

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*

Against small-mindedness

As locusts over the biblical Egypt political correctness came over Switzerland

by Dr Peter Forster, chief editor "Schweizer Soldat"



Dr Peter Forster
(picture ma)

The strange specter does not even have a German name, so strange, so far-fetched is it. But it exists – and it drives our country into a certain sinister direction.

It all began with the firing of Ambassador Jagmetti, an excellent, innocent diplomat: He

fell victim to political correctness and the cowardice of his superiors shortly before his retirement.

From Washington Jagmetti had warned against certain dangers in regard to unclaimed assets, danger, which later accurately occurred and afflicted our country. Had the Federal Council listened to Jagmetti, Switzerland would have been spared a lot.

The unspeakable witch-hunt against Major General Regli, an excellent news director, followed. A liar and crook incited the media and the federal prosecutor in

such an insidious way that the innocent Regli was put to the sword.

It took full eight years until the Federal Council rehabilitated Regli one hundred percent.

Mean political correctness celebrated its ultimate triumph against Ambassador Borer. The efficient diplomat Borer had defended the interests of the country fearlessly in the struggle about unclaimed assets.

But never had he told the tabloid press what they wanted to hear. For this he was fired by his boss after a vile cock-and-bull story. The lawyer Borer refuted the pack of lies step by step. The tabloid publisher apologized properly and made adequate amends to Borer.

Politically, two sad truisms proved to be highly effective. Neither can the media "press the toothpaste back into the tube once it is out", nor can a diplomat, a senior officer or a CEO survive if their superiors have no backbone and give in to pressure.

Now look at the victims!

Jagmetti, a bourgeois, liberal-conservative politician, Regli, bourgeois, committed to the safety of Switzerland, upright, courageous, and Borer, bourgeois and edgy, a diplomat who did not only talk

about human rights first thing, but about the vital interests of the country.

Did you notice?

Political correctness always hits men who are edged, unafraid, who undauntedly represented bourgeois values, above all freedom and security of the country. Red-Green personalities are never hit by that small-mindedness – the respective men and women could line up by the scores, but nothing ever happens.

Long since political correctness has served the left in the country, who use it as a weapon in conjunction with the Old-68ers in editorial offices, schools and parish houses. The bigot self-righteousness of the anti-army, anti-bank, anti-nuclear, pro-Brussels and pro-levelling forces has become a sharp instrument. Too many cringe and clench their fists only in their pockets.

All those who do not want to let our land drift off to Brussels and into Old-68er dreams are well-advised to recognize political correctness as that what it is: a weapon of small-mindedness and slavery. And we have to stick together, speak up in case of uncomfortable truths and continue to bravely fight out in the open. •

Source: *Schweizer Soldat* No 5 from May 2013
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Will there soon be a referendum on freedom of expression in Switzerland?

About Voltaire, the GSoA¹, the DDPS²
and the lack of democratic conscience of leftist historians

by Matthias Erne, Attorney, Zurich

Voltaire (1694–1778) was one of the most influential thinkers of the European Enlightenment and is regarded as a pioneer of the French Revolution. Whenever he propagated what he considered to be right, he showed great knowledge and empathy. Voltaire spent a part of his life in Switzerland and his criticism on the mischief of absolutism and feudalism left its marks. The quote "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" is indeed falsely attributed to him, but it aptly characterizes his attitude. The phrase sums up what is understood today

as "freedom of expression". It demands respect for others and restraining one's own desire for power and one's wish to forbid the other to speak.

The GSoA is a political alliance in Switzerland. The full name of "Group for a Switzerland without an Army" is its program. It brings together advocates of the integration of Switzerland into NATO and the EU as well as radical communist and utopian pacifist movements. It is a well-managed political grocery store; one can wonder about its leaders and their predetermined categorisations. Later this year

there will be a vote on an initiative of this group. It requires that the mandatory military service shall be abolished in the constitution. Thus the militia army would have to be converted into a professional army which would be incompatible with the self-image of the successful model of Switzerland. The highly topical general peace concept of "perpetual armed neutrality" based on Immanuel Kant and his book "Perpetual Peace" is rejected by the GSoA.

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"Will there soon be a referendum..."

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Peter Forster is now editor in chief of the military magazine "Schweizer Soldat". For many years he has been Colonel of the Army's Information Regiment, quasi the militarized media for the supply of the population with information in the event of a crisis. He has been correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" and for many years chief editor of the "Thurgauer Zeitung".

For him the Federal Council went too far cutting again and again the army's finances and leading the ability to maintain the armed neutrality ad absurdum. He wrote: "*The Federal Council knowingly plays with a valuable good, the security of our country which is entrusted to him as the original duty of the State. We already wrote here about the question of 'adaptation or resistance'. Then as now we come to the conclusion: Silence would mean betrayal and adaption submission – in a situation in which our conscience forces us to resist against the own government.*" Forster expressed his opinion in a periodic journal. He is well-known, however. His word is important. He has always been loyal to the flag.

This prompted National Councillor Jean-François Steiert of the SP Fribourg to ask the Federal Council whether a soldier and officer – who in a democratic State publicly refers to his conscience as a reason to resist the democratically elected government – was still acceptable for the army. If this was the case, he asked where the Federal Council saw the limits of loyalty from which senior officers would have to protect democratic institutions and the democratically legitimized authorities.

Steiert, who himself is close to the GSoA, studied Swiss history and Communication Sciences as subsidiary subject in Fribourg. Today, he is delegate for inter-cantonal affairs in the Department of Education of the Canton of Vaud. From 1998 to 2000, he was Secretary General of the SP Switzerland and later political group chairman of the SP in the National Council. Prior to that, he had been *Secretary General for press and information of the SP Switzerland* for five years. The name slightly reminds us of the Soviet Union but in essence this means that he was his party's spin doctor.

In his opinion a senior militia officer apparently must not express his own opinion, in any case no other than that of the Federal Council. A left historian calls for blind obedience which was responsible for

great crimes against humanity? Has the man got no mind? This attitude is typical for historians from the "generation Bergier". They show the index finger of the know-it-all, find shocking deficits everywhere in the democratic self-image and are executives of a department of education. Did they have a seat behind a column in the civics lessons and read nothing of Voltaire? Or are they so opportunistic?

A look at the publications of the Faculty of Law of his own Alma Mater would reform the gentleman, for example if he read the book by Peter Hänni "Rechte und Pflichten im öffentlichen Dienstrecht (Rights and responsibilities in the Public Service Law)" which was published in 1993 by the Universitätsverlag Fribourg Switzerland, at the time when Steiert studied and began to stand on his own political feet. On page 97 there is a decision of the Government Council of the Canton Obwalden that would please Voltaire. Here is the decision from Central Switzerland:

"For civil servants and authority members there is no interdiction to speak about proposals which they ever had to deal with. Such a ban would be incompatible at all with our democratic principles. On the contrary, democracy means discussion – any factual expression is required. In fact, it would therefore be incomprehensible why in the discussion about issues of far-reaching importance officials, administration members or former members of the commission would not be allowed to have a say as experts just like all other voters, only because they happen to be or have been civil servants or members of the administration or former commission members. The authority of the government or a department would certainly not suffer. It would only suffer if the government tried to make the subjects wear a muzzle so that the people could not listen to the objections." (VVGE II, p. 12, Translation Current Concerns)

In Zurich, too, the right of freedom of expression of officials was seen and confirmed by the Federal Court, last in the context of the proceedings against teachers around VPM in the 1990s. Democracy means discussion. Period.

If the GSoA does not cease to suppress other opinions and even calls for state repression of opinions they do not like, we will turn their referendum on the mandatory military service into a vote for freedom of expression. Then it will be even more

fundamental. Then the closing of ranks will be made even broader.

Apart from *Gotthard Frick* and *Helmut Hubacher* there are many more responsible SP members who do not appreciate the pacifist line of the party leadership and want to revise the passage in the SP platform which calls for the abolition of the army. Maybe the sense of reality will return more easily to this party if the machinations of certain alpha animals during the Cold War are reviewed. A look at the historical research of *E. Bischof* may contribute to the clarification.

Very strange: In France the Left wages an imperial war abroad. Here the party leadership cannot even commit to the self-defense of a state in times of distress. As long as they cannot accept the highly topical peace model of perpetual armed neutrality and its consequences, and as long as Voltaire is not the guiding principle for a fair debate, something is basically wrong, I would say. •

¹ GSoA – Group for a Switzerland without an Army. Its main goal is abolishing the Swiss Army.

² DDPS – Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport.

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Switzerland has the potential to resist political blackmail

**Shoulder-to-shoulder partnership across party lines,
create majorities based on humanity, stand together**

me. At the General Assembly of the Homeowners Association Hinterthurgau there was silence, when President Paul Hug, Wilen, recited his annual report. He expressed thoughts with an independent profile, that met with consent.

The 352 members in the decorated “Hörnlihalle” applauded when he called for “constraints and resoluteness towards the EU and the US administration.” One must have the “courage to throw all the junk (of rules) coming from Brussels out of our country. It only costs money and serves no useful purpose.” *Paul Hug* supports the clean-money strategy, because Switzerland does not need to defend gangsters and robber barons, instead the tax evaders discussion was hypocritically used as a pretext. The general aim was to destroy the Swiss financial center. Hug said that the moment had come to show backbone and firmness regarding foreign policy and to act in cold blood. Switzerland had what it took. He said he expected more from the government and the parliamentarians in the National Council and the Council of States.

