

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

“We are well-advised to prepare for conflicts, crises and disasters”

by Lieutenant General André Blattmann, Chief of the Swiss Armed Forces



André Blattmann
(picture reuters)

Terroris, Brussels, Paris. These three terms sum up a very large part of what has kept the world public busy during the last few days of the months of November and of December 2015. However, there is more

behind it. It is about the security of our democratic, modern, interconnected society. And it is about the question, how and by what means our country and its people can be protected these days.

We all need security. Economy, education, research and even culture and sports require security. A look at the world is enough to have this statement confirmed. In the Arctic, several states are claiming possible mineral deposits for themselves, in the South China Sea territorial claims are leading to tensions, wars are going on in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East a terrorist group has declared itself a state power, in the middle of Africa – barely noticed by the international media – women and children are being kidnapped, raped and killed.

So we would be well-advised to constantly review the security situation and to take the necessary actions. This is true for the individual as well as for enterprises or the state: Are security measures at home appropriate, are health and retirement plans still adequate? Are IT network and data centre of our companies protected against cyberattacks and our employees informed. How can I protect assets against exchange losses? What risks and threats will Switzerland have to face in the years to come?

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Western States in particular have begun to distribute peace dividends. At the same time, the substance of defense (in the broadest sense) has been reduced. Other areas in the state are claiming reputed (or opportunistic) larger and more important needs. We know the result. The events

concerning safety have gone head over heels in the past two years.

Meanwhile, military manoeuvres have been performed again on either side. Military potentials are built up in a hurry. What is being acquired today with peaceful intentions – namely for defense – may be used for new purposes tomorrow, if those in power so decide. It can be compared to a community of storey owners in a house. If one owner does not abide by the rules, the union is over and they are taking to court, and then what... If you look at it this way, the community of states must rely on compliance with the international rules. If necessary, solutions have to be negotiated. However, what is going to happen if one party does not participate?

Switzerland looks back on a period of over 160 years without any war – a real privilege. However, the Balkan wars were waged only about 15 years ago. Experiences are very different. Even if we are (still) not directly concerned by the war-like events in the world at present, the impact of the situation outlined at the beginning have already reached our country:

- Terrorist threat increased; hybrid wars are being fought around the globe.
- Economic prospects look dim; important motors are sputtering.
- The resulting migration floods (war-displaced persons and economic migrants) have already reached undreamt dimensions. He who has been watching the situation cannot be surprised.

Thus, risks are increasing twofold: the competition on the labour market adds to the weaker economic development; in addition there are the persons who need sup-



(picture ma)

port. Social unrest cannot be excluded; the vocabulary becomes dangerously aggressive. Our precarious infrastructure gets in the focus of the opposite side. Due to differences in dealing with these problems, solidarity is at risk even within state communities.

The mixture is getting increasingly gross. The fundamentals of our prosperity are challenged for the first time in many years. Experiences of 1870/71, 1914–1918 and 1939–1945 should teach us: “Seule la catastrophe est mobilisatrice” is a bad advisor.

So we are well-advised to prepare for conflicts, crises and disasters. The remedy for modern risks and threats – so to speak the safety reserve in our country – is the Swiss militia army. This army is on its way to further development, so that it can fight for land and people, can protect and help them. The tasks are clearly described in the 2010 army report.

In addition to the financial resources this requires in particular our proven Swiss soldiers – autonomous citizens who stand up with their lives for freedom and security.

Source: *Schweiz am Sonntag* from 27 December 2015

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Syria - A peace agreement which would allow the losers to save face

by *Thierry Meyssan*

The terms of Resolution 2254 [of the World Security Council from 18.12.2015] mostly confirm those of the Geneva Communiqué, which was adopted three years ago. The two greatest military powers in the world agree that the Syrian Arab Republic should be maintained, while the imperialists – with France in the front line – pursue their dream of changing the Syrian regime by force. But the world has changed over the last few years, and it will not be as easy to sabotage this new agreement as it was in 2012.

Washington-Moscow relations

For the second time, the United States and Russia have signed an agreement and concluded a peace plan for Syria.

