

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

Swiss army chief: EU debt crisis is major threat to Switzerland EU Commission nervously refers to Nobel Peace Prize



Lieutenant General
André Blattmann,
army chief
(picture thk)

me. In a speech to the Belgian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Brussels the Swiss Lieutenant General and army chief *André Blattmann*, said that the debt crisis in Europe and the resulting high unemployment was the biggest political security threat to Switzerland.

This assessment was not particularly taken note of until the Belgian weekly newspaper *Le Libre Belgique* took up the Swiss army chief's statement.

Now it has aroused the EU Commission's attention. Peevishly, European Commission spokeswoman *Pia Ahrenkilde* said last Friday (9 November), Brussels did not understand Switzerland's fears. The European Commission did not want to comment on such "disaster scenarios" (read: not listen to). The EU was and would remain a peace project. "That is what it was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for."

When the cameras were switched off, the tone became even more explicit: fuel was put to the fire, fear of the EU was fanned and above all, such fantasies were ridiculous. That means, they do not have much to laugh about in Brussels.

The army chief regrets the "anger in Brussels", but he maintained his stance. It was the purpose of any security organiza-

"I can see no future for the European Monetary Union. The economic difficulties increasingly lead to political disintegration now. Mutual insults are the order of the day. The seemingly good countries dictate the seemingly evil countries – this threatens to destroy the whole political integration of the past half-century. It is not worth the monetary union."

Source: *Heiner Flassbeck* in an interview with the "Tages-Anzeiger" of 13.10.2012
(Translation Current Concerns)

Helmut Schmidt fears revolution in Europe

Financial institutions' maximizing profits is 'economically absurd'

Addressing about 600 guests from business and politics at the economic forum of the Hamburg weekly *Die Zeit* the former chancellor said on Wednesday 7 November: Against the backdrop of the debt crisis, he considered profound political and economic changes conceivable. "We are on the eve of a possible revolution in Europe", *Schmidt* warned. He said he could feel that throughout Europe the confidence in the European institutions was decreasing. In China and the US as well the situation was characterized by uncertainties.

For one day, managers, politicians and scientists discussed the future of Europe and the euro in Hamburg.

The co-CEO of the Deutsche Bank, *Jürgen Fitschen* was self-critical and described the financial institutions' short-term profit maximization as "economically absurd".

It should no longer have any place, as "it will hurt us in the long term". Moreover, the executives at the largest German bank are expected not to cash out their bonuses before five years.

German Finance Minister *Wolfgang Schäuble* said about fighting the debt crisis: "We can manage, but in Greece we have not yet turned around the corner."

Source: "Hamburger Abendblatt" of 9.11.2012
(Translation Current Concerns)

tion to prepare for difficult cases, he said. He had been talking about security risks associated with the debt crisis. If tides of refugees were going to spill into Switzerland, the army would have to protect the critical national infrastructure, although he did not wish this scenario to happen.

The army has practiced it in September. On the occasion of the army staff's military exercise "Stabilo due" such a situation was simulated.

So far the report on Brussels' excitement about *André Blattmann's* remark. There is, however, no such excitement about the statement of *Helmut Schmidt*, who considered Europe "on the eve of a revolution" and thus expressed the same idea much more clearly.

The Brussels line of thought ought to be reflected in more detail: The strange fact that "the EU was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize" (which was lately awarded to various war criminals) is interpreted by the EU Commission spokeswoman as if this fact could prevent riots. We vividly remember the Greek politician, who said a few weeks ago: Greece was in a

similar situation as the Weimar Republic at that time.

Those who hide their heads in the sand should abolish the blue flag with yellow stars and make the "ostrich" their emblem, probably best on innocent white background.

However, let us be a bit more rebellious: What does the peace project do to fight unemployment; for example in Greece, in Spain, and increasingly in all EU countries in the southern and western belt? Former chancellor *Schmidt* mentioned revolutions as a destabilizing factor. *André Blattmann* and others are still waiting for an answer. But instead of building a vocational training for the young generation, the EU follows quite a different track: Already, there are extensive police apparatuses for counterinsurgency under construction in the Union. *Current Concerns* repeatedly reported. The European Commission spokeswoman's announcement on Friday is therefore very hypocritical. *Eurogendfor* and *Altmark* (D) at their best.

Brussels should explain what they plan to do against the unemployment crisis. Police forces en masse are indeed a form

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"Swiss army chief: ..."

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of answer, but they are not the solution! That did not even work with the inflated "homeland security concept" in the US.

And what is more: In recent times battered Greece had to buy hundreds of second-hand American Abrams tanks and other military equipment en masse. How does that match?

Indeed, serious and real answers are required. You have to think about the relationship between economy, common weal and economics. Dogmatically reeling off globalization phrases is part of "the rearguard of yesterday's progress", as the late Major General *Bachofner* once put it. He would have been happy about the reflections and would have immediately backed up Corps Commander Blattmann. This globalization chant must be reflected, although this will not be an easy thing to do for all editorial offices.

Heiner Flassbeck (62), chief economist and monetary expert of the UN Organization for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva made an attempt. In an interview with the "Tages-Anzeiger" a few days ago he said that in context with the currency crisis that it was necessary to reconsider the concept of "opening" all economic sectors. He did not plead for the contrary, but for a reasonable national economy. "We need to get away from this regime, even

"[Opting out of the monetary union and devaluation] would be better in any case than the current devaluation via wage cuts, which will destroy the domestic economy in these countries. Until competitiveness will be restored in this manner, the domestic economy will be ruined. No elected government can survive

such a process. Therefore, we have this crazy political instability today. My biggest concern is that democracy in these countries will be destroyed this way."

Source: *Heiner Flassbeck in an interview with the "Tages-Anzeiger" from 13.10.2012*
(Translation Current Concerns)

though it may be hard in the short term. Imports have to be replaced as far as possible by domestic production. That has always worked, as we have seen in many countries, even in Brazil, where everybody had predicted that it would not work."

If you keep the production in your own country – with irons produced in Germany again and shirts sewn back in Italy and not by North Koreans – unemployment will be lower. Maybe the shirt costs a little more, so what. But it may be produced for longer durability again. In time of revolutions we won't wear a lot of shirts, anyway.

Back to the subject: If Brussels nervously distributes muzzles and calls the scenarios of the Swiss army chief or of the former chancellor Schmidt "disaster fantasies", we might have hit the mark. So please go on!

The army chief was right and he deserves gratitude and appreciation by the people. He shows something that is missing: backbone and profile. If he refers to reality and expresses uncomfort-

able truths, he proves that he takes his job seriously. We can take him as an example.

Even in Switzerland a little rework has to be done. Not only with the Army bud-

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"Without previous wage pressure we are facing high unemployment today, which in turn puts pressure on wages again. This impairs the income expectations of the people, and that is what prevents recovery and reduction of unemployment. This is the classical case of an unstable system – and the state should intervene directly. There are no other means any more: monetary policy has reached its limits, and higher government spending is taboo. Since interference into the labor market is denied too, the economic policy is totally blocked."

Source: *Heiner Flassbeck in an interview with the "Tages-Anzeiger" from 13.10.2012*
(Translation Current Concerns)

And right he is!

France has many problems – yet here comes another one! The international terrorist organization al-Qaeda is no longer the greatest terrorist threat to the country. It is the fear of the homemade terror that the French Ministry of the Interior and thus the whole country is panicking about. The issue was brought to light by French investigators, who dismantled a cell of radical Islamic terrorists. Startling facts were unveiled: All suspects were young men from the French suburbs ...

It frightened them so much that the French Ministry of the Interior raised public alarm about the serious(!) security threats posed by "domestic terrorism". Interior Minister *Manuel Valls* (Catalan father, mother from Ticino) unmistakably emphasized: "... dozens if not hundreds of individuals are a serious threat." And he explained, "These are groups from our neighborhoods. They are not foreigners, but converted French people and French Muslims." And he also announced that "there will be more arrests and house searches in the weeks and months to come" ...

"Poverty, hopelessness and crime" were "fertile grounds" for a radicalization, said the Minister of the Interior. Prisons were often places where young disorient-

ed people were exposed to radical Islamist propaganda. "We must raise the question whether we should not train Muslim prison chaplains, as well as imams(!)." The French administration thus dissociates from the theory of "single offenders" and the "exceptional phenomenon" with which the public was supposed to be reassured after the bloody attacks of Toulouse and Montauban in March. The investigations in the recent case of *Mohamed Merah* have conveyed a terrorist profile that turns out to be typical for today's terrorist threat. Merah is one of the French banlieue youths; according to his passport he is French without being culturally embedded, a young man from a broken home with poor job prospects due to a chaotic school career and educational deficits. Merah initially slipped into delinquency and was then radicalized in the course of a prison stay ...

Meanwhile, eleven "terrorists" have been arrested. They are aged between 19 and 25 years. Their careers are characterized by extreme ruptures. Best known face: *Yann Nsaku*. 25 years old, he originates from the Congo and was celebrated as a young football talent. Nsaku played in Bradford, but had to quit his football

career abruptly due to an injury. Eventually, he joined radical Salafist groups, his helpless father affirmed. For some time no French Islam experts have been warning of a jihadist Salafism, which is spread through intensive propaganda on the Internet, in mosques and in prisons. Delinquent young people are particularly susceptible to this propaganda, which brings them a message of salvation, says the French/Algerian Islamic researcher *Maiek Chebel*. "Past and future crimes are forgiven because they serve the ultimate objective, the fight for the holy war." Maiek: "One of the Salafist arguments to the banlieue youth is that they will never be fully French." That feeling of exclusion therefore often turns into hatred against society, or often also into anti-Semitic sentiments. Islam scholar *Olivier Roy* even speaks of a phenomenon of "deculturation". For him, al-Qaeda is the movement with the highest proportion of converts. It is the product of a rupture between generations. The experience of defeat, the feeling of failure is central, *Olivier Roy* commented in a report to the government ...

Source: *Vertraulicher Schweizer Brief* (Swiss Confidential Letter) from 11.10.2012

(Translation Current Concerns)

Impoverishment on the periphery: Europe's future is sacrificed to a delusional idea

Meanwhile the euro has plunged large parts of the monetary union into misery with the vehemence of a medieval pestilence. More than half of the young is without work in Greece and Spain. Even the euro rescuers in Berlin reckon that Athens will be on the drip for the next ten years. Ireland is about to lose a whole generation of well-trained workforce. More than 300,000 especially young Irishmen emigrated in the past four years. These are 7 percent of the population

– a bleeding which reminds us of the Great Famine of the 19th century. More than 18.2 million people are without work throughout the euro-zone, more than ever before the single currency was introduced in January 1999.

The ruling elites in Berlin, Paris and Brussels fear nothing more than the precedent of a withdrawal from the euro and the following domino effect. If the Greeks returned to the drachma, they would be bet-

ter off in two or three years. It is for sure that the construction fault of the euro cannot be corrected by more debts, that piling up debts and money printing will have severe consequences. Europe's future is sacrificed to a delusion. The bill will be presented to the German citizen. •

Source: Extract from *DeutschlandBrief* by Bruno Bandulet, published in: *Eigentümlich frei* from November 2012

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The money must stay home Every government has the competence to end the free capital movement and to introduce control again

In the past the Spanish province Catalonia never missed an opportunity to emphasize their far-reaching autonomy and to distance themselves from Madrid whenever possible. Now came an urgent call for help exactly from there. Catalonia is the third province that addressed a request for immediate financial help to the Spanish government in Madrid. It is a request which certainly was not easy to make for the Catalans which shows how serious the situation is!

To make ends meet, province Catalonia whose cash desks are simply "empty" according to a statement of the Minister of Finance, needs five billion euro of emergency aid. It is money which the Spanish government does not have of course, so that the likelihood rises that the "proud" Spaniards will soon resort to the "rescue package" as well ...

The state finance and banking crisis that has been raging in Spain for a long

time, is still clearly aggravated by a flight of capital that has persisted for months, now. Only in July 2012 roughly 75 billion euro left Spain and for August (whose figures are not available yet) an even higher figure will emerge. It is money which the Spanish banks urgently lack. They would need it to keep a hold on their balances stressed severely by the ailing real estate financing that occurred on a huge scale. In the first request for help directed to Brussels 60 billion euro had been mentioned; they are already wastepaper. In the course of the probably biggest flight of capital of all times the capital requirements of the Spanish banks might still become infinite. Inspectors that the European Union had sent long ago estimated the sum of the bad loans and ailing credits of the Spanish banks at a triple-digit billion sum!

During the coming weeks and months Spanish financial problems might become

the dominating topic of the euro-zone. Then sums will be talked about which will make the so far experienced crisis scenarios (e.g. Greece and Portugal) appear as "harmless" overtures! •

Source: *Vertrauliche Mitteilungen* (Confidential notifications) from 9.11.2012

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

Editor: Erika Vögeli

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P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich

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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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"Swiss army chief: ..."

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et. Eighteen months ago, in the spring of 2010, the same army chief has shown the same "risk map" as recently in Brussels and named the five countries Greece, Spain, Italy, France and Portugal as "endangered". Many journalists and other "security experts" and parliamentarians, whose thinking power seems to be somewhat inhibited by the mainstream, turned up their noses.

"Plunging into more integration from a situation of highest political disintegration during the past 50 years – that is completely illusionary."

Source: Heiner Flassbeck in an interview with the "Tages-Anzeiger" from 13.10.2012

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Especially in German-speaking Switzerland. André Blattmann was even told in Parliament: "You must not say so." The protagonists had failed to recognize that an army which may no longer call a threat by its name may have an even bigger problem. How is this army supposed to exercise?

The then boosers have to do their homework. We are allowed to learn and get wiser. We may also revise opinions. If the same people in the political salons and editorial offices should walk again in the same mind trap and impede free thought in the national interest, we will take the collected articles of March 2010 about Blattmann's "risk map" at hand and call those women and men, who have to think twice, by their names.

As the proverb has it: "Reality is never polemical; it is unpleasant at the most." •

The free movement of capital is a huge robbery

"Above all, sovereignty over their economy is taken away from the peoples by the free movement of capital. The peoples work hard for their national income. It belongs to the peoples and the peoples have the right and obligation to distribute this income freely, equally, fraternally, i.e. democratically among themselves according to general law. Within the framework of existing legislation the capital owners may use the capital privately. However regarded from a humane constitutional point of view you may not take away the capital from the people, so as to foster your own interests."

*Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider:
Demokratie versus Kapitalismus,
Vom Recht des Menschen. 2001*

"Free movement of capital contradicts the territorial limitation of the political legitimization system and thus of ex-

istential statehood. It creates a kind of worldwide private Latrocinium¹."

¹ *Augustinus, The God's state IV, 4-6:
"If empires lack justice what else are they
than big bands of robbers."
["Latrocinium", in English: "raid"]*

*Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider:
Freiheit in der Republik, 2007*

"International capitalism is as incorrigibly contrary to democracy and to social status like international free capital movement. In a free-enterprise economy it is contrary to the system that is inevitably based on capital investment. A national economy as an economy of a nation must be subjected to the laws of the nation. The investors may not have the power to dictate the laws to the nation. [...] The managers of the capital are new masters of the world, and they get rich

at the expense of the mostly poor people to an intolerable degree, in a way masters have always acted. [...] This is incompatible with the freedom of humans and with the sovereignty of the peoples."

*Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider:
Die Souveränität Deutschlands;
Souverän ist, wer frei ist, 2012*

"Globalisation of capital utilisation is the successful way of exploiting the peoples and subjugating states for the time being. This new form of exploitation has become possible solely by the "freedom" of capital movement that politics is responsible for."

*Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider:
Republikanismus versus Globalismus,
exemplified with the free movement of
capital, undated*

(Translation Current Concerns)

Beat Kappeler warns: The West is sliding

It makes me sick to have to make such predictions and warnings in allegedly highly civilised states. The old, over-indebted, demographically challenged, policy-driven West slips off financially, above all first, however, ethically. To whom the warnings of this column do not reach,

should turn to the newest book of popular historian *Niall Ferguson*, "The Great Degeneration".

Ferguson demonstrates the fact that first the agreements, the society's facilities are dropped and the fact that then the economic decline follows and as a

"bonus" gigantic conflicts, blockages, social fights, people's fronts, fascisms and poverty. In Europe this period is not so long ago.

Extract from Beat Kappeler's column in the *NZZ am Sonntag* from 11.11.2012
(Translation Current Concerns)

With dual education youth unemployment could be solved easily

ds. Youth unemployment rates¹ of 55.6% in Greece, 54.2% in Spain, 35.1% in Portugal, 35.1% in Italy, 25.7% in France and an EU average of 22.8% in September 2012 force the individual states and the EU as a whole to take action against youth unemployment, if they do not want their youth to be used as cannon fodder for the revolution that is feared by *Helmut Schmidt* and the outcome of which is unknown. A foretaste was provided by the riots in France in 2005 and in England in 2011 – where some streets looked as if they had been air-raided – or the increasingly violent demonstrations in Greece, Spain, Italy and again in France. The structure of the *Eurogendfor*, a militarized police force for counter-insurgency, and the construction of the associated military training area in Altmark for 100 million euro are no viably sustainable solutions. Here the countries are called upon to make a constructive contribution to reduce youth unemployment.

The global speculative financial markets need to be regulated and imports replaced, as far as possible, by means of domestic production – "here the government

would have to intervene directly", according to the proposals of economist *Heiner Flasbeck*. And from a constitutional point of view, *Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider* demands that the economy as an economy of the people should be subject to the laws of the people and not to the power of the people and not of financiers.

Another area is vocational education, where the government, in cooperation with regional businesses, would have numerous options to reduce youth unemployment efficiently and to reintegrate young people into work life and society. The government ought to support individual initiatives for apprentice training and promote the founding of producers' cooperatives and retail cooperatives or even, where necessary, directly establish companies providing apprenticeships: A master craftsman, together with three or four experienced skilled workers and about 20 apprentices, could receive orders from the population and execute them inexpensively and customer-friendly, in various professional fields. Combined with one day of theory classes a week, a generation of skilled workers would grow up, which

could go on working independently and train new apprentices. The fact is: Compared to countries with a system of dual vocational education like Switzerland, Germany and Austria, countries that don't have this combination of practical work and theory in professional education more often suffer from a lack of skilled workers and from high youth unemployment. With dual vocational training, the problem of youth unemployment could be easily resolved, even in countries with high unemployment rates.

There is enough work. Today everything remains undone that does not yield a maximum profit. We need "an economy for the benefit of all" – that was the title of a popular initiative, which is being established in Switzerland (see *Current Concerns*, No. 41 of 1 October). The initiative demands that the people do not have to dance to the tune of the economy but that the economy is oriented towards the needs of the people again.

¹ according to Eurostat. Statista 2012,
<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/74795/umfrage/jugendarbeitslosigkeit-in-europa/>

Towards a Western retreat from Syria

by Thierry Meyssan

cc. What many experts who have most precisely dealt with Syria and the ongoing war situation, have reported since long, is now successively coming to light in the public. Many of the rebels in Syria have in fact not much to do with democracy.

In early November, pictures of rebels, who had captured, tortured and executed official Syrian army soldiers, went around the world. Both the UN and Amnesty International raised serious accusations against the insurgents and referred to them as "war crimes". There must be investigations against those proceedings, they said. What is really needed is a genuine dialogue for peace.

In order to create the conditions for such negotiations the Russian peace plan, which was drawn up as early as this summer, would be a viable option. (see box)

The military situation in Syria is turning against those in Washington and Brussels who hoped to change the regime there by force. Two successive attempts to take Damascus have failed and it has become clear that that objective cannot be achieved.

On 18 July, an explosion killed the leadership of the Council of National Security, signalling the beginning of a vast offensive during which tens of thousands of mercenaries descended on the Syrian capital from Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. After several days of pitched battles, Damascus was saved when the fraction of the population hostile to the government chose out of patriotism to assist the National Army rather than bid welcome to the forces of the FSA.

On 26 September, al-Qaeda jihadists were able to penetrate the interior of the Defense Ministry, disguised as Syrian soldiers and carrying false papers. They intended to detonate their explosive vests in the office of the joint chiefs of the military but did not get close enough to their target and were killed. A second team attempted to take over the national TV station to broadcast an ultimatum to the President but were not able to reach the building as access was blocked moments after the first attack. A third team targeted government headquarters and a fourth was aimed at the airport.

In both cases, NATO coordinated the operations from its Turkish base in Incirlik, seeking to provoke a schism at the core of the Syrian Arab Army and rely on certain generals for the purpose of overthrowing the regime. But the generals in question had long been identified as traitors and marginalized from effective com-

The Chapkas – as well a hope for the Russian Jews in Israel

thk. The plan of the Russian President Putin is to deploy troops of the "Collective Security Treaty Organization" (CSTO) to the war zone, in the sense of the UN "Blue Helmets". The "Chapkas" [translated: "blue fur hats"] consist of Russian troops and troops of various peoples along Russia's Caucasus which fought consistently against drug trafficking in the Middle East during 2003 to 2008. During this period, more than 75 tons of drugs, including 20 tons of opium, were seized. The troops are combat-tested, well trained and have great experience, which would benefit their operation in Syria. It is part of this plan that the Chapkas should be permitted to arrest foreign fighters. President Putin's plan includes – in addition to the deployment of the peacekeepers – the creation of a free trade zone between Syria and the Eastern European Customs Union, made up of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Thus, some pressure should be reduced from Syria, which – due to the sanctions – is bearing on the country and especially on its population, and has led to an extreme increase of bread prices among other consequences.

The presence of Chapkas could be a first step toward peace in Syria. Russia

as a protector of the oppressed population in Syria and as a bulwark against the warlike confrontation which was brought into the region from outside. It would also be a reassurance for the large community of Russian Jews in Israel. After the 1990 opening there was a veritable exodus of Jews from the former Soviet republics, in particular from Russia. The *Jüdische Zeitung* (Jewish newspaper) speaks of 900,000 to 1.5 million immigrants. The Russian immigrants distinguished themselves by a high rate of academics and a strong high work ethic. "The people had come to work and not to receive social welfare", the website of the Jewish community in Mainz states (www.jgmainz.de). They "made a significant contribution to society and the economy of Israel." Since about 2005, however, a steady decline of this immigration movement can be observed. Many prospective emigrants now stay in their own countries because they find better perspectives there. For the large Russian colony in Israel it would be a benefit if they were guaranteed that Russia could achieve an end of bloodshed in Syria by its presence and thus a long-term stable peace in the Middle East might be guaranteed.

mand. In the aftermath of the two failed attacks, Syrian power was reinforced, giving it the internal legitimacy necessary to go on the offensive and crush the FSA.

These failures put a damper on those who had been crowing in advance that the days of *Bashar al-Assad* were numbered. In Washington, consequently, those counselling withdrawal are carrying the day. The question is no longer how much time the "Assad regime" will hold out but whether it costs the US more to continue the war than to stop it. Continuing it would entail the collapse of the Jordanian economy, losing allies in Lebanon, risking civil war in Turkey, in addition to having to protect Israel from the chaos. Stopping the war would mean allowing the Russians to regain foothold in the Middle East and strengthening the Axis of Resistance to the detriment of the expansionist dreams of the Likud.

While Washington's response takes the Israeli dimension into account, it has stopped heeding the advice of the *Netanyahu* government. Netanyahu ended up undercutting himself through his manipulations behind the assassination of Ambassador *Chris Stevens* and through his shocking interference in the American

presidential campaign. If the long-term protection of Israel is the goal rather than folding to the brazen demands of *Benjamin Netanyahu*, a continued Russian presence is the best solution. With one million Russian-speaking Israelis, Moscow will never allow that the survival of that colony to be imperiled.

A glance backward is necessary here. The war against Syria was decided by the Bush Administration on 15 September, 2001 during a meeting at Camp David, as confirmed notably by General *Wesley Clark*. After having suffered several setbacks, NATO action had to be cancelled due to the vetoes of Russia and China. A "Plan B" then emerged, involving the use of mercenaries and covert action once deploying uniformed soldiers had become impossible. Given that the FSA has not scored a single victory against the Syrian Army, there have been multiple predictions that the conflict will become interminable and will progressively undermine the states of the region, including Israel. In this context, Washington signed onto the Geneva Accord, under the auspices of *Kofi Annan*.

Bomb attack in Beirut

Pogrom for the expulsion of Christians

ga. A black Friday, 19 October 2012. Shortly after 2 p.m., the students leave the venerable walled French school centre in the Christian district of Beirut. They are picked up by their parents or driven home by buses. A nearby, shattering explosion suddenly ends the light-hearted atmosphere. The bang can be heard for miles and the cloud of smoke can be seen above the prominent hill of Ashrafieh. Concerned parents will not get any information by telephone, they must hope and wait. Finally the seven-year-old Auri gets off the bus and hugs her mother, still trembling. She stammers haltingly: "I want to get away from here."

What has happened? A bomb, deposited in a car, killed eight people and injured many. Among the dead is the Sunni chief (*Hassan*) of the Lebanese intelligence service, who was closely linked with the anti-Syrian opposition. These are the first statements. What they did not reveal was that the attack had taken place directly next to the headquarters of the Christian militias (*Falangists/Lebanese Forces*). Moreover, the names of the Christian victims were not published.

It does not even take half an hour before western media accuse Syria in a globally standardised broadcast of being responsible for the attack. Anyone who releases such a broadcast without the indispensable analysis comes close to the offenders.

The offenders' simple-minded confession of the murder of the Greek singer *Ibycus* comes to mind: "See there! See there, Timotheus – behold the cranes of Ibycus!" Or alternatively the saying: "Kill a friend and accuse your enemy."

Political murders are rarely solved truthfully. *Olof Palme*, *Rabin* and *Hari-ri* are just a few examples. We live in a degenerated democratic world in which state leaders feel entitled to murder their inconvenient political opponents after they have previously been criminalised by the media.

With some distance of time it is possible to speculate in a more substantiated way about the perpetrators of the last bombing:

- The murdered Hassan's contacts among the Falangists should be investigated. Were there any plans to bring the almost seceded Lebanese north back under the control of the Lebanese central government by means of Christian-Sunni actions (as in the Palestinian camp *al Bared*)? Or should the secession of the Lebanese north be secretly cemented, against the will of the majority of the Lebanese Parliament?
- Did the attack primarily target the Christian militias and the Christian centre in Beirut – in response to the Pope's visit – for the purpose of the expulsion of Christians from Lebanon?

Who benefits from the expulsion of Christians?

- Lebanon is currently ruled by a religious and culturally well harmonising majority of Shiites and Christians. This situation ensures the Shiite axis between Syria, Lebanon and Iran (and Iraq). However, it interferes with the implementation of Western geostrategic interests in raw materials, the expansion of Israel and the maintenance of non-democratic structures in the Sunni oil states. Sunni Wahabites/Salafists are obviously used by this group to destroy the Shiite axis – first in Syria, now in Lebanon. The aim is the extermination of the Shiites and their Christian helpers. This background knowledge must be particularly taken into account with all attacks.

During his visit to Lebanon the Pope called for peace, the unity of Christians and their continued residence in Lebanon. The recent assault will drive many Christian families away from the country. Western raw materialists are obviously completely indifferent towards the fate of Christians in the Middle East. On the long term they are asking for severe trouble, caused by extremists, and especially Europe is going to suffer, if it does not develop an independent policy. •

"Towards a Western retreat ..."

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Subsequently, the war camp torpedoed this agreement by organizing leaks to the press concerning the West's secret involvement in the conflict, leaks that led to Kofi Annan's immediate resignation. It also played its two trump cards with the attacks on 18 July and 26 September and lost them both. As a result, *Lakhdar Brahimi*, Annan's successor, has been called on to resuscitate and implement the *Geneva Accord*.

In the interim, Russia did not remain idle: it obtained the creation of a Syrian Ministry of National Reconciliation; supervised and protected the meeting in Damascus of national opposition parties; organized contacts between the US and Syrian general staff; and prepared the deployment of a peace force. The first two

measures scarcely registered in the Western press while the last two were flatly ignored.

Nevertheless, as revealed by *Sergei Lavrov*, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russia addressed the fears of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning Syrian chemical weapons. It verified that these were stored in locations sufficiently secure not to fall into the hands of the FSA, be seized by jihadists and used by them indiscriminately. Ultimately, it gave credible guarantees to the Pentagon that the continuation in power of so determined a leader as Bashar el-Assad is a more manageable situation, for Israel as well, than allowing the chaos in Syria to spread further.

Above all, *Vladimir Putin* accelerated the projects of the CSTO, the *Collective Security Treaty Organization*, the anti-NATO defense alliance that unites Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirghi-

zstan, Tadjikstan and Russia itself. The foreign ministers of the CSTO adopted a shared position on Syria and a logistical plan was drawn up for an eventual deployment of 50,000 men. An agreement was signed between the CSTO and the UN Peacekeeping Department that these "blue chapkas" would be used in the zones of conflict under a UN Security Council mandate. Joint drills between the two are to take place from 8 to 17 October in Kazakhstan under the label of "Inviolable Fraternity" to complete the coordination between these two intergovernmental organizations. The Red Cross and the IOM will also participate.

No official decision will be taken in the US during the presidential campaign. Once that ends, peace might become conceivable. •

Source: www.voltairenet.org

(Translation *Michele Stoddard*)

Syria rebels losing moral high ground

Arrogance, criminality and mounting atrocities have wearied supporters

by Anne Barnard

“They were supposed to be the people on whom we depend to build a civil society.”

Twenty months into Syria’s civil war, violence and social disintegration are deepening as the government and the rebels adopt more brutal tactics without making headway, trapping Syrians in a darkening mood of revulsion, despair and a fear that neither side can end the conflict.

Even for partisans of the government of President *Bashar al-Assad*, the extreme violence seems all the more pointless for its lack of results. But perhaps the most significant mood shift has been among the rebels’ supporters, who long claimed the moral high ground of fighting dictatorship but now criticize their own fighters for arrogance, criminal behavior and executions.

New protest chants focus not on the government, but on the rebel forces. “The people want the reform of the Free Syrian Army,” crowds have called out. “We love you, correct your path.”

Recent atrocities and missteps by rebels have drained the enthusiasm of some civilian supporters, whose willingness to sacrifice has helped the fighters withstand superior government firepower. Poorly executed offensives have brought reprisals and destruction, notably in Syria’s largest city, Aleppo, an ancient town that stood for centuries as the proud legacy of all Syrians.

The growing tally of rebel shortcomings has been compounded by the changing character of the opposition, from a force of civilians and defected soldiers that took up arms after the government used lethal force on peaceful protests to one increasingly driven by extremist Islamist jihadis.

The radicalization of the opposition has also made Western capitals even more reluctant to give rebels the arms they need to win. Instead, they have struggled with little success to find another way to end the war of attrition, with Washington helping to build a viable government-in-exile and Turkey considering setting up a de-facto no-fly zone over northern Syria.

For Syrians, it has been small acts of senseless destruction and petty humiliation, and the cold-blooded execution of prisoners, that has led many to believe some rebels are as depraved as the government they fight. Last week, a video circulated showing rebels forcing captive Syrian soldiers to the ground and opening fire; the United Nations called it evidence of a war crime.

“They were supposed to be the people on whom we depend to build a civil society,” lamented a civilian activist in Saraqeb, the northern town where the video was apparently shot on Thursday. That day, the activist said, he saw rebels drive soldiers from a milk factory, then destroy it, even though residents needed the milk and had good relations with the owner.

“They shelled the factory and stole everything,” the activist said. “Those are repulsive acts.”

Some of the uprising’s staunchest supporters are beginning to fear that Syria’s sufferings – lost lives, fraying social fabric, destroyed heritage – are for naught.

“We thought freedom was so near,” said a fighter calling himself *Abu Ahmed*, his voice catching with grief as he spoke via Skype last month from Maaret al-Noaman, a strategic town on the Aleppo-Damascus highway. Hours earlier, a rebel victory there ended in disaster, as government airstrikes pulverized civilians returning to what they thought was safety.

“This shows it was a big lie,” *Abu Ahmed* said of the dream of self-government that, he said, inspired him to lead a small rebel fighting group from his nearby village, Sinbol. “We cannot reach it. We can’t even think of democracy – we will be sad for years. We are losing victims from both sides.”

A chain of calamities fueled disgust and frustration on all sides, dozens of interviews with Syrians show.

In July, a rebel bombing killed four senior officials in a heavily guarded Damascus building, bringing new insecurity to government supporters. Rebels’ growing use of large bombs that kill bystanders, and the rising profile of battalions with extremist religious agendas, spurred concerns on both sides.

In September, rebels launched an offensive in Aleppo, bringing bloody battles to previously calm areas, but failing to achieve the turning point they had promised, or hoped for.

The government, trying to curb soldiers’ defections and reduce strain on the military, kept more forces on bases and turned to air power and artillery, flattening neighborhoods with abandon. But the strategy shift did not restore control or security. The capital, Damascus, resembles Baghdad in the grip of American occupation and insurgency; blast walls surround official buildings and checkpoints choke commerce and daily life.

After witnessing a rebel bombing and small-arms attack on a central government

ICRC convention on the general protection of prisoners of war

Article 13

Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention. In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned and carried out in his interest. Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against prisoners of war are prohibited.

*Geneva Convention (III)
relative to the Treatment of Prisoners
of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949*

* * *

me. The “Detaining Power” mentioned in the convention might be a special group of states – in the case of the destabilisation war in Syria a group of states introduced from outside. This group includes all countries that support irregular forces with weapons, ammunition, logistics, “trainers” and espionage. According to reports the following states must be included in that group: France, England, Germany, Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel and the US. They all bear the responsibility for “their troops”, i.e. they are Detaining Powers under the Geneva Conventions and may be sanctioned accordingly.

building, a chauffeur for a wealthy businessman complained that conspicuous security measures made him “live in fear” – without being effective.

“I want someone from the government to answer me,” he said. “The government cannot protect its key military and security buildings, so how can it protect us and run the country?”

"Syria rebels losing moral ..."

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Even within Mr Assad's most solid base, his minority Alawite sect, discontent spilled over last month in a coffee-shop brawl in the president's ancestral village, Qardaha. Some Alawites complain of being marginalized and bullied by Alawites in pro-government militias.

Others were shaken recently by heavy casualties in the disproportionately Alawite military and militias, according to *Fadi Saad*, who runs a Facebook page called Alawites in the Syrian Revolution.

On the rebel side, the Aleppo battle catalyzed simmering frustrations among civilian activists who feel dominated by gunmen. One Aleppo activist said she met with fighters to suggest ways to cut government supply routes without destroying the city, to no avail. Rebels wanted glory and publicity, the activist said, even if that meant entering the old city, drawing government fire that burned its medieval market.

"You risked the lives of the people for what?" the activist said. "The Free Syrian Army is just cutting the nails of the regime – we want results."

Another Aleppo activist, *Ahmed*, said he begged rebels not to camp in a neighborhood telecommunications office. But they did, and government attacks knocked out phone service.

One fighter, he recalled, shot in the air when customers at a bakery did not let him cut a long line for bread. Another, he said, was enraged when a man washing his car accidentally splashed him. "He shot him," *Ahmed* said. "But thank God he wasn't a good shot, so the guy wasn't hurt."

Nominal leaders of the loose-knit rebel umbrella group, the Free Syrian Army, say they embrace ethical standards, contend that the government commits the vast majority of abuses and blame bad rebel behavior on rogue groups.

Then came last week's video: Men writhe on the ground, staring up and screaming in terror. Rebels stand over them, shouting a cacophony of orders and insults. Some wear fatigues, but they move like a gang, not a military unit: jostling and crowding, kicking prisoners, forcing them into a pile. Suddenly, automatic weapons fire drowns the noise. Puffs of dust rise from the pile, now still.

"All the ugly stuff the regime practiced, the F.S.A. is copying," *Anna*, a finance worker in Damascus, said of recent behavior.

She blamed the government for making society abusive, but said the rebels were no better. "They are ignorant people with weapons," she said.

In Maaret al-Noaman after the airstrikes, the disappointed fighter, *Abu Ahmed*, said Syrians would weep to see destruction in the city of "our famous poet and philosopher," *Abu al-Ala alMa'arri*.

The 10th-century poet, a skeptic and rationalist buried in the now-ravaged town, wrote often of disillusion, and of the fallibility of would-be heroes: "How many times have our feet trodden beneath the dust/A brow of the arrogant, a skull of the debonair?"

Abu Ahmed said he found the town's mosaic museum looted and littered first by soldiers, then by rebels. "I saw bodies of both rebels and regime forces, I saw beer bottles," he said. "Honestly, honestly, words are stuck in my mouth." •

Source: © *The International Herald Tribune* from 9 November 2012

Is Israel planning "electromagnetic attack" on Iran?

The British "Sunday Times" recently reported on the fears of "US intelligence community", according to which Israel possibly intends to attack Iranian nuclear facilities with electromagnetic weapons. Both – the generation of electro-

magnetic pulses by microwave weapons as well as the firing of a nuclear warhead at high altitude – was conceivable. In both cases massive electronic components would be destroyed, which would lead to an extensive paralysis of the Ira-

nian infrastructure and thus to a temporary stop even of the nuclear program. •

Source: *Vertrauliche Mitteilungen* (Confidential notifications) from 18.9.2012

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Rule of law offers foundation for long-term democratic hopes

by Kishore Mahbubani

ev. While the West is pointing the finger at China and frequently complains that it needs "more democracy", the view of Mahbubani Kishore, an attentive observer and expert on Asian development is very helpful: He points to the immense challenges which Chinese politics has to face; his recommendations are not guided by Western arrogance but so to speak by the inner experience of the Asian development. He directs the sight clearly and concisely at the experiences of the more than 80 percent of the non-Western world's population who draw their own conclusions considering the state of the western world itself and their own experiences with the western "bombocracy", drone huntings or other "humanitarian interventions", for example in Afghanistan and in Iraq. His recommendations do not originate in the dishonest greed of power; instead they are read like observations of a contemporary companion at a time of upheaval. That is why he appreciates the achievements of Chinese development: bringing 1.2 billion people forward in their living conditions is an achievement that over a billion hungry people in the world are still waiting for.

China's leaders face a unique challenge. China's political system has delivered the fastest improvement in standard of living that any society has experienced in recent times. But it is also being closely watched as the public clamors for greater democracy.

Given these unique challenges, China's leaders will have to be unusually creative and innovative in deciding how to change and evolve. Any sudden change in system would be a disaster, as the collapse of the Soviet Union showed.

A sudden and overnight transition to democracy led to a dramatic shrinking of the Russian economy, a collapse in living standards and massive suffering for the Russian people. It would also be a mistake for China's leaders to stand still and not try out reforms of its political system.

As China is developing the world's largest middle class, it is inevitable that this middle class will insist on a greater say in the evolution of China's future. The Chinese political system therefore needs to adopt a "bigtent" approach¹ and include a diversity of voices. At the same time, greater "intraparty democracy," with more elections within the CPC, will also help.

It would also be helpful for the CPC to have a debate on whether China should push for greater democracy or greater rule of law as it seeks to reform its political system. In the West, there is a public consensus that the only road to take is to go for greater democracy. Behind this public consensus, there are growing private doubts about the ability of the democratic system to solve some of the fundamental problems that Western societies face today.

In theory, democracies create a "government of the people by the people and for the people," as then US president Abraham Lincoln said in the Gettysburg Address. In practice, democracies have become governments chosen by the people to support powerful special interests.

The US political system has been taken over by a parasitic set of lobbies that protects special interests over the universal interests of the people. Such a system would be a disaster for China.

While preparing slowly for democracy in the long run, China should move forward instead toward pushing for greater rule of law in the short term. Stronger rule of law will give the Chinese people greater confidence that there is one set of rules that applies equally to both leaders and followers.

This means that while the law courts would sentence an ordinary worker to jail for murder, the same court would also sentence *Bogu Kailai* for murder. The perception that there is one set of laws applying to all citizens regardless of their rank and position would significantly enhance the legitimacy of the Chinese political system.

Subjecting the more than 80 million members of the CPC to the same rule of

law as the regular citizens of China might appear at first glance as a reduction in the power and influence of the CPC. However, if the general public begins to see that CPC members are subject to the same public laws and courts as ordinary citizens, this could paradoxically increase public confidence and trust in the CPC.

Stronger rule of law would also bring other long-term benefits. It would check any arbitrary exercise of power of the local and regional officials. In turn, this will lead to a reduction of regular outbreaks of social unrest.

If people have faith in independent and reliable legal courts to address any grievances they may have, they will be less likely to take to the streets. Indeed, the best long-term mechanism to reduce the prospects of any emergence of "color" revolutions, such as the ones experienced in Ukraine and Georgia, is to have stronger rule of law.

In trying to strengthen the rule of law, it is important to bear in mind that good laws are easy to find. Good laws have been written for thousands of years. Good men and women to implement the rule of law are harder to find.

One important lesson Singapore has learned is that it is important to find the best people to become judges. It is equally important to pay them well and protect them to ensure they are not tempted or seduced by money or power.

Over centuries, China has built good dikes along the main rivers to prevent great floods from sweeping through the countryside causing great ruin. Similarly, a good army of strong and honest judges can act as a powerful dike to prevent great floods of social and political unrest. Hence, before promoting democracy, China should first promote greater rule of law.

¹ A "big tent" approach or a "catch-all" party seeks to involve people of all social ranks and of different philosophies, aspiring to represent the broad range of the electorate in their diversity of interests in a balanced way.

Source: *Global Times* from 14 October 2012
The author is Dean of the National University of Singapore.

This is what the citizens of European countries could demand from the United States ... and from our own governments

by Karl Müller

On the day of the US presidential election the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” published an interview with the prominent neoconservative *Robert Kagan*, who had also been a foreign policy adviser to Republican presidential candidate *Mitt Romney*. At the center of the interview was the statement that even in the 21st century the United States would hold on to their position in a unipolar world dominated by themselves. A multipolar world, even a world of equal states, would “neither be stable nor peaceful” since there was no longer a “world policeman”, he said. The most important thing the US should do would be to keep its military budget at least at the current level.

Robert Kagan is one of the Americans who have been saying quite bluntly, for many years, what they think of the rest of the world and that the world could not do nothing better than submit to US policy. You have to add: Although the wording and style vary depending on the slant, this is basically the strong belief of most of the US elites.

Ever since *Kishore Mahbubani* we also know that almost 90 percent of the world does not think so. But where is Europe’s stance? And what do we, the citizens of European countries demand?

We might congratulate *Barack Obama* on his re-election, but also make clear what we request:

We might demand that Europe – committed to the truth – reappraises its history since the Second World War. Most recently, a research assistant of the European United Left in the European Parliament, *Andreas Wehr* (“Die Europäische Union”, ISBN 978-3-89438-498-2), made such an attempt, and came to the conclusion that what later became the European Union had never been a European project but a US American one. And that it had not been intended to secure peace in Europe, but was established mainly in order to enforce US economic and US financial interests more effectively.

We could demand that the US commits itself to the Charter of the United Nations; hence it should renounce wars of aggression and show reliable respect for the

“All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 1

equality and sovereignty of all the states in the world.

We, the citizens of European countries, might demand that the United States close all US military bases outside their country and limit themselves to what is the right and the duty of every country: stationing troops only in one’s own country and spend for military purposes as is necessary for the defense of one’s own country. We could also demand that the United States neither use *hard power* nor *soft power* nor *smart power* in their foreign policy in the future, but instead that they regulate their relations with other countries in open and equal negotiations. This is also true if somebody in the United States wants to purchase raw materials in other countries.

We, the citizens of European countries, could demand that the US cease to develop ever more terrible weapons of mass destruction and instead adopt honest and serious disarmament initiatives.

We could demand that the US cease to destabilize other countries. We know the attempts to decompose other states, and the demonization of other states and governments from the history of all the wars in Europe. Such stereotypes do no longer suit a world that is supposed to grow together in peace and equality.

We could ask that also US policy accept that each country regulates its economic order according to the will of its people. Only such an approach corresponds to the *International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights* also ratified by the US. In Article 1, paragraph 1, the following is laid down: “All peoples have the right to self-determination. In virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

There is no convincing argument for why the present economic world disorder should continue. And why every country should maintain a kind of capitalism that only serves a minority that is socially unjust and renders peace in the world impossible. Obviously, we citizens of European countries could request a lot more, so that in the coming years US politics will no longer follow the teachings of *Robert Kagan*, but will serve the efforts for a more peaceful and socially just world. And with all the demands we would naturally associate the wish that the United States bring peace and justice to their own people.

Finally, we would also have to demand from our own governments in Europe everything that we request the United States to do. We should give special emphasis to those claims – so that the governments of European countries would be standing at the side of their citizens. This would also be very important for the future of US politics. •

US arms exports at a new maximum value

The widespread worries about an armed confrontation with Iran in many Arab countries yielded record profits to the U.S. arms industry last year. The export revenues of U.S. arms-industries increased from 21.4 billion U.S. dollars in 2010 to \$ 66.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2011. This was mainly the result of the fighter aircraft and anti-missile systems export to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. •

Source: *Vertrauliche Mitteilungen* (Confidential notifications) No. 3995 from 4.9.2012
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Cooperatives in Spain as an instrument to face unemployment

by *María R. Sahuquillo / Raquel Vidales*

gl. The financial and debt crisis in Spain: 25% of the people are unemployed; the rate with under-25s is as high as 52%. How do people live under these circumstances, how do they try to cope with the situation? It is difficult to get a true notion from Spanish newspapers. Besides the fact that only one Spanish newspaper – “El País” is available outside Spain, and sometimes only the previous day’s issue, our media convey an image of Spain which does not match the occasional visitors’ perception.

Family ties are still very strong in Spain; people close ranks to take on additional family members or lodgers in their apartments. In large parts, many families live on their grandparent’s retirement benefits, which date from the times of plenty. The older generation enables the young unemployed generation to live a life of consumption and spending to some extent. The underground economy is widespread.

Wherever one gets into conversation with Spaniards, they express the opinion that over the last decades Spain has lived beyond its means and that the building boom was disproportionate – with all its consequences. The dissatisfaction of many Spaniards mainly refers to the bad government (under the socialist Zapatero, but also under the current administration of the conservative Mariano Rajoy). Government cuts hit the poorest most and are met with general disgust. Spain is the European country where the gap between rich and poor has opened most over the last years. This development had already begun under the socialist government.

It is encouraging that cooperatives, which have had a long tradition in different regions of Spain, now experience a renaissance: Citizens take their lives into their own hands.

The city sports complex *Manuel Santos García* in the Sevillian town Gerena offers a variety of activities. Swimming lessons and aqua aerobics in the heated swimming pool, basketball, indoor soccer, Pilates, aerobics, ballroom dancing, salsa, merengue, skating, just to mention some. And this is not an initiative on the part of the municipal administration, which has been strangled by the crisis like many others these days. This is but an initiative based on the persistence of four citizens, who have endeavored to find a use of a new gigantic site that has been built with funds from the

Plan E and which was opened in 2008 with a bang. Until a year and a half ago it was not used properly, because there was no money.

The citizens said that if the administration was not able to do anything about it, they would make the best of it and take it in their own hands. And they started to move things forward and founded *Aquasport*, which was set up as a cooperative. They entered into an open competition to win the contract for the management of the facilities and then started operations in January 2011. Their project: Transforming the facilities into a dynamic space, open to any proposal that benefits the people. Today they even celebrate festivals and birthdays on the site.

Do not wait for the state

The history of the Gerena sports center is an example of how cooperatives take over various social functions which the welfare state no longer can fulfill due to the crisis. But there are more such examples: health services, care for the needy and disabled, financial services, education, renewable energies, cultural activities, agriculture ... In Spain there is a total of 22,171 cooperatives, according to the Spanish Confederation of Social Enterprises *Cepes*. More than half of them are focused on services. These are cooperatives that will survive, although the total numbers have declined due to the real estate disaster which hit housing cooperatives. “The cooperatives that arise now, are working cooperatives, consumer and user cooperatives in education or work ...”, says *Francisco José Martín*, a specialist in social economy. From January to March this year, 223 cooperatives of this kind have been founded according to the Ministry of Labor.

Cooperatives have been around for more than 100 years in different sectors of the economy worldwide. Now, particularly in difficult times, many of them offer innovative responses to the challenges posed by the crisis. “These are solutions that develop in the cooperation among people who do not wait that public administration solves their problems; however, they are looking for a solution within the specter of their own resources,” analyzed *Iñigo Bandrés* from the network for Social and Economic Alternative *Reas*. “Just like after the Civil War, when many villages had no electricity or running water and founded their self-supply cooperatives, this can serve as a

model to cushion the impacts of government cuts in many social areas,” confirms *Ana Isabel Ceballo*, president of the Association of Consumer Cooperatives in Spain (UNCCUE).

An old people’s home, in which human beings count more than their money

The *Servimayor* buildings were not erected due to the austerity measures, but rather to meet a need, which, in any case, would never have been fulfilled by the authorities: a village of 3,200 inhabitants, *Losar de Vera* in the province of Cáceres, wanted to have an old people’s home. One day *Santiago Cañades*, then 74 years old, and one of his neighbors had the idea to join together in a cooperative and to build a center. Moreover, it should be to their liking. “We wanted a good place to go when we are no longer able to continue living independently. We do not like those private homes. Money is more important there than human beings, so we thought of a different model,” *Cañades* explains. A place where they would neither be dependent on the authorities nor on their own children and where they would be admitted at cost price after investing a certain amount of money.

Servimayor – having a garden and offering physiotherapy and a hairdresser’s service several times a week – was opened in 2010 with 124 accommodations. 150 cooperative members are involved, 90 of which have not yet retired. Just like *Francisco Martín*, 57 years old and cooperative member number 3, they place their accommodation at their parents’ disposal or make it available on the free market. [...]

Opening of a business in times of crisis

Felix Martin, Secretary General of the Spanish Association of Consumer Cooperatives, confirms that cooperatives can not only fill the gaps caused by the cutbacks in the welfare state, but also provide a good opportunity to open a business in times of crisis. “It’s a more natural way to do that with more support, because there are cooperative members. And therefore it is bearing less risk”, he assures.

Cooperatives enjoy the same tax benefits as other types of companies, but they have to invest a part of their profits into a fund for the education and training of their members and in social activities for

"Cooperatives in Spain ..."

continued from page 11

the promotion of cooperatives. However, according to the experts, one cannot count on the necessary public support. "There is neither any support nor any policy promoting social economy or cooperatives," Bandrés says. Moreover, many cooperatives that have taken over the duties of the public service look helplessly on a large part of the funds being further reduced.

But despite all this, these and other cooperatives resist the impacts of the crisis. According to statistical data they can cope better than other types of businesses by simply tightening their belts. "They adjust their working conditions to maintain the jobs," says the expert of *Reas*. Or they even try to create more. "We are not obliged to make profit and are not accountable to capitalist entrepreneurs. Our only objective is to gain our pay, 1,200 euro per month, by good management and to offer the community a good service", says Francisco José Martín, president of the cooperative of *Aquasport*. Therefore, the sports center in Gerena is able to offer many more activities than the company which had held the license from 2008 to 2011 and which confined itself to sell subscriptions and keep the grounds in order. With the current management, they can handle the ups and downs of the economy much better: Their objective is not to grow, but to remain.

Joan Segarra, head of department for initiatives in the social sector of the Federation of Catalan Workers Cooperatives, emphasizes other reasons why this type of business is growing in the midst of the crisis: the inexorable increase of the unemployment rate and self-employment as an alternative. "In recent times, all counseling seminars for young entrepreneurs have been fully booked out. Many participants have lost their jobs and decided to make the best of it and to found a cooperative," he explains. And why do they prefer a cooperative to a private limited company? "In many cases, it happens for ideological reasons. It is a good model in which working for the benefit of the people and not serving the capital has the highest priority. It is one of the leading principles of the so-called social economy to reject the principles of capitalism, which have caused the crisis," is Segarra's answer.

The Spanish Association of working cooperatives *Coceta* claims that from 2009 to 2011 3,083 such cooperatives were newly established and hence 28,558 jobs were created. The report of the International Labor Organization ILO confirmed this growth according to which

these companies were more resistant to crisis. *Simel Esim*, head of the Department for Cooperatives in the ILO, mentions the example of financial organizations: "The cooperative banks have improved their profitability during the crisis because their readiness to take risks is smaller and they are less profit-seeking. They strive not to freeze loans, they try to keep certain stability in interest rates, and their loan conditions are generally more bearable".

The consumer cooperatives have also experienced a large growth in recent years. "Not so much, or not only, due to the crisis, but because many citizens would like to have access to products that they don't find so easily on the market or that are too expensive if you buy them individually", explains the Secretary General of *Hispa-Coop*. An example of a recently established cooperative is *Som Energia*. It was founded in 2010 in Girona with 150 members who wanted to buy 100% renewable energy without additional conventional energy. Today, the cooperative has 3,267 members already, and the group started its first production projects in addition to their marketing work.

In *Almocafré* they are already veterans. This ecological consumer cooperative has existed for 15 years now. Its task is the

distribution of organic farming products; in addition to the direct sales of the producers to the 150 members of the cooperative they also market private people's products. "It is a way to act ecologically sustainable with the help of the shopping basket, but also to support independent family farms that feel connected with the land and use artisanal methods", explains one of the members of the cooperative, *Miguel Navazo*.

There are also mixed cooperatives in the fields of labor and consumption. For example *Frescoop*, headquartered in Manresa near Barcelona. The cooperative was formed less than a year ago. Farmers from the District of El Bages joined and searched for consumers who wanted to buy fresh products at a good price, "without any intermediaries, who increase the total costs, and without having to go to the local markets", explains *Alba Rojas*, representative of the cooperative. Online purchases are processed through a platform and they offer various meeting places where customers can pick up their goods. 120 Consumer cooperative members and another 50 on the side of the producers have already joined. [...]

Source: *El País* from 31 August 2012(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Price increase of global food: Corn and wheat 25%, soybeans 17% About 40% of US corn production are being used for bioethanol production

The latest statistics by the World Bank concerning food showed a price increase of 10% for the month of July 2012. The strongest increase was recorded for corn and wheat with 25%, followed by soybeans with 17%. Only rice prices came down by 4%. The World Bank holds bioethanol production responsible for the significant increase in prices. About 40% of US corn production are being used for the production of bioethanol. Due to the sharp rise of crude oil prices it is worth even for German farmers to sell grain to biogas plants instead of to the food industry.

While in the saturated states of North America and Europe, rising food prices are hardly problematic, because the proportion of disposable income that is spent on food is still very low, the situation in the poorer parts of the world is getting worse by a multiple. Meanwhile, many people in Africa and other parts of the world can no longer afford sufficient foodstuffs because their prices

es have increased to such an extent that ... the disposable personal income is no longer sufficient for adequate nourishment. On top of that, the "US-Israeli warfare" in the Middle East through the embargo against Iran as well as the war in Syria, caused food prices to increase sharply throughout the whole region. While this might be desirable for targets such as Iran and Syria to create an explosive force within these countries against their governments, it might lead to significant problems in the already conquered countries, Egypt, Morocco, Libya and might stir up unwanted revolutionary potential there. Possibly the food question will determine whether the Middle East can come back to rest or will spread to become a conflagration.

Source: *Vertrauliche Mitteilungen* (Confidential notifications) No 3998 from 25 September 2012(Translation *Current Concerns*)

No compulsory measures – vaccination has to remain voluntary

No revision of the Epizootic Diseases Act

by Roland Güttinger and Dr phil Henriette Hanke Güttinger

cc. In two weeks' time the electorate has the opportunity to vote on the revised Epizootic Diseases Act. The opponents of this bill have put their concerns and main arguments against this revision on the table, in a press conference already in mid October. Lively discussions of the Pros and Cons of this law have been going on among the citizens ever since.

Strikingly, no concrete facts have ever been forwarded by the supporters of the revised act, who tried to cast a slur on its opponents with mainstream-media activities that can only be referred to as cheap propaganda. The accusation of introducing compulsory vaccination cannot be challenged that way. The new law bestows far-reaching competencies, which really belong to the cantons and to every single citizen, on the Federal Veterinary Office (FVO), who would find it much easier now to impose compulsory vaccinations. All in all the new law is an attack against our federalist structures. In addition it would lead to even more interference from abroad, which could result in FVO orders which would be beyond democratic control in future.

Repetitive statements that the new law was not going to introduce compulsory vaccination are not enough in a decent discussion, if the paragraph preventing such compulsory vaccination cannot be cited. In fact, the reason why no supporter has so far been able to cite this paragraph protecting us against compulsory vaccinations in future is that there is none. It should make us suspicious that veterinary doctors object the law as too far-reaching and are perfectly happy with the current one.

The following article summarizes the most important arguments and outlines possible detrimental effects the amended law might have.

It was the farmhouse of Thomas and Katharina Grieder (Pfäffikon, CH) to where the "committee against a revision of the federal Epizootic Diseases Act" had invited for a press conference, in preparation of the federal referendum on 25 November 2012. Chaired by Urs Hans (Neubrunn), bio-farmer and Green cantonal councillor, the committee outlined their reasons to object the revision of the Epizootic Diseases Act.

Farmers from several cantons demonstrated to the journalists with concrete

facts how devastating the effects of compulsory vaccination campaigns in connection with bluetongue disease had been for agricultural enterprises.

Massive losses of livestock

Following the vaccinations against the bluetongue disease massive losses of livestock had occurred between the summers of 2008 and 2010. Thomas Grieder (Pfäffikon), who owns 26 ha meadow farmland with a livestock of 20 suckler cows lost five of them among other animals. On Thomas Jucker's farm (Weisslingen) almost half of the cattle died. On Toni Hürlimann's farm (Walchwil) severe health problems occurred after the vaccination, too. Not a single one of the 13 cattle which Alois Müller (Küssnacht) had ordered to have vaccinated in 2008, is alive any more. Only the one cow which had not been vaccinated is still doing well.

Jost Kathriner (Stalden, Obwalden) suffered a loss of 30,000 Francs with his livestock of 20 dairy cows and 15 calves.

Sybilla Kölbener from the Puschlav reported how her herd of sheep was confiscated by the official veterinarian after she had refused to have them vaccinated.

Affected farmers are not just trouble-makers

When it came to the first bluetongue vaccination, in most instances farmers were quite willing to have their animals vaccinated. When health problems occurred afterwards, at first they asked themselves whether they had done something wrong. Only when other colleagues confirmed later that they had experienced similar events the suspicion took root that all this could be directly linked to the bluetongue vaccination, as it has been confirmed from official side as well in the meantime. It was their own bitter experiences what made many farmers refuse further vaccinations.

Shameful for our authorities was what happened next, including the personal consequences the farmers had to endure. These ranged from threats of penalty and harassment on their own farms up to police operations. In most cases there were no reimbursements for lost animals or other damages. It turned into a bitter experience with the authorities who totally negated the farmers' own responsibility and their expertise on how to care for their animals.

Agricultural business of Thomas Jucker (Weisslingen, CH)

- 5 abortions
- Premature birth, cell numbers massively increased (by factor 2.5)
- Milk production sharply decreased (848 kg per cow per year)
- Weak calves that died a few hours after birth
- Claw problems in the course of which whole soles were detached
- Unnatural problems with the after-birth
- Poor fertility (insemination index increased from 1.9 to 2.3)
- Significantly reduced activity of the animals
- expenditure of 7000 francs for treatment with antibiotics – within 3 months
- Nearly half of my cows died within one year (28 cows)

Agricultural business of Thomas Grieder (Pfäffikon, CH)

- 5 dead mother cows in the first three weeks after the first vaccination
 - 5 claw sole detachments (laminitis)
 - 4 untreatable inflammations of the udder and the joint
 - 1 dystocia
 - 1 approximately four months mummy
 - 2 stillbirths
 - 1 preterm birth, which died after 24 hours
 - 1 cow with acute dyspnea
- Farmer Grieder reported on a complete monitoring of all cases by the veterinarian.

Participation due to referendum

Even in such severe circumstances there is no need in Switzerland to start a rebellion nor give up in despair. Referendum and initiative are tools for constructive solutions. So the farmers chose to take the referendum against the amendment of the Epizootic Diseases Act including compulsory vaccination at the federal level. The people will cast their vote on 25 November.

International organisations claim authority to rule our communities

Another speaker focussed on the federal power concentration this revised Epizootic Diseases Act would entail. Wherever power is concentrated there is a risk of mis-

"No compulsory measures ..."

continued from page 13

using it. Without us even getting to know about it, the Federal Council is entitled to sign agreements with international organisations (Article 53b). Thereby the sovereignty of the electorate is partially surrendered to those international organisations. The speaker reminded the audience of the swine flu incidence when the WHO stirred up a pandemic hysteria. Only big pharmaceutical corporations benefited from huge profit margins for their vaccines, which Switzerland had piled up for nothing since there simply was no pandemic.

Federalism is weakened

According to the speaker, with this power concentration at the federal level all cantonal veterinary authorities are being brought in line. That way another element of federalism is lost, the care for animal health at the cantonal level, a level where people still know each other personally and the administrative unit is manageable. The federalist idea primarily entails the principle of personal responsibility and independence. Only too rarely do we – especially those of us living in towns and cities – remind ourselves of the fact that our whole body politic is based on this foundation. The very idea of subsidiarity means that any administrative level deals only with those issues which the hierarchically lower levels cannot handle and organise for whatever reason. When objecting the revision of the Epizootic Diseases Act we can refer to subsidiarity, which is integral part of the constitution. Let's not give up this precious achievement, for which all other European states rightfully envy us, so eas-

ily. This enables us to maintain transparent administrative processes and also control the mightily proliferating administrative bubble at the federal level.

Successful control of epizootic diseases

When asked by one of the journalists Urs Hans took the example of Neubrunn to explain how Switzerland successfully and sustainably contained the foot-and-mouth disease: After foot-and-mouth disease had occurred in the stable of his neighbour, his farm had been put under quarantine and disinfected, his cattle were slaughtered as an emergency measure. That way foot-and-mouth disease spreading to other farms was successfully prevented. This strategy proved absolutely successful for the whole of Switzerland.

No general prohibition of vaccinations – personal responsibility

In conclusion the committee made the following remarks:

"How to proceed from here? In order to put an end to this art-of-the-state abuse of power and legislative scandal we demand to immediately establish a permanent monitoring committee at the federal level, independent of the FVO and including representatives of the farmers.

We as farmers will no longer serve as pawns in the chess game of multinational corporations' economic interests.

We say STOP! to unscientific and hypocritical panic-mongering for the sake of profit maximization, such as bird flu, swine flu or bluetongue disease.

We demand vaccinations to be voluntary: Everybody should be able to have vaccinations done, but in his or her own responsibility.

Uniterre – No to the revision of the Epizootic Diseases Act

Uniterre (member of the *Coordination Européenne Via Campesina*), represented at the press conference by its co-president, *Ulrike Minkner*, gave reasons for their "No to the revision of the Epizootic Diseases Act" as follows:

"Uniterre starts from the assumption that the farmers' rights to self-determination should not be further limited.

The last big vaccination campaign, concerning the vaccination against the blue tongue virus which temporally overlapped with the BVD (*Bovine Virus Diarrhoea*) control, was associated with big financial losses and considerable additional expenses for many farming enterprises.

Therefore it seems important to us not to weaken the decision-making responsibility in the farmers' hands. Clearly another case are animal diseases which can be transmitted from animals to man which have to be looked at in a clearly differentiated manner.

We don't regard the implementation of nationwide vaccination programmes

by the state as a satisfying approach. They continue to be measures of combating symptoms which will aggravate problems in the long term. Vaccination campaigns can only prevent the spread of diseases at short notice – in the long term we have to reconsider the matter.

Already years ago demands presented by critical farmers' circles pointed into a different direction:

- Research for natural immunization is to be promoted
- Alternative methods of treatment are to be developed further
- Reduction of the administering of antibiotics is to be initiated
- Changing the aims of breeding, i.e. towards long-living, robust animals

These claims were not fulfilled up to now and are not reflected in legislation. Without these measures the regulations of the revised Epizootic Diseases Act one-sidedly strengthen a restrictive level of ordinances instead of putting the animal welfare at the centre."

Sybilla Kölbener (Puschlav, CH)

The native Appenzeller from Puschlav, breeding sheep together with her husband, reported the following, "I am here as a directly affected animal owner who knows what she is talking about when incapacitation is discussed, undergone, experienced during the years of compulsory blue tongue vaccination. As we did not vaccinate the sheep, because there was nothing to be vaccinated, they were confiscated by the official veterinarian and he was authorized to assume the supervision of the farmer's property, his healthy herd. Our appeal's suspensive effect was rejected, we had nothing more to say, it was the law!"

Toni Hürliemann's farming enterprise (Walchwil, CH)

"On 4 August 2008, the vaccination was repeated. [...] After some time nothing on my farm was as it had been before the summer of 2008. Above all my animals did not become pregnant any more despite of two bulls. I noticed more stillbirths and miscarriages, along with growth-restricted and puny calves. This led me to obtain exact information about the vaccinations, and so for a first step I asked my vet for the package insert of the vaccine. Two days later he called me back: he was horrified and confirmed my fears about the ingredients, especially mercury. But in the package insert there is much more:

- [...] Duration of immunity: The results are pending.
- A possible impact of the vaccination on the reproductive function of bulls (spermatogenesis) has not been studied yet.
- Safety in use of this vaccine in pregnant or lactating animals has not been investigated so far.

On the issue of vaccine damage on the farm, Prof *Hässig*, University of Zurich, stated: 'It could be verified with the farm veterinarian that the problems started after the vaccination, and that before the vaccination the farm had had the usual problems of a farm in Switzerland.'

We demand personal participation and responsibility.

Farmers in the Canton of Zurich have already succeeded in achieving this goal.

In their new Epizootic Diseases Act the Cantonal Council ruled that after future vaccination campaigns not only acute adverse effects, but also long-term sequelae will have to be reimbursed and farmers want to have a say in the assessment. Moreover, in future an independent administrative commission will supervise the work of the veterinary authority. This is exactly what we need at the federal level, too.

For all these reasons we clearly reject the bad, patronizing and wrongly revised *Federal Epizootic Diseases Act* on 25 November, for the sake of our animals." •

Do horned and hornless animals harmonize in the same open stables?

Do horns make the cows or the people happy? Open discussion at the Olma-Forum

by Michael Götz, freelancing agriculture journalist LBB Ltd., Eggersriet St Gall

ab. When the new Animal Welfare Act suggested keeping livestock in open stables, the question came up, how animals from the previous hornless cattle husbandry will get along with horned brood. I was convinced that this would work, since it was their own offspring that was concerned. I was also sure that our initial group of four hornless, but very self-confident Toggenburg goats from three different breeding stables would establish their own sensible hierarchy in the herd. And they did: the goat who came to us as the daughter of a leader goat took the lead without any conflicts and with great expertise. The offspring of the following years bore proud horns, but all of them respected the existing order of the herd. Only one, born hornless for genetic reasons, which is rather rare, fit in more cautiously. When the young ones were three years old, they had to solve some conflicts among each other in their age group and the mothers in the herd did not look on without involvement. We noticed that the hornless were able to "box" more recklessly compared to the horned ones: when giving a "lesson" to one of them, they can ram their heads into the flank or the stomach with full force, so that it will really hurt. If the goat herself is pregnant, this does not happen without causing harm. Sometimes we had to ask the vet to check whether everything was still all right. At this time, we learned that the Swiss Federal Research Station for Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Engineering, Tänikon (FAT) had worked out a doctoral thesis on the common farming of horned and hornless goats in open stables. As a result of this investigation one has to pay additional attention to certain things: Multiple, well distributed feeding places must exist so that the subordinate animal can dodge well when the dominant ladies are expelling them from the main feeding point. Furthermore, additional hiding places and elevated areas must exist for the game-playing, so that they may well escape. That way the subordinate animals gain great skills and rapidness in the herd. And they also know that they are great experts in that!

Horns belong to the cow, thereon everyone agreed at the Olma forum, but there were different opinions about whether you may or should even remove the horns.

This thesis was a help to us to build complementary facilities in our goat-parlour. Tänikon has established a master model stable in the publicly accessible part of their facilities where horned and hornless goats of different races are living and playing together.

When we placed three igloos into the outdoor enclosures of our goats stables –

play this little game with. The others were interestedly watching and wanted to try it as well in the coming days – more or less skilled. The little one, however, who had been allowed to learn from her mother remained to be the most competent: she was always calm and concentrated and never failed in the game. From my point of view, we must draw conclusions from such ob-



Horns belong to the cow (picture KAGfreiland)

and we did so some weeks before the time of birth – the three herd-mothers hogged "their" one-family houses and defended them. Since then, the whole herd knew who owned the igloos.

I was moved by even another observation that occurred quite unexpectedly and unfortunately without a film recorder: A horned young mother took her young with small horns of 8-10 cm length by its head and placed it opposite to her. She showed him how to slightly push each other back and forth head to head. After she repeatedly had practiced it with the young, she signaled that this was enough for this day. The young then went to its peers, looked quietly around seeking one he could also

servations on how to educate our children.

Horned and hornless? A simple question? Not at all. The question is different again with regard to cows and requires a lot more new observations. Those who better understand their animals motion of heads will have fewer complications in the stable. The courses and modules for "understanding cow signals correctly", which are carried out by some agricultural schools, are in great demand. The calm and factual way, representatives of different positions discussed the issue at the Olma – Fair, is typically Swiss. We are therefore pleased that Michael Götz has summarized the discussion for us.

"The horns are important for the cow", said Denise Marty of KAGfreiland, the organizer of the forum. On the one hand they serve the cows to keep their distance from each other and on the other hand, to

stabilize themselves when they test their strength head to head, substantiates the veterinarian Mark Kirchofer. In the eyes

"Do horned and hornless ..."

continued from page 15

of Martin Ott, organic farmer on the farm estate Rheinau SH, the horns strengthen the position of the head, because cows cannot see details, but only outlines. "So they resolve conflict before it hurts", he said.

Not efficient enough?

But obviously that does not always work. *Martin Haab* from Mettmenstetten ZH, who keeps 60 cows in his barn, removed the buds of his calves, so that no horns could grow. He did so because otherwise the animals would hurt each other, but also in order to protect himself against – though mostly unintentional – horn bumps. "It would be nice if we could keep the cows like at *Gotthelf* times", he says. "But this way we would not be efficient enough". In the spacious cow shed he had to cage in the cows in the feeding fence during feeding so that they would not push each other away with their horns; and he also required more space and labor. "So the 50 farmers who keep horned cattle for *KAGfreiland*, are inefficient?" queries moderator *Adrian Krebs*, journalist of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". Horns mean

extra work, but there is a third way, replies *Martin Ott*. He also keeps 60 dairy cows in the spacious cow shed and uses the latest technology. To this third way you get by watching the animals, try to understand them and respond to them. This was not always easy. Complaining was no help; his motto was: "The more difficult the situation with nature is, the more it challenges me". It is no coincidence that *Martin Ott* is author of the bestseller "Kühe verstehen" (understanding cows).

Is the effort too great?

Although *Martin Ott* advocates leaving the horns on, he warns his colleagues against simply letting their calves grow horns again, without considering the consequences. He cannot use, for example, feeder stations in his barn, which the cows have to leave backwards, because they cannot go back if a cow with horns stands behind the station. Impasses are taboo, and in the cubicles they must have a possibility to escape forward. In order to help the cows get their horns out of the feeders, more leeway is necessary than with usual feeding grids. Keeping horned cows would mean above all, to take more time for the animals. For example, it would require much more time and care to intro-

duce a new cow to a herd of horned cattle than to a herd of hornless cows. Someone, who enjoys the animals, will take his time. Although *Martin Ott* certainly does not want to say that farmers, who keep cows with horns, do not care for them. They as well have a heart for their cows. So *Martin Haab* says: "It is my passion to keep cows."

Only by eliminating pain

A cow, which has been dehorned, is probably feeling different than before due to the loss of her horns. But because today the horn-roots are removed from the calves at an early age, this will not affect the psyche of the cow, the veterinarian says. He stresses, that it is important to remove the horn-roots under anesthesia and to alleviate the pain. There are clear legal regulations on this procedure. The farmer may perform the surgery on his own provided that he has completed a recognized training and the calf is not older than three weeks; otherwise, the operation is allowed only by the vet. To remove the horns of a cow is causing her very great pain, if it is not properly done as there are nerves in the horn. Another way to avoid dehorning would be to breed polled cows, but the genetic basis is too small in most breeds.

Letter to  the Editor

No to the revision of the Epizootic Diseases Act

Without doubt some indisputable innovations are suggested in the animal disease legislation on which the Swiss people will have to vote on the 25 November, 2012. However, this is only half the truth.

Many remember too well the compulsory blue tongue vaccination in the years 2008 and 2009. Most animal owners tolerated these vaccinations while holding back their aggression. Many animals suffered after this vaccination, became ill or aborted. About a dozen animal keepers, I was also among them, did not allow the vaccination of their livestock. A blockade was imposed over the livestock. We were interrogated like criminals by the police and public prosecutor's office, were punished with large fines and threatened with prison. Then the turn: Only a few months later the obligation for the unnecessary blue tongue vaccination was lifted. However, the widespread distrust among the farmers against the autocracy of the veterinarian justice continued.

The new Epizootic Diseases Act justifies this distrust. Vaccine banks are to be established. These vaccines will also be used, for sure. If need be against the will of those animal holders who, according to their expe-

rience, want to bear the small risk of a possible illness of single animals themselves. For this purpose the penal regulations are tightened to make recalcitrant men and women farmers more compliant.

On the other hand, in the new law, no payment of damages caused by the vaccinations is mentioned which will also certainly appear with the new preventive vaccinations. And there is no word about an independent body, which should observe and judge the decision-making process concerning the measures of nationwide vaccinations, as well as the long-term disadvantages of such vaccinations for animals and people.

I have no trust in this new act because many things confirm the suspicion that the already existing possibilities for compulsory vaccination are to be further extended. I reject the act in this form. I hope that the Federal Council and the Parliament will give more personal responsibility to the animal keepers with a new consultation and give the alternatives to compulsory vaccinations a chance, as well.

**90 % of the cows
don't have horns anymore**

Today, it is difficult for farmers to trade horned cows, as 90 percent of the Swiss dairy cows do not have horns any more. *KAGfreiland* has brought the "last horned cow" symbolically into the Zoological Museum of the University of Zurich. With their Campaign "horn on!" they take a stand for leaving the horns on the cows. "You are pioneers", a farmer praised "horn farmers" at the event. "There is much ignorance at among the farmers. I had to learn as well", he adds. In this context also "Americanization" of milk cattle breeding is blamed; because at exhibitions the animals are no longer shown in a natural way, but almost in a humanized way like mannequins.

Does "Horn milk", milk from cows with horns, have a chance on the market? Yes, in the small scale, as the packaging of various dairies proves. "KAG lucky milk" or "KAG horn cheese" are examples of this. On the large scale, this seems to be more difficult as *Peter Zürcher*, purchaser of dairy products at the *Coop*, says. It takes a lot, because of the large number of different dairy products, to make a new product gain acceptance. •

Source: First published in *Bioaktuell*, 9/2012

*Werner Ammann, farmer,
Ganterschwil, CH*