.eda.admin.ch

Since 1515 (the defeat of the confederates – “Eidgenossen” – at Marignano) Switzerland, of its own free will – has embarked on the path of perpetual armed neutrality and stuck to it throughout the centuries against all odds, against the great powers and later maintained neutrality in and outside of Europe. Typical of Switzerland, there were often individual prudent citizens who dedicated themselves with unselfish commitment to the independence and neutrality of their country. Thus, after the Thirty Years’ War the Mayor of Basel, Johann Rudolf Wettstein, attained a decree of the German Emperor, in which the independence of the Confederation from the Empire and its courts was upheld (Peace of Westphalia 1648). 1815, after the wars of Napoleon, in which Switzerland had also been involved, the European powers recognized and guaranteed the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland and the in-

violability of its territory in Paris. Since then, Switzerland has never been involved in any military action outside its borders.

### The law of neutrality as part of International Law

“Neutrality is an instrument of Swiss foreign and security policy, the status of the neutral is defined by international law. Neutrality enjoys great popular support and has contributed over centuries to the cohesion of the Confederation. It is part of the tradition, history and identity of the citizens.”

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### The Hague Convention of 1907

The law of neutrality is part of international law. In the Hague Convention of 1907, the essential rights and duties of neutral powers are recorded. Switzerland has ratified the Law of Neutrality in 1910 and the Law of 1907 still applies today.

### Most important obligations of neutral powers

- non participation in armed conflicts
- non-disposal of its territory to the belligerents
- no mercenaries for the warring parties (which also means no membership) in military alliances.
- self-defence, that is having an own army.
- equality of the belligerents with respect to the export of war material.

### The most important right of neutral states

- The right to the inviolability of their territory.

### Rights and duties of neutral powers

Article 1 – The territory of neutral powers is inviolable.

Art. 2 – Belligerents are forbidden to move troops or convoys of either munitions of war or supplies across the territory of a neutral power.

Art. 10 – The fact of a neutral Power resisting, even by force, attempts to violate its neutrality cannot be regarded as a hostile act

Art. 16 – The nationals of a State which is not taking part in the war are considered as neutrals.

Art. 17 – A neutral cannot avail himself of his neutrality

(a) If he commits hostile acts against a belligerent;

(b) If he commits acts in favor of a belligerent, particularly if he voluntarily enlists in the ranks of the armed force of one of the parties. In such a case, the neutral shall not be more severely treated by the belligerent as against whom he has abandoned his neutrality than a national of the other belligerent State could be for the same act.

### Remarks

- Article 2 of the Hague Convention implies that the neutral states must not allow (for example, Austria!) a belligerent nation, either the passage or over-flight by military vehicles or aircraft. This prohibition applies not only for fight jets but also for transport of troops and provisions.
- Article 10 allows as single act of violence of a neutral state, the armed self-defense against the violation of his neutrality. It follows that any other kind of armed operations – for example the deployment of Swiss soldiers in Kosovo or Afghanistan or in the “fight against pirates” in Somalia – is violating the Hague Convention.
- Articles 16 and 17 conclude: Who is involved in a war, who makes military operations for a war party, can no longer be called “neutral”. Swiss officers that have done service for some time under NATO command in Afghanistan, which means a violation of Switzerland against Articles 16 and 17 of the convention, even if the Swiss were not involved in direct combat operations. It is sufficient that a combat mission would have been possible. Therefore, the participation of Switzerland in the NATO alliance “Partnership for Peace” (PfP) – from a legal viewpoint of neutrality – is basically not permitted – since it is always possible that the line between peace and war effort will be exceeded. If Swiss troops would have taken part in the operation against Atalanta Somalia under EU command, this would have been a clear violation of the law of neutrality. Fortunately, for this reason the National Council clearly rejected the Atalanta deployment of the Swiss Army in September 2009. Military participation

may be manifested by a financial contribution, as well.

“By investing money in NATO-Funds Switzerland makes itself part of the war.”

National Councillor Josef Lang in the “Neue Luzerner Zeitung” of 30.01.2010

### Neutrality in the Swiss Federal Constitution

According to Article 173, paragraph 1 and Article 185, paragraph 1, the Federal Assembly (parliament) and the Federal Council (the executive) are required to ensure the compliance with neutrality.

### BV Article 173: Further duties and responsibilities

1. The Federal Assembly also has the following duties and responsibilities:

a. You should take measures to safeguard the foreign security, independence and neutrality of Switzerland.

### BV Article 185: External and internal security

1. The Federal Council shall take measures to safeguard the external security, independence and neutrality of Switzerland.

Parts of the Federal Council and Parliament claim the reliance on so-called higher-level international law on all possible and impossible occasions. Actually, the Hague Convention of 1907 is overriding international law, which is confirmed by the DFA (EDA) on its website. At the same time, the Federal Council has falsely claimed for some years now that all military action (armed deployment in Kosovo after the NATO Partnership for Peace, Air Force fighter pilot training abroad in the Swiss Alps, fighting against pirates under EU command, etc.) were compatible with neutrality (“neutralitätskonform”). Only on the basis of this constant and misleading repetition the people approved to the abroad “peacekeeping” operations of the Swiss army, several years ago. But the will to respect the law of neutrality is unrelinquished in the Swiss people. Let us watch out that the Federal Council and Federal Assembly comply with their constitutional obligation to respect the neutrality of Switzerland.

### Humanitarian commitment to the world

“Neutrality is not just a security tool, but also a message of peace. A neutral state wants to avoid one thing above all: war.”

“The neutrality of Switzerland”  
www.eda.admin.ch

Only a neutral, impartial outsider can contribute to peaceful conflict resolution. An

continued on page 5

### “Human Rights Council Has ...”

continued from page 3

in these territories and their involvement in acts of torture?

This morning, the Deputy Foreign Minister from Sweden made a curious and arrogant speech that included critical judgments about nine countries. However, he did not say a word about the complicity of the Swedish government with secret renditions that made a stopover in his country while transferring kidnapped persons. We hope that his prolonged investigation of the matter would conclude some day and that he would deign to share the results with this Council.

What has been happening in Palestine for years is a true genocide. Thousands of Palestinians have lost their lives as a result of the indiscriminate military attacks and the tight sieges and blockades that deprive them from the most elemental means of subsistence.

The military dictatorships in Latin America, which have been imposed and propped up by the US for decades, have murdered hundreds of thousands of persons. Only in Cuba they caused the death of 20 000 people.

The right to life is continuously violated around the world. The very existence of the human species is being seriously jeopardized by climate change. The ones who have historically been and still are responsible for it are the same who unleash and conduct the wars of conquest. The shameful Copenhagen meeting, with all its deceitful and exclusive practices, was an act against the right of humanity to life and survival.