- The first time was during the Geneva Conference in June 2012¹. The content of this agreement concerned bringing peace both to Syria and the whole of the Middle East by dividing the region into zones of influence². However, this agreement was immediately sabotaged by Secretary of State *Hillary Clinton* and her group of “liberal hawks” and “neo-conservatives”. And less than two weeks later, France organised a reprise of the war, during the Paris Conference of “Friends of Syria”³, then with the operation “Damascus Volcano and Syrian Earthquake”⁴. To this dispute was added the coup d’État in Ukraine at the end of 2013. The two events marked the almost total suspension of diplomatic relations between Washington and Moscow.
- The second time was during the visit by *John Kerry* to *Vladimir Putin* at the Kremlin, on the 15 December 2015⁵. Their encounter was immediately followed by a meeting of the High Commission of the Syrian opposition, and the adoption of Resolution 2253⁶, which forbade the financing of al-Qaeda and Daesh, and Resolution 2254⁷, which institutionalised the efforts deployed in Geneva and Vienna for Syria. To general surprise, the High Commission of the opposition elected the Ba’athist ex-Prime Minister *Riyad Hijab* – member of a tribe present in Arabia – to lead its delegation. In order to avoid errors of interpretation, Secretary of State Kerry declared at the Kremlin that the United States’ opinion of President *Assad* would not be an obstacle to the Syrian vote, then confirmed at the Security Council that the “political process will not offer a choice between Assad and Daesh, but between war and peace”.

The withdrawal of the Iranian military advisors had begun a little before the summit meeting at the Kremlin.

Russia accepted to conform with the Geneva Communiqué, which stipulates that elements of the opposition should be integrated into a sort of government of national union for the Syrian Arab Republic. In order to demonstrate that it is fighting the terrorists, but not the political opposition, whether or not they are armed, Russia concluded an agreement with the Free Syrian Army and its sponsor, France. While this army has never had the importance on the ground that the Atlantist media claim, and although it has not existed since the end of 2013, as many as 5,000 combatants, who have appeared from no-one knows where, are now collaborating with the Russian army as well as the Syrian army against al-Qaeda and Daesh – this is a surprising development considering that the Free Syrian Army was supposed to be settled in the South, but is now fighting in the North of the country.

Since the fiasco of the Geneva Conference of June 2012, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge. Certain of the protagonists have been eliminated, and the balance of power has been inverted.

- President Obama seems to have regained a portion of his power and closed down the “Arab Spring” project. He has managed, successively, to get rid of General David Petraeus (whom he had arrested in handcuffs in November 2012), Hillary Clinton (in January 2013), and General John Allen (forced to resign just two months ago in October 2015). In the same way, he has cleaned out his administration – including the National Security Council – by banishing the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Jeffrey Feltman remains the number 2 at the UNO. Feltman has drawn up a plan for the total and unconditional surrender of Syria, and has been dragging his feet on peace negotiations in the hope that the Syrian Arab Army will be defeated first⁸.
- In June 2013, the White House forced Emir Hamad al-Thani of Qatar to abdicate, and his Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassem to withdraw from political life⁹. However, bin Jassem has become the co-President of the Brookings Institute in Doha, while the new Emir, Tamim, maintained the financing of the Muslim Brotherhood and their terrorist organisations until the diplomatic crisis with his Saudi neighbour, in March 2014¹⁰.

- Despite warnings from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), [US military secret service] David Petraeus’ group was able, in mid-2014, to manage the development of an organisation that he had created in 2004, with Colonel *James Steele*, Colonel *James Coffman* and ambassador *John Negroponte*, under the name of the “Islamic Emirate in Iraq”. They used it to ethnically cleanse part of the country with a view to partition. This operation was supported by several states (Saudi Arabia, Cyprus, the United Arab Emirates, France, Italy, Israel, Qatar, Turkey and Ukraine) and multinationals (Exxon-Mobil, KKR, [Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. L.P.] Academi).



Thierry Meyssan
(picture Wikipedia)

- The White House was able to eliminate the clans of both ex-king *Abdullah* and prince *Bandar bin Sultan* from the Saudi directorate, leaving it in the hands of princes *Mohammad bin Nayef* and *Mohammad bin Salman*, under the authority of the new king *Salman*. This new distribution weakened the power structure, but made political change possible.
- The 5+1 agreement with Iran marked Teheran’s renunciation of its revolutionary ambitions¹¹, so that a modus vivendi with the Saudis became conceivable¹², even though the Yemen episode complicated the situation.
- Both Washington and Moscow have taken a firm dislike to Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan¹³. However, the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO forced the White House to play carefully, particularly since Ankara is allied with Kiev¹⁴, another important theatre of war in the global strategy of the United States¹⁵.
- The balance of power between Washington and Moscow was progressively inverted, in June 2012 and September 2015. NATO lost its superiority in both intercontinental missiles¹⁶ and conventional warfare¹⁷, so that Russia has now become the world’s leading military power.

"Syria - A peace agreement ..."

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As a result, the roles have been inverted. In 2012, the Kremlin aimed at becoming the equal of the White House. Today, the US needs to negotiate in political terms the loss of its military domination.

A sign of the times – the Rand Corporation, the emblematic think tank of the military-industrial complex, has just published its Peace Plan for Syria. This powerful group had already shocked the US establishment in October 2014, when it confirmed that the victory of President el-Assad would be the best result for Washington¹⁸. It then proposed a cease-fire which would justify the presence of representatives from the opposition and the Kurds in the future government of national union¹⁹.

