

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*

Winter session 2016

Popular initiative “For Food Security”

No “walls up policy”, but a commandment of the hour – not only for Switzerland

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

On 29 November 2016, the Council of States reviewed the Popular initiative “For Food Security”. The initiative was submitted by the Swiss Farmers’ Union (SBV) on 8 July 2014 with nearly 150,000 valid signatures collected in only three months.¹ On 9 March 2016, the National Council voted – against the proposals of the Federal Council and the National Council Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation (CEAT-N) – to support this initiative (with 91 votes in favour, 83 against and 19 abstentions). After that, the committee of the Council of States (CEAT-S) drew up a counter draft.² Although the objective of this was widely different from the approach of the people’s initiative, the Council of States adopted it without amendments on 29 November 2016 (with 38 ayes against 4 nays) and recommended the people’s initiative for rejection. So the bill has

now been passed back to the National Council.

Food security and a high degree of self-sufficiency through family enterprises at local level are justified concerns of fundamental importance for all peoples. That is why they were anchored in the World Agricultural Report of 2008.³ Small farm structures are the best guarantors for local food security, as well as for national and regional food sovereignty, and must therefore be not only respected but also actively promoted. It must be urgently recommended to include these principles, which also apply to wealthy countries such as Switzerland, into further state-political debate.

The fact that so many Swiss people signed the initiative in such a short time should be taken heed of: a large part of the population is looking for good quality as well as local origin of its food and is

also as far as possible willing to pay accordingly more. This attitude is connected to a desire to be as little dependent on foreign countries as possible. In view of the tense international situation and the fact that our spears are evidently of a differing length when we negotiate with great powers such as the EU or the USA, one cannot merely dismiss this concern of many Swiss as a wish for a Swiss “walls up policy”.

In addition to the already discussed initiative, two others were submitted, representing concerns partly of similar and partly of different kinds: “For Food Sovereignty. Agriculture concerns all of us” and “For healthy and environmentally friendly and fairly produced food” (Fair Food Initiative).⁴ Both will also come to the vote in the near future.

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The initiative’s core piece is strengthening domestic production

A criticism of the Council of States’ counter draft

Interview with Hansjörg Rüeeggsegger, President SALS Switzerland¹, President of Berne Farmers’ Federation (“Bauernverband”), Riggisberg (BE) and board member of Swiss Farmers’ Union (SFU)



Hans Jörg
Rüeeggsegger
(picture ma)

Current Concerns: With interest I read your comments in the “Schweizer Bauer” (Swiss Farmer) of 19 November². There you say that in the counter draft you miss the strengthening of domestic production. Is that not the initiative’s core piece?

Hansjörg Rüeeggsegger: Yes, this is one of the core points of the initiative. Therefore, SALS is critical against the counter draft.

But the Farmers’ Union board might be willing to withdraw the initiative in favor of the counter draft?

That entirely depends on how the votes of the members of the Council of States will be tomorrow, 29 November 2016. Of course, the SFU has been in contact with members of the Council of States Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation. We will see which direction the debate will take. From my own experience as President of Berne Farmers’ Federation I know that one should send signals at the right time that one would be ready to negotiate. But for us from SALS, for me it is clear, that strengthening of domestic production must be in the submission.

So, it is up to you and also to the SFU whether tomorrow the Council of States will go even more in the direction of the initiative’s text? [What he did not do on 29 November 2016; Comment Current Concerns]

I agree.

Many open questions in the counter draft

In its report, the Council of States maintains that its counter draft would leave less room for interpretation than the initiative’s text. But in the “Schweizer Bauer” (Swiss farmer) you point out that many formulations do not clarify what is meant by: for example, with the promotion of a “locally-adjusted and resource-efficient food production” or a “market-oriented agriculture and food industry”.

I agree. Where in wide circles one agrees in “Federal Berne” is that food security has to be written into the Federal Constitution. But how is this supposed to happen ... both, the counter proposal and

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"Popular initiative ..."

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Counter draft is to handle the three people's initiatives all in one go

Anyone who compares the counter proposal of the *council of States Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation (CEAT-S)* with the initiative text will find only *one* content-related conformity: The Confederation is to take measures to safeguard against the loss of cultivated land (i.e. soil and land cultivated and used by agriculture). On the other hand, the main focus of the people's initiative on Food Security, i.e. *the strengthening of domestic production of foodstuffs and the highest possible level of self-sufficiency*, does not appear in the counter proposal. In its report of 24 January 2015, the Federal Council even criticises the fact that *"the initiative is one-sided and unbalanced because it is focused too much on domestic production."*⁵ Objection! The people's initiative focuses on the point that is important to its initiators. It is precisely the purpose of the right of initiative that citizens will be able to demand that which they miss in the authorities' policy.

The intentions of the *CEAT-S* counter proposal are however quite different: "The aim is to *persuade the initiators to withdraw their initiative* by means of a con-

vincing formulation. [...] Furthermore, according to the committee's opinion the key of its draft bill is the support of the orientation of the Confederation's current agricultural policy and the following up on the path chosen by its agricultural policy 2014–2017. There should be *no backwards-looking or even protectionist elements* [...]. In addition, the counter draft [...] should, as far as possible, *include those of the concerns of the 'Fair Food Initiative' and the people's initiative 'For Food Sovereignty' that are capable of winning a majority, so as to provide a better starting point for countering these two initiatives.*"⁶ (Accentuations by *Current Concerns*)

In short, the majority of the Council of States committee have already decided in advance that they will try to do more than subjugate the current initiative: they will also try to beat off the next two initiatives – if possible all three in the same referendum.

The counter draft by parliament will allow for a postponement of the referendum on the current initiative for another year, namely until January 2018. Until then, the other two initiatives should also be ready to be put to the vote.

The Council of States approved the extension of the deadline on 29 November, the *CEAT-N* requested the National Coun-

cil to extend the period of treatment to 8 January 2018. The Grand Chamber will presumably agree to this extension of the period on the last day of its session (15 December); there will be no discussion of this matter. On request, National Councilor *Markus Ritter*, member of the National Council and president of the *Swiss Farmers' Union*, has disclosed that thus all options remain open to the National Council. By agreeing to the extension of the term, it consents to discuss the counter proposal, but it can then also reject this.

All three initiatives would prevent an agricultural agreement with the EU and Switzerland's link-up to TTIP

According to the Council of States's report, all three initiatives contain "protectionist elements", i.e. they demand increased state interventions in the food market in favour of the maintenance and strengthening of good and sustainable domestic production and the control of food imports. These requirements, in turn, would be compatible neither with an "opening of the markets" or an agricultural agreement with the EU nor with TTIP.

Let me quote two free democratic (or shall we say, neoliberal?) voices from the

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"The initiative's core piece ..."

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the initiative are formulated very openly. Depending on the interpretation, a "locally-adapted and resource-efficient food production" could be an invitation for more environmental requirements and the shift of certain production branches abroad. Or it could also mean that every Swiss company has to switch to organic production.

The wording "market-oriented agriculture and nutrition" could also open the door to industrial agriculture. Although many Swiss consumers appreciate the smaller family businesses, the basic conditions must also be such that these companies can survive!

A further point in the counter proposal, which we are critical of is the issue of trade relations across the Swiss border. There is a question mark for us. How is this interpreted? Is it what we do imagine or what the advocates of a "border opening" imagine?

Should the door be left open with this for an agricultural agreement with the EU and/or for TTIP?

This is quite possible. On this point I am very critical, because in the Council of States, there are of course, members who want a border opening in this sense. If the

Council of States is really going in this direction, which you suspect – one can see that fairly quickly.

Security of supply for the population must be ensured throughout the world

Many people believe that we have no problems with importing the food we need in Switzerland. You and I belong to the post-war generation, but there have been times when this was not so sure. We do not know if it will always be as it is today. Are we not to look for more self-sufficiency?

This is an important question. The global demand for food is increasing. Too much rain – too little rain, irritating factors such as the not infinitely occurring phosphorus, the available fresh water, droughts and lack of water restrict the production in many countries. This will increase. Food production and distribution is becoming an ever more important issue. So this is why I'm really not convinced that it would be the one solution to import more food. Hence, other countries have to watch out already today to be able to feed their population. We in Europe live in luxury – but there are areas, for example in southern Spain, southern Italy, or Greece where not everything is on the shelves like here. Therefore, food production is of great importance. I think food could even be a warfare or reason for war – when it comes to the territory ...

... or the water. Actually, the advocates of a market opening would have to take this into consideration as well, or?

They usually do not look this far. Many have only the next five or perhaps ten years on their mind. That makes me start thinking. It is only that we in Switzerland have sixty or eighty thousand more people each year. They need space and need to be nourished. In China or other countries the population grows disproportionately. Something is approaching us, which we have to consider holistically.

Thank you, Mr Rüeßegger, for the illuminating conversation. •

(Interview *Marianne Wüthrich*)

¹ *The Swiss Association for a Strong Agricultural and Food Sector (SALS Switzerland)* is committed to a producing agriculture and a strong food industry in Switzerland. It represents the interests of the agricultural and food sector in the context of increasing opening and internationalisation of the agricultural markets. It is specifically aiming against free trade agreements, which threaten Swiss agriculture. That is why in particular, it rejects an agreement on agricultural free trade with the European Union.

² "Counter draft should be improved". Interview with Hansjörg Rüeßegger, President of SALS. In: *Schweizer Bauer* from 19.11.2016

Initiative or counter draft? Considerable statements on democracy and bureaucracy

by Thomas Minder, independent Councillor of States (Canton of Schaffhausen)



Thomas Minder
(picture mw)

As a rule, the original is better than a copy, and the original is the initiative text. If you are committed to an initiative, with a lot of effort and money, and have gathered signatures in the street, you are also in the referendum cam-

campaign more dedicated to it than to a counterproposal. I would prefer to have an initiative, behind which there is an initiative committee, which is committed with heart blood, rather than to have a counterproposal, which is advocated only half-heartedly.