Mr President;

For half a century Cuba has been a victim of US aggressions and terrorist actions. Five thousand five hundred and seventy seven Cu-

bans have either lost their lives or have been left maimed.

The perpetrators of the blowing up in mid-air of a Cubana de Aviacion airliner in 1976 enjoy impunity and are being protected by the US government. A dengue epidemic that resulted from a bacteriological attack caused the death of 101 Cuban children. One of the several bombs that were planted in Havana in 1997 killed an Italian youth.

The so-called Cuban Adjustment Act and the “wet foot/dry foot” policy encourage illegal migration and take a toll on human lives. The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba is an act of genocide, defined as such in subparagraphs b) and c) under Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and is a mass, flagrant and systematic violation of human rights.

The US policy against Cuba, that the Government of President Obama has kept unchanged, is taking a toll on the lives of Cubans. A new escalation of subversion, with broad media coverage, has been launched against Cuba. In no way has there been any respect for any ethical principle. An attempt is being made to make the mercenaries appear like patriots and make the US paid agents in Cuba appear as dissidents.

The powerful machinery of the empire did not hesitate to use a reoffender inmate, who was tried in court in accordance with due process of law for having committed common crimes – and later on recruited while in prison – to make him appear as a human rights fighter. In order to obtain spurious political dividends he was thrust into death, despite the thorough medical assistance offered to him. It was an unfortunate event, as was expressed by President Raul Castro. He was

yet another victim of the subversive policy of the United States against Cuba.

Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, there has never been in Cuba a single case of assassination, torture or extrajudicial execution; there has never been a “death squad” or an “Operation Condor”. When it comes to the protection of the right to life, Cuba’s slate has been meritorious and impeccable, which includes its altruistic cooperation beyond its borders.

Mr President;

I would have wished to refer to concrete aspects related to the serious work carried out by this Council; I would have liked to address this agency’s review, which is due to take place next year, in order to condemn the attempts to subdue it, modify its composition and procedures with the aim of forcing on the Council certain political interests. I would have wished to refer to the Universal Periodic Review, which proved to be a useful exercise, despite its imperfections and the lack of self-criticism on the part of the powerful who were showed up. I would have liked to defend the Council and outline the importance of preserving it free from politicization, discrimination, selectivity and double standards.

I can assure you that Cuba will continue to contribute its efforts and determination so that the Human Rights Council can preserve its independent course and cooperation is further consolidated as a true way to promote and protect human rights in the world.

On behalf of the heroic and noble people of Cuba I should proclaim that there would be no campaign that could make us drift away from our ideas of independence and freedom.

Thank you very much.

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## Current Concerns

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

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative  
Editor: Erika Vögeli  
Address: Current Concerns,  
P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich  
Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50  
Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51  
E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

Subscription details:  
published regularly  
annual subscription rates: SFr. 72. –  
€ 45. – / £ 28. – / \$ 66. – (incl. postage and VAT)  
Account: Postscheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4  
Printers: Druckerei Nüssli, Mellingen, Switzerland  
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*.

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*Current Concerns* is an independent journal produced by volunteers that is not supported by advertising. Any financial contribution is greatly appreciated.

Switzerland

Commission on Legal Affairs at the Council of States  
Calls for Action with Regard to Killer Games

by Dr. Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller, Switzerland

On 16 February, the Commission on Legal Affairs at the Swiss Council of States demanded a prohibition of killer games. According to report, it backed two motions of June 2009. It argued in favour of a sales prohibition for killer games to children and young people; likewise it favoured an absolute prohibition with 9 to 3 votes.

The report of the Commission on Legal Issues suggests that “The Commission sees a need for action as to protect children and young people against violence in the media and wants to set an example by accepting the respective motions, according to which ‘youth and violence’ still represent a serious problem. In principle, the commission thus affirms that there is a need for action ...”

The two motions must now be dealt with in the Council of States. If this chamber of the parliament agrees, the National Council will have to submit a bill. Moreover, the Commission on Legal Affairs was concerned with a motion, which contained the proposal of higher punishment for child pornography. The Commission unanimously requested to convert the motion into an examination assignment. A possible increase in penalty for child pornography should be examined.

Besides, it should be examined, “which further measures could be taken in particu-

lar to reinforce prosecution of child pornography”.

Roland Näf, vice-president of the Social Democratic Party in Berne, who has been fighting decidedly for a prohibition of media violence for years and in particular for a prohibition of killer games, reckons that within a period of five years killer games will be forbidden.

Viewed against the background of a new case in the German city of Ludwigshafen, where a former student brutally stabbed and killed his teacher, the decision of the Commission for Legal Affairs is reassuring and necessary. The next hurdle has been cleared. Voices demanding to finally implement a prohibition of killer games, are growing in number. Apart from the Cologne Appeal for a prohibition of killer games, there are ever more prominent voices who call for the same consequence.

Thus last December, the German children’s book author and theatre director *Christian Berg* demanded the prohibition of killer games. For several years, he had observed that on more and more occasions, children and young people loudly acclaimed violence during their visits to the theatre. “I have never before experienced such brutalization as in the past three years in my altogether 23 years on stage,” says Berg. During his lectures,

Swiss Violent Video Game Resolutions Move Forward

Media report on a resolution that was unanimously passed in the Commission on Legal Affairs and would make it illegal to sell games rated PEGI 16 or 18 to underage youths. Swiss Parliament now has a chance to vote on the bill, which was originally introduced by the Christian Democratic Party member and National Councilor *Norbert Hochreutener*, in 2007.

Hochreutener believes the law is necessary to “enforce ratings and make sure kids cannot play what is called ‘killer games’ in the German-speaking part of Europe.”

A second motion called for a complete ban of violent and adult-themed videogames throughout the country. This motion passed too, though with a closer vote of nine to three, and will also go to the parliament for vote. One of the back-

ers of this proposal is Social Democrat *Evi Allemann*.

On her website, Allemann comments on the banning of such “killer” games as follows: “Such games do not make everyone a killer, but they increase the willingness of those who are already at risk. A ban on such games therefore seems appropriate and proportionate, especially since they do not have any cultural and social content worth protecting and there are thousands of other exciting games that work without such extreme violence. [...] One way to implement the motion lies in the implementation of Article 135 of the Criminal Code. This law prohibits the display, manufacture, importation, storage, promotion, etc. of sound and visual recordings of cruel violence.”

he also realized that “children can no longer listen.” The children’s book author drew the following consequences; he wants to start an initiative for the prohibition of killer games and to collect book sponsorships for children (“giving children books”). The discussion with a victim’s mother of the Win-

nenden shooting also made an impact on him to commit himself to activities against violence among children and for a prohibition of killer games.

Result: Killer games should be put on the International Community’s agenda and must be outlawed.

Violent Video Games Increases Aggressive Thinking,  
Aggressive Affects and Decreases Prosocial Behavior

*Iowa State University* Distinguished Professor of Psychology *Craig Anderson* has made much of his life’s work studying how violent video game play affects youth behavior. And he says a new study he led, analyzing 130 research reports on more than 130000 subjects worldwide, proves conclusively that exposure to violent video games makes more aggressive, less caring kids – regardless of their age, sex or culture.

The study was published in the March 2010 issue of the *Psychological Bulletin*, an *American Psychological Association* journal. It reports that exposure to violent video games is a causal risk factor for increased aggressive thoughts and behavior, and decreased empathy and prosocial behavior in youths.

“We can now say with utmost confidence that regardless of research method – that is experimental, correlational, or longitudinal – and regardless of the cultures tested in this study [East and West], you get the same effects,” said Anderson, who is also director

of *Iowa State’s Center for the Study of Violence*. “And the effects are that exposure to violent video games increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in both short-term and long-term contexts. Such exposure also increases aggressive thinking and aggressive affect, and decreases prosocial behavior.”

The study was conducted by a team of eight researchers, including ISU psychology graduate students *Edward Swing* and *Muniba Saleem*; and *Brad Bushman*, a former Iowa State psychology professor who now is on the faculty at the *University of Michigan*. Also on the team were the top video game researchers from Japan – *Akiko Shibuya* from *Keio University* and *Nobuko Ihori* from *Ochanomizu University* – and *Hannah Rothstein*, a noted scholar on meta-analytic review from the City University of New York.

Meta-analytic procedure used in research

The team used meta-analytic procedures – the statistical methods used to analyze and

combine results from previous, related literature – to test the effects of violent video game play on the behaviors, thoughts and feelings of the individuals, ranging from elementary school-aged children to college undergraduates.

The research also included new longitudinal data which provided further confirmation that playing violent video games is a causal risk factor for long-term harmful outcomes.

“These are not huge effects – not on the order of joining a gang vs. not joining a gang,” said Anderson. “But these effects are also not trivial in size. It is one risk factor for future aggression and other sort of negative outcomes. And it’s a risk factor that’s easy for an individual parent to deal with – at least, easier than changing most other known risk factors for aggression and violence, such as poverty or one’s genetic structure.”

The analysis found that violent video game effects are significant in both Eastern and Western cultures, in males and females, and in all age groups. Although there are good theoretical reasons to expect the long-term harmful effects to be higher in younger, pre-teen youths, there was only weak evidence of such age effects.

Time to refocus the public policy debate

The researchers conclude that the study has important implications for public policy debates, including development and testing of

potential intervention strategies designed to reduce the harmful effects of playing violent video games.

“From a public policy standpoint, it’s time to get off the question of, ‘Are there real and serious effects?’ That’s been answered and answered repeatedly,” Anderson said. “It’s now time to move on to a more constructive question like, ‘How do we make it easier for parents – within the limits of culture, society and law – to provide a healthier childhood for their kids?’”

But Anderson knows it will take time for the creation and implementation of effective new policies. And until then, there is plenty parents can do to protect their kids at home.

“Just like your child’s diet and the foods you have available for them to eat in the house, you should be able to control the content of the video games they have available to play in your home,” he said. “And you should be able to explain to them why certain kinds of games are not allowed in the house – conveying your own values. You should convey the message that one should always be looking for more constructive solutions to disagreements and conflict.”

Anderson says the new study may be his last meta-analysis on violent video games because of its definitive findings.

“Switzerland’s Law of Neutrality”

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honest broker must have no selfish interests – neither economic nor political – in an agreement between two parties in conflict. The neutrality of Switzerland does not only serve the own country. On the contrary: Especially today’s world with its wars and the associated human misery is in urgent need of neutral states, which are not involved in any political and military alliances. As a small neutral country, Switzerland can take over a variety of tasks, which it can perform better than the UN precisely because of its neutrality. Given the balance of power in the Security Council the UN are often not suitable for the role of an impartial third party.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the Red Cross was founded in Switzerland, in 1863. Only a small neutral state could – and still can – take over the honorable role of ICRC’s main responsibility, and as the depositary state of the Geneva conventions, since the trust of all participating governments and all involved groups is an essential prerequisite for a successful humanitarian work. Also the neutral ground, which our country is able to offer, is valuable for meetings of belligerent parties.

„Not by accident, but because of the long tradition of neutrality, Switzerland is the depositary state of these conventions. These include, among other things the strict minimum of humanitarian law, which must be met anytime and anywhere. As a contracting state, Switzerland has the duty to demand this minimum of humanity and to draw attention to violations of the rights of victims. “

“The neutrality of Switzerland”  
[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)

Back to the commendable suggestion of Professor *Stahel* and National Councillor *Lang* that Switzerland should rather launch a peace initiative for Afghanistan instead of paying money into a NATO Fund; The rejecting statement of the DFA and Federal Councilor *Micheline Calmy-Rey* that Switzerland did not want “to do it on their own in this case” is diametrically opposed to the historic commitment of neutral Switzerland to offer its good services to war-torn nations of the world. Perhaps Ms Federal Councillor should have read again the quoted pronouncements of her department (see quotes)? One thing is certain: “In isolation”, as an upright, peace-seeking and encouraging neighbor, the small neutral state can make a difference, rather than in association with the war powers of the world.

Horizontes y Debates

The new Spanish Edition of Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns

At the request of many readers the co-operative *Zeit-Fragen* will publish from now on a Spanish edition: *Horizontes y Debates*. It is published monthly. The first edition is already printed and can be ordered free of charge.

Please let us know addresses of possibly interested parties to whom we should send the journal.



# US Ambassador in Kabul Shows Bleak Warnings

by Eric Schmitt

cc. The warnings of Mr Eikenberry, American ambassador in Kabul and former top commander of the US mission in the country, document precisely the Afghan policy's fiasco. The fort can hardly be held and is far too expensive. The pretended civil setup is nowhere in sight.

The United States' ambassador in Kabul warned his superiors in the US in November that President *Hamid Karzai* of Afghanistan "is not an adequate strategic partner" and "continues to shun responsibility for any sovereign burden," according to a classified cable that offers a much bleaker accounting of the risks of sending additional American troops to Afghanistan than was previously known.

The broad outlines of two cables from the ambassador, *Karl W. Eikenberry*, became public within days after he sent them, and they were portrayed as having been the source of significant discussion in the White House, heightening tensions between diplomats and senior military officers, who supported an increase of 30,000 American troops.

But the full cables, obtained by "The New York Times", show for the first time just how strongly the current ambassador felt about the leadership of the Afghan government, the state of its military and the chances that a troop buildup would actually hurt the war effort by making the Karzai government too dependent on the United States.

*Stanley A. McChrystal*, the top American and NATO commander in Afghanistan, who had argued that a rapid infusion of fresh troops was essential to avoid failure in the country.

They show that Mr Eikenberry, a retired army lieutenant general who once was the top American commander in Afghanistan, repeatedly cautioned that deploying sizable American reinforcements would result in "astronomical costs" – tens of billions of dollars – and would only deepen the dependence of the Afghan government on the United States.

"Sending additional forces will delay the day when Afghans will take over, and make it difficult, if not impossible, to bring our people home on a reasonable timetable," he wrote 6 November. "An increased US and foreign role in security and governance will increase Afghan dependence, at least in the short-term."

Without offering details, Mr Eikenberry has



Afghanistan – Wherever you look is a scene of destruction. (picture reuters)

But it is not clear what might have changed about his assessment of President Karzai as a reliable partner, and the strong language of the cables may increase tensions between the ambassador and the Karzai government, especially as world leaders meet in London on Thursday to discuss a much-debated Afghan plan to reintegrate Taliban fighters. It also coincides with a strong effort by the administration to mend ties with Mr Karzai.

An American official provided a copy of the cables to "The Times" after a reporter requested them. The official said it was important for the historical record that Mr Eikenberry's detailed assessments be made public, given that they were among the most important documents produced during the debate that led to the troop buildup.

On 6 November, Mr Eikenberry wrote: "President Karzai is not an adequate strategic partner. The proposed counterinsurgency strategy assumes an Afghan political leadership that is both able to take responsibility and to exert sovereignty in the furtherance of our goal – a secure, peaceful, minimally self-sufficient Afghanistan hardened against transnational terrorist groups.

"Yet Karzai continues to shun responsibility for any sovereign burden, whether defense, governance or development. He and much of his circle do not want the US to leave and are only too happy to see us invest further," Mr Eikenberry wrote. "They assume we covet

their territory for a never-ending 'war on terror' and for military bases to use against surrounding powers."

He continued, "Beyond Karzai himself, there is no political ruling class that provides an overarching national identity that transcends local affiliations and provides reliable partnership."

In a second cable, dated 9 November, he expressed new concerns: "In a PBS interview on 7 November, Karzai sounded bizarrely cautionary notes about his willingness to address governance and corruption. This tracks with his record of inaction or grudging compliance in this area."

On Monday, Mr Eikenberry declined through an embassy spokeswoman, *Caitlin M. Hayden*, to comment on the cables and his views on Mr Karzai. She said by e-mail, "We stand by what we provided during the review process, which got us to the clear strategy we're now implementing, that the ambassador unequivocally supports."

In his memos, Mr Eikenberry raised other concerns. He said he had serious doubts about the ability of the Afghan police and military forces to take over security duties in the country by 2013. "The army's high attrition and low recruitment rates for Pashtuns in the south are crippling," he wrote. "Simply keeping the force at current levels requires tens of thousands of new recruits every year to replace attrition losses and battlefield casualties."

The ambassador, who left the military last April to become Mr *Obama's* emissary, also complained about an inadequate civilian counterpart organization to the NATO military command in Afghanistan. Nearly three months later, he is still expressing concerns about too few civilian experts in Afghanistan.

He also noted worries that the success of Mr Obama's Afghanistan policy hinged on Pakistani forces' eliminating militants' havens in the mountainous region near the Afghan border.

"Pakistan will remain the single greatest source of Afghan instability so long as the border sanctuaries remain," he wrote. "Until this sanctuary problem is fully addressed, the gains from sending additional forces may be fleeting."

"As we contemplate greatly expanding our presence in Afghanistan, the better answer to our difficulties could well be to further ratch-

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## International Committee of the Red Cross

### Afghanistan: a Long Journey for Osman

The cables – one four pages, the other three – also represent a detailed rebuttal to the counterinsurgency strategy offered by Gen. A land-mine cost Osman his legs and his brand-new job as a policeman. Going back to the old job was no option – herding sheep and cultivating crops from a wheelchair was hardly realistic. A chance meeting with an ICRC team changed everything. Today, Osman is walking again, on artificial legs from the ICRC rehabilitation centre in Herat.

Osman (24) lives in Farestan, a village near Qal-i-Naw City in Badghis Province, northwest Afghanistan. Like many Afghans, he just has the one name, Osman. He learned to look after sheep from his father, starting when he was very young. His father considered sheep more important than an education, so Osman never went to school and still cannot read or write. But he had a flock of 30 sheep, sold the lambs at market and grew enough wheat on his own land to feed his family and generate an income. All in all a pleasant, quiet life in a small Afghan village.

In April 2008, Osman decided to join the Afghan National Police. "Just two months after I joined the police, I was asked to go to Bala Murgab district. That day changed my life forever. Our car drove over a mine, which exploded. I was in shock and unconscious. Apparently, I was taken by helicopter to the hospital in Qal-i-Naw, but I don't remember the journey. I don't even know what happened to my colleagues who were in the same car. What I do know is that I woke up 12 days later and realized I was in hospital. I lifted my right leg. It felt very light. I could sort of feel my left leg. Then I realized that both my legs had been amputated above the knee."

Back in Farestan, life was difficult. "I had no idea what to do when I got home. Without legs, there was no way I could go back to farming. After a while, my father suggested I use my police disability pension to open a grocer's shop in front of my house, selling things like tea, biscuits, and sweets." Even getting hold of the basics was complicated. "I didn't have a wheelchair at first, so I sat on the ground using my hands to move around. Eventually I borrowed one."

Things went on like this for about a year. Then, on 30 October 2009, an ICRC convoy coming back from a field trip stopped at Osman's shop. "Unknown to me, one of the ICRC drivers, an Afghan staff member from

said in public hearings since then that his concerns have been dealt with, and that he supported the White House's troop increase plan. the area, told a delegate about my plight and asked if the ICRC could help me." The team chatted with him, listened to his story and gave him some information on the ICRC's rehabilitation services.

"I thought that was it, but the next morning at six o'clock when I was just opening my shop for the day, the ICRC convoy returned. They were on their way to Herat where the ICRC has a sub-delegation and a rehabilitation centre, known here as an Orthopaedic Centre. They offered to take me to the OC where I could be seen by professionals and get artificial legs. I had ten minutes to decide. The delegate was encouraging me to go, and my father was telling me I should stop thinking about my legs and accept the situation as God's will. I packed a bag and got into the Land Cruiser."

At the centre, a physiotherapist examined him and immediately saw that the bone on his left stump was growing through the skin and was badly infected. That meant he needed an operation in Herat regional hospital, located next to the centre. His father was a little reluctant at first, but eventually the family agreed that the operation was in his best interests.

"I recovered well after surgery and was sent home for my wounds to heal. Two months later, I was back at the centre to begin the process of fitting my artificial legs.

Osman is glad he let himself be persuaded. "Now I can walk again. Having the operation and getting artificial legs was definitely the right decision. I'm a very active person who likes sports. I learned wheelchair basketball in Herat and I would like to continue playing in my village."

Acquiring artificial legs has given Osman new optimism. "I'll carry on with the shop when I get home, but now I'll be able to stand on my own two feet! I want to do some work on my house and start a family. And I want to help my younger brother with the sheep."

Physiotherapist *Yvonne Jansen* is in charge of the ICRC rehabilitation centre in Herat. As she says, "Osman's courage in overcoming his adversity is an inspiration for the many Afghans who have suffered the same fate." •

source: International Committee of the Red Cross, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/afghanistan-feature-110310>

## Afghanistan Is Rich in Raw Materials and Minerals!

### Who is going to exploit them?

by Prof. Albert Stahel, Institute for Strategic Studies, Wädenswil/Switzerland

In UNO statistics and also in public thinking, Afghanistan is perceived an extremely poor country. This is of course true for the majority of the Afghan population of farmers, widows, orphans, cripples and beggars – but of course not for the rich drug merchants including the family of President *Karzai*. This assessment is also not true for the gas reservoirs along the Amu Darya River in the north of the country. They have ruthlessly been exploited by the Soviet Union for its own needs during the occupation in the 1980s. These and other deposits of raw materials have been recorded during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. So far, the global public has deliberately not been informed on the country's richness in raw materials and minerals.

Last year, international print media have reported that, based on its tenders including building a railway line in Afghanistan, a Chinese company has won a contract to exploit a copper mine near Ayak. Suddenly, reports like the one issued 2007 by the US Geological Survey regarding the assessment of deposits of raw materials and minerals in Afghanistan become accessible. According to this report, Afghanistan does not only have copper but also huge mineral resources including iron, sulfur, talc, chromium, magnesium, salt, mica, marble, ruby, emerald, lapis lazuli, asbestos, nickel, mercury, gold, silver,

lead, zinc, fluorspar, bauxite, beryllium and lithium. In addition, there are significant deposits of phosphorus, uranium and thorium. It is also possible that Afghanistan has deposits of rare metals which are vital for electronics and currently only found in China. All these deposits have been mapped by the US Geological Survey between 2005 and 2007.

According to the US Geological Survey map, the most important resources are located in the east and the southeast of Afghanistan. These are also the provinces with the most important bases of the US military forces. The concentration of bases in this region is commonly justified with the Taliban resistance and the need to battle their logistics, their fighters and their supporters in the Pakistani tribal areas. Could it be that this is not the true reason for these bases to be built? Is it possible that the bases have enabled the US to take over the mineral deposits so that they can be exploited by American companies later on? If this hypothesis is true, then the European states whose troops are not stationed in the mentioned regions have been deceived by the war and the nation-building rhetoric in Afghanistan. Possibly, some states are confidants of the US and will have their share in the future exploitation! In this case, NATO's Afghanistan war would mean nothing else than theft on a geo-political scale! •

# El Departamento de Estado de EE.UU planifica «Revoluciones Twitter»

## Cómo Washington utiliza la fascinación de la juventud por la electrónica para cambiar gobiernos sin que se note la influencia de la CIA

Por Eva Golinger\*

Durante los días 15 y 16 de octubre de 2009, la Ciudad de México fue la sede de la segunda Cumbre de la Alianza de Movimientos Juveniles (“AYM” por sus siglas en inglés). Patrocinado por el Departamento de Estado, el evento cuenta con una oradora de lujo – vía Internet- la Secretaria de Estado Hillary Clinton. Adicionalmente, hay varios “delegados” invitados por la diplomacia estadounidense, incluidos personajes vinculados con movimientos de desestabilización en América Latina. Los nombres que figuran en la lista de participantes incluyen a los venezolanos Yon Goicochea (Primero Justicia), el dirigente de la organización Venezuela de Primera (grupo fundado por Goicochea), Rafael Delgado, y la ex dirigente estudiantil Geraldine Álvarez, ahora miembro de la Fundación Futuro Presente, organización creada por Yon Goicochea con financiamiento del Instituto Cato de Estados Unidos. También asisten Marc Wachtenheim de Cuba Development Initiative (proyecto financiado por el Departamento de Estado y la USAID a través de la Fundación del Desarrollo Panamericana “PADF”), Maryra Cedeño Proaño, de la Corporación Foro de la Juventud Guayaquil, entidad ecuatoriana financiada por la USAID, y Eduardo Ávila de Voces Bolivianas, organización promovida por la embajada de Estados Unidos en Bolivia con financiamiento de la USAID. Son 43 delegados en total, de países de todo el globo, de Sri Lanka, la India, Canadá, Reino Unido, Colombia, Perú, Brasil, Líbano, Arabia Saudí, Jamaica, Irlanda, Turquía, Moldavia, Malasia, Estados Unidos y México.

Los panelistas y patrocinadores son una extraña mezcla de representantes de las nuevas tecnologías y funcionarios de las agencias de Washington, especialistas en la subversión y desestabilización de gobiernos no subordinados a su agenda. Oradores de Freedom House, el Instituto Republicano Internacional (IRI), el Departamento de Estado y el Banco Mundial figuran en la agenda de la cumbre, junto con jóvenes creadores de tecnologías como Twitter, Facebook, Google, Gen Next, Meetup y Youtube. Los únicos medios tradicionales invitados al evento por el Departamento de Estado son CNN en Español y CNN en inglés, dato curioso que evidencia su estrecha relación.

Sin duda, esta unión entre las agencias de Washington, las nuevas tecnologías y los jóvenes dirigentes políticos seleccionados por el Departamento de Estado, es una

receta para una nueva estrategia de “cambiar regímenes”. Además, este evento reafirma el apoyo político y financiero al movimiento estudiantil de la oposición en Venezuela por parte de Estados Unidos y coloca ante la opinión pública una evidencia irrefutable de la siniestra alianza entre Washington y las nuevas tecnologías.

### Centro para la diplomacia digital

Según su propia definición, la AYM nació en 2008 debido a la aparición “...en la escena mundial [de] una serie de casi desconocidos, generalmente jóvenes [que] dominan las técnicas más recientes y han hecho cosas asombrosas. Han causado grandes transformaciones en el mundo real en países como Colombia, Irán y Moldavia, valiéndose de esas técnicas para mover a la juventud. Y esto ha sido sólo el comienzo.”

Las agencias de Washington no podían desaprovechar un atractivo escenario donde los jóvenes, ya adictos a las nuevas tecnologías como Internet, Facebook, Twitter y MySpace, entre otras, que podrían convertirse en dirigentes y promotores de movimientos sociales al servicio de los intereses imperiales. Pero había un problema, según los fundadores de la AYM. “Estos movimientos del siglo XXI constituyen el porvenir de la sociedad civil pero todavía no se dispone de mecanismos para ayudar, capacitar y potenciar a estos dirigentes que en lugar de oficinas tienen direcciones electrónicas. Tampoco existe una entidad que capacite a las asociaciones y a los movimientos ya conocidos del siglo XX en el uso eficaz de los instrumentos y medios del siglo XXI para el logro de sus objetivos.”

### ¿Sus objetivos?

#### ¿O los objetivos de Washington?

Una de las primeras operaciones exitosas de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia (CIA) en los años cincuenta y sesenta fue la creación del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura en Europa para impregnar y utilizar los espacios de arte, las universidades, los intelectuales y los movimientos sociales para neutralizar la expansión del comunismo. El uso de la cultura para promover la agenda imperial no terminó después de la Guerra Fría. Mientras crece la adicción a la tecnología, este eficaz mecanismo está siendo refinado y aplicado. Nuevas tecnologías como Facebook y Twitter, desarrolladas con financiamiento de empresas de la CIA como In-Q-Tel, especialista

en la “minería de data”, hoy en día funcionan como redes para reclutar y captar “agentes” dispuestos a promover los intereses imperiales. El uso potencial de estas tecnologías para promover operaciones psicológicas y propaganda es ilimitado. Su fuerza es la rapidez de la diseminación de los mensajes y su cobertura mundial.

Sólo hacía falta diseñar la estrategia que permitiría alcanzar ese potencial.

### La campaña de Obama como “modelo”

“La Alianza de Movimientos Juveniles (AYM) es la respuesta a esa necesidad. Comenzó con una reunión cumbre en diciembre de 2008, en la cual el Departamento de Estado se asoció con MTV, Google, YouTube, Facebook, Howcast, AT&T, JetBlue, GenNext, Access360Media y la Facultad de Derecho de Columbia University para reconocer y convocar a los movimientos del siglo XXI y dialogar con ellos por Internet por primera vez en la historia”.

Durante la primera cumbre de la AYM, participaron miembros de la organización opositora venezolana Súmate (financiada por la NED y USAID), y los creadores colombianos de las marchas “No más Chávez” y “Un millón de voces contra las FARC”. Los principales panelistas eran tres asesores de la campaña de Barack Obama para la presidencia, incluidos Joe Rospars, director de Nuevos Medios de la campaña, Scott Goldstein, director en línea de Obama para América, y Sam Graham-Felson, director de blogging para la campaña Obama 2008. También participaron Sherif Mansour, de Freedom House, Shaarik Zafar, asesor del Departamento de Seguridad Interior de Estados Unidos (Homeland Security) y ocho altos funcionarios del Departamento de Estado, junto a representantes de diferentes multinacionales de la comunicación y las nuevas tecnologías.

Los creadores de la exitosa campaña “súper-tecnológica” de Obama se juntaron con las agencias de Washington para diseñar la estrategia perfecta. Combinaron dos fuerzas novedosas en la política -la juventud y las nuevas tecnologías-. Era una combinación capaz de lograr lo que durante varios años le habían dificultado a la CIA: el cambio de régimen en países no subordinados a los intereses de Estados Unidos, sin que apareciera la mano de Washington.

El movimiento estudiantil “manos blancas”, en Venezuela, financiado y formado

«El vocero de Visible Technologies, Donald Tighe, reveló que la CIA les pidió monitorear a los medios sociales extranjeros e instalar un sistema de “detección temprana” para informar a la agencia de inteligencia sobre “cómo los asuntos de interés se están manifestando a nivel internacional».

por las agencias estadounidenses, las protestas anticomunistas en Moldavia, las manifestaciones contra el gobierno iraní y las últimas protestas virtuales contra el Presidente Chávez son ejemplos de esta nueva estrategia. Las nuevas tecnologías –Twitter, Facebook, YouTube y otras– son las principales armas, y los medios tradicionales, como CNN y sus afiliados, ayudan exagerar el impacto real de estos movimientos promoviendo matrices de opinión falsas y distorsionadas sobre su importancia y legitimidad.

La Alianza de Movimientos Juveniles es otro capítulo más dentro de los planes de desestabilización contra países soberanos antiimperialistas que rechazan la dominación imperial. La doble moral de Washington reafirma este hecho. Mientras que el Departamento de Estado promueve, financia y patrocina la formación de jóvenes de otros países en el uso de las nuevas tecnologías para desestabilizar sus gobiernos, el uso de Twitter y Facebook para convocar protestas contra las políticas de Washington dentro de Estados Unidos se criminaliza. Así se demostró hace tres semanas cuando dos ciudadanos estadounidenses fueron arrestados por utilizar Twitter para informar a los manifestantes contra la cumbre G-20 en Pittsburgh sobre las acciones represivas de la policía. •

Sitio oficial de la Alianza de Movimientos Juveniles: <http://info.howcast.com/youthmovements/summit09/delegates>

\* Eva Golinger es una abogada venezolana y estadounidense que vive en Caracas. Ha publicado los libros El Código Chávez: Descifrando la Intervención de los Estados Unidos en Venezuela, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales 2005 [The Chavez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela], Bush Versus Chavez: Washington’s War on Venezuela (Monthly Review, 2007) y La telaraña imperial: Enciclopedia de injerencia y subversiones, con Romain Migus, 2008.

Fuente: [www.rebellion.org](http://www.rebellion.org)

### “US Ambassador in Kabul Shows ...” continued from page 7

et up our engagement in Pakistan,” he wrote without elaboration.

On 9 November, he repeatedly warned against rushing into a large deployment of more American forces without further study.

He urged that the White House appoint a bipartisan panel of “civilian and military experts to examine the Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy” and provide recommendations by the end of 2009. The recommendation, which would have extended a White House-led policy review of many months, was not accepted.

Mr Eikenberry suggested sending a relatively small force to train Afghan security forces and protect some population centers, and to condition more troops on the Afghans’ meeting objectives, like committing to taking full responsibility for national defense by a specific date.

And while General McChrystal warned of failure if additional troops were not deployed, Mr Eikenberry concluded by cautioning of competing risks “that we will become more deeply engaged here with no way to extricate ourselves, short of allowing the country to descend again into lawlessness and chaos.” • Source: “The New Times”, 25 January 2010

## Horizontes y Debates

### Novedad: Edición española de Zeit-Fragen/ Current Concerns

Por deseo de muchos lectores la Cooperativa Zeit-Fragen publicará también en el futuro una edición española de nuestro periódico con el nombre de Horizontes y Debates. Se prevé aparezca mensualmente.

El número 0 acaba de ser impreso y puede ser distribuido gratuitamente.

Les rogamos comuniquen a la redacción [redaktion@zeit-fragen.ch](mailto:redaktion@zeit-fragen.ch) las direcciones de los posibles interesados en recibir el periódico.

## La CIA compra una empresa que monitorea blogs, Twitter, YouTube y Amazon

En la revista WIRED, se reveló que In-Q-Tel, una empresa inversionista de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia de Estados Unidos (CIA), acaba de hacer grandes inversiones en un negocio dedicado a monitorear los medios y redes sociales. Esta empresa, Visible Technologies, vigila cada día más de medio millón de sitios en internet, revisando más de un millón de conversaciones, foros y posts en diferentes blogs, foros en línea, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter y Amazon.

Los clientes de Visible Technologies reciben información en tiempo real sobre lo que se está diciendo y haciendo en el ciberespacio, basada en una serie de palabras claves.

El vocero de Visible Technologies, Donald Tighe, reveló que la CIA les pidió monitorear a los medios sociales extranjeros e instalar un sistema de “detección temprana” para informar a la agencia de inteligencia sobre “cómo los asuntos de interés se están mani-

festando a nivel internacional”. Pero también, se utiliza a nivel nacional, dentro de Estados Unidos, para monitorear a los bloggers y tweeters domésticos.

Visible también suministra un servicio similar a empresas de comunicación, como Dell, AT&T, Verizon y Microsoft, para informarles sobre lo que están diciendo en los foros de ciberespacio sobre sus productos.

La comunidad de inteligencia ha tenido un gran interés durante muchos años en los medios sociales y las redes sociales en internet. In-Q-Tel ha realizado grandes inversiones en Facebook y otras empresas que reúnen datos e información de millones de usuarios por todo el mundo.

Reportaje de Wired: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/10/exclusive-us-spies-buy-stake-in-twitter-blog-monitoring-firm/>  
<http://aporrea.org/tiburon/n144282.html>

# “Novena” – Fresh Products from the Goms, 4000 Feet above Sea Level

by Hedwig Schär, Switzerland

The “Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Berggebiete SAB” (Swiss Working Group for Mountainous Regions) promotes the improvement of life conditions and the chances for development of the population in mountainous regions. It has recognized increasingly that, aside from agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play an important role for the economic safety in these regions. The economy action plan, passed in September 2009, is meant to lay the foundations for this and to improve this development. (www.sab.ch).

A company where these requirements have been fulfilled for a long time is “Novena Fresh Products” in Ulrichen in Valais.

Cross-country skiing up the beautiful Goms valley, one would not guess that the inconspicuous façade of the shed and the hangar of the former military airport Ulrichen contain a pasta production facility.

Where many people go for vacation, fresh foods have been produced since 1994. The company’s name originates from the Nufenen (ital. Novena) pass, leading into the Ticino.

The owner of the company, *Roman Bernegger* who finished an education as food engineer at the ETH in Zurich, has been involved with the mountainous region since his childhood. Born in Appenzell, he helped his relatives making hay in Grisons where he often spent his holidays. He gained experience with producing pasta in Canada where he lived for a few years. Back in Switzerland, he did not expect to be working with pasta again. He was more interested in dairy products. But in Switzerland, the dairy industry is in steady hands. Since pasta was a growing market, Roman Bernegger returned to his former product. There is high demand in urban regions, a dynamic market. Bernegger’s own small refrigerator vans deliver his products all over Switzerland.

From the start, Bernegger tried to produce in a regional and organic way. Today, production is still organic, but *Novena* had to extend its procurement beyond the region because many raw materials could not be obtained in Valais in an organic way. Roman Bernegger’s company was the first to produce organic pasta.

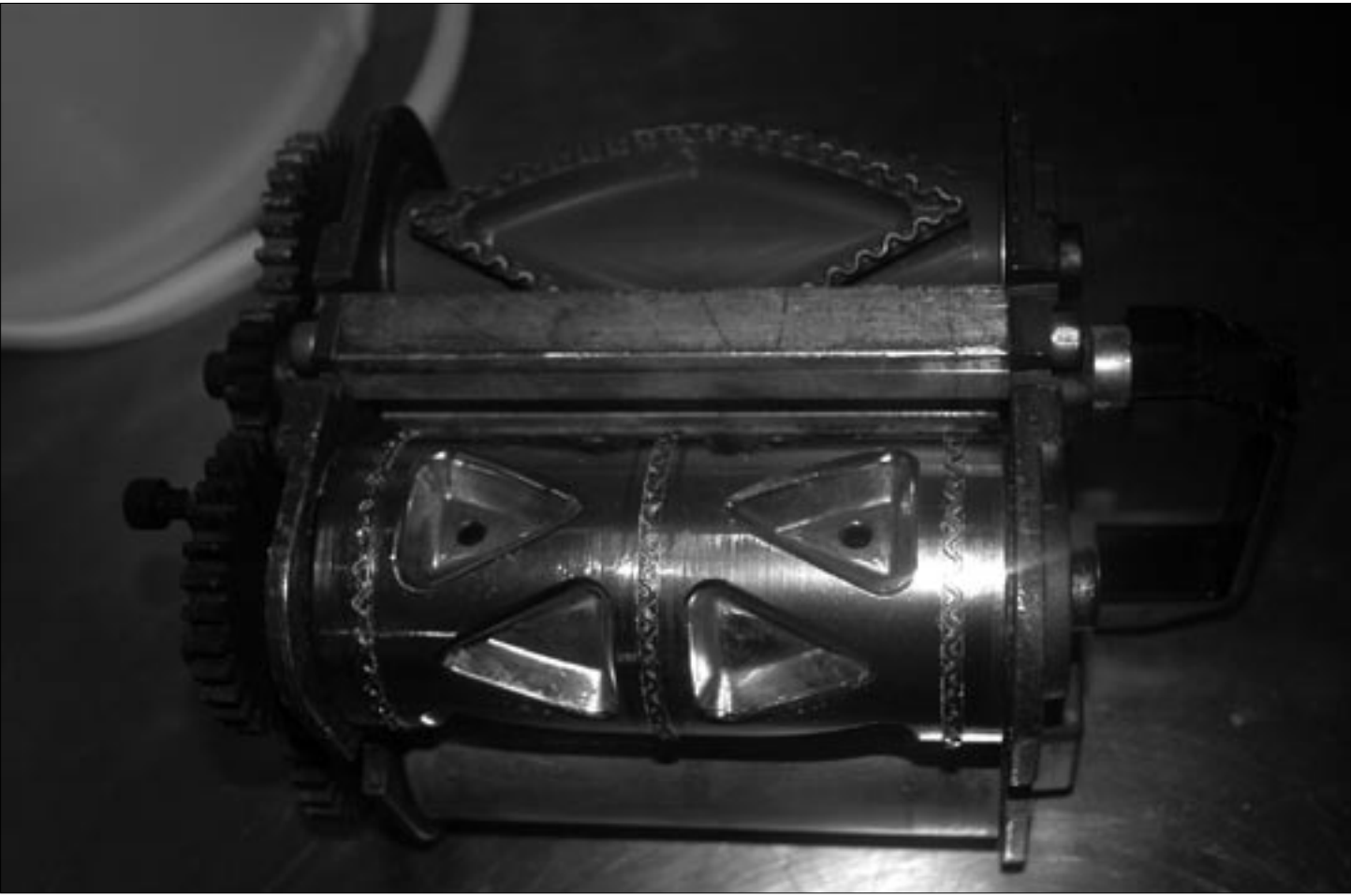
To provide a solid basis, he built up a network of suppliers and customers. “It is about give and take in this business”, Bernegger says.

## Mountainous region

The main problem is the seasonality originating from tourism, Roman Bernegger reports. When the guests are gone, everything comes to a standstill. He did not want a seasonal business but production throughout the year.

In Valais, they have a saying: “Everything goes down the Rhone River”. This means, more and more business is withdrawn from the mountainous region. The problem is that not much is moving in the opposite direction; not many people move up here. For example, pension fund money cannot be invested in these peripheral regions because economy is too feeble there. This makes it very difficult to build up a company, even more so because also banks are very cautious in giving credit. So Bernegger’s company started as a one-man business and he put much of his own money into it. Fortunately, his wife has been working in a job all the time allowing them to fill gaps.

Roman Bernegger would like to see more entrepreneurial spirit and less bureaucracy.



Roller for the production of ravioli: Very easily it can be installed into the machine. (picture hs)

The mills grind too slow in this sector! He has filled out unbelievably many applications and forms. But when building up a company, you have to move forward and cannot always wait until applications are processed.

Another problem of peripheral regions is the public infrastructure, e.g. the postal service. In the beginning, he could distribute his products by mail. When the service gradually deteriorated over the last years, he had to buy another refrigerator van to be more independent and reliable.

With a smile, Bernegger says that his location is actually a very central one. Within a few hours, he can reach Milan, Geneva or Zurich, three metropolises.

## The Factory

The fresh product factory works 52 weeks a year. Interestingly, neither Christmas nor New Year are peak periods for sales. March is the best month. Roman Bernegger offers the explanation that this is the time when most people are in Switzerland. There are

some tourists around and the locals are not on vacation.

Work starts at five o’clock in the morning, ending at eight in the evening. Employees come from the region, working in two shifts which overlap at noon. Overall, there are 15 full-time jobs at *Novena*: cooks, sales people, bakers, mechanics and drivers. Many employees work flexibly in the position where they are most needed or where they like to work. For example, one of the bakers enjoys also working as a driver in distribution.

## Products and their manufacturing

Novena produces all kinds of pasta. Ravioli with delicious stuffing are very popular. These stuffing is produced in the former cheese dairy and then brought to the former military airport hangar where the ravioli, tortellini or cannelloni are stuffed. Many kinds of stuffing are produced seasonally like the one containing wild garlic in spring or pumpkin and mushrooms in autumn. The product line is constantly being enlarged. Some ideas come

from customers. The cook, however, also has a say in it.

In the center of the former hangar, there is a large cooling chamber which is kept at a temperature between 0° and 2° Celsius. Here, the finished products are stored before distribution. Production and packaging are taking place around this room. Next to the entrance, we pass a dirt barrier, and then we are facing the machine which is producing the dough and rolls it out. Very flexibly, it is possible to attach another machine which just produces noodles or one that produces ravioli in various forms. For this, rollers in various sizes and shapes are used (see picture). This enables the employees to easily produce various pasta types according to the demand. This fast switching allows great flexibility. Every day starts with planning the production according to the orders.

If desired, ravioli and tortellini are also produced by hand. This is mostly done for restaurants. Because it is specialized

in it, *Novena* can deliver in consistent quality.

Quality and freshness is the highest priority. Deliveries must also be on time. The expression “fresh” in the company’s name can be taken at face value.

Roman Bernegger bought the machines in Italy, but he extended and improved them according to his own plans and thus optimized them for his needs. Most machine units are available in duplicate, so that production can continue even if one machine fails.

## Distribution

*Novena* does not have a homepage and there is no advertisement for it in the media. Customers are hotels, restaurants and delicatessen shops.

*Novena* also produces pasta for Gran Alpin, a cooperative from Grisons consisting of 50 organic farms producing wheat, rye, barley and spelt.

Two years ago, the company started producing five products for *Coop* under the brand name *Pro Montagna*.

Bernegger’s strong point is his development of a good and broad range of customers. Frequently, the word of mouth advertising works. It takes stamina, sometimes over years. In one case, he had presented himself in a hotel, showing some samples. It did not work out that time. However, when the hotel came under new management, but the cook remained on the job, he remembered the presentation and Bernegger had a new customer. Especially in gastronomy, it takes a lot of patience.

To keep demand on a high level, it takes quality and several pillars. Therefore, Novena could survive the financial crisis. There were some blows, but due to the broad reach, they could be absorbed.

Roman Bernegger’s company realizes many of the ideas of the SAB: local jobs for skilled workers, access to Swiss markets, cooperation between companies, creation of networks, usage of available infrastructure and the improvement of the image of the mountainous regions as a workplace. All this provides a sustainable economic development in the region.

With all his stamina and all his heart, Roman Bernegger has been working for 15 years along the foundations which the SAB passed in 2009.

This company has been formed by an enormous amount of commitment, initiative and persistence. We hope that many more companies will be built up or enlarged in the peripheral regions!

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