The opposition to the new world order

The opposition to Barack Obama's policy has not altogether disappeared. For example, the Washington Post accuses him of having surrendered to Russia on the question of regime change in Syria²⁰.

In 2012, it was possible to interpret the opposition of the Petraeus-Clinton clan to peace as a desire to profit as far as possible from US military supremacy. But with the development of new Russian weaponry, this no longer makes any sense. As from now, the only possible interpretation is the hope of provoking, with minimal delay, an international confrontation, believing that the Western powers may still have a chance of winning – something that will become unimaginable as soon as China is in a position to field its army.

Just as it did at the Geneva Conference, France stepped in as soon as Resolution 2254 was adopted. Its Minister for Foreign Affairs, *Laurent Fabius*, once again declared that while all opposition groups should be allowed to participate in the transition in Syria, only President al-Assad should be excluded – an idea which is contrary to the principles of the Geneva Communiqué and Resolution 2254 itself.

While in 2012 it was still possible to interpret the French position as a desire to replace the Ba'athist regime with a government run by the Muslim Brotherhood, in the continuity of the overthrow of secular Arab regimes (the "Arab Spring") – or as an attempt to "bleed the Syrian army" in order to facilitate regional domination by Israel – or simply as a desire for re-colonisation – this is no longer possible today, because any of these three objectives would imply war with Russia.

France is orchestrating the Syrian question on behalf of the US liberal hawks and neo-conservatives. In doing so, it is supported by the Messianic Zionists who, like Benjamin Netanyahu, consider it a

religious duty to hasten the arrival of the Messiah by provoking an eschatological confrontation.

Peace in Syria or nuclear war ?

It does not seem credible that the liberal hawks, the neo-conservatives and the Messianic Zionists could manage to impose their politics on the two great powers. However, it will be difficult to arrive at a definitive result before January 2017 and the arrival of a new President in the White House. Now we may better understand the support proclaimed by Vladimir Putin for Donald Trump, who seems the best placed to block his friend Hillary Clinton²¹.

In reality, everything is now ready for a peace that will allow the losers to hold their heads high.

Keep in mind:

- Resolution 2253 forbids the sponsors of Daesh and al-Qaeda to continue to support them. Resolution 2254 confirms the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. Both Russia and the US agree to maintain the Syrian Arab Republic and to support a government of national union.
- During the Geneva Communiqué, the opposition army, supported by Saudi Arabia, elected Ba'athist ex-Prime Minister Riyadh Hijab to lead its delegation. Meanwhile, Russia concluded an agreement with the Free Syrian Army and its sponsor, France.
- Everything is ready for the conclusion of a peace agreement which would allow the losers to save face. But, just as in 2012, France reiterated its demands as soon as Resolution 2254 was adopted.

(Translation *Pete Kimberley*)

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Source: www.voltairenet.org/article/189697.html from 21.12.2015

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Community of values?

by Dieter Sprock

The US has been pushing Brussels for a long time to admit Turkey into the EU. Since 1952 Turkey is already a NATO member and since 1999 also a candidate for EU membership. But the negotiations with the EU have been slow up to now. In addition to the Turkish refusal to recognise the EU member Cyprus, serious human rights violations as well as deficits in democracy and freedom of expression were responsible for this. Thus, only two of the overall 35 negotiating chapters that must be processed prior to accession have been completed so far, namely, those on science and research.

Now, the flow of refugees to Europe has put back in motion the stagnant negotiations. According to all media, the EU needs Turkey to solve the refugee crisis. In return to closer co-operation in the refugee question, Turkey demanded the revival of negotiations on EU membership.

On 14 December, the EU foreign ministers agreed to this request: They gave green light for the opening of the accession chapter on economic and monetary policy and on top promised to Turkey three billion euros for aids to refugees and visa facilitation for Turkish citizens.

Turkish Prime Minister *Ahmet Davutoglu* spoke of a “historic day for Turkey” (*tagesschau.de*), and the EU leaders defended their decision with respect to allegations of Turkey’s lack of constitutionality. “Turkey has an eminent interest to cooperate with us, we have an interest to make a reasonable solid cooperation”, said EU Enlargement Commissioner *Johannes Hahn* launching the talks (*Spiegel online* from 14 December 2015). And the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister *Mehmet Simsek* was convinced that the launching of economic and monetary policy will have positive repercussions in the investors views (“*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” from 15 December 2015).

While the EU promotes the accession negotiations with the “uncontrollable Turkish watchdog of the United States” (*Albert Stahel* in *Current Concerns* of 15 December 2015), the Turkish army intensified its war against the Kurds in the southeast of Turkey and even invaded Iraq – ironically in those areas where the Kurds have ensured stability and economic recovery and from where they lead the fight against the IS (Daesh).

On 19 December, the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” reported under the title “With tanks against a handful of young Kurds” about the increasing distress of the population in eastern Anatolia: “For four days there was no electricity and no water in their neighbourhood, said a man from Silopi. The big family ran out of food because the market was closed. Injured could not be taken to hospital. According to inhabitants the situation in Cizre is similarly bleak.”

Earlier this week, the government had moved 10,000 soldiers and members of special units and tanks into the region, and *Recep Tayyip Erdogan* announced: The military operations would continue until the areas have been cleaned. “You will be destroyed in these houses, buildings and trenches that you’ve dug here”, the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” quotes him.

It will be interesting to hear what the EU community of values, which flying the flag of the *European Convention of Human Rights* understands itself as a guardian of human rights and fundamental freedoms, has to say to this. •

Open letter to the Nuremberg members of the German Parliament

The German Federal Republic must not enter into war!

One thing in advance: There is nobody surpassing me in terms of condolence with France, with Paris and especially with the families of the victims and of disgust looking at that devious attack. I lived in Paris for a year, I had a home in Latin quarter and studied at Sorbonne University. I have absorbed the spirit and the atmosphere of this city and can literally feel with my own body the pain that was dealt to this city.

Nevertheless, I oppose Germany’s entry into the war, no matter how harmless the government is trying to represent it: no infantry, merely granting aid to the bombardments, everything limited to one year. But the truth is that we would enter into a war of which today, nobody can say whether and when we can get out again. (Experts of the “*Bundeswehr*” association are reckoning with at least ten years.) In

the heterogeneous Alliance of those willing to go to war, there are neither coherent beliefs about the aims of this war, nor is there the slightest consensus about any post-war order, which might bring a normal life to the people in Syria and Iraq without terror and military violence. On top of that, the risk of a military confrontation within the Anti-ISIS mission is huge because of the almost contradicting spheres of interest. In case of emergency, the Syrian War is in danger of getting entirely out of control, plunging the whole of Europe into ruin.

Besides, the intended resolution for an entry into this war is lacking a viable legal basis. It is startling that most of the members of the Great Coalition don’t seem to care at all about diverging from the spirit and the letters of our “*Grundgesetz*” (Basic Law), resorting to ever more dar-

ing interpretations of range of restraint, that our constitution actually imposed on us with good reason.

The bitter lessons of the failed Afghanistan War don’t seem to be taken to heart yet: 14 years of war, uncounted, mainly civil casualties, 40 billion euro for the German tax payer and the consequence that ten thousands of Afghans seek refuge in Europe, seeing no future in their old home.

Should this really happen once more if under different portent?

I persistently appeal to you, members of the German Parliament, not to step onto the fatal path of war, but to seek ways to express our upright solidarity with France without entering the armed conflict.

*Peter Schönlein,
Mayor ret., Nuremberg*

Prevent nuclear war!

Why alternatives to the US neo-conservatives' war policy and to NATO are a bid for survival of humanity

by Paul Craig Roberts*



Paul Craig Roberts
(picture ma)

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 gave birth to a dangerous American ideology called neoconservatism. The Soviet Union had served as a constraint on US unilateral action. With the removal of this

constraint on Washington, neoconservatives declared their agenda of US world hegemony. America was now the "sole superpower," the "unipower," that could act without restraint anywhere in the world.

The Washington Post neoconservative journalist *Charles Krauthammer* summed up the "new reality" as follows: "We have overwhelming global power. We are history's designated custodians of the international system. When the Soviet Union fell, something new was born, something utterly new – a unipolar world dominated by a single superpower unchecked by any rival and with decisive reach in every corner of the globe. This is a staggering new development in history, not seen since the fall of Rome. Even Rome was no model for what America is today."

The staggering unipolar power that history has given to Washington has to be protected at all costs. In 1992, top Pentagon official Undersecretary *Paul Wolfowitz* penned the *Wolfowitz Doctrine*, which became the basis for Washington's foreign policy.

The Wolfowitz Doctrine states that the "first objective" of American foreign and military policy is "to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat [to US unilateral action] on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources

would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power." (A "hostile power" is a country sufficiently strong to have a foreign policy independent from Washington's.)

The unilateral assertion of American power began in earnest during the *Clinton* regime with the interventions in Yugoslavia, Serbia, Kosovo, and the no-fly zone imposed on Iraq. In 1997, the neoconservatives penned their "Project for a New American Century." In 1998, three years prior to 9/11, the neoconservatives sent a letter to President *Clinton* calling for regime change in Iraq and "the removal of *Saddam Hussein* from power." Neoconservatives set out their program for removing seven governments in five years.