But the initiative is also better in terms of content. Paragraph 2 deals with the reduction of administrative burdens, so that the

farmers do not become bureaucrats [and a bigger portion of direct payments reach the farmers instead of seeping away in the administration]. I do not understand why the Economic Affairs and Taxation Committee EATC has omitted this important concern of the initiative in its counterproposal.

If you see how the initiatives are implemented in Berne, the Farmers' Association Union as a large lobbying organization should have written five or ten paragraphs rather than just two. Whether the initiative or the counterproposal is accepted – both texts are formulated very spongy, and the parliament then makes anything out of it, we have already experienced this several times. In my initiative [initiative against rip-off salaries] I made 24 insinuations, I advise all committees to proceed in this sense as well.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"National Initiative ..."

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Council of States debate of 29 November 2016⁷:

Ruedi Noser, FDP Zurich: "[...] Today's agricultural policy is luring farmers into a false sense of security. It has once more to be made clear to all farmers that the opening up of the markets will continue, that it will also be extended to other areas, and that this change cannot be stopped." Therefore Noser calls for "an agricultural policy that promotes structural change."

Federal President Johann Schneider-Ammann: "As has been pointed out several times, the background of the commission's concept is *not only the one initiative* that we have to tackle, *but all three of them*. They are lying ahead and *they need clarification*. I very much hope that the draft will be adopted, and let me say it succinctly, I also very much hope that the Farmers' Union will in due course withdraw its initiative in response to this counter draft.

[...] With AP 2014-2017, we have defined an open agricultural policy. The initiative is in some way a response to this AP 2014-2017, and it wants to relativise this openness. That would not benefit the country. Ergo we must oppose this development. The counter draft declares for the cross-border activity *expressis verbis*."

* * *

When Ruedi Noser speaks about "structural change", he means that ultimately

only large-scale farms will be able to survive (of which there are not many in Switzerland, for geographical reasons and lack of space) and that intensive agriculture should be replaced by landscape management (golf courses, nature parks). An "open agricultural policy" means being ready to conclude free trade agreements such as the EU agricultural agreement or TTIP.

Based on these facts, the following further action strategies are to be recommended:

- The National Council and its committee (CEAT-N) *should reject the CEAT-*

S counter draft because it targets very different goals from those of the initiative.

- The three Initiative Committees *should support each other in the referendum campaign because each of their initiatives has better chances if they are mutually supportive!* It would not lead to the desired result if one committee stood up against the others – in the erroneous belief that this would benefit its own initiative ...
- The Initiative Committee and the Swiss Farmers' Union *should in no case withdraw their initiative "For Food Security" in favour of a counter proposal that would not only not prevent the decline of farming but, on the contrary, even accelerate it.*

150,000 citizens have signed their initiative because they want to secure the survival of a strong Swiss production and greater independence from abroad concerning our food supplies. The Swiss Farmers' Union has to prove itself worthy of this, the public's great confidence in them.

¹ cf. Werner Wüthrich. Where will Swiss agriculture go from here? In: *Current Concerns* No. 14 of 30 June 2016

² *Report of the Council of States Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation (CEAT-S)* of 3 November 2016, p. 7; Cited: Report CEAT-S

³ "Ways out of the hunger crisis: the findings and consequences of the World Agriculture Report. Proposals for an agriculture of tomorrow" (reproduction of the main contents)

⁴ cf. Werner Wüthrich. Where will Swiss agriculture go from here? In: *Current Concerns* No. 14 of 30 June 2016

⁵ *CEAT-S report*, p. 4

⁶ *CEAT-S report*, p. 8/9

⁷ <https://www.parlament.ch/en/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=38675>

Text of the initiative:

Art. 104a (amended) Food Security

- 1 The Confederation shall encourage the supply of the population with foodstuffs grown by diversified and sustainable domestic sources; in particular, it shall take effective measures against the loss of productive land, including summering grazing areas, and for the implementation of a strategy of quality.
- 2 It shall ensure low administrative expense and adequate security of investment and legal certainty in agriculture.

Art. 197 (11)

11. Transitional provisions of Art. 104a
No later than two years after the adoption of Article 104a by the people and the cantons, the Federal Council shall

request the Federal Assembly to submit the implementing legislation.

Text of the CEAT-S counter draft:

Art. 104a Food security

In order to ensure the supply of the population with food, the Confederation shall lay the foundations for:

- a. securing the basis for agricultural production, in particular the cultivated land;
- b. site-adapted and resource-efficient food production;
- c. market-oriented agriculture and food industry;
- d. cross-border trade relations which contribute to the sustainable development of the agricultural and food industry;
- e. the resource-friendly handling of food.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The Swiss hydro power and its future

by Narcisse Seppey, Hérémence VS

The “Blue Gold” (water) and the “Black Gold” (crude oil) have a common provenance, they are contemporaries tied to the industrial era, and they render similar services such as driving building machinery replacing pick and shovel, and trucks having unburdened the backs of donkeys and humans. Additionally, they contributed to living comfort such as lighting, heating, kitchen facilities and washing machines. Both driving forces stem all along from rough places: either from the high mountain wilderness or from the desert.

For some people it appeared to be unfair that this “manna” came from the sky and they became jealous of the beneficiaries, while the economic benefits of intensive agriculture and the industrial enterprises had to be created by humans.

Controversial older energy sources

Productivity in the industrial age was based on three sources of energy: coal to warm houses and to drive trains and ships; crude oil to operate larger engines; electricity for lighting and propelling small engines.

Today all these three natural energy sources are controversial: coal because of environmental pollution caused by fine particulate matter; oil due to air pollution and global warming attributed to it; hydroelectric power due to the reducing of the water flow rates in watercourses.

Newer energy sources

Nuclear power, as a major discovery of the 20th century, at the beginning was seen as a “godsend”. It creates a phenomenal force and had none of the drawbacks of the existing energy sources. In most industrialized countries nuclear energy has overtaken the other energy sources with its rapid spreading.

But even this much-vaunted energy star has its Achilles heel. More than any other energy sources it produces great concerns: Chernobyl showed that a destroyed nuclear power plant can be as devastating in 1,000 km distance as in the direct neighbourhood. Fukushima has illustrated the rapid loss of confidence in nuclear power plants in a country, where nuclear power has enjoyed a high reputation. The comprehensive discussion on potential damages has made the “local” effects of Hiroshima and Nagasaki forgotten. The fear of a nuclear disaster affects the whole world. In economically better situated countries like Switzerland the great benefits of this energy source are fading into the background because of the fears of a serious accident in a nuclear power plant and cause the population to demand phasing the nuclear power out.

Covering the current needs

In our country as well as in the neighbouring countries nuclear energy covers the energy needs to a higher percentage than any other source. Without a replacement at hand, its elimination is hardly possible.

Some countries – Germany as a pioneer – have funded the production of alternative energy with huge financial means. But energy from coal is still being used – obtained, for example, in the world’s largest mine stemming from the early 1980s – despite its contribution to air pollution. One is still heading for clean and renewable energy sources as follows:

There is the sun pleasing all countries of the world with its generous warming rays. Then there is the wind propelling our wind turbines and in third place the geothermal energy and heat pumps completing the list.

Up-to-date in our European region demand on energy is abundantly covered, as can be seen by falling prices. This situation results from government investment and subsidies for the development of new types of energy.

Future needs

Demand of energy never ever dwindled, despite ongoing calls for saving and deterrent measures against the waste of electricity. Future demand will continue to rise for various reasons:

On the one hand in our countries population increases from year to year, especially due to immigration, either for humanitarian reasons or on the basis of the desire for a better life. On the other hand, a better economic life opens up to broader layers of the population. One of the first effects will be the increase of energy consumption.

Foreseeable development of the current sources of energy

Currently none of the unwanted energy sources is abandoned: the nuclear power plants are still in operation, the coal is still mined and burned, oil drives still the vast majority of motor vehicles and supplies together with natural gas a large part of the heating systems.

These energies face their end, on which ever point in time is still unclear and variable depending on the country. The current alternative energy sources – others will join – enable this change. Today all peoples are aware of the dangers of air pollution and global warming and as well of the danger of a (regional) nuclear disaster. The pioneering countries will get other countries following. The already signed international agreements are clear signs of it.

The present situation of hydropower

The collapse of energy prices hurts hydroelectric power producers with full force. Their prices are by no means excessive. Compared to the solar and wind energy, they are no longer competitive, because those benefit from government subsidies, generating a significant distortion of competition.

The trend towards globalization of the economy strengthens even the temptation to procure energy as well as food from abroad at lower prices. In these two areas – to stick to those only – a wide part of the population pins the eyes on the purse, instead of placing value on quality and security of supply.

Comparison of the respective advantages

Even though they are clean and renewable, solar and wind power have weaknesses that become more and more evident now: the solar energy depends on the activities of a capricious star. At night in deep sleep, it often takes a siesta during the day, once his place is taken by rain or fog. Wind energy is exposed to mood swings as well, because the wind is blowing at speeds between 0 and 200 km per hour. Both energies depend on the season, and the most active seasons are not always the times with the highest energy demand. The solar installation provides sufficient heating capacity for a house in the winter, but produces excessive unneeded energy in the summer.

On the same market, hydropower is the only energy that can be produced without excess, immediately, and at our fingertips at day or at night, winter or summer.

A look into the future

In future, energy consumption will just rise. In addition to more economic comfort for the traditionally poor almost every modern activity requires energy. In each flat it needs energy to every nook and cranny, the residents need energy to operate their personal utilities opening them the door to social contacts.

The traditional energies will evolve in parallel in a reverse direction: one will pinpoint the environmentally harmful energy technologies ever more, and their replacement will be inevitable, because it is technically and financially feasible. Promoting electric cars, if spread widely, will massively hit the oil and gas sector.

The dangerous energies, however, will be given up once a replacement is there.

What I expect of Donald Trump ...

Interview with Prof Dr iur et phil Alfred de Zayas

Current Concerns: Professor de Zayas, you are an American citizen, formerly a Wall Street lawyer. You live in Switzerland since 1981 and are equipped with ample experience and knowledge in international politics, especially in international law. Certainly you have paid attention to the recent elections in the US. Contrary to all forecasts Donald Trump was elected US president. Were you surprised by this outcome?
Prof Alfred de Zayas: Like everybody else, I am influenced by the media and I was indeed surprised by the result. My candidates would have been *Bernie Sanders* or *Elizabeth Warren* on the Democratic side, *Ron Paul* or *Patrick Buchanan* on the Republican side. I did not like the gladiator match *Trump* versus *Clinton* and I am glad that the elections are over. In fact I have been a registered Republican since my time at Harvard and I used to be very active there in the Harvard Republican Club. What I am looking for in candidates is ethics, straight-forwardness, sincerity, common decency, a modicum of modesty, respect of people with different opinions and a commitment to peace and dialogue.

What does that actually mean in politics?
 In principle, I would like to see the US president change the old imperial paradigm and start respecting the sovereignty of other states instead of pretending to make other people happy by exporting our US ideas to the rest of the world and bullying people to adopt them. By now we should know that “democracy” cannot be exported. Most importantly, we should stop demanding regime changes in other countries, let alone financing coups d'état.

“The Swiss hydro power and ...”

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The modern world esteems to protect itself against all possible risks.

Fundamental changes will probably occur faster than expected: on the basis of their power needs and the offerings of their vendors people are flirting increasingly with their own electricity production. The necessary photovoltaic panels are becoming more powerful and less expensive. Such a decision, however, requires a connection to the power supply, on the one hand to get energy when there is insufficient production, on the other hand to feed into the grid at production in excess.

If this solution spreads nationwide, hundreds of thousands of homeowners become producing consumers, while today only a few hundred large companies keep the energy production in hands.

What do you reckon about Donald Trump?

No matter whether I like him or not, one has to face reality and make the best of the new situation. Let's be optimistic. Everyday politics will be different from his election campaign speeches. Most of all, Trump needs good advisers instead of rigid ideologues or die-hard radical anti-communists. Unfortunately, he made some rather nasty utterances after the death of *Fidel Castro*, which were really inappropriate. Whether he liked *Fidel Castro* or not, *Castro* was a larger-than-life historical figure, of the stature of a *Nelson Mandela* or *Mahatma Gandhi*. Of course, he did bad things, but he also gave the example of international solidarity to the world, sent Cuban doctors to many countries in need, and ensured free education and health care for the Cuban people. The remarks of pope *Francis* on *Castro's* death were just right.

How do you judge his foreign policy?

In fact we simply don't know enough to predict what the world will have to face. A positive aspect is that Trump often argued against the current practice of “interventionism”. He wants to stop using NATO as a weapon of intervention or getting engaged in even more adventures and regime change attempts. Hopefully he will end the role of the US as policeman of the world. I think this is necessary, considering the consequences of our foreign policy in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria – catastrophe after catastrophe.

How would you judge his opinion about the Russian president Wladimir Putin?

If all homeowners participate in this development, whether because of purely economic considerations or because it is fashionable today, production could cover the whole demand, without recourse on oil and nuclear power.

What kind of future does the hydropower in Switzerland have?

If the use of crude oil and nuclear power continues much longer, the Alpine reservoirs could remain filled all year-round. On the basis of the previous considerations, such a development is rather unrealistic, especially in Switzerland.

If one, however, considers the widespread production of alternative energies by private people, a joint approach is vital. In this case, the hydropower is the ideal partner, because it can bridge phases with lack of energy and store abundant energy.

It is obvious that the policy will play a crucial role in this area. If our country –

They respect each other. It is important to note that Trump is not interested in challenging Putin or provoking him. A solution for the unstable situation in the Ukraine will be found more easily with Trump than with Clinton.



Alfred de Zayas
(picture ma)

And where do you see problems in the future foreign policies?

Apparently Trump wants to dismantle the nuclear deal with Iran. I think this is ill-advised. Whether we like it or not, Persia has a long history, it has legitimate aspirations, and one has to acknowledge that.

What is your opinion about the plans of Donald Trump regarding the economy?

Trump is an entrepreneur himself. Business people often have innovative ideas. In any case he is right with his criticism of the megalomaniac trade agreements such as Nafta, TPP, TTIP, TiSA and so on. These agreements are beneficial for multinational corporations, which don't even pay their taxes because they transfer their profits to tax-havens. It is necessary to scrutinize all these agreements very carefully and work them over so that all may benefit from globalization and not just some elites. Despite being a billionaire himself, Trump has shown an interest in the fate of the American middle class and wants to do something against un-

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following certain other states – wanted to support the alternative power production of private people with massive subsidies, so it would need to fund hydroelectric power equally, because the latter would otherwise inevitably lose its impact. If the national and cantonal policy targets balanced subsidies, the large power providers will cooperate.

In addition to the advantages of being a single always usable, clean and renewable energy, hydroelectric power offers also the great advantage of being domestic instead of the dependance on foreign energy supply.

It is also crucial that Swiss policy keeps sight of the benefits of independence from abroad and of federalism inside the country in the energy sector as well as in all other areas that affect the entire country and its people!

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"What I expect of ..."

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employment. I also hope he can serve the human rights of all Americans, or to put it bluntly, make sure that the "silent majority" is no longer systematically lied to by the corporate media. Moreover I hope he can maintain the old American Christian traditions, so that Christmas for-instance remains Christian instead of degenerating into a mere market of consumerism. I oppose the idea to build a wall between the US and Mexico. There are other means to organize legal immigration. After all America is a country of immigrants per definition, something which constitutes a difference between the United States and Germany or Switzerland, for example. Trump is the descendant of German and Scottish immigrants.

Is there anything peculiar about the US election result?

Well, it is most peculiar that millions of Americans have turned their backs to the established media. Basically the whole media industry was biased against Trump – they actively tried to defame him, they lied and misquoted him – but still he has won. The top 50 newspapers in the country endorsed Clinton and the nastiness with which television commentators put words in Trump's mouth, distorted his message, quoted him out of context – was breathtaking. This is a revolution, mainly of the younger voters, against the establishment, against anything smelling of "political correctness". Millions of people said "We've had it" – enough of the manipulation by the "New York Times", "Wall Street journal", "Financial Times", "Washington Post", CNN and so on. Obviously many voters got their information from the internet, *facebook* and *twitter*.

Will the media change somehow?

Let's see. The "New York Times" still hasn't come to terms with the result. Many commentators in the "established" media just go on as if they could prevent the inauguration of Trump, pretending that a new vote count in Michigan or Pennsylvania would bring Hillary Clinton to Washington after all. Strange! They even use the old weaponry, the fatigued "reductio ad Hitlerum", comparing Trump to *Hitler*. I believe no sensible person falls for such tricks anymore or is willing to embrace the hackneyed neoliberal mantras. With abusive speech and inappropriate historical comparisons these media will get even more irrelevant than they already are.

Why has Hillary Clinton lost the elections? She was the candidate of the discredited establishment. Everybody expected "business as usual" from her presidency. The deep disappointment of the US-Americans

about these elites has been underestimated. The fact that all lobbies supported Clinton is also interesting – not only the so-called military-industrial complex but also Wall Street and the LGBT lobby. Still Trump has won. That is a lot of food for thought.

After the elections several demonstrations and protests against Donald Trump took place. What do think about these protests?

Evidently a lot of people only give lip service to democracy and the democratic process. Whoever doesn't agree with the policy of the new president should offer alternative proposals for discussion. Rowdy anti-Trump agitation will turn out to be counter-productive.

What do you expect now regarding the European politicians?

Whether they like it or not, they will have to adapt. Some of them will eat their words. How arrogant of CDU politician *Norbert Röttgen*, for example, to have voiced "warnings" against Trump. How trivial and embarrassing the term "catastrophe" used by SPD politician *Ralf Stegner* or the undiplomatic accusation of *Frank-Walter Steinmeier* who called Trump a "hate preacher". However, politicians often are surprisingly opportunistic, they will find other accommodations. Nobody expects vassal behavior but also no intransigence regarding TTIP and TISA. *Ulrich Grillo*, the pompous chief of the *Federation of German Industries* made a rather funny remark when he condemned the USA in strong words and demanded that "racism, chauvinism, populism and sexism" had to stop, and that there would be a "trade war" should Trump try to hamper free trade. Really?

If you had a chance to speak with Donald Trump what would you advise him?

I would suggest to him to reinvigorate the values of the US constitution, to aim for social justice, invest in the infrastructure and the education of the youth. I would propose that he should tell the Europeans: Let people in other countries find their own way to democracy, stop interfering with internal affairs of countries such as Austria, Hungary or the Ukraine. Leave the political non-culture of mobbing and blackmailing behind. I would argue he should make *Goldman Sachs* and others in Wall Street pay their taxes and reimburse the government for the 2008 bailout. I would also suggest he should check all existing trade agreements so that more justice for all might be achieved.

Most of all I would try to make a case for peace – no more sanctions against Cuba, Russia or Iran. No more adventures, no wars against Russia, against China or against Iran. That way human rights would thrive on their own. I wish him good success, for the American people, for Europe and the world.

Of course, Donald Trump will not be able to escape the constraints of the political routine, but step by step he might be able to reduce the nonsense of the corrupt American (and maybe even of the European) elites. After all, he has dared to openly say that the emperor has no clothes. The fraud against the peoples of the United States and Europe has to be exposed at last.

What do you think of all this noise about "fake news" and "post-truth"?

There has been "fake news" at every US election that I can remember. And, to be fair, I think there was as much "fake news" against Clinton as there was against Trump. The losers in the US election are belly-aching and imagining that the big bad Putin pulled strings and hacked systems so as to promote Trump's election. That is rubbish – give me some solid evidence, and then we will talk. But sometimes losers grasp at any straw they can find. As far as "post-truth" is concerned – Gosh! I have seen so much post-truth in connection with 9/11, Afghanistan, the Iraq war, Libya and Syria that I can only be mildly amused by all the commotion.

Professor de Zayas, thank you for the interview(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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

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Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

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

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-

for all other countries.

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

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Illegal wars – How Nato countries undermine UN

A chronicle by Daniele Ganser

by Johannes Irsiegler



Daniele Ganser is a historian and a peace researcher specialised in international politics and contemporary history since 1945. Furthermore, he is founder of the “Swiss Institute for Peace and Energy Research” (SIPER) in Basel. With his previous publications, he has already made a strong contribution to an urgently needed review of the history of the West since 1945. His new book “Illegal wars – How Nato countries undermine UN. A chronicle from Cuba to Syria” is a another important contribution.

Daniele Ganser begins with a few personal remarks: In addition to the good example of his parents, a defining experience for the political engagement of Daniele Ganser were the great worldwide anti-war manifestations in 2003 before the attack of the US and its allies on Iraq and the following Iraq war with its dire consequences until today. Daniele Ganser pictures his concern at the time and puts the reader emotionally in the mood. Many a reader may remember exactly these times of lies and arrogance of warmongers like *Tony Blair* and *George Bush*.

As a first access to the topic, Daniele Ganser addresses a current problem: the refugee crisis. He puts his finger on the point: The main cause for the wave of refugees are the wars, mainly having been provoked by Nato states and their allies in the Middle East and still being led by them. This obvious idea gets lost in the daily reporting of our leading media or it is concealed. Ganser points out that all these wars are illegal: “Since the end of the Second World War and the

The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are among the most valuable historical documents and should serve us all as a guide in the 21st century. I can only advise anyone to read through these two documents and think about them. Already as a student, I ordered from the UN the Declaration of Human Rights and hung it up as a poster in my room. “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”, emphasises the Declaration of Human Rights, which was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. “Everyone has the right to life, freedom and security of the person” (Article 3) and “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief” (Article 18).

Of course, it is true that the UN Charter and the human rights are being violated daily. In some cases, as outlined above, these two documents were even played off against each other by insidiously starting a war with reference to the human rights, for example, in Libya in 2011, thus violating the UN Charter. These problems will continue to exist in the future and should not be ignored.

But it must also be pointed out at the same time that the human rights and the UN Charter have been respected in many countries, which has always led to a flourishing society. In addition, the goals of the UN were repeatedly strengthened. This was also the case on 25 September 2015, when the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were adopted at a UN summit of heads of state and governments. Therein, the UN member states commit themselves to reduce poverty, hunger and discrimination against women and to promote renewable energies. Above all, however, the States committed again themselves to prevent all forms of violence, because peace and stability are fundamental prerequisites for sustainable development to be possible at all.

“Switzerland has a vital interest in the fact that in international relations right prevails against violence and not vice versa,” said former Swiss Federal Councillor *Micheline Calmy-Rey*. With this she was absolutely right, because small countries like Switzerland do not want the world to slip into war and chaos. We must orient ourselves by the right and take care of it.

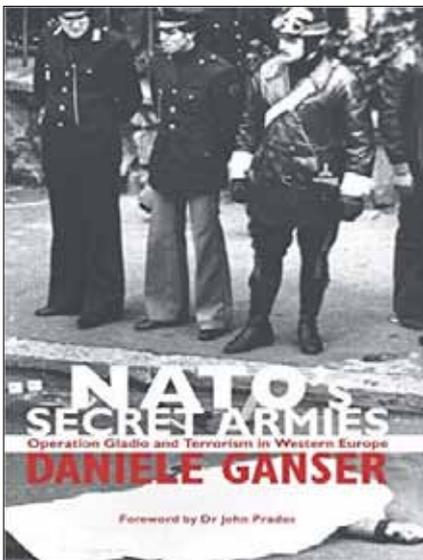
from: *Daniele Ganser. Illegale Kriege (Illegal wars), p. 330f.*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

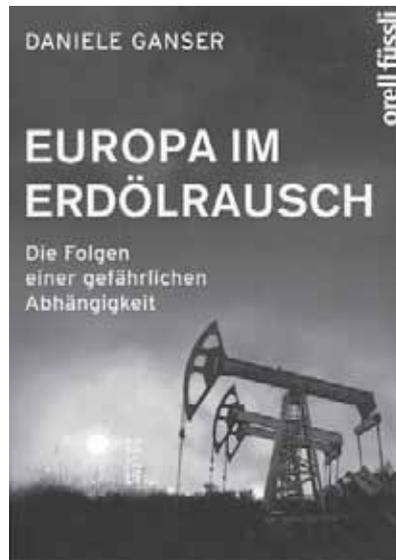
establishment of the UN peace organization, there has been a worldwide ban on war.” Although, there have been other warring states in the last fifty years, it is a fact that Nato states, led by the US, “have been waging most of the illegal wars during the last 70 years. However, they have always remained unpunished”.

Daniele Ganser feels committed to the UN and its simple and clear basic idea: wars are illegal. There are only two exceptions to the world-wide ban on war: the right of a country to defend itself against an attack, and a war against a country

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ISBN 978-0714685007



ISBN 328-006-1067



ISBN 978-3-280-05631-8

"Illegal wars – How ..."

continued from page 7

with an explicit mandate from the UN Security Council. This is the key to a civilized coexistence on this planet. United Nations prohibition of the use of force must be respected and strengthened. Nowadays this basic idea must more than ever be introduced into the general discussion on war and peace. Nato media of our Western nations tend to ignore this idea. More and more you get to hear the reproach of the UN being inefficient and not up-to-date. Daniele Ganser's response to this reproach is brilliant: "This book shows that the reason for the inefficiency of the UN is not its system, but the individual failure of its members, who temporarily act unfairly and sabotage the UN with lies in the Security Council and the General Assembly." Ganser concludes that any reform of the UN that does not involve the problem of lies must fail in the long term.

After these basic thoughts on the UN there follow remarks on Nato and the USA. Daniele Ganser speaks out bluntly what is common knowledge: Nato is an instrument of the US oligarchs to enforce their hegemonic claims on our planet.

The following main part of the book is a detailed chronicle of the illegal wars and coups of Nato states against democratically elected governments. It all begins with the overthrow of the Iranian Prime Minister, *Mossadegh*, in 1953. His sole "crime" was to demand a greater share of the oil revenues from the British and to provide the poor population with this money. At that time the British were still putting most part of the oil revenues of the country in their pockets. The German author *Michael Lüders* considers this coup as "first sin of the West". The consequences of this morally vicious policy are still felt today.

The following chapters treat the wars against Guatemala 1954, Egypt 1956, Cuba 1961, Vietnam 1964, Nicaragua 1981, Serbia 1999, Afghanistan 2001, Iraq 2003, Libya 2011, Ukraine 2014, Yemen 2015 and Syria since 2011 until today. Each chapter is self-contained and can be read separately. It would also be an excellent resource for teaching history in schools and for basic contemporary history lectures at universities.

There is a lot of blood on the hands of Nato officials in the US and Europe. In order to anaesthetize the population, so-called humanitarian reasons are used in the old imperialist manner. Although, the main reason of these wars are resources and global predominance, as is the main reason of today's so-called "war on terror". With regard to this war Ganser draws a devastating balance: there is a destabilization of whole regions, there is a flow of refugees, there are no less, but more terror attacks, there is dismantling of civil rights and progression of surveillance. Conclusion: The "war on terror" has failed and must be put to an end.

Daniele Ganser concludes as follows: "Nato is not a force for security and stability, but a threat to world peace."

However, Daniele Ganser also points out what each of us can do in order to re-establish the basic principle of the UN and promote the peaceful co-existence of the nations.

With regard to Switzerland and Austria, for example, he calls to return to neutrality and to abandon Partnership for Peace, or to put it in another way, "Partnership for War". In Switzerland, the population could request a referendum on leaving PfP.

Yet, in all countries, the peaceful population can do something. Thus, Ganser encourages a stronger networking of American and European peace movements. "The cooperation of the European peace movement with the peace movement in the USA is very important as only the US peace movement is able to reform the US empire from within peacefully." The individual citizen can inform himself from independent sources and books and is so capable of forming his own opinion. One of the blessings of the Internet is that we no longer have to rely solely on the Nato biased reporting of our leading media.

According to Daniele Ganser the promotion of renewable sources of energy would also promote peace, as most wars are lead for oil and natural gas and we are more independent of these products through renewable energies. Furthermore, one of the most important concerns of Ganser is to strengthen the ban on violence and the international law as enshrined in the UN Charter: "The UN

Charter and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are among the most valuable historical documents; they should guide us in the 21st century". The globally connecting idea "We, the Peoples of the United Nations" must be revitalised as it expresses the precious idea of the family of men.

Despite infamy and suffering, after reading there is no feeling of resignation. Daniele Ganser gets to the heart of an essential idea: the bloody wars deeply contradict the social nature of human beings, because: "[...] deep in their hearts men like each other." Thank you, Daniele Ganser, for the excellent book, we warmly recommend it to anyone interested in politics. Furthermore, it is an encouraging signal to see the book already taking first place on the Swiss bestseller lists for non-fiction books.

Ganser, Daniele. "Illegale Kriege – Wie Nato-Länder die Uno sabotieren. Eine Chronik von Kuba bis Syrien." Zurich 2016, ISBN 978-3-280-05631-8

Letter to  the Editor

Jürgen Rose and his "Trio infernale"

When you hear the last message about the election of a new German Federal President with the name of *F. W. Steinmeier* mentioned, we have to think of *Jürgen Rose's* wording of the "Trio Infernale", namely that *Mrs von der Leyen*, *Mr Gauck* and *Mr Steinmeier* are striving for the lead in Europe and for a "military-fed new German power policy". That would mean that the German Armed Forces, a purely defensive army according to the "Grundgesetz" (Basic Law), is to be deployed everywhere in the guise of security policy and also to wage war?

It is fitting that *Mr Steinmeier* reports that he will not let somebody to order him to be quiet in this office, which should be a purely representative one, so he doesn't want to be a "figurehead" but will continue to contribute his political views.

Gisela und Ingo Kersten

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Why I cannot trust our politics anymore ...

by Karl Müller

Since I was young, *George Orwell's* most famous novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four", which appeared in 1948, has been a landmark of political criticism. At the time I was not aware that Orwell was an English socialist who fought with the Trotskyites in the Spanish Civil War, who came into conflict with the forces from Moscow, who worked for the British Secret Service after the war, while denouncing colleagues from his milieu as communists.

Ever since his time in Spain, Orwell was critical of the Soviet Union. Already back in my school years, his novels "Animal Farm" and "Nineteen Eighty-Four" were rated as plausible works of literary criticism of communism and totalitarianism. As a young man, this criticism strongly appealed to me. At that time I was a decisive critic of National Socialist and Communist Totalitarianism. This has not changed.

"Newspeak" in Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four" and in 2016

However, I have lost my almost completely uncritical attitude towards "Western" politics – I was a well-behaved child of the Cold War. Today when I re-read Orwell's remarks dealing with the construction and meaning of "Newspeak", published as an appendix to the novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four" I do not primarily think of the year 1948 and global politics of the time, but in inevitably of today's politics in our own country which claim opposition against all kind of totalitarianisms, but practice precisely what Orwell has characterised so aptly – in spite of all the paradoxes of his own life.

Concretely: Reading the German Chancellor *Angela Merkel's* speech of 23 November 2016 in the German "Bundestag" immediately reminded me of *George Orwell's* rulers, except that Mrs Merkel is practising it much more perfidiously and that we are not dealing with a novel but with reality.

George Orwell wrote: "Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc [English Socialism]. The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak was adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten (say, in 2050), a heretical thought – that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc – should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words."

Merkel is more perfidious

Orwell further writes that words like honour, justice, morality or democracy had been banned from the Newspeak vocabulary – this is where Mrs Merkel is more perfidious. She still uses these words – but she has changed their meaning.

In the beginning of her speech she cited the South American writer *Mario Vargas Llosa*: "The willingness to live together with those who are different may have been the most unusual step of mankind towards civilization, a step that preceded democracy and was necessary to make it possible." But she cited this in order to justify her own politics, mainly her migration politics, right away at the beginning of her speech. Maybe also her confession of respect for the "diversity of sexual orientations" which she also intends to demand from the new US president. Was this what the famous South-American writer had intended to say?

An attack on the freedom of expression

Then Mrs Merkel touches on changes in the media, complaining that the mainstream media with their "due diligence for journalists" were not the only that were perceived but that there were also many citizens who "consume media based on a very different foundation [that is without 'due diligence'], which were less under control [but should be in future?]." Because today we had "fake pages, bots and trolls which could distort public understanding" and "certain algorithms could create self-regulating amplifications of opinions".

The answer to the question in the square bracket can be found in the next paragraph of her speech: "In order to reach the people, in order to inspire people, we need to deal with these phenomena and, where it is necessary, also *govern them*." (Italics by the author)

Has Mrs Merkel now adopted the slogan issued early this year by the resigned head of US secret service *James Clapper*: What does not suit us is a fake – and nothing but Russian propaganda and controlled by Russia! Let us fight it with all means!

"Populists" are the enemy

The next paragraph identifies the domestic opponents: "This concern about stability, of course, is amplified by what is happening around us. Populism and political extremism are gaining ground in the western democracies." Mrs Merkel supports a "culture of debate" – "but it needs to take place respecting the dignity of the opponent. This is the essence and this is lacking in many places."

A little later Mrs Merkel gets specific: "In connection with the Crimean and the Ukraine we have to recognize a breach of international law and a violation of the territorial integrity of a state." Two sentences later she claims: "The situation in Syria, especially in face of what is happening in Aleppo, oppresses us every day. I have to state honestly: there are many indications that hospitals and medical institutions are deliberately being bombed. With all due respect: this is internationally prohibited. This has to be prosecuted." And the opponent is identified here, too: "The *Assad* regime has to know about this. And, ladies and gentlemen, it is very sad that Russia is supporting this regime."

Why is Mrs Merkel silent about reality in Eastern Europe ...

But why has Mrs Merkel kept silent about how the current situation in Eastern Europe has developed? About the continuous expansion of NATO and EU towards the Russian border and the strategic concept (at least of the USA) to control the Russian wealth in raw materials? After all, in the 1990s the EU and the USA supported precisely the Russian forces that helped to weaken the country! Why has Mrs Merkel not stated that in February 2014 there was a violent and unconstitutional change of government in Kiev, supported by her government? The overwhelming majority of the population with Russian origin in the Crimean peninsula and in eastern Ukraine did not agree with this! Why doesn't Mrs Merkel even consider that the Russian government had to fear that violent supporters of the Kiev rebels were also moving towards the Crimean where Russia has an important naval base? Why doesn't Mrs Merkel acknowledge that Russian troops succeeded in avoiding bloodshed in the Crimean? Or that, in a referendum, an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the Crimean have voted for independence from Ukraine and for a membership in the Russian Federation?

... and in Syria?

And the situation in Syria and in Aleppo? Why doesn't Mrs Merkel mention who brought the war to Syria and why in 2011 this war was carried exactly to Syria? There are well-founded answers to these questions. The Swiss author *Daniele Ganser* has compiled them in his new book ("Illegale Kriege"). The latest book of the Australian *Tim Anderson* ("The Dirty War on Syria") has answers, too. Also the German

Hacker attacks – “Enemy Image of Russia” shown to be propaganda

ef. End of November, in time for the 60th anniversary of the “Bundesnachrichten Dienst” BND (German Federal Intelligence Service), an interview with the new BND chief *Bruno Kahl* in the German newspaper “Süddeutsche Zeitung” of 28.11.2016 made the round: “BND president warns on cyber-attacks from Russia”. The US election campaign had been influenced by hackers and trolls – the trail leads to Russia, according to US security authorities. The new BND chief confirmed that there was “‘evidence’ for a trail to Russia”. In the interview, he said: “The attribution to a state actor is technically difficult. But there is some evidence that this is at least tolerated or desired by the state.” Bruno Kahl sees this danger also for the coming election year in Germany. Russia could make cyber-attacks at the 2017 “Bundestag” elections.

The IT security expert *Guido Rudolphi* from Uster (Switzerland) found clarifying words in an interview with the Swiss “Tages-Anzeiger” of 29.11.2016. According to the IT security expert, the warning of the BND chief on possible Russian cyber-attacks against Germany “is absolute nonsense. Mr Kahl is speaking about cheap propaganda; look who is talking. Because that is exactly what he does.”

When asked if Russia could make cyber-attacks, he said, “It would be possible. It would also be possible that the Swiss, the Americans or any hackers from Timbuktu could do that. However, I wonder how the BND boss’s mission is defined to be able to make such statements without evidence.” He also clarified the hacked e-mails of *Hillary Clinton*’s electoral campaigners: “This electoral champion had a password that today no kindergardener would use. Here, too, no evidence is presented to the Russians. Something is simply claimed, and that fits into a global mood. Just a few years ago it was always the North Koreans, then it was the Chinese, and now it is the Russians. Obviously, the assessment of cyber threats is always very dependent on how the political weather is. It’s just embarrassing.”

To the Cassandra calls of the cyber-attacks and whether you can protect yourself from it, the IT security expert explains: “Basically, there is no security in IT. Security in IT is a marketing concept and nothing else. And if we are aware of this, we need to think about what data we store where and how.” Most politicians, however, did not care. Political cyber war is typically done “by claiming cyber-attacks without evidence”; in fact “there is

no evidence that a cyber war takes place. And that is just happening”.

Last week, when 900,000 customers of “Deutsche Telekom” in Germany lost Internet, telephone or TV connections, it quickly became clear that this was a targeted attack on “Telekom” and even a targeted attack on Germany’s public communications structure. *Manfred Kloiber* of the German news radio station *Deutschlandfunk* said on 3 December 2016: “Let’s first note: it was not a targeted attack on the ‘Telekom’. And it was not a targeted attack on our country’s public communications infrastructure. [...] Rather, it was the failed attempt by computer criminals. [...] It is apparent that in the case of 900,000 customers of ‘Deutsche Telekom’, the Internet, telephone or TV connection was lost only due to the fact that the used routers of the ‘Telekom were simply cheap and badly programmed. [...] Just a few hours after the incident became known, wild speculation circulated over a state attack on our infrastructure. Russian intelligence agencies were suspected of being the originators, yes, the cyber war broke out. [...] And ‘Deutsche Telekom’ boss *Höttges* has already called for a cyber-Nato.” This is just cheap propaganda. •

“Why I cannot trust ...”

continued from page 9

journalist *Michael Lüders* (“Wer den Wind sät”) has researched these questions. Mrs Merkel, however, keeps her silence. Why isn’t she addressing the question where from the current occupiers and violent conquerors of East Aleppo got the right to do exactly this: apply violence and seize power? Or the question where these forces got their weapons and who is continuously supporting them? Why is she avoiding any statement about what really happened in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria?

Any war is atrocious and the war for Aleppo is atrocious, too. Nobody should euphemise it. But what is Mrs Merkel doing to end this war? Why is she not supporting the concept that those who have no legitimate right to use weapons should put them down first? Or has she turned into a “revolutionary” who despises legality, state authority and the monopoly on legitimate use of force? Why is she still allied

with those who have been fostering terrorism in the Middle East for decades? Why doesn’t she comment on what her party colleague *Jürgen Todenhöfer* found out when he spoke to an al-Nusra terrorist in East Aleppo – the interview was published in the “Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger” (26 September: “Die Amerikaner stehen auf unserer Seite”)?

And why did Mrs Merkel openly support the war against Iraq in 2003? Why is she silent about the horrors of the war there? Why don’t we hear now, while she is complaining about violations of international law, any statement on her regretting her support of an aggressive war violating international law in 2003? And why don’t we hear a single word about the devastating consequences of this war?

And so forth and so forth.

This is why I cannot trust our politics anymore!

George Orwell saw his “newspeak” as an instrument of power for Ingsoc – a

totalitarian state in war with another superpower. But today we are dealing with more than lies, more than moral failure.

The issue now is to take a stand. Mrs Merkel is not an “evil” person. Mrs Merkel and her likes can also change. But how can this be achieved? First of all: how can she and her likes be stopped? How can they, after so many years of political failure, be made to resign from their offices? How can they be replaced? And how should the country be run in the future? And so forth and so forth.

These are questions for all Germans and for all mankind. Some would answer: Countervailing force is the only way. *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*’s “Iphigenie” has pointed out a different way: resolute and sturdy humanity has stopped power and violence, creating humanity. I cannot be the judge regarding the right way. But: just watching is unbearable. •

The idea and practice of cooperatives are UNESCO World Cultural Heritage

ef. On 30 November 2016 the *Intergovernmental Committee on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in Addis Ababa included the idea and practice of organised shared interests in cooperatives in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. By the adoption the idea shall be protected and at the same time its value as an economic model shall be brought back to awareness. At the same time the nomination confirms the friendship between nations as cooperatives unite us with all human beings around the globe. Working together in cooperatives is a form of human coping with life, based on self-help, self-responsibility, and self-administration, which has developed dif-

ferently on the whole world. The cooperative principle includes fundamental values of human living on an equal footing and in freedom and is based on the common good (*bonum commune*). The ethical essentials of the idea of cooperatives are well founded in anthropology and have been valid since 150 years to date. These foundations should be preserved and developed further for future generations.

In 2012, the UN has already declared the "Year of Cooperatives", paying tribute to the cooperatives with its 800 million cooperative members in more than 100 countries around the world.

Cooperatives are characterised by a high degree of co-creation and participa-

tion; that is why cooperatives are often preferable to other forms of enterprises. Cooperatives contribute to the eradication of poverty, they create jobs and they support social integration.

In numerous articles and contributions during the last years *Current Concerns* has been discussing the basic foundations of cooperatives in an interdisciplinary manner.

The brochure, entitled "We establish a cooperative. Living and working together and for each other" is an example for this. (In English/German/French) •

You can order the brochure at Verlag *Zeit-Fragen*. At this year's Leipzig Book Fair from 23 to 26 March 2017 the cooperative *Zeit-Fragen* is going to organise two conferences on this subject.



Brochures from Verlag Zeit-Fragen.

ISBN 978-3-909234-17-2 ISBN 978-3-909234-15-8 ISBN 978-3-909234-16-5

The Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage is composed of 24 elected States Parties to the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. Once a year it decides on the inclusion of new cultural forms in the lists of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

So far, 336 forms have been registered on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, 43 elements on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, and twelve Best Safeguarding Practices for intangible cultural heritage. Criteria for the

approval include, among others, a verifiable liveliness and an identity-establishing component for the bearers of cultural expressions ("Träbergemeinschaft"), the development of safeguarding measures, a substantial participation of the bearers of cultural expressions and the inscription on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. By registering, the States Parties commit themselves to promote the Intangible Cultural Heritage in their respective state territories.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage includes living traditions from the fields

of dance, theater, music, oral traditions, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. Since 2003, UNESCO has supported the safeguarding, documentation and preservation of these cultural forms. Until today 171 states have ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Switzerland has ratified the UNESCO Convention in 2008, Germany in 2013.

Source: News release of the German UNESCO Commission of 30.11.2016 and Swiss Federal Office of Culture

Swiss cooperatives

In Swiss history cooperatives represent a central corner stone. The Federal Charter of 1291, the structure of the communes, the "Landsgemeinde" (open-air assembly of all voters), and last not least the name Confederation are based on cooperative values; these historical structures and experience were reflected in 1848, when the Swiss Federal State was founded.

Based on the tradition of the commons and the Alpine cooperatives, a large cooperative movement formed in Switzerland – as well as in the rest of Europe – in response to industrialization. Thus in the agricultural sector, a particularly large number of purchasing and marketing cooperatives developed. In the 19th century the consumer cooperatives were of great significance for the national economy and represented a path toward mutual help.

Source: *Zeit-Fragen Cooperative*. "We establish a cooperative", p. 10

2012 – the international year of cooperatives

According to UN information there are 800 million cooperative members in more than 100 countries; over 100 million jobs were made available by way of the cooperatives. Half of the world population receives its basis of nutrition from cooperatives. This way, the credit cooperatives, agricultural and industrial cooperatives, contribute a regional economic cycle to stabilize and to encourage local jobs.

In addition, the UN demands that cities create an environment and a set of rules which encourage cooperatives as they do with other types of businesses.

One of the biggest challenges of the future is the lowering of the jobless rate of teenagers through the new founding of cooperatives or other small businesses.

Not all cooperatives function exactly the same way. But most of them fol-

low the seven basic rules of cooperative identity which, in the course of time, have developed in the international community. These serve as guidelines and with their help transform the ideas into reality:

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic decision making by members
3. Economic participation of the members
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education, further-education and information
6. Cooperation with other collectives
7. Provision for the community of the cooperative

Source: *Zeit-Fragen Cooperative*. "We establish a cooperative", pp 16.

Letter to the Editor

Family in the German Democratic Republic, GDR

In *Current Concerns* No 26/27 (5 December 2016, page 16), I found a very nice and stimulating article, but I was also somewhat irritated by it. I found it nice because value and importance of the family for education and life in general were described here, irritating because the impression was created that the German Democratic Republic (GDR), unlike Western Germany then and now, was a true family shelter.

This impression, if it is not based on a misunderstanding on my part, can only be a part of truth. And it would certainly be a mistake, if somebody would have even thought that the protection of the family was a real concern of the GDR policy. It was more a power-political concession.

I am writing as a person who has passed his first 9 years in the GDR and who, for the following 30 years until the end of this state, has been in constant contact with the kinship, and who often went to see them. It is true that the family in the GDR was not exposed to the breaches existing in the West in the sixties and seventies, and finally, to this day. But there were other breaches, the great desire of the state to exert influence on the children, even on the babies, and to deprive them as early as possible from the influence of the family; this is not just a prejudice.

For my father, it was one of the reasons to leave the GDR when he saw his little son proudly tying the blue pioneer necktie around his neck [a sign of the future socialist].

A 68-generation movement like in the West was not needed, socialism was already in power, and it did not tolerate any opposition. It is certainly true that in the GDR man was understood as a social being from birth, but a declared commitment to the family cannot be deducted from that fact; seen through the glasses of the GDR leaders, one must rather understand that the child is to be educated by the broad socialist community, and not by the bourgeois family, which *Karl Marx* has already mocked about in the Communist Manifesto, not to mention his own way of life.

The fact that the family survived better in the GDR than in the West was not only due to the mostly opposition-free political climate, but above all to the fact that the GDR leadership, despite its own ideology, had not completely lost its mind: different from the student movement in the West, it had to take responsibility for the supply of the population, otherwise it simply would have lost its power base. For this reason, apart from the extensively existing anti-family socialist educational measures, the family also had to be preserved in a certain framework because of its productive social function. The Chinese cultural revolutionaries have shown what can happen otherwise: the economic decline. This preservation of the family was above all a basis for the then developing opposition movement, which – irony of the history – finally led to the end of the GDR.

If the quoted co-founder of the "Neeues Forum" and Minister in the Transitional Government, *Modrow*, expressed his apprehension about the anti-authoritarian ideas of the Frankfurt School and its followers, it was no longer an expression of "the GDR". But it was exactly this citizens' movement which – by the help of the family and ecclesiastical backbone – finally buried the GDR socialism.

In my experience, the solid survival of the family in the GDR is the expression of the natural opposition of the people to the socialist practice. I find this supplement important, in order that an historically wrong impression would not be created.

Christian Fischer, Cologne

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Editor's note: The above letter to the editor is an important addition to the contributions in the issue No 27 of our newspaper, because neither the editors nor the authors share the opinion that the problems on which the author of the letter to the editor is writing, did not exist. On the other hand, in the so-called West, we have to ask ourselves how the sometimes violent criticism of the family policy in the former GDR matches with the fact that in today's "West" we ignore the importance of family to such an extent that it equals a negation of human nature.

Education – Humboldt or McKinsey?

by Carl Bossard



Carl Bossard
(picture ma)

Some say [the new Swiss] Curriculum 21 is nothing less than a paradigm shift. The others appease: Nothing would change. So, what now? An external view.

A tried and tested recipe: Who-

ever wants to propagate and sell the new, caricatures and defames the old. So does the President of the German-Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, the Schaffhausen Christian Amsler, in relation to Curriculum 21 and teaching up to now. "In the past, something was simply 'covered'", he succinctly declares. Today, in contrast, with competences "interaction of knowledge, ability and willing" would be trained, he stresses full of euphoria.¹

In the past passive, now active learning

It is as simple as that. A striking contrast is constructed by typically presenting the status quo as badly as possible: Until today, something was covered; in the future, one would at last train competences. Curriculum 21 was the trigger. It would lead from the old to the new school, from the outdated to the contemporary learning. In such a way, at least, Amsler's statement can be interpreted. Entire generations of conscientious teachers are put under general suspicion by his casual sentence. With his statement, he is not alone. Recently, in the journal *ph-Akzente* of the Zurich University of Teacher Education was to be read: "While in the past, learning in school often meant passive takeover of passive knowledge, today learning is about active examination of learning objectives and learning contents." Here too, a disastrous dichotomy: in the past passive consumption of subject matter – today (at last) active learning and constructing.

The buzzword "competence"

These "past" educators are wondering rightly whether they did not train competence with their learning goals based on skills – and furthermore, they may ask why one is talking about a paradigm shift and what Curriculum 21 with its competences will really bring. Not without reason the basis calls introductions to Curriculum 21 in its own words often lost time – and probably lost money for the cantons.

The word "competency" once meant "responsibility". Meanwhile, however, as economic-educational double bellow it became an orotund replacement word for "skill" and deteriorated into a "catchphrase".² Jürgen Oelkers, Zurich Professor Emeritus for Pedagogy, points out that today the buzzword "competence" has to "serve for everything that sounds somehow innovative and yet rarely transcends the traditional concept of 'knowledge and ability'".³

Dispersal

At first, pedagogy knew only three competencies: social, methodological and self-competency. Then professional competency was added. And because the word competence means everything and by that does not really say anything, it has to be split up into different partial competencies. The second version of Curriculum 21 therefore covers on 470 pages 363 competences divided into more than 2,300 competence levels.

Homo sapiens thus becomes homo competens. As a result, there is no longer anything we cannot be made competent for: team competency, inter-religious competence, curiosity competence, stress competence, presentation competence, underlining competence, assistance-acceptance competence and so on and so forth.

Being able to solve problems

Prof Franz E. Weinert, founding professor of the Max Planck Institute for Psychological Research in Munich, is regarded as the father of today's concept of competence. However, many scientists have distorted and watered down his precise ideas. Weinert wanted to break the school of an often unilateral dominance of knowledge. Promoting and training skills, that was his motto: Young people must be able to solve problems. For this they need knowledge, willpower and motivation.

Conscientious teachers have always been guided by this old insight: one has to know something, one has to be able to do something, and both together should help young people to think and act better. This includes the "three great B": basic knowledge, basic skills and basic principles. This triad cannot really become obsolete, because it represents something like an ultimate. A kind of a general law of nature – such as the pedagogical tablets of the law of didactic Mount Sinai. They are short, concise and concrete.

The fear of haphazardness

The Curriculum 21 brings much and embraces a lot. But the fundamental skept-

icism remains: Who brings so much, brings something for everyone. But everything is the enemy of something. Or in other words: When the abundance of specifications seems so comprehensive, they become hardly reality in everyday life. Not for nothing the Basel social-democratic representative of the Council of States Anita Fetz says in the *ZEIT*: "An overly ambitious bureaucrat mouse gave birth to a document mountain."

She speaks out what many fear: The many presets cause that knowledge and skill building will remain rather haphazard and the systematic neglected. But young people need cognitive order structures, thinking processes need clear knowledge structures. "When dividing school into innumerable separated competences, the form of teaching is sometime falling apart to dust" notes Ralph Fehlmann, expert for teaching methodology at Zurich University.

Combining knowledge and skill

Realistic teachers knew it ever since: Skill or just competence can be developed only with general and specialised knowledge, a non-additive knowledge, but an overall structured knowledge. This requires a clear teaching strategy: how do I as a teacher impart understood and applicable knowledge to students? Reflecting and describing the own learning process, known as metacognitive thinking, promotes and strengthens this teaching strategy.

Such teaching is not to be equated with the mere adoption of knowledge. Ever since students had to understand, work through and apply the contents, in order to continually improve skills and knowledge. Therein lies the secret of learning and effective teaching. Also in the old school. This requires no paradigm shift.

Against the spirit of arbitrariness

However, looking at the Curriculum 21, one gets often the impression of arbitrariness and randomness. It looks like the important thing in school is not so much geometry, grammar of German language, the creation and comprehension of texts, the history of our origins as such, but primarily the acquisition of skills such as "to learn learning" or to google information. That is not wrong in principle, but skills just arise as a side-effect of intense reflection and working on content. Knowledge and skills are not formed casually, but as a result of engagement. In such a teaching, teachers are not degraded to admin-

Committee for a good “Thurgauer Volksschule”

“Teachers in the future should be allowed to teach the way they wish”

Weinfelden, 27 November 2016 – One in four of Thurgau’s eligible voters approved the initiative for a good school – despite the superiority of government, parties, administration, and associations. Obviously school policy has lost a part of the base. The rejection of the initiative must be respected. At the same time, the responsible persons are being committed to keep their promises, to respect the freedom of opinion and methods and to renounce epochal upheavals. This means that essential requirements of the initiators – also under Curriculum 21 – are maintained.

The approvals for our initiative show a great dissatisfaction with the official education policy and its reform delusion. This result is all the more remarkable as officials of all levels with great financial and human resources and a polemic anxiety campaign have tried to discredit the initiative. Many eligible voters, however, did not let themselves delude by phrases such as the return to the educational Stone Age. The discussion that was triggered by the initiative is pleasant and liberat-

ing. Completely different from their original attitude, the responsible persons in the reconciliation campaign have committed themselves to the essential demands of the initiators: teachers in the future should be allowed to teach the way they wish, class teaching and learning in the direct teacher-student relationship should retain its central importance, teachers should be free to express their opinions. Additionally – according to the clear statement of the governing council, *Monika Knill* – not in any way an epochal reform is to happen. The public is sensitised and it will commit the responsible to these promises.

The committee for a good “Thurgauer Volksschule” would like to thank all those who helped to discuss what a good school might be. This discussion will remain alive even beyond cantonal boundaries. Our objection to Curriculum 21 and some questionable developments in the current education and training system thus maintain a lasting positive effect.

“Komitee für eine gute Thurgauer Volksschule.”
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istrators of skills and to learning compan-

ions. They remain what they always were: pedagogues.

School and lessons have more than just instrumental sense, they convey more than

measurable and applicable skills – with the cold calculus of economic usefulness and the employability. That would be a school of McKinsey.

Technocratic spirit

Education cannot be acquired in the hurry of rapid completion; it is more than professional qualifications and “being fit for ...” It does not correspond to our humanistic view to disassemble children and young people into skills. A technocratic spirit is inherent in the deconstruction of people into partial skills; there is something soulless breathing.

Therefore the Curriculum 21 should place a stronger focus on the educational and philosophical goals of school and support them in a humanistic way. The present time needs a stronger orientation towards values as *Wilhelm von Humboldt* has represented: Education as cultivation of ourselves and as the ability of comprehensive orientation – in a world that is more and more falling apart. The imperative of our time is Humboldt instead of McKinsey.

¹ Amsler, Christian. Bildung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung im Lehrplan 21 – für unsere Kinder und für die Zukunft. In: *ilz.ch* 3/2016, p. 3

² Dubs, Rolf. Die Defizite des Lehrplans 21. In: *Schweiz am Sonntag* from 2.11.2014

³ Oelkers, Jürgen. Die Persönlichkeit im Lehrberuf und wie man sie bildet. *Vortrag an der PH Zug* from 27.10.2009, script p. 9

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Letter to  the Editor

“Competence orientation” and decline of education systems in OECD countries

According to the “Foundations for Curriculum 21”, the proven Swiss education system is to be shifted to OECD’s “competence orientation” (definition *Weinert*) (www.lehrplan.ch/sites/default/files/Grundlagenbericht.pdf).

Established in 1961, the OECD is seeking to open up the global education market with the “competence orientation/-control” and the “self-guided learning”. This global market will lead to a reduction of national sovereignty of the states and by 2017 generate more than 6,000 billion US dollars in sales (computers, tablets, software, ready-to-use teaching units, test batteries, etc.) for the global education companies.

The US reforms and new curricula in the mid-1960s led to a decline in education, which affected in particular the weaker pupils. In the 1970s, the world’s largest educational experiment with 100,000 pupils and 1 billion dollars was conducted to find the best way to promote the weaker pupils. Although all the elite universities were in-

involved, only “direct teaching” (class teaching) through a praxis-teacher fulfilled the specified improvement goals in all subjects. Nonetheless, the failed educational methods were financially preferred. This is why the low US education level has never recovered.

The introduction of “individualised”, “self-controlled” learning methods with “learning companions” and the comprehensive school led to declining achievements in Great Britain in the 1980s. In 1993, the Labour Party’s Guru held his own party responsible for decades of failure in school education and the mediation of moral values as well as the abandoning of the weaker pupils.

In 1990, a national curriculum including “competence orientation” and “comprehensive school” was introduced in Finland. It was intended to move away from the existing high-performance school system to become “more contemporary”. Thanks to the aftermath of the old school system, Finland had top positions in the

Pisa results until 2006. However, when the majority of the qualified teachers had been replaced by newly trained “learning companions”, the “model country” literally fell behind with Pisa in 2009 and lost more than 25 points, which corresponds to an entire academic year. In the meantime, Finland has turned away from the comprehensive school reforms and runs special needs schools again. In 2000, New Zealand introduced a new curriculum with “competence orientation” based on the model of Great Britain. Since 2002 the Pisa results of New Zealand are in free fall. While 47 per cent of the 12-year-olds were still capable of performing simple multiplications in 2001, the figure was only 37 per cent in 2009!

The tried and tested Swiss educational system is not to be buried past the people!

Peter Aebersold, Zurich

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Bündnerfleisch”¹ – cultural heritage and export hit

by Heini Hofmann

What salami means for the raw sausages, “Bündnerfleisch” means for the panoply of dried meat: uncrowned queen. But contrary to the salami who also acquired some Swissness but still remains an Italian “invention”, the question: “Who invented it?” is easy to answer with regard to the “Bündnerfleisch”: the “choge”² “Bündners” [inhabitants of the canton of Grison]!

Drying is an ancient and widespread preservation method, which is based on a simple consideration: If you extract water from the easily perishable food meat, the process of decomposition is slowed down. This was already known by the prehistoric hunters as it is proven by *Ötzi*, the man from Similaun, who carried along at his last tramp dried meat of alpine ibex and deer as provision. But the “Bündner” people thought a bit further: They didn’t only dry perfectly but although placed it skillful on the market.

A Phoenix from the ashes

Short sideglance: Because the consumption of meat should double in the next 40 years according to the population growth, it is frantically looked for an artificial “in vitro” surrogate. As compared to the conventional livestock method the production of this would need only half of the energy and only one-hundredth of the land consumption. Moreover the primate “man” should be spared of the burping of the cows that are causing harm to the world’s climate ...

That men and farm animal form a very old partnership and that grazing animals animate the countryside, is thereby forgotten. After the gen-food debate, the vision of molecular gastronomy and the nano-food debate now follows the prospect of retort meat. In the summer of 2013 in London the first laboratory-burger was tasted, made from cattle stem cells. Polite com-



“Bündnerfleisch” with the help of the sun: Probably the last small-scale drying enterprise using traditional methods of Renato Giovanoli in Maloja (which will soon have to close due to the lack of a successor). From this principle, the Alpine physician Oscar Bernhard was inspired for his heliotherapy by concluding that when the sun dries the meat, this must also work with wounds. And it did so!

(picture Heini Hofmann)

ment of the invited tasters: not really liable for amusement tax!

Due to such prospects one turns to those delicacies which were able in a long tradition to become a labelling product of our country: besides chocolate and cheese in the meat sector “Bündnerfleisch” succeeded, namely to gain international fame and popularity. A tried and trusted, delicate and digestible natural product, a phoenix from the ashes of above mentioned futuristic-technocratic “food” culture.

“Binden”- or “Bündnerfleisch”

Even older than the label “Bündnerfleisch” is the term “Bindenfleisch”. Actually it is the umbrella term for all three typical Swiss dry meat sorts: “Bündnerfleisch”, Wallis dry meat and “carne secca del Ticino”. The term “Bindenfleisch” traces back to the cloth strings with which the salted pieces of meat were enrolled in former times and hung up for drying.

The term “Bündnerfleisch” which occurred initially in the 20th century stems from a tactical consideration: to demarcate by clear designation of origin from analogous products and first of all to protect from imitations (just like Emmentaler cheese!). This paid off: today “Bündnerfleisch” belongs to the most exported Swiss specialities indeed, the air-dried delicacy has the status of a culinary cultural heritage. But this obliges.

The “Verband Bündner Fleischfabrikanten VBF” (Union of grisons meat fabricants) with four bigger and more than thirty smaller meat drying enterprises have worked out a functional specifications document together with the Federal Office for Agriculture. This was not easy because it was necessary to convert mainly the smaller enterprises for the extra effort and expense by certification and strict controls. Today the benefit of these self-imposed standards for a credible and constant product quality is undoubted.

Salting – curing – drying

“Bündnerfleisch” (Romansh: Pulpa, in the Engadine: Puolpa) is a product of protected geographic declaration (“Geschützte Geographische Angabe”, GGA) and, as such, is subject to a state treaty between Switzerland and the EU regulating the mutual recognition of designations of origin. The curing as well as the drying of the meat have to take place within the canton of Grisons, with the latter obligatorily having to be dried above a minimum altitude of 800 metres (a little lower within the southern Grisons valleys). Only the packaging may be assembled outside of the canton of Grisons.

“Bündnerfleisch” is known in the trade as a low-fat raw cured product of

Healthy and digestible

Profile of the final product:

Rectangular shape, deep red colour in the whole of the product, typical cured flavour, aromatic by drying in free-flowing air, high nutritional value, low in fat, rich in vitamins and trace elements. – For consumption cut across the fibre, sliced very thinly.

100 g of “Bündnerfleisch” contain:

Energy: 652–1024 kJ (154–243 kcal)
Protein: 34–44 g
Fat: less than 7 g
Carbohydrates: less than 2 g
Water: 46–53 g

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beef meat, preferably from lean animals. First, the thoroughly cooled pieces of meat are cleaned of fat, tendons and fascias and are rubbed with a mixture of spices, salt and other curing substances (those latter ones are rubbed on individually). Then the pieces are stored, stacked and restacked in a drum (more modern facilities use slowly rotating tumblers), where brine is produced during the process.

After the curing, the meat pieces are washed and woven into nets in order to dry while hanging, similar to support stockings. In smaller facilities, the wet nets and bandages are placed outside for a couple of days to start the drying process, prior to being moved to a dark drying room for at least three months. During that time, in order for the residual fluid to be dispersed evenly, the pieces are compressed multiple times. Moreover, this step is responsible for giving the meat pieces their characteristic rectangular shape.

There is no smoking of “Bündnerfleisch”!

Modern large-scale enterprises operate with room and air conditioning technology, allowing them to control temperature, humidity and air flow more precisely and with the added benefit of being able to produce “Bündnerfleisch” during the summer, which – given the high demand – has become mandatory. This method may not be quite as romantic, yet it is working optimally and quite a bit more timesaving: 14 days of salting, 14 days of a sweat and pre-drying period and lastly the real drying time of twelve weeks during which the meat is compressed five times.

Switzerland

Bündnerfleisch – beef taken from the upper thigh or shoulder, with a protected geographical indication

Wallis dry meat – a Wallis beef specialty from the 14th century

Carne secca del Ticino – this includes not only beef, but also Coppa and Pancetta

Appenzeller Mostbröckli – gently smoked before drying

Jurassier Braisi or Breusi – air-dried and smoked beef brisket

Other countries

France: *Brési* (beef brisket, named after the reddish Brazilian wood)

Italy: *Carne secca*, *Bresoala* and *Slinzega* (the latter two Veltlin)

Spain: *Cecina* (slightly smoked)

Finland: *Kuivaliha* (dried reindeer meat, dried outside under specific conditions)

Bosnia-Herzegovina: *Suho meso* (beef, or lamb, cold-smoked)

Egypt, Turkey, Armenia: *Pastirma* (beef and camel meat)

Ethiopia: *Qwanta* (beef, slightly smoked, sliced into strips)

The dried meat range

Mauritania, Morocco: *Tichtar* (sun-dried camel or gazelle meat)

Somalia: *Odka* (sun-dried beef)

Nigeria: *Kilishi* (sun-dried beef)

South Africa, Namibia: *Biltong* (beef, ostrich and wild meat)

Canada: *Bôgoo* (Amerindian specialty from caribou meat)

USA: *pastrami* (Jewish beef specialty), *pemmican* (Amerindian bison protein food) and *beef jerky* (also a specialty of Indian beef, now a popular snack)

Mexico: *Carne seca* (long, marinated beef strips)

Mexico, Cuba: *Tasajo* (a Caribbean beef specialty)

Brazil: *Carne-de-Sol* (dried beef or goat) and *Charque* (llama meat)

Afghanistan, Pakistan: *Lahndi* (dried sheep or beef meat)

China: *Bakkwa* (dried, sweet-salty beef, pork or lamb meat)

Mongolia: *Borts* (dried yak, beef, mutton, goat or camel meat)

Nepal: *Sukuti* (morsel of dried beef, pork, buffalo, or pork-meat)

Whether traditional or modern methods are used, the work stages remain the same. The artisanal enterprise is dominated by manual labour, whereas the modern facility is at an advantage when it comes to production reliability. However, both styles of production have to factor in a weight loss of about 50% ! That, and the many steps needed in the production process explain the pricing of “Bündnerfleisch”. But the most basic determination of all remains that the preservative effect exclusively is a result of curing and drying. There is no smoking of “Bündnerfleisch”!

Premature suspicion of smuggling

One important, finishing step after drying the meat – prior to packaging it – even triggered a bit of a political tiff: after the rotten meat scandal and the “neighing lasagna”, German authorities had become wary and in the summer of 2013, the main customs office in Singen (Germany), in a move that turned out to be premature, sued a Swiss company for allegedly declaring meat of lower quality as “Bündnerfleisch” and smuggling it into Germany without paying taxes.

The reasoning was that, according to a laboratory examination, the edible mould typical of authentic “Bündnerfleisch” was missing. Without that mould, the meat would only be dried beef meat not exempt from taxes, which is why 250,000 euros of duty were levied post-clearance. The *Swiss Federal Office of Agriculture*, however, was able to clarify the misunderstanding.

While being part of the meat maturing process, it is essential to wash off the mould prior to packaging the meat because it would otherwise rot. The EU commission in Brussels went over the accounts and instructed all customs offices to consult the Food Administration of Grisons for the certification of authenticity of Bündnerfleisch for duty-free import into the EU in the future – and all was well again

“Bündnerfleisch” wrote history of medicine!

HH. What dried meat has to do with medicine? A lot! Sometimes ground breaking discoveries are based on coincidences (example: *Penicillin*) or on everyday experiences. This was also the case with *heliotherapy* (sun phototherapy treatment). It was an aha-experience, which in 1902 led the legendary doctor *Oscar Bernhard* from the Engadine Alps to come up with the idea of the sun tanning.

Sudden inspiration with consequences

He was very worried about a festering wound, which did not want to heal, in the hospital of Samedan. One morning, when the sun was just laughing through the hospital windows, the decisive brainwave came – in analogy to

the preservation of the “Bündner Bindenfleisch” specialty: tanning and fresh air would dry, granulate and heal the wound. And thus it showed! Heliotherapy of surgical tuberculosis was “invented” and should henceforth be a worldwide triumph.

If “Bündnerfleisch” and tuberculosis were not two contradictory terms, the dried meat sector should be proud to be the force behind a medical strategy of a century (before chemotherapeutics existed). “The ‘Bündnerfleisch’-principle saved indirectly hundreds of thousands of people’s lives” would perhaps be an even better slogan than the bureaucratic Latin than the Federal Council’s fit of laughter slip “Bü-Bü-Bü-Bündnerfleisch” ...

¹ dry-cured beef from the Grisons (Switzerland)

² coll.: damned, bloody