Literally Hug said: “Last year was once again dominated by the banking crisis in the European and American sphere of influence. They both pester the Swiss market because there is still money available there. Switzerland has done its homework and created a powerful tool with the debt cap that helps us not to grow exuberantly. It is also clear, however, that we still need to improve or at least not to worsen. There are groups in our country that want to adjust to the EU at all costs. And still they call themselves lobbyists for Switzerland and the Swiss population. What a nonsense! Representatives of the country’s and its people’s interests counter foreign influence attempts and foreign regulations. I am missing resoluteness and resistance, especially towards the European Union and the US administration. And this begins with the Federal Councillors, and goes on with the parliamentarians in the National Council and the Council of States. Once and for all we need to stop the automatic enactment of laws and regulations. Let us finally stop being blackmailed and

put up some claims ourselves! Would you like to hear some examples?”

Example noise: On the Swiss side of Lake Constance the German Railway rattles with old wagons and causes immense noise at freight transport. Trucks from all over Europe cross the Alps with some old and defective vehicles. Air traffic at Zurich airport is limited unilaterally by Germany. What do our politicians do? Nothing or they do it so quietly that nothing can be heard. Why are no packages put together? Why is no firmness demonstrated?

Example rules: Coming from the construction industry, I know that more and more regulations and recommendations from the European region, specifically DIN regulations, are adopted. Why do we accept uncritically recommendations that only cause laughter in our neighboring countries (experienced myself)? But at last let’s have the courage to throw all this junk ‘I may say: Brussels’ out of the country. Because it only costs money and serves no useful purpose – and then we are wondering why everything is getting more expensive. Where is the politician who has the courage to do something?

Example banking: I want to start by saying that I fully support the white-money policy. We do not need gangsters and robber barons in Switzerland. However, what is demanded from Switzerland – and practically from Switzerland only – is blackmail. That it is about tax evasion, is only a pretext, which is just a profitable side effect. It is clear: the goal is to destroy Switzerland as a financial center. I am asking you, why do our politicians not realize that?

In the future I expect having more backbone and showing firmness, and no moral cowardice with respect to any foreign authorities.”

Domestically, Paul Hug called for a shoulder-to-shoulder partnership across party lines. You must create majorities based on humanity and stand together. Therefore you should put away the two-handed sword, and fight with the foil. He warned that everywhere there will be attempts to curtail property – not only in Cyprus. This fashionable phenomenon is entering our country insidiously. He com-

pleted the tour d’horizon with a thank-you to the *Protest movement against aircraft noise Hinterthurgau* that had prevented that the region from being abused as a “Trash can for noise” in conjunction with BFO and Councillor *Stark* at the forefront.

A last remark was made about the Cantonal Department of Monument Preservation under the direction of Dr phil I *Beatrice Sendner*. This office should be tied back and its power curtailed. The many non-cantonal “Lic phil I-philosophers” in the monument preservation had lost touch, he said. Homeowners were treated vexatiously, he said correspondingly. He expressed his wish that the community-based management, seeded with a sense of proportion, as it was tradition and custom in the Thurgau, would be sown in that office again. For this he got applause, too.

The statutory-related agenda items were completed quickly. The association is in a good shape, there is a consensus among the board members, the balance is fine and reserves exist. With the welcoming of the member No 2800 it became clear that the association also has a numerical weight.

After a musical contribution of the female Swiss folk band Schäläbü National Councillor *Hans Egloff* (President of the Homeowners Association of Switzerland HEV) continued the political discussion. The imputed rental value is a rarity, an absurdity he said. In no neighboring country there is such a thing. It favors debt-making because you can abstract the mortgage interest from your income taxes. This is a mistake in the political climate. Because of the debt brake Switzerland is set up well internationally. He thanked the political fathers of this invention. The tax system should be changed so that it would be no longer attractive to have debt. He said a new approach of the HEV, according to which the owner should be able to vote whether they wanted to be taxed imputed rental value with deductions or forgo debt deductions, and because of that wanted to be taxed without imputed rental value. He, Egloff, was going to step off as president, not before after the imputed rental value was abolished. •

Should the Federal Government consider releasing GM plants...

... Beekeepers associations will use any democratic instruments, to make legalisation impossible



Robert Sieber

Dear beekeepers
Often Swiss beekeepers associations are not perceived as dialogue partner in bee relevant topics by the Federal Government and administration and are not

even addressed in consultations. This is different in case of the *GM-moratorium* (*genetically modified organisms*), which is going to expire in 2017. With satisfaction we noted that our respective interventions have born fruit and that *apisuisse* representing our organisations has been invited to comment. Of course, we have embraced the opportunity. This is about nothing more and nothing less than the future of beekeeping in Switzerland. Why these dramatic words?

Genetically modified plants contain fragments of genetic material of other living beings. A fragment of genetic material of a bacterium is implanted, for example, in a maize plant and kills vermin that eat from this maize plant. Such genetic ma-

terial is located throughout the plant, including the pollen, which bees carry home to feed the larvae. But pollen are not only in pollen products, but, as is well-known, also in honey.

What Swiss consumers would still buy Swiss honey, if you read "May contain pollen from genetically engineered plants" on the label? In that case he will rather put the cheap products from overseas into the trolley.

Switzerland is a small country. Bees however, with a flight range of up to five kilometres, cover an area of almost 80 km². Even with only a partial release of the previous GM plants ban in Switzerland, it would hardly be possible to produce honey free of GM pollen. A major motivation of many beekeepers to produce natural honey would become obsolete in that case. They would give up beekeeping. As a result, the pollination of many wild- and crop plants in Switzerland would be seriously endangered.

Under these conditions, it is probably not surprising that the boards of beekeeping associations strictly reject the planting out of genetically modified plants. In its consultation (<http://www.vdrb.ch/>

[aktuelles/news/news/](#)) you read the following: "If the Federal Council lifted the moratorium and considered a legalisation, the beekeeper associations in cooperation with like-minded organizations would make use of any possible democratic means, to make legalisation impossible." In plain text, this means, that, if necessary, we will launch a referendum together with our members and other opponents. We have never gone so far in our association's history of more than hundred years. But it is ultimately not just about us, but about the future of beekeeping, bees and our food; at least the one that is produced in Switzerland. This includes Swiss honey.

I could also rephrase the situation. "Please, who would benefit in Switzerland from release of the planting of genetically engineered plants, other than just a few industrial giants?" I gladly accept credible counter-arguments.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Sieber, robert.sieber@vdrb.ch

Source: *Schweizerische Bienenzeitung* (Swiss Bee Journal) 05/2013
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

People's initiative "Save Our Swiss Gold" already shows impact

Only 30 percent of the gold reserves are abroad, none of them in the USA – the army must be able to protect gold vaults

thk./me. On 20 March, the federal people's initiative "Save Our Swiss Gold" was filed with more than 106,000 signatures at the Federal Chancellery in Berne. In 2014 Swiss people will vote whether they want to prohibit further sales of gold reserves by the Swiss National Bank and that the gold is brought back into the country. In addition, it will be required that at least 20% of the currency has to be backed by gold.

Now the President of the National Bank, *Thomas Jordan*, has made a statement on this initiative at the shareholders meeting of the National Bank. Surprisingly, he revealed a long-kept secret, namely the locations of the gold reserves: 70 percent are in Switzerland, 20 percent in Britain and 10 percent in Canada.

According to official data, Switzerland has 1,040 tons of gold. It is noteworthy that – assuming the SNB is honest – no gold reserves are located in the US. This is relieving; especially since the German

Bundesbank has been trying for about 2 years to see their gold reserves in the US for counting – which has been constantly denied by the US authorities. In the nineties, the SNB sold about 1,000 tons of gold. These were described then as "superfluous for monetary policy" by the then political leaders and sold at rock bottom prices. Previously, there had been a dispute between Switzerland and the US administration under *Clinton* and the President of the World Jewish Congress, *Bronfman*, who put pressure on Switzerland via the *Bergier* Commission attempting a targeted attack on Swiss history during the Second World War. Following that, about 1,000 tons of gold reserves were considered unnecessary and hence sold.

Apparently, the former leaders had at least the coolness to pay the ransom by selling the stocks held in the US. However, this is merely a plausible assumption. But let us go back to the initiative.

The Swiss National Bank is having a hard time with the required 20 percent gold backing for the currency. They fear that expanding the balance sheet total will no longer be easy when they have to back each expansion with gold. Thus, the flexibility of the SNB will be restricted and the possibility of setting a lower limit for the Swiss Franc, as it exists in relation to the euro today, will no longer be available, says *Thomas Jordan*. *Lukas Reimann*, National Councillor and co-initiator of the gold initiative, does not understand this reasoning. "Initially, we had a 100 percent gold backing. By 1999, the gold backing was reduced to 40 percent, which is more than the initiative requests today. This backing had not restricted the flexibility of the SNB; it had rather strengthened the National Bank and provided more securi-

"People's initiative ..."

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ty." Nowadays, gold reserves are mainly a good backing for our currency.

Indeed it was written in Article 38, paragraph 7 of the former Federal Constitution (valid until 1 January 2000) that "Banknotes issued must be covered by gold and short-term securities." Under these provisions, 40 percent of the money had to be backed by gold.

In the initiators' opinion, Jordan's fear that an increase in total assets was no longer possible, if the initiative is to be implemented, is not tenable. If Switzerland had to buy 100 billion euro to secure the Swiss Franc's lower limit, 20 percent of this sum could be used to buy euro gold.

According to Lukas Reimann, the main problem of today's financial crisis is the threat of inflation due to the expansion of the balance sheets. "Instead of using them sparingly, balance sheets are bloated extremely."

**Success of direct democracy
in current affairs**

This shows that political processes can be influenced by the opportunities that direct democracy and initiatives provide in Switzerland. Although they take energy and time, it is obvious that they are working well. Prior to the vote, we finally now know where "our gold is stored". Before that, large numbers of parliamentary requests were denied. Many nations envy Switzerland's privilege to take direct action by means of the referendum and initiative. We only can encourage other nations to work on the development of such democratic instruments. Citizens feel more comfortable if they really have a say.

**Raising questions for the gold
in Germany and Austria**

"Other countries are slowly realizing what is going on," says *Luzi Stamm*, member of the National Council and president of the

Initiative Committee: "In Germany, people want to know where the gold is, and they want to have it stored again in the country. In general, one can say that gold is sold in the western world. In the East it is very different story, Russia buys gold, the Chinese and other Asian countries as well."

Thinking it through to the end

It is reassuring that there are at least 70% of the gold reserves in Switzerland. We are feeling – a bit – more at ease that only 20% are stored in London and 10% in Canada.

But now the army must be able to protect these gold reserves in Switzerland, and if necessary they also need to defend them. We are not part of the EU and thus have a better position in comparison to

other states. Hence, we should be ready to share our experiences and explain our different paths to internal peace and economic prosperity. We must also be willing and able to defend our way and position. It is becoming necessary that the conformists in the National Council re-think their position and become respected again or else that we can vote them out of office if necessary. Keeping the militia army, reinforcing its readiness and making it powerful are of similar importance. Along this line of thinking we are coming from the Gold Initiative to the next but one vote on the GSoA (Group for a Switzerland without an Army) Initiative that wants to abolish the militia army. It really becomes evident that many issues have an interdependence which we do not realize at first glance. •

Letter to  the Editor**Store Swiss gold abroad?**

21 June 1941, 6 months before entering the war, the US blocked all gold reserves and assets of all neutrals. That was a very hard blow for Switzerland, involved in an economical fight for survival and urgently dependent on its funds in the United States to pay its imports from overseas.

Actually we are witnessing today how the US is recklessly using their economic power against Switzerland to extort from it practical and legislative changes that they themselves do not impose on their own American financial sector. We have also witnessed how the – highly paid EU-leaders – suspended from the ordinary people and democratically not legitimated – shamelessly seized private savings deposits of ordinary people, a behavior that was regarded as sacrosanct until recently.

Anyone can now draw the conclusion himself, where the majority of the Swiss gold reserves should be deposited.

As we no longer have an army with a deterrent effect, you have to consider that in a medium future – in case things go to the crunch – other countries could instruct their armies to force us to submit to their wishes and also lay hands on our gold. Mr *Steinbrück*, the German chancellor candidate, has indeed played twice with the idea to send out the "cavalry" against recalcitrant Switzerland. Should the situation deteriorate dramatically in Germany – who can rule that out – things won't be far from thought to action.

Gotthard Frick, Bottmingen

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Instead of attacking peace-loving neighbors, Germany should think about its tax policy

by Karl Müller

Each state has to spend money in order to be able to fulfill its duties. These expenditures match an income, usually taxes paid by citizens of the country. Today, this is a fact and indisputable. The debate, however, has to be opened about what kind of responsibilities the state has, how much of that money from the citizens it is entitled to, and how much of it from what citizens.

A glance at Germany (see table) shows that the German state of today (federal, state and local authorities) obviously has not always had the same tasks. Beginning with its existence after the Second World War (in the table, first only the Federal Republic and from 1990 on also the acceding territory of the former GDR) it could dispose of very much differing tax yields. If one has a look at the figures from 1962 to 2013, the per capita tax revenue, (inflation-corrected and calculated in euro) rose from 3,124 euro in 1962 to 7,561 euro in 2013. Hence, the tax revenue has more than doubled.

At what time, however, had the Germans a real state after the Second World War? Is the state of 2013 a real state for the first time or was it a real state already ten years earlier with 6,145 euro and more than 1,400 euro per capita less? And was the old Federal Republic of 1962 no state at all yet, because people had so very little taxes at that time?

Tax Revenue in Germany (federal, state and local communities)

year	million euro	million euro (inflation-corrected)	population (in million)	taxes per capita in euro (inflation-corrected)
1950	10783	50216	51	985
1952	16992	78654	52	1513
1962	44166	178044	57	3124
1972	100726	305830	62	4933
1982	193627	355099	62	5727
1987	239622	387547	61	6353
1992	374128	545571	81	6735
1997	407577	510456	82	6225
2002	441705	517101	83	6230
2003	442238	510074	83	6145
2007	538243	586075	82	7147
2008	561182	597314	82	7284
2009	524001	543606	82	6629
2010	530586	545527	82	6653
2011	573353	584820	82	7132
2012*	601500	601500	82	7335
2013*	620000	620000	82	7561

Source: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steueraufkommen_\(Deutschland\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steueraufkommen_(Deutschland));

* Charges after tax estimation

The fact remains that German per capita tax revenues have not been linear, however, steadily rising by tendency.

It is, therefore, understandable that in recent years the issue of taxes has become

a permanent topic in Germany. It is surprising, however, that the debate has not been marked by public discussion about a possible excess of tax payments, but by the state's complaints about a too low tax revenue and about defaulting tax payers. Only those who do not look at the figures may believe that Germany was suffering from an acute revenue shortage, since there were some citizens in the country who were not willing to pay the taxes assigned to them. Astonishing too, that the behavior of such citizens makes these opulent headlines.

Is it not high time now to consider the facts in context and ask questions?

1. Are there reasonable counterarguments to the previous German tax policy?
2. In whose interest is the German tax subject becoming a continuous issue, whereby they speak not only about those Germans who do not entirely comply with German tax laws, but simultaneously attack other states, as well?

The first question is to be answered fairly easy. Yes, there are many arguments against the present German tax legislation arguments which are raised over and again, but have so far largely remained without response. The fact alone that Germany's tax income tend to rise in fact

US NSA's data about so-called tax havens – but not about Delaware or Miami

Letter to the Austrian Minister of Finance

Dear Madame Federal Minister, today your attitude towards "tax havens" has been reproduced on "Spiegel Online". There you mainly touch upon the situation in the UK with respect to the so-called "trusts". I fully understand your statement. One may be inclined to smile when "Süddeutsche Zeitung" and other press organs that process the recent flood of data in this field talk about the occasion that kicked off the data flood. According to them, allegedly an informant has actuated a hitherto unknown journalistic network. Don't you believe it! Like others I know that there is only one certain organization that is capable of collecting such a mass of data in the course of over thirty years and more. Labelled "National Security Agency" this organization is based in Maryland rather than being a single person, as Newspapers and News are trying to make us believe. Moreover, it is strange indeed, that US tax havens – such as the state of

Delaware or the black-money megapolis Miami – are not at all mentioned. Apparently, they swoop down on smaller European countries in order to be able to supply those US tax havens with capital flows. It's just like *Basel II* and *Basel III*, which indeed have the effect of imposing a set of regulations on continental Europe, which the US itself does not want to take on. This is a new form of "financial NATO," in which the actual reason of public displeasure is being discredited.

It is therefore all the more gratifying that you commented on London in this context. Everybody in Europe knows about it, and for that you need not even use any cavalry. I hope your open words, that deserve every support, will not come too late. They are in line of your statements that are as wise as refreshing, not only on 3sat.

Willy Wimmer,
State Secretary Retd, Juechen (Germany)
(Translation Current Concerns)

"Instead of attacking ..."

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and at the same time the public debt is increased (to now around 2.3 trillion euro – in other words four times as much as the current annual tax burden) allows to ask the question what the state has actually done with so much and ever more money; and can one really say that by this increased tax income the quality of human life as a whole has been raised and the social progress has been promoted. Or must we not rather speak of political mistakes?

The second question is not that easily to be answered. In any case, it is scandalous that individuals are singled out and – with the aim of socially discrediting them and of spreading political propaganda – are named and shamed, even before there are constitutional judgements. And how are we to understand the words of a German chancellor candidate who relies entirely on such political propaganda and who again plays to the gallery with the words "Cavalry is sometimes better than diplomacy"? Does Mr *Steinbrück* in all seriousness assert, it was better to go to war than seek negotiated solutions? And, well understood, addressed at the peace-loving neighbor Switzerland!

Are politicians in the German state planning already now and by all means how to collect trillions for their present and coming debt obligations such as the ESM, the bad loans from the ECB or the planned EU "European Banking Union"?

And what if the data for European campaigns on the tax issue were com-

ing from the US intelligence? At least, one has to assume this, if it's true what the experienced German foreign and defense politician *Willy Wimmer* wrote in a letter to the Austrian Minister of Finance (see box page 6). To inform the public, the minister had declared that she was not prepared to comply with the demand of full disclosure of all bank data of foreign banking customers in Austria, a so-called "automatic exchange of information".

Does the US intelligence provide data in order to contribute to a more equitable tax system in Europe? Or are there any US interests aimed at a situation that monetary wealth is invested not just in Europe and on other continents, but only where there are other "tax havens", namely in the United States itself? Is there perhaps an even deeper interest, namely: to sow discord and disorder in Europe in order to continue dominating Europe and yet still being able to remain the "sole super power"?

Each country, each government, each parliament has a responsibility to regulate its tax system so that it expresses its citizens' will. Where citizens are forced to transfer ever more money to the state and where this money does not even benefit the community, where citizens have no influence on the amount of their contributions, where there are efforts to divide the citizenship by means of campaigns and enemy images, and where citizens are being turned against other countries and other peoples by means of the tax issue, there a lot of things are amiss. •

"... because they place more confidence in the Swiss franc and a Swiss bank than in the euro and Deutsche Bank"

Switzerland seems to be made the scapegoat for own mistakes and failings. These include the tax systems, which are unjust because of their impenetrability, as well as a failed or missing industrial policy. [...] The reasons for the small and large escapes to Switzerland [...] do not lie in the Swiss Confederation, but in the European region. Yes, Swiss Bank consultants worked out tax saving models for German customers. But they did

not steal the customers' money and take it to Zurich. All the dentists, lawyers and SMEs have come voluntarily. And not always to evade taxes, but often because they place more confidence in the Swiss franc and a Swiss bank than in the euro and Deutsche Bank.

Source: "Süddeutsche Zeitung" of 26.4.2013

(Translation Current Concerns)

German tax system on the back of the "Mittelstand"

The German "Mittelstand" is disproportionately reminded of its duties. These numbers demonstrate that impressively: In 1960 you had to bring home 18 times the average income to fall into the highest tax class in Germany. Today 1.8 times is sufficient. [...]

Little personal responsibility, no incentives, much bureaucracy: This trika is responsible that also exemplary citizens groan as soon as they hear the word "tax". Accordingly the tax morale is bad.

Source: "Tages-Anzeiger" of 25.4.2013

(Translation Current Concerns)

Insufficient acceptance of the German tax system

But in the end also an automatic exchange of information will not prevent people from evading taxes. And this is precisely the problem of the German debate. With each black money scandal, each taxing CD, politics resorts to the same refrain: More inspections are being demanded, harsher penalties for tax evaders – and of course more pressure on tax havens. They forget that a control system's acceptance by the citizens plays a significant role for their attitude towards taxation.

Source: "Tages-Anzeiger" of 25.4.2013

(Translation Current Concerns)

Secretary General of the German FDP refers to the Battle of Morgarten

FDP General Secretary *Patrick Döring* went on the offensive on *Twitter*: "I thought we Germans had learned to rely on diplomacy rather than on cavalry! *Steinbrück* is mistaken." And then he reminded the SPD-functionary of European history. "History teaches that cavalry against Switzerland might go awry." Döring wrote this sentence with reference to the Battle of Morgarten, which took place on 15 November 1315 – where the Swiss Confederates defeated the Habsburg dynasty.

Source: "Die Welt" of 23.4.2013

(Translation Current Concerns)

Cooperatives – the alternative to the construct of homo oeconomicus

by Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

The great crisis shows: Radical neo-liberal market economics, especially the *Chicago School of Economics* (Milton Friedman), has generally failed because it was wrong. Its ideology is based on a concept of man (Menschenbild) that defines man as homo oeconomicus. In particular, Chicago School economists have contributed to the spread of a narrowed economic view to all areas of human life and reality as such (hegemonic claim to knowledge). This view reduces human behaviour to a purely rational weighing of benefits (utilitarianism). The homo oeconomicus view of humanity reduces man to a being who only seeks to maximize his (own) benefit or advantage (example: “strategic friendships”). Man is therefore only the object of his pursuit of advantage, selfish, irresponsible and completely detached from the moral principle of respect for fellow human beings and their dignity. “The aim is to remove the burden of moral standards from the individual as completely as possible so that they can act out their assumed need for a rigorous maximisation of self interest. [...]” (Peter Ulrich, 2008, p. 202, quoted in Krautz, 2013).¹ “The logic of the market becomes the logic of life.” (ibid.) Today we find this economism in almost all areas of life: business, health, family, religion, education, science, psychology, psychiatry ...

Cooperatives as a way out of the economic crisis

In the meantime economists, bank managers and managers of international financial institutions have openly admitted the failure of the neoliberal economy with its false concept of man.²

Many economists and business ethicists are moving away from the idea of homo oeconomicus and are focussing once again on the wellbeing of the people and the common good. They do not see man as an economic machine, but as a person capable of making decisions and taking action. It is human beings, not market forces, that determine the shape of our economy.

A consideration of various economic and social systems shows that the cooperative system in particular is deeply imbued with exactly this concept of man. Thus the principles of a personalist con-

ef. Cooperatives are a possibility to organize economy in a concerted manner. There are, however, family enterprises, personally operated enterprises and SME that are based on similar foundations.

The personalist concept of man («Das personale Menschenbild»)

ef. The personalist concept of man sees him as a social being from scratch who fully develops his personality within and by the community; he is not simply a product of gift and environment, but has a creative and formative own activity at his disposal, and is capable of reason and ethics. Man is able to create culture and to set moral values.

The personalist view is based on the values of Christianity that are valid in natural law and on the natural law ideas of the Enlightenment, which attributed individual rights to the individual person. In the early 16th-century representatives of the School of Salamanca developed an “international natural law” against the backdrop of the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of South and Central America. They heralded the end of the medieval legal concept. Thus for the first time, the concept of sovereignty of the people was introduced by the School of Salamanca.

The values universally valid for mankind have been confirmed by the personalist psychology, as well. Anne-Marie Buchholz-Kaiser writes about this in her contribution “Personalist Psychology – The contribution of psychology and education to human dignity” (V. Conference “Mut zur Ethik” – The dignity of man, Feldkirch 1997), which deals with the question of how a social sense of responsibility and solidarity with one’s fellow human beings can be developed: “Morality must not be forced onto the human being: It has its roots in the empathy, which develops between a child and its bonded caregiver. Formation of conscience, of ethical behavior and of moral sense, which all have their origins in this relationships [...] are rooted in human nature itself. It is this empathy and compassion which puts the human being in a position to weigh the effects his activities have on others and leads him to behave in socially responsible manner.”

The individual psychologist Alfred Adler described the sociality of human beings with the concept of “Gemeinschaftsgefühl”^{*} (sense of social interest), which was the essence of his teaching. For Adler, humanity is the basic structure of human existence. Man is a social being, because he can only survive in the community and he can only achieve self-realization, life fulfillment, satisfaction and contentment by cooperating with others. Man can only become «a whole person» in a community of cooperating fellow men. Primarily this is due to his biological imperfection and the helplessness and dependence, both arising from it. The human being is only able to cope with the tasks ensuring the preservation of his life by joining forces with other human beings, through division of labor and cooperation. The “Gemeinschaftsgefühl” (social interest) is thus a biological fact. All cultural achievements, such as language development are developed on the foundation of this Gemeinschaftsgefühl. Cooperation, solidarity and the principle of mutual aid are constitutive for the development of the Gemeinschaftsgefühl and of social progress of mankind. Thus humanity becomes the actual meaning of life. Any form of striving for power, the lust for power is diametrically opposed to the Gemeinschaftsgefühl and will have fatal consequences for humanity.

* The term «Gemeinschaftsgefühl» can be described as a disposition, which «enables the human being to develop a way of life based on cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility. He tackles life’s problems to his own and to other people’s benefit [...]. The term includes attitudes such as love of justice, peacableness, confidence and courage, rectitude, respect for others, readiness to help and altruism.» (A. Buchholz-Kaiser, *Mediating Values: A Task for Personality Formation and the Preservation of Culture*, in: *The nature and tasks of a personalist psychology*, University Press of America, 1995)

cept of man have been part of the cooperative system from the beginning. *Helmut Faust* is the author of a very readable volume, “*Die Geschichte der Genossenschaftsbewegung*” (The History of the cooperative movement) (3rd edition 1977). In it, he argues that civilisation and human culture as such began with the emergence of cooperative activities as the precursor of modern cooperatives: “As long as people have inhabited the Earth, they have always united in groups or communities

when it was necessary to satisfy economic or other needs and if the task exceeded the abilities of the individual. The rise of the human race from the dark natural condition into the light of civilisation and culture has only been made possible by the union of man with man and, as development progressed, by the creation of societies with their division-of-labour structures.” (p. 17) What all cooperatives from

The cooperative as the basis of the Swiss model for peace

"Even in our most ancient and the surviving democracies the original sense of the word must not be forgotten. Confederation originally and mandatorily includes a community of people who vowed to stand up for each other, the will to shape their common political life, together. That was the reason for the first, for the Eternal Alliance, and it remained its best basis. The state's rule of law has never been an end in itself, or even the subject of worship, but always for the benefit of the people."

Georg Thürer. *Persönlichkeit und Volksgemeinschaft im eidgenössischen Bundesleben, 1949. In: Gemeinschaft im Staatsleben der Schweiz. Haupt-Verlag, 1998, p. 146*

"A cooperative unites its members by means of the three 'self': self-help, self-administration, and self-responsibility. Its members are not subjects; they are co-proprietors and co-designers with equal rights. They have the same right to vote and to decide. This is contrary to the old regimes, which gave greater voting rights

to the rich and the aristocrats than to the politically less well-off, not unlike the corporations of our modern capitalist society, which give the owners of big parcels of shares correspondingly more influence on decisions than the owners of only a few shares. Personality, yes, even human dignity was safeguarded in the cooperatives. The simple associate was someone, and it had always been like that."

Georg Thürer. *Die Genossenschaftsidee im schweizerischen Staat, 1977. In: op. cit., p. 193*

"The Confederation is, as the name suggests, imbued with the spirit of the cooperative. At the time of its founding freedom meant something different than today. Freedom was involved in the cooperative. The Confederates did not defend the human right of freedom, but the independence of their small communities, in which, however, the individual personality could come into play as it was indicated. The legend about the foundation and the entire historical tradition contains both: the spirit of coop-

erative cohesion as well as the crucial importance of the individual act or of a personal idea. It is deeply rooted in this cooperative tradition that in Switzerland privileged classes, which handle public duties, have developed less than elsewhere, such as the class of 'politicians', or the military caste or the class of the 'educated'. In the cooperative everyone is responsible for everything. No sphere is to be released from the responsibility of the community. The original cooperative attitude continues to exist in the known forms of modern Switzerland: in direct democracy, in the system of concordance, the collegiality of the authorities, in the persisting federalism. If asked about the nature of a Swiss national spirit, you will most likely find it in this fact, that all life is supported by the small circles of family, commune, and region."

Wolfgang von Wartburg (ed.). *Wagnis Schweiz. Die Idee der Schweiz im Wandel der Zeit. Novalis. Schaffhausen 1990, pp. 24*
(All translations by Current Concerns)

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the early days up to the present have in common is that their significance is "not confined to the economic support of the members, but that it can also be seen in the fulfilment of cultural tasks." (p. 9). The cooperative principle of cooperation is fundamental: "To unite in a community for mutual assistance is the simple meaning of the cooperative idea. Although this is so much part of the human nature, its realisation testifies to the highest ethics man can attain." The cooperative principle thus refers not only to economic and material needs, but covers the whole human condition, and is thus a basic anthropological constant.

The cooperative is the true original form of common activities in terms of self-help, self-responsibility and self-management. It is based on a common goal that those involved want to attain and that develop by means of constant communication. The purpose of a cooperative is al-

ways the optimal use of common cause. The forms of use may be different, but the purpose must always serve the common good. The internal procedures of cooperatives must be conducted with care – non-hierarchically, honestly, with dignity and humanely. This places high ethical demands on all members. A person who wants to exercise a leadership function must have proven himself in democratic life.

The inner attitude is characterised by justice and solidarity, a willingness to take on social responsibility and to care for others. This requires openness, communal spirit, understanding and loyalty.

That cooperatives so to speak correspond to an "anthropological principle" is also proven by the fact that this form of economic activity has developed around the world and has remained successful to the present.³

In the Swiss Confederation, this life and economic system has also prevailed in the political realm: It was the experience of Alemannic Mark cooperatives

which was reflected in the covenant of the Confederates from 1291. Thus, the cooperative principle in Switzerland was already present in the first alliance of the Confederates from 1291. As the basis of security and prosperity it has continued to exist in the Swiss federal state since 1848. The content of the Federal Charter of 1291, namely "All for one – one for all", or in other words "together – for one another", as the President of Swiss Confederation *Ueli Maurer* said in his New Year speech, breathes the spirit of the cooperative system. It would be a rewarding task for historians to work out precisely how direct democracy has developed over 700 years of history from the many different types of cooperatives in the towns and villages, the cantons and the Confederation.

2012: The International Year of the Cooperatives

The idea of cooperatives is up to date more than ever, as the United Nations *Resolution A/RES/64/136* shows. With this resolution, the United Nations General Assembly has decided to proclaim the year 2012 as the *International Year of Cooperatives (IYC)*. By this step the cooperative model was raised to worldwide importance and its economic as well as social and societal significance was pointed out: cooperatives reduce poverty, create jobs and promote social integration. With the resolution the UN also pursue the goal that governments create an environment which promotes the growth and creation of new cooperatives

ef. In the field of education as well, the economist point of view is now criticized in a refreshingly frank way; a reconsideration about a concept of education that is again oriented towards the personalist concept of man, towards democracy and towards human rights. Thus, in his article "Educational reform and propaganda" (2013) *Jochen Krautz* writes: "Education must enable all citizens in the republic to think and act autonomously and responsibly, so that the human being may determine his life within community." And

again: "Education at public schools serves the personal development of the individual within the context of the common weal, that is to say the orientation towards peace, freedom and justice."

In his analysis *Jochen Krautz* shows how the economist concept of man was imposed on us via propaganda and via various international organizations as for example the organization of OECD during the last decades respectively how we let it be imposed on ourselves.

Benedict XVI demanded a new perspective on economy

In his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace this year the then Pope Benedict XVI demanded "a new, shared commitment in pursuit of the common good and the development of all men, and of the whole man." In his point of view the causes of rising tensions and sources of conflict lie in the growing inequality between rich and poor as well as the unregulated financial capitalism (radical economic liberalism) with its selfish and individualistic mentality. Benedict XVI expressed that a new perspective on economy was needed, today: Beyond selfish and individualistic stepping up of profits and consumption he focused on the realization of the common good in all areas of human life as well as "policies of industrial and agricultural development concerned with social progress and the growth everywhere of constitutional and democratic states."

(Translation Current Concerns)

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even more. So, states should create a legal position that guarantees cooperatives the same initial situation as other economic and social enterprises. Newly, the third revised edition of the "Guidelines for Cooperative Legislation" is published at UN level. It is published by the *International Labour Organization ILO*. This complex of rules gives guidance and advice in creating a conducive environment for the development of cooperatives on national, regional and international level.

The personalist concept of man in national law and international law

ef. The personalist concept of man is also inscribed in the *Grundgesetz* (basic law Grundgesetz for the Federal Republic of Germany): "Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority" (Art.1) and "Every person shall have the right to free development of his personality insofar as he does not violate the rights of others or offend against the constitutional order or the moral law" (Art. 2 (1) as well as "All persons shall be equal before the law" (Art. 3 (1)). The constitutional court of Germany formulates as follows: "The anthropology of the Grundgesetz is not based on an isolated sovereign individual, the Grundgesetz has decided the tension between individual and community in the sense of community spirit and community roots of the person without violating the inherent value of the per-

son." According to the UN there are 800 million members of cooperatives in more than 100 countries worldwide; more than 100 million jobs are provided by cooperatives. Half of the world's population – as the UN estimates – finds its nutritional basis in cooperatives. Thus, credit cooperatives, rural and commercial cooperatives contribute to stabilizing regional economies and promoting local employment.

The UN's key messages concerning cooperatives are:

- Cooperative enterprises build a better world
- Cooperative enterprises are member owned, member serving and member driven
- Cooperatives empower people
- Cooperatives improve livelihoods and strengthen the economy
- Cooperatives enable sustainable development
- Cooperatives promote rural development
- Cooperatives balance both social and economic demands
- Cooperatives promote democratic principles
- Cooperatives and gender: a pathway out of poverty
- Cooperatives: a sustainable business model for the youth

(Source: www.social.un.org.)

On the occasion of the *International Year of Cooperatives 2012* UN Secretary General *Ban Ki-moon* said: "Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility." And at the International Day of the Cooperatives in 2012 he stated: "In this International Year of Cooperatives, I encourage all stakeholders to continue building aware-

ness and pursuing policies to strengthen cooperatives everywhere. By contributing to human dignity and global solidarity, cooperatives truly do build a better world." *Ban Ki-moon* (26.7.2012, Internationaler Tag der Genossenschaften)".

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic decision-making by the members (one member – one vote)
- Economic participation of members
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Cooperation among cooperatives
- Concern for community of the cooperative

Source : www.ilo.org

ness and pursuing policies to strengthen cooperatives everywhere. By contributing to human dignity and global solidarity, cooperatives truly do build a better world." *Ban Ki-moon* (26.7.2012, Internationaler Tag der Genossenschaften)".

José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of FAO, publicly announced in his statement on *World Food Day 2012*: Cooperatives are the key to feeding the world.

Cooperatives combat world youth unemployment

The closing event of the *International Year of Cooperatives 2012* was conducted on the subject "The promotion of cooperatives after 2012" at the UN in New York in November 2012. The bell for the international year was to herald a "Decade of Cooperatives" after this event. Youth plays an important role in this. The question how young people can get involved more in cooperatives becomes the focus of attention. Besides global food security the significance of cooperatives for the reduction of youth unemployment and for social development is seen in the foundation of cooperatives: from 2002 to 2007, youth unemployment decreased continuously around the world. This changed abruptly with the global financial crisis: since 2007, unemployment began to rise again. The rapid increase has destroyed a lot of what had previously been achieved, especially in the years of 2008-09. Today approximately 75 million young people are unemployed, which is equivalent to an increase of more than 4 million since 2007. However, the "working poor" (people who are poor in spite of being employed) are the far bigger challenge. The *International Labour Organization (ILO)* estimates that over 152 million young people must live with less than \$2 a day (*ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth 2012*).

An important means to meet these challenges is seen in young people engaging in cooperative enterprises or organizations.

Because cooperatives are owned by their members and are enterprises close to communities, they can qualify young people to start

Afghanistan – history is repeating itself

The parallels between the current war and that of the 1840s are striking

by William Dalrymple*

On March 10, Afghanistan's president, *Hamid Karzai*, shocked Western leaders by declaring that recent attacks proved that the Taliban "are at the service of America." The implication was clear: terrorists were colluding with the United States to sow chaos before America's planned withdrawal in 2014. American and European leaders, mindful of the blood and treasure they've expended to defend Mr. Karzai's government, were baffled and offended.

But to students of Afghan history, Mr. Karzai's motivation for publicly spurning foreign powers was quite obvious. A [Taliban news release](#) on March 18, which received little notice in the Western press, declared: "Everyone knows how Karzai was brought to Kabul and how he was seated on the defenseless throne of *Shah Shuja*," referring to the exiled Afghan ruler restored to the throne by the British in 1839. "So it is not astonishing that the American soldiers are making fun of him and slapping him on the face because it is the philosophy of invaders that they scorn their stooge at the end ... and in this way punish him for his slavery!"

The Taliban inadvertently put their finger on a key factor in understanding Mr. Karzai's psychology. After all, as an elder of the Popalzai tribe, Mr. Karzai is the direct tribal descendant of Shah Shuja ul-Mulk, Britain's handpicked ruler during the first Western attempt at regime change in Afghanistan in the mid-19th century.

And although few in the West are aware of it, as the United States prepares to withdraw from Afghanistan, history is repeat-

ing itself. We may have forgotten the details of the colonial history that did so much to mold Afghans' hatred of foreign rule, but the Afghans have not.

Today, Shah Shuja is widely reviled in Afghanistan as a puppet of the West. The man who defeated the British in 1842, *Wazir Akbar Khan*, and his father, *Dost Mohammed*, are widely regarded as national heroes. Mr. Karzai has lived with that knowledge all his life, making him a difficult ally — always keen to stress the differences between himself and his backers, making him appear to be continually biting the hand that feeds him.

In 2001, top Taliban officials asked their young fighters, "Do you want to be remembered as a son of Shah Shuja or as a son of Dost Mohammed?" As he rose to power, the Taliban leader *Mullah Omar* deliberately modeled himself on Dost Mohammed, and, as he did, [removed the Holy Cloak](#) of the Prophet *Muhammad* from its shrine in Kandahar and wrapped himself in it to declare jihad, a deliberate historical re-enactment, the resonance of which all Afghans immediately understood.

The parallels between the current war and that of the 1840s are striking. The same tribal rivalries exist and the same battles are being fought in the same places under the guise of new flags, new ideologies and new political puppeteers. The same cities are being garrisoned by foreign troops speaking the same languages, and they are being attacked from the same hills and high passes.

Not only was Shah Shuja from the same Popalzai sub-tribe as Mr. Karzai, his

principal opponents were Ghilzais, who today make up the bulk of the Taliban's foot soldiers. Mullah Omar is a Ghilzai, as was Mohammad Shah Khan, the resistance fighter who supervised the slaughter of the British Army in 1841.

The same moral issues that are chewed over in editorial columns today were discussed in the correspondence of British officials during the First Afghan War. Should foreign troops try to "promote the interests of humanity" and champion social reform by banning traditions like the stoning of adulterous women? Should they try to reform blasphemy laws and introduce Western political ideas? Or should they just concentrate on ruling the country without rocking the boat?

As the great British spymaster Sir *Claude Wade* warned on the eve of the 1839 invasion, "There is nothing more to be dreaded or guarded against, I think, than the overweening confidence with which we are too often accustomed to regard the excellence of our own institutions, and the anxiety that we display to introduce them in new and untried soils." In this early critique of democracy promotion, he concluded, "Such interference will always lead to acrimonious disputes, if not to a violent reaction."

Just as Britain's inability to cope with the Afghan uprising of 1841-2 stemmed from leadership failures and the breakdown of ties between the British envoy and Shah Shuja, the strained and uneasy relationship of NATO leaders with Mr.

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their own businesses. By creating their own businesses, adapted to the local needs, young entrepreneurs stimulate economic development in their communes and expand their own skills and abilities at the same time.

Thus, cooperatives contribute significantly to preventing and ending poverty, creating social safety nets and strengthening the youth.

It was emphasized that the younger and the older generation need each other. The young generation wants to be listened to and taken seriously. The older generation with their experience is very important to

the younger ones. So, the dialogue between the generations is essential. Of great importance is the respect paid to each other, it is the basis of trust. It is important to listen to each other and to be willing to learn. It was also emphasized that it takes courage. And not to be afraid to make mistakes. Cooperation is better than competition. •

Cooperatives worldwide

An estimated 1 billion people worldwide are members of cooperatives. In 2008, the top 300 cooperatives were responsible for an aggregate turnover of US\$1.1 trillion. This is the size of the world's tenth largest economy, Canada, and nearly the size of the economy of Spain.

- In Kenya, cooperatives have the following market shares: 70 percent of coffee, 76 percent of dairy, 90 percent of pyrethrum and 95 percent of cotton.

- In Brazil, cooperatives are responsible for 40 percent of the agricultural GDP and 6 percent of total agribusiness exports.
- In Bolivia, one third of the population are members of cooperatives (Fairmining, Fairtrade).
- In Kenya, 924,000 farmers earn income from membership in agricultural cooperatives, in Ethiopia about 900,000, and in Egypt about 4 million.

Source: www.fao.org

¹ Jochen Krautz "Bildungsreform und Propaganda" in: Sonderheft "Demokratie setzt aus" der *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik* 2012, p. 86–128.

² cf. Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Freefall: America, free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy", Norton, 2010; summit at the UN general assembly of the then president Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, a.o. with J. Stiglitz, *Zeit-Fragen*, No 28, 2009 and *Current Concerns* No 12, 2011; "Open letter to the citizens", signed by 270 economists; Basel manifest on the economic enlightenment, November 2011; "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 16 January "Der Homo oeconomicus hat ausgedient. Weg mit ihm". (The homo oeconomicus has served out. Away with him.)

³ see also Elinor Ostrom "Governing the commons. the evolution of institutions for collective action." 1990 Cambridge University Press.

Afghanistan – a comparison between the Soviet Union’s war from 1979 to 1989 and the occupation by the United States from 2001 to 2014

by Professor Dr Albert A. Stahel, Institute for Strategic Studies, Wädenswil, Switzerland

The Soviet war in Afghanistan 1979–1989

In December 1979, the USSR Politburo with its ailing General Secretary *Brezhnev* and its members *Suslov*, *Gromyko*, *Andropov*, *Chernenko* and *Ustinov* issued the command to invade Afghanistan, which was marked by insurgencies, without previously consulting the General Staff. The liquidation of Afghan President *Hafizullah Amin* and his bodyguards through the special KGB unit *Alpha* on 24 December 1979 marked the beginning of the occupation of Afghanistan by the 40th Army. *Babrak Karmal* was installed as the new president. Larger towns and cities in Afghanistan were captured by a contingent of 60,000 men. Once the Afghan army had the situation in the country under control, the Soviet troops were to be removed again. Without clear objectives and without a well developed operational doctrine the 40th Army together with reserve troops from Central Asia were commanded into this war. Due to their unreliability these units had to be replaced by regular units of Russians, Ukrainians and Balts in 1980. The war in Afghanistan happened to turn out to be a quagmire for the 40th Army. According to Soviet experts the war was lost in seven phases (*Arbenz, P. et al. p. 7*):

1. Invasion and rebellion in Kabul (20 to 22 February 1980)
2. Guerrilla war of resistance and thus a more difficult control of the country by the 40th Army (March 1980–September 1982)
3. Soviet reorganization of their own and of the Afghan forces

(October 1982–February 1984)

4. Major Soviet offensives and scorched earth tactics (March 1984–March 1985)
5. Battle for the connecting roads (March 1985–December 1986)
6. military-political compromises and armistice offers to the resistance (January 1987–January 1988)
7. Soviet withdrawal (May 1988–February 1989)

The number of troops, which had proved inadequate in the first phase of the country’s occupation, was gradually raised by 1985 to over 100,000 men. The Soviet generals had to compensate for the numerically insufficient stock of troops by the massive fire of their artillery, their combat helicopters and combat aircraft. Hence entire Pashtu villages were wiped out along the border with Pakistan and the people were killed or expelled.

Decision of the Politburo chaired by Mikhail Gorbachev: Meeting on 13 November 1986

On 13 November 1986 the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee under the chairmanship of the Secretary General *Mikhail Gorbachev* met and discussed the dire situation of the 40th Army in Afghanistan. At the beginning of the meeting *Gorbachev* stated (*Allan, P. et al. p. 434–451*):

“We have been fighting for six years in Afghanistan. If we do not change our methods, we shall fight for another 20 to 30 years. That would cast a shadow on our ability to influence the course of events. We also have to tell our military that they learn badly in

this war. Does our general staff not have a more promising approach? In general, we have not found the right key to solving this problem. Will we fight endlessly and confirm that our troops cannot cope with the situation? We need the conclusion of this process in the near future.”

Gromyko confirmed this assessment:

“We have to set a strategic goal. Not too long ago we talked about the fact that we had to shut off the border of Afghanistan, with Iran and Pakistan. Experience has shown that we have failed because of the difficult terrain, the existence of hundreds of mountain passes. Today one must clearly say that the strategic task is to bring the war to its conclusion.”

For *Gorbachev* the end of the war was the focus of attention. In what way this could be achieved was still to be clarified:

“We must talk about the necessity of its completion within a maximum of two years in a decree.”

Gromyko assessed the policy and strategy of the then US *Reagan* administration correctly:

“As for the Americans, they are not interested in regulating the situation in Afghanistan. On the contrary, it is advantageous for them if the war is protracted.”

The then Chief of Staff and first Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR *Akhromeyev* commented clearly on the military situation in Afghanistan:

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“Afghanistan – history ...”

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Karzai has been a crucial factor in America’s failures in the latest imbroglio.

Afghanistan is so poor that the occupation can’t be financed through natural resource wealth or taxation. Today, America is spending more than a \$100 billion a year in Afghanistan: it costs more to keep Marine battalions in two districts of Helmand than America is providing to the entire nation of Egypt in military and development assistance. And then, as now, the decision to withdraw troops has turned on factors with little relevance to Afghanistan, namely the state of the occupier’s troubled economy and the vagaries of politics back home.

History never repeats itself exactly, and there are some important differences between what is taking place in Afghanistan today and what took place during the 1840s. There is no unifying figure at the center of the resistance, recognized by all Afghans as a symbol of legitimacy and justice: *Mullah Omar* is no *Dost Mohammed* or *Wazir Akbar Khan*, and the tribes have not united behind a single leader as they did in the 1840s.

Moreover, the goals of the conservative, defensive tribal uprising that brought colonial rule to an end were very different from those of today’s *Taliban*, who wish to reimpose an imported *Wahhabi* ideology on Afghanistan’s diverse religious cultures. And most important, *Mr. Karzai* has tried to establish a broad-based, democratic government, which, for all its many flaws and prodigious corruption, is

still much more representative and popular than the regime of *Shah Shuja* ever was.

Mr. Karzai is keen to learn the lessons of his forebears’ failures. When my book came out in India in January, he got hold of a copy and read it. “Our so-called current allies behave to us just as the British did to *Shah Shuja*,” he told me. “They have squandered the opportunity given to them by the Afghan people.”

Mr. Karzai believes that *Shah Shuja* didn’t stress his independence enough, and he made clear that in his own last year in office he is going to act in such a way that he will never be remembered as anyone’s puppet.

* *William Dalrymple* is the author, most recently, of “Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839–42.”

"Afghanistan – a comparison ..."

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"Soon, our military activities in Afghanistan will have lasted for seven years. There is not a piece of land in this country that has not been occupied by a Soviet soldier. Nonetheless, a large part of the territory is in the hands of the insurgents. The Government of Afghanistan disposes of a significant military force: 160,000 men in the army, 115,000 in the Zarandoi (police) and 20,000 in the institutions of state security. There is no military mission which we did not complete, however, there is no result. This is all due to the fact that military results are not consolidated by political ones. In the center there is a power, but it is missing in the provinces. We control Kabul and the provincial centers, but the power cannot be established in the conquered territory. We have lost the battle for the Afghan people. A minority of the people support the government. Our army has fought for five years. It is still able to keep the situation at the present level.

But given these conditions the war will continue for a long time.

50,000 Soviet soldiers close the borders, but they are not able to close all the channels through which goods are brought across the border. I repeat that we can maintain the situation at the present level, but we will have to find a way out and solve the problem in the way Andrei Andreyevich (Gromyko) has proposed. We have to step up to Pakistan."

This assessment of the situation in Afghanistan was completed by the first Deputy Foreign Minister *Vorontsov* by describing the economic situation in Afghanistan:

President of Afghanistan: statement regarding common goals of Taliban and US have been misinterpreted

Afghan media report that, according to President *Hamid Karzai* the media have misinterpreted his statements regarding congruent goals of the US and the Taliban.

At the beginning of March, Karzai had accused the US and other foreign forces of negotiating separately with the Taliban in order to cause the peaceful inner Afghan dialog to fail and to continue the war. Karzai was reported to say that the US interests in Afghanistan were clearly not to fight terror, since the terrorists were actually outside the country. The real goal was to dominate the region.

In a joint press conference with US Secretary of State *John Kerry* in Kabul, Karzai confirmed the endeavour of his

"A few words continuing the idea just expressed by Comrade S.F. Akhromeyev: Afghanistan is a rural country (80 percent of the population are farmers). But to them the revolution has brought the least result. In eight years of revolution, the production of agricultural products increased by only 7 percent, the standard of living of the peasants remains on the pre-revolutionary level."

Both the "military" as well as the economic assistance of the USSR in Afghanistan had to be called a failure. For Gorbachev, there was only one way out of the Afghan quagmire, namely the 40th Army's unconditioned withdrawal:

"In October last year, we set the line of regulation of the Afghanistan issue in the Politburo meeting. The objective we set was to speed up the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan and at the same time to secure a friendly Afghanistan for us. We decided to realize this goal through a combination of military and political means. But there is no advancement in any of these directions. The reinforcement of the military positions of the Afghan government did not take place. [...]

All in all, the proposed concept has been poorly implemented. But the problem is not only inherent in the concept, but also in its implementation. We must act more actively, and regulate two questions clearly. First, we have to realize the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan in the course of two years. In 1987, 50 percent of the troops are to be withdrawn and in the following [year] another 50 percent. Second, you have to work towards an enlargement of the social basis of the regime, taking into

government to promote a national reconciliation in Afghanistan and to start a dialog with the Taliban.

At the same time, Karzai requested the US army to cease their military missions in Afghan villages in order to prevent civil casualties.

Kerry and Karzai underlined their common standpoints regarding the dialog with the armed opposition.

The US Secretary of State emphasized that he welcomed the Afghan presidential elections in 2014 and also promised economic, military and political support after the transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan authorities.

Source: *Ria Novosti* of 26 March 2013
(Translation Current Concerns)

**Afghanistan:
transport airplane crash
at Bagram US Air Base**

On Monday, a transport aircraft crashed near the US Air Base in Bagram (Afghanistan). According to Afghan authorities the plane crashed directly during take-off for technical reasons. It is still unclear if there were any casualties.

In an interview with *Pajhwok* agency, the International Security Assistance Force ISAF confirmed that a civil plane had crashed. Rescue workers had been deployed. The radical Islamic Taliban movement claimed that the aircraft had been brought down by Mujahedin; all passengers had been killed.

Bagram Air Base is the most important US military airport in Afghanistan and a hub for supplies for the international coalition in this country. In some cases, supply flights are performed by civil air transport companies.

Source: *Ria Novosti* of 29 April 2013
(Translation Current Concerns)

account the real distribution of political forces. [...] You have to enter into negotiations with Pakistan. The main thing is that the Americans should not invade Afghanistan."

This decision was adopted by the attending members of the Politburo. Two facts are outstanding. First, the Politburo's decision to withdraw was taken prior to the delivery of the first anti-aircraft *Stinger* missiles to the Mujahedeen by the US. Contrary to the American propaganda the stinger missiles did in no way weaken the military situation of the 40th Army in Afghanistan. Neither did they affect the decision of the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev to withdraw. Second, President *Obama* justified his decision for the withdrawal of US forces and NATO forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 in almost the same words as once Gorbachev did in the historically decisive Politburo meeting on 13 November 1986.

Drawing the balance of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan

Finally the leadership of the USSR withdrew the 40th Army from Afghanistan without having crushed the resistance. In military terms the 40th Army was not defeated, but as a result of this war of deterioration the USSR had suffered huge financial, human and economic losses and thus lost the war politically.

Officially confirmed losses of the USSR (*Arbenz, P.* et al. p. 8)

- 13,833 deaths (including 1,979 officers)
- 49,985 wounded (including 7,132 officers)

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"Afghanistan – a comparison ..."

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- 6,669 invalid
- 330 missing

The high proportion of officers killed and wounded in this war is an indication of leadership at the front and therefore an indication of Soviet officers' bravery. The Soviet logistics was a serious weak point. Almost all of the fuel and food for the 40th Army had to be brought to Kabul via the Salang tunnel. The situation of the water supply was previously misjudged. The risk of infectious diseases had also been misjudged. At times there were up to 75% failures with the 525,190 officers throughout the war. This was due, among other things, to lack of vaccination of Soviet troops.

Until today, there have only been speculations on the cost of the Soviet occupation. On the other hand, it is considered to be certain that the war led to a significant destabilization of the Soviet economy and society and has thus contributed to the disintegration of the USSR. Up to the present day, the disabled of this war are poorly supplied.

On the Afghan side, the balance of the war is even more desperate: The civilian population suffered at least 2 million deaths and over five million people fled to Pakistan and to Iran. Some of them still live in refugee camps. After 1992 Afghanistan came under the rule of the warlords who destroyed Kabul in their war. In 1996 the capital was conquered by the devout Taliban under their leader Mullah Omar.

After 2014, NATO intends to leave up to 12,000 troops in Afghanistan

NATO intends to leave up to 12,000 troops in Afghanistan after 2014 when the responsibility for security in the country is fully transferred to the Afghan security forces, as was confirmed towards *Ria Novosti* on Tuesday by a diplomat affiliated with NATO.

NATO General Secretary *Anders Fogh Rasmussen* had stated before that the final decision regarding the number of NATO instructors for the Afghan security forces would be taken in the following months.

After 2014, NATO will cease its fighting missions on Afghan territory. Early in January of this year it became known that the US Ministry of Defense had come up with a plan foreseeing that even after 2014 3,000 to 9,000 US troops would remain in Afghanistan.

According to media reports there are some 66,000 US troops in Afghanistan today. They form the main force of the NATO troops in Afghanistan.

Source: *Ria Novosti* of 23 April 2013
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Parallels to the war and withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan

Just like the war of the 40th Army in Afghanistan that of the armed forces of the United States and NATO (the *ISAF – International Security and Assistance Force* – is commanded by NATO) can be divided into phases (*Holz, D.*, p. 162/163):

1. phase: In October 2001 the United States created a "coalition of the willing" and their first air strike against the strongholds of the Taliban was prepared;
2. phase: after the air strike, singular US Special Operation Forces along with forces of the Northern Alliance defeated the Taliban regime in November/December 2001 and expelled Al-Qaeda;
3. phase: from 2002 to 2008 the US and NATO carried out various ground operations whose orders were to definitively destroy the Taliban and Al-Qaeda;
4. phase: from 2009 to 2012 the Afghan security forces together with the *ANA (Afghan National Army)* and *ANP (Afghan National Police)* – whose stocks were increased to over 300,000 men, similar to the situation under Soviet occupation – should stabilize the situation in the country with the support of the armed forces of the United States and NATO;
5. phase: from spring 2013 onwards Afghan security forces were to take over all combat missions. Gradually the bulk of the US armed forces and their allies were to be withdrawn by the end of 2014. The Allied air forces are still being used for battlefield support of the Afghan security forces, but the remaining US and Allied land forces in Afghanistan will only have training contracts;
6. phase: now discussions are going on whether after 2014 the United States should deploy 3,000 to 9,000 soldiers in Afghanistan for Counterterrorism against the Pakistani tribal areas and in order to train Afghan security forces or whether all troops should be withdrawn. For the period after the withdrawal the Afghans will obtain 30 Russian *Mi-17* transport helicopters from the US and unmanned drones for reconnaissance. Deliveries of light combat aircraft and medium transport aircraft are being deferred (*Lee, C.A.*, and *A. Entous*).

The coincidence of this war progress with the phases of the Soviet war is amazing. The result is almost the same as for the 40th Army after their withdrawal in 1989. Even the forces of the US and NATO could not break the Taliban's resistance. The topography of Afghanistan, differences in temperature from minus 20 to plus 40 degrees and the martial tradition of the Afghans were an obstacle to western war objectives. From 2008/09, more and more young fighters, recruited in the refugee camps by the madrassas, poured across the border into Afghanistan from Pakistan. This situation was exacerbated by the boom-

ing opium poppy and cannabis planting by drug lords. Western forces were confronted with a conglomerate of insurgents, terrorists, criminals as well as lies and corruption of the Afghan government. This conglomerate formed a quagmire especially for the European NATO allies in which their troops stationed in Afghanistan sank down. The example of Germany shows the way in which European governments are hiding this disaster from their own people. With the assertion that the army did not wage a war in Afghanistan, the government in Berlin tried to conceal the Afghan disaster.

The financial cost of the Afghanistan war can only be estimated. It is suspected that the total cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan so far have been at 3,000 to 4,000 billion dollars for the USA. Added to this are the costs for the physical and mental care of thousands of invalids. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are said to have caused a total of 49,000 crippled (*Faison III*, p. 64). Already now similar developments characterize Afghanistan for the period after the withdrawal; hence a war between the warlords of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. Organized crime in Afghanistan will take advantage of this turmoil and keep abusing the land for the production of drugs. The consequences of this war in Afghanistan could even surpass those of the Soviet war of the eighties. It lies in the hands of the US to withdraw from this war, the longest war in its history, as quickly as possible, and to address China's power-political challenges. •

Source:

Institut für Strategische Studien (Institute for Strategic Studies) on 28.4.2013, see also "Demontage einer Supermacht" (Dismantling a superpower), in *Damals*. Das Magazin für Geschichte, No 05/2013.

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Beekeeping as a contribution to the protection of birds

Exotic ornamental trees are popular in our gardens and parks – this to the regret of the local bird and insect world

by Helmut Hintermeier, Galmersgarten, Germany

The use of native bee-active bird nourishing copse in fruit and home gardens, parks and other public facilities should actually be a matter-of-course today. But unfortunately, in the average green areas of our villages and towns exotic ornamental trees and shrubs are still very popular. An argument at first glance and a possible selection criteria is a lush and decorative mass of blossoms – at the latest after the blossom many bushes however eke out a miserable, a green and for animals uninteresting shadowy existence. Above all, quite some of the species (filled snowball, breeding form: cultivar of *Viburnum opulus*; ornamental cherry trees, *Prunus* spec.; hawthorn, cultivated form: *Crataegus laevigata*) are also infertile and even fruit-bearing cultivated forms attract insects and birds far less than their native counterparts (see table). Even though approximately four dozen wild shrubs suitable for gardens could quite compete with the so popular exotic plants regarding their ornamental value. Even more important is their ecological significance (as already indicated in the last issue of *Current Concerns*), which is indirectly for the benefit of the people, as well. The larger festoons of fruit – due to

the pollination by the bees – are at least capable of preventing the damage caused by some bird species in fruit cultures – not totally, however, of reducing it effectively. In late winter when food supplies are scarce, it is known that bullfinchs (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), tits (*Parus spec.*), sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and finches (*Fringillidae*) cast an eye on the buds of our fruit trees. Especially popular are the vitamin- and protein-rich flower buds, of which even a single Bullfinch can consume up to 30 pieces per minute. British scientists found, however, that the winter food of the Bullfinch is essentially composed of the fruits and seeds of only a few plants (maple, birch, and especially oak seeds) and the birds only switch to buds food when the autumnal range of seeds and fruit goes down or is not sufficient due to fewer trees.

Birds as landscape gardener

The preservation of a preferably species-rich multiform cultural landscape and the revival of monoculture areas already cleared out with single trees, shrubs and “colorful” hedges should be a heart’s desire. For beekeepers’, fruit farmers’, bird- and conservationists’ equally. For thou-

sands of years, even before any forestry birds have contributed to the proliferation of trees and shrubs. These gardening activity of birds is used deliberately today in so-called *Benjes hedges*. The process is amazingly simple and free of charge too: At the appropriate place, a barrier of undergrowth (cuttings of trees) is stacked, three to four meters wide and about a meter high – the longer, the better. The rest is done by the “outhouse toilet effect of the birds”: With the excrements dropped there, the seeds of the later hedge bushes will reach the undergrowth. In the first summer already, a herbage hedge develops that quickly grows more or less fast depending on soil type and groundwater level to merge in a tall forbs hedge. Protected from browsing, the first bushes appear, but their further growth must be “stopped” by cutting them back, otherwise a hedge of trees would soon develop.

But some trees are desirable and in the truest sense of the word of “surmounting” importance. Recently, the lay out of “modified *Benjes hedges*” is also being recommended that permits the planned bringing in of certain trees. “But whether the hedge shrubs are poorly staffed with berries or richly packed, is decided by the bees, to whom a seam life zone must be provided along the hedge, in which there should always be something blooming.” (H. Benjes) •

Source: *Schweizerische Bienenzeitung* (Swiss Bee Journal), December 2012

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There are significantly more fruit-eating bird species on native than on exotic trees.

Native woody plants:

Rowan berry (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)	63
Black elderberry (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>)	62
Gean (<i>Prunus avium</i>)	48
Grape and elderberry (<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>)	47
Juniper (<i>Juniperus spec.</i>)	43
Forest raspberries (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)	39
Alder (<i>Frangula alnus</i>)	36
Redcurrant (<i>Ribes rubrum</i>)	34
Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus spec.</i>)	32
Wild blackberry (<i>Rubus spec.</i>)	32
Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)	32
Dog rose (<i>Rosa canina</i>)	27
Dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>)	24
Mean euonymus (<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>)	24
Common Bird Cherry (<i>Prunus padus</i>)	24
Yew (<i>Taxus baccata</i>)	24
Ordinary snowball (<i>Viburnum vulgare</i>)	22
Common Privet (<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>)	21
Amelanchier (<i>Amelanchier ovalis</i>)	21
Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)	20
Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)	20
Common barberry (<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>)	19
Buckthorn (<i>Rhamnus spec.</i>)	19
Sea buckthorn (<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>)	16
Field Maple (<i>Acer campestre</i>)	15
Cornelian cherry (<i>Cornus mas</i>)	15
Wayfaring Tree (<i>Viburnum lantana</i>)	15

Wild gooseberry (<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>)	14
Honeysuckle Black (<i>Lonicera nigra</i>)	14
Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	14
Holly grows (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	12
Rock cherry (<i>Prunus mahaleb</i>)	11
Hazelnut (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)	10
Daphne (<i>Daphne mezereum</i>)	10
Blue Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera caerulea</i>)	10
Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera xylosteum</i>)	8
Honeysuckle plant (<i>Lonicera caprifolium</i>)	7
Black currant (<i>Ribes nigrum</i>)	3
Willows (<i>Salix spec.</i>)	3
Real medlar (<i>Mespilus germanica</i>)	2
Bladdernut (<i>Staphylea pinnata</i>)	2
Wild honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>)	1
Alpine currant (<i>Ribes alpinum</i>)	1
Scotch broom (<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>)	1

Exotic woody plants:

White dogwood (<i>Cornus alba</i>)	8
Oregon grape (<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>)	7
Bastard flour berries (<i>Sorbus heilingensis</i>)	4
Acer negundo (<i>Acer negundo</i>)	4
Cherry laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>)	3
Lavalles Hawthorn (<i>C. x lavallei</i> Hér. ex Lav.)	3
Yellow-wooden Dogwood (<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>)	2
Staghorn sumac (<i>Rhus typhina</i>)	2
Weigela (<i>Weigela spec.</i>)	1
Forsythia (<i>Forsythia spec.</i>)	1

"Beekeeping as a contribution ..."

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)



(picture H. Hintermeier)

Steps against bee mortality

rt. Besides the Varroa mite, introduced from Southeast Asia, the bee colonies in North America and Europe are suffering from an industrialized agriculture, which takes little consideration of the grown environment. This includes the land application of often inad-

quately tested chemicals. Thus as early as in 2008 they suffered a catastrophic bee death in southern Germany. Only after lengthy investigations and parallels in the US and France a trace led to a new generation of insecticides, the neonicotinoids. Although the manufactur-

ers deny any connection to their products, the Federal Office for Agriculture (BLW) followed a decision of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and now also forbids three suspicious insecticides. The following is the position statement of the BLW.

Restriction of the authorization for individual insecticides

Berne, 29.4.2013: The *Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (BLW)* provides analogous to the EU – suspending the permission for three insecticides for the treatment of rape- and maize-seed. These insecticides of the chemical group of neo-nicotinoide were re-evaluated due to a publication by the *European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)*. Although these pesticides – if they are applied according to the regulations – do not present an unacceptable risk to bees, the *BWL* considers the safety margin as small. While under suspension techniques should be developed, with which the risk to bees can be reduced and the safety margin can be increased.

After the *EFSA* had published an assessment of the three drugs' hazards to bees (*Imidacloprid*, *Clothianidin* and *Thiametoxam*), the *BLW* was asked for a situation analysis by the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research. This assessment confirms that the substances, applied according to the regulations, do indeed not indicate an

unacceptable risk to bees under normal conditions, however, under certain circumstances, the safety margin is low.

Imidacloprid, *Clothianidin* and *Thiametoxam* are approved for seed dressing of maize, rape, cereals, sugar beet and salad. So far no bee poisonings associated with this type of use were observed in Switzerland. The use of these substances as a mordant offers the distinct advantage that the young plants are protected against parasites during the growth phase and that spray applications with other products can be avoided. Furthermore, in Switzerland, unlike in the EU, no monocultures are cultivated.

The precautionary restriction applies to cultures that are attractive to bees. The seed dressing of maize and rape is – in contrast to that of beet and salad, which are harvested before flowering – under consideration. The pelleting of sugar beet seed also prevents the formation of dust when sowing. In this case, a restriction of use is therefore not jus-

ified. As spraying application the substances may only be used by professionals and only after the flowering of the cultures.

While under suspension, the technical means should be developed to reduce the danger for the bees. In addition, the risks and benefits of seed dressing are to be analyzed comprehensively as a method to protect the cultures and is compared with the foliar treatment. Furthermore, it is important to continue to investigate the causes of the bee mortality, for which primarily the *Varroa mite* seems to be responsible.

According to the usual procedure the *BLW* will inform the affected license holders, so that they can comment on the above-mentioned measures. The more restrictive measures are expected to come into force in autumn 2013.

Source: *Federal Office for Agriculture*
www.blw.admin.ch from 29.4.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)