The events of September 11, 2001, are regarded by informed people as "the new Pearl harbor" that the neoconservatives said was necessary in order to begin their wars of conquest in the Middle East. *Paul O'Neil*, President *George W. Bush's* first Treasury Secretary, has stated publicly that the agenda of President Bush's first meeting with his cabinet was the invasion of Iraq. This invasion was planned prior to 9/11. Since 9/11 Washington has destroyed in whole or part eight countries and now confronts Russia both in Syria and Ukraine.

Russia cannot allow a jihadist Caliphate to be established in an area comprising Syria/Iraq, because it would be a base for exporting destabilization into Muslim parts of the Russian Federation. *Henry Kissinger* himself has stated this fact, and it is clear enough to any person with a brain. However, the power-crazed fanatical neoconservatives, who have controlled the Clinton, Bush, and *Obama* regimes, are so absorbed in their own hubris and arrogance that they are prepared to push Russia to the point of having their Turkish puppet shoot down a Russian airplane and to overthrow the democratically-elected government in Ukraine that was on good terms with Russia, substituting in its place an American puppet government.

With this background, we can understand that the dangerous situation facing the world is the product of the neoconservative's arrogant policy of US world hegemony. The failures of judgment and the dangers in the Syrian and Ukrainian conflicts are themselves the consequences of the neoconservative ideology.

To perpetuate American hegemony, the neoconservatives threw away the guarantees that Washington gave *Gorbachev*

that NATO would not move one inch to the East. The neoconservatives pulled the US out of the ABM Treaty, which specified that neither the US nor Russia would develop and deploy anti-ballistic missiles. The neoconservatives re-wrote US war doctrine and elevated nuclear weapons from their role as a retaliatory force to a pre-emptive first strike force. The neoconservatives began putting ABM bases on Russia's borders, claiming that the bases were for the purpose of protecting Europe from non-existent Iranian nuclear ICBMs.

Russia and Russia's president, *Vladimir Putin*, have been demonized by neoconservatives and their puppets in the US government and media. For example, *Hillary Clinton*, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president, declared Putin to be "the new *Hitler*." A former CIA official called for Putin's assassination. Presidential candidates in both parties are competing in terms of who can be the most aggressive toward Russia and the most insulting toward Russia's president.

The effect has been to destroy the trust between nuclear powers. The Russian government has learned that Washington does not respect Washington's own laws, much less international law, and that Washington cannot be trusted to keep any agreement. This lack of trust, together with the aggression toward Russia spewing from Washington and the prostitute media and echoing in the idiotic European capitals, has established the ground for nuclear war. As NATO (essentially the US) has no prospect of defeating Russia in conventional war, much less defeating an alliance of Russia and China, war will be nuclear.

To avoid war, Putin is non-provocative and low-key in his responses to Western provocations. Putin's responsible behavior, however, is misinterpreted by neoconservatives as a sign of weakness and fear. The neoconservatives tell President *Obama* to keep the pressure on Russia, and Russia will give in. However, Putin has made it clear that Russia will not give in. Putin has sent this message on many occasions. For example, on September 28, 2015, at the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, Putin said that Russia can no longer tolerate the state of affairs in the world. Two days later Putin took command of the war against ISIS in Syria.

The European governments, especially Germany and the UK, are complicit in the move toward nuclear war. These

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“We need an exit from the sanctions” A criticism of the extension of the EU sanctions against Russia

by Eckhard Cordes*



Eckhard Cordes
(picture www.ost-ausschuss.de)

Following the loss of 6.5 billion euro in 2014, German exports to Russia in 2015 will be reduced by another 8.5 billion Euro. Even in the trade with Ukraine and other countries of the region we continue to observe massive losses.

Even if the mutual sanctions are only one of the causes of this dramatic development, it is obvious that, for the benefit of all, we urgently need an exit from these sanctions.

After we have seen the Russian government sending signals of de-escalation, we would have asked the EU heads of government to muster more courage in approaching Russia. The style in which the EU sanctions have now been prolonged for six months without any substantial debate is disappointing. Once again we missed a chance to move one step towards Russia and to start a new and positive dynamics in the mutual relationships. [...]

The relationship between Russia and the EU could be improved which would also be in the interest of the economic development of Ukraine. It will take a long time of increased trade with the EU to be able to compensate Ukraine's losses in the trade with Russia. As of September 2015, export to Germany has only increased by a meagre 50 million Euro (+3%). In 2015 as well, the total of Ukraine's exports to the EU will drop, in spite of unilateral trade benefits.

Currently there are concerns that the full implementation of the EU association agreement with Ukraine will deepen the trade conflicts with Russia. The trilateral negotiations between Ukraine, Russia and the EU in Brussels which are supposed to develop technical solutions for the Russian points of criticism, are on the verge of failure.

Hence we welcome Foreign Minister *Steinmeier's* initiative trying to introduce offers for a deeper economic cooperation with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union in the context of trilateral negotiations. The Federal Government needs to do everything to gain the missing support of its EU partners and the EU Commission with regard to this question.

Another escalation of the Ukraine conflict after the implementation of the association agreement on 1 November must be prevented in order to avoid investors' further discomfiture in the region. To get on its feet economically, Ukraine needs access both to the EU and the Russian market.

Source: www.ost-ausschuss.de/node/1035 from 17 Dec. 2015

(Translation Current Concerns)

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two American vassal states enable Washington's reckless aggression toward Russia by repeating Washington's propaganda and supporting Washington's sanctions and interventions against other countries. As long as Europe remains nothing but an

extension of Washington, the prospect of Armageddon will continue to rise.

At this point in time, nuclear war can only be avoided in two ways. One way is for Russia and China to surrender and accept Washington's hegemony. The other way is for an independent leader in Germany, the UK, or France to rise to office and withdraw from NATO. That would

begin a stampede to leave NATO, which is Washington's prime tool for causing conflict with Russia and, thereby, is the most dangerous force on earth to every European country and to the entire world.

Source: <http://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2015/12/28/why-wwiii-is-on-the-horizon-paul-craig-roberts/>

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“A very dirty war is taking place in Yemen – but the world puts up with it”

Interview with Fritz Edlinger*, Secretary General of the Society for Austro-Arab Relations, GÖAB



Fritz Edlinger (picture ma)

Yemen does not come to rest. After the failure of the first round of peace talks in Switzerland on 20 December 2015 and even before their continuation scheduled for mid-January 2016, the war coalition head-

ed by Saudi Arabia rescinded the armistice in early January.

In the following interview, the Secretary General of the Society for Austro-Arab Relations, GÖAB, Fritz Edlinger, comments on the background of this bloody conflict and the role of the states involved.

Current Concerns: Mr Edlinger, a merciless war has been raging in Yemen for a long time. International law is no longer respected, it is hardly possible to provide humanitarian aid anymore, and the Geneva Conventions are being violated. How do you see today’s situation in Yemen against the backdrop of the historical development of the country?

Fritz Edlinger: Yemen is not an uncultivated Third World country without a history but one of the cradles of humanity as well as one of the cradles of the Arab nation, or at least the precursor of the Arab nation. A few thousand years before Christ there was an advanced civilisation in Yemen, and this advanced civilisation has been handed down in its different forms and is directly the basis, also in the consciousness of the people of Yemen, for the present situation.

The Zayidis, for example, who belong to the religious current that has produced the Houthis, are essentially potentates, imams – religious rulers in northern Yemen – who have been in power continuously for about 1000 years. The Zayidi-Imamat, for example, originated in the 10th century and lasted till 1962. In so far the Zayidis and the Houthis – quasi as their current fighting organisation – are follow-



ing on in the tradition of a thousand years of continuity of a certain kind of public order and they are not just any Islamist terrorist group that has only just got together somehow somewhere.

Can Saudi Arabia, the current aggressor in Yemen, also look back on such a long history?

Saudi Arabia as a state is barely 100 years old and is as such an entity without history and largely also without an identity. Without the oil wealth under the Saudi desert Saudi Arabia would never have emerged in its present form. I am a historian, and I believe that such topics play a role in the acts of persons and in their thoughts, that we reflect: Who am I, where do I come from and who is my enemy and where does he come from.

This is an incredible story in Yemen. Here it has become a reality that a nouveau riche parvenu loudly claims power in the region, that they want to be the masters over all others in the area, and thereby they completely ignore that they are complete newcomers in the historical sense.

That happened also in Iraq. Iraq was a nation based on an old civilisation and

is now a “failed state”, not least due to the Saudis’ involvement. Ever since modern Saudi Arabia has been in existence, its policy towards Yemen has always been based on the principle of “divide and rule”. I’m not a psychologist, and certainly not a psychologist of the mindset of Saudi princes and kings. But I can imagine that these potentates intuitively have an overarching inferiority complex when dealing with countries such as Yemen.

Yemen is a country steeped in history. It is the larger country, and even the number of its inhabitants is larger. If you go to Yemen, you realise immediately that you are visiting a country of cultural heritage, and when you go to Saudi Arabia, you realise that you are visiting an artificial fabrication copied from somewhere.

How would you describe the current relationship between Saudi Arabia and Yemen?

Saudi Arabia’s policy concerning Yemen is inherently destructive. So, for example, in the 1930s Saudi Arabia con-

* Fritz Edlinger is the Secretary General of the “Society for Austro-Arab Relations (GÖAB)” since 1996 and the editor of the Journal “International” since 1979. He is the publisher of several books on the Middle East (e.g. Lybia, Syria, Iraq).

"A very dirty war is ..."

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quered the border province of Asir, which had been part of the Ottoman Empire and thereafter became independent by military force. This border conflict was ultimately settled in the 1990s, but, just due to the population structure, tensions persisted. This plays a certain role also in the current military conflict. Saudi Arabia has never supported Yemen as a whole, but in the different historical periods the Saudis have changed their coalition partners in Yemen.

At the moment they are, for example, fighting the Houthis as their main enemy. During the civil wars in the 1960s, the Saudis for the most part supported the conservative royalists, as opposed to the socialists of South Yemen, who were at that time supported by Egypt. Today, the situation is reversed. For years, the recently deposed President Ali Abdullah Saleh was their man in Yemen, and they pampered, petted and bribed him. For years Saleh waged a war of extermination against the Houthis in Yemen in Saudi Arabia's interest. Saudi Arabia has always had some enemy in Yemen.

What do you think the result of the current Saudi aggression will look like?

One of the results will surely be that South Yemen will secede again – and the Saudis are quite interested in South Yemen going its own way, because this would mean that Yemen as a whole is weakened. Whatever the result of this war, it is to be feared that in the end there will be another failed state. It cannot be assumed that the Houthis will prevail in a way being able to govern Yemen as a whole. It is also not likely that President Abed Rabbo Mansur Hadi, who was deposed by the Houthis and who is now living in exile and being supported by Saudi Arabia, will come back and seize power again. As a realistic option it can be assumed that we will have a more or less independent South Yemen, that the Houthis will dominate their own territory in the north – and in the middle there will remain a permanent war zone where terrorists like al-Qaeda and lastly IS/Daesh will battle local militias for supremacy. Unfortunately, Yemen can be expected to put itself to the growing list of "failed states" in the orient.

At present there are no attempts at a solution allowing progress to be made towards peace in Yemen?

If there is a rest, it will be a superficial calm due to the warring parties being tired, bled-out and exhausted. On short-term you can hardly assume, in my opin-

ion, that the real underlying problems can be solved in a way acceptable to the important stakeholders and power blocks in Yemen. There are still the same power blocks in Yemen that have been in existence for decades.

Is that the reason why the Western countries are exercising considerable restraint when it comes to this conflict? Even on the part of the UN? They drag themselves along with resolutions, ceasefire is pronounced only for one side, the matter is pushed back and forth, although the Secretary-General of the United Nations is speaking of a humanitarian emergency. Even if peace talks are now held, one gets the impression that the Western countries and the international community are hanging rather heavily over this as a whole.

There are already enough conflicts in the world. The world has not been waiting for a new one in the depths of the Middle East, especially since this conflict really touches no one except those directly affected, howsoever they feud with each other locally in Yemen and however inhuman the war being waged there. This is so similar to Faust: What do I care about the wars far away in Turkey.

No Western country has significant economical and currently also any geo-strategic interests. The situation with the strait and Aden as a base, as a port, this is no longer quite as significant as it was in the time of colonialism, when the British simply took Aden to use it as an important naval base. Today, the technology is different, today the enforcement of interests works in a different way.

Is that also true for the United States?

Americans have been active in Yemen for a long time. Yemen is not only the country from where the leadership of al-Qaeda originates. Bin Laden was a Yemeni from Hadramawt, many of his original, first-generation followers also came from Yemen, and in recent years desert areas in Yemen have become a haven for al-Qaeda. There was the attack on the USS Cole in the south. So this reached an alarming magnitude. Therefore the US has been carrying on a war against terror, against al-Qaeda in Yemen, and in a manner to make it backfire now.

Still under the regime of Saleh the Americans built up their own anti-terrorist forces with enormous financial costs. Thousands of soldiers were recruited, trained and armed. The command was put in the hands of Saleh's son. But now Saleh and his son are enemies of the Saudis, who in turn are the major US allies in the region. In other words, the whole anti-terrorist policy of the United States in Yemen was, and is, like much of what

they are doing in world affairs, in any case in the Middle-East, absolutely contradictory and was regularly bypassed, in some cases even by their own local coalition partners. Evidence emerged time and again that the anti-terrorist forces, in fact, did not fight against al-Qaeda, but often federated and collaborated with them. This is another example of the mistaken US policy in the region.

But other Western states have no strong interests in Yemen. Therefore the conflict, as it is being fought out now, may go on for quite some time. And neither will it be an issue in the UN, because if it comes to any UN resolutions, in the imminent situation, they will definitely be in the interest of the Saudis.

The UN resolution of the summer 2015 mirrored the position of the Saudis in every way: absolute withdrawal of the Houthis, unconditional recognition and reinstatement of Hadi and his government. These are in fact the war aims of the Saudis and of Hadi, and that can never be the position of a mediator. The UN mediation initially focused on winning the various warring parties over to direct talks. To be sure, the relevant UN resolutions remained unchanged, but de facto it was assumed that they would then be amended in any case. So if these negotiations actually come about, we will see where they are leading. But I personally think that a breakthrough is hardly possible because the interests of the various acting participants are hardly compatible.

Not only the persisting differences inside Yemen have to be observed here, but doubtlessly also the regional and international ones. Therefore it is to be assumed that the world is unconcerned with the conflict in Yemen even despite terrible things are happening there. This is, amongst others, due to the situation in Syria and Libya, which is classified as far more menacing than the situation in Yemen.

Can you give us an example?

The horrible crimes happening have already been well documented.

The Saudi Air Force is behaving like former colonial armies that simply wiped out entire villages – at that time still with napalm and the like. Sa'da, for example, the capital of the Houthi province in the North, has been razed to the ground, and this is, after all, a city with about 150,000 inhabitants. There is not a house there still standing. This is known, it is simply acknowledged because no-one is interested in intervening there.

Germany 2016 – The country needs the rule of law and not the state of emergency

by Karl Müller

If you *google* the terms “Angela Merkel woman of the year” and “poverty in Germany” under the heading “news”, you get about an equal number of hits. *Google* delivers about 239,000 hits for the first and about 247,000 hits for the second term.

“Angela Merkel woman of the year” is quite wonderful for the propaganda departments of a certain part of the German “elites”: pomp and ceremony, Germany is playing an important role in the world again, with a globally recognised Chancellor who was even enthroned by the US magazine *Time*. Germany has an economy which is stronger in exports, sales and profit than almost any other European country. In Europe it has a unique “culture of welcome” for millions of refugees from around the world – with its chancellors mantra of “We can do it” ... and furthermore: Europe’s “gentle” hegemon, who has “rescued the EU out of necessity” and now wants to set the tone; is engaged in many places where war is being waged today.

“Poverty in Germany” at first glance does not fit so well into the illusory brave

“The year 2015 will be remembered as a year when a breach of law was committed, a breach of law, which is so dramatic because it was committed by states that are actually responsible for the protection of the law. What is the value of the rule of law, if states no longer subordinate to it? What shall we be guided by and hold fast to when we can no longer rely on the rule of law?”

Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung from 20 December 2015

new German world. But it is a bitter reality, as the interview with *Norbert Wohlfahrt* (see below) shows.

Especially bitter because it does not have to be that way. But it is tacitly accepted – as a result of a policy based on false theories and pursuing tangible interests.

The result is the division of the country. Some people prefer reading that Chancellor Merkel has been named Woman of the Year, and the others read with concern or experience themselves that millions of people in Germany are having a tough

time, because in more and more spheres of human life only one thing counts: cutting costs, primarily reducing personnel costs and making as much profit as possible.

And far too little consideration is given to what is right and what is wrong.

And yet this thought is by now urgently needed also for a country like Germany. On 20 December 2015, a few days before Christmas, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* wrote regarding to Germany: “The year 2015 will be re-

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Amongst other things, because there are huge risks?

The Saudis have been trying for months to find coalition partners who will assist them with ground forces, because the Saudis know as well as those who are planning and directing their war that they cannot win by Air Force alone. Anyone – having been in Yemen or looking closer at the geology of Yemen – knows it as a huge country with mountains and canyons, where you have to fight against an opponent native to the country, who knows every nook and cranny. If one goes in there with an occupation force, it is likely that this will become the attacker’s Vietnam. Therefore, Pakistan has categorically refused the Saudis’ request to send troops and even Egypt has rejected this wish, because they know what would be threatening them. Are now the British or the Americans to send troops? Nobody wants that, and that is why things are left to slide. Therefore the Saudis and the Emiratis are now using zillions of mercenaries from around the world. It is no question at all that terrible war crimes have been

committed in the meantime. This has already been documented. It is a very, very dirty war that is taking place there. But the world puts up with it.

There was a brief period of hope for more democracy in Yemen, a national dialogue had begun ...

... That started with the demonstrations against Saleh. This was cushioned by Saleh being deposed and his former deputy Hadi becoming his successor. Of course this was a pseudo-solution, because Hadi still was a formal member of Saleh’s party. But concurrently there were really demonstrations in the streets, especially of the young. This was comparable to Tahrir Square. The young people, including many women, took to the streets against the wishes of their fathers and their families, and said: We want finally things to change in this country, because that is our future.

A change for more democratic conditions?

For more democracy, for more economic development, also for a less regressive interpretation of religion.

The country was partially very isolated and secluded by its big mountains. Until

1962, the situation was comparable with that in neighbouring Oman, where it was the rulers’ aim to prevent western contacts. [The Kingdom (Imamate) of Yemen lasted until 1962; from there on Yemen was called Yemen Arab Republic.] Because that would have meant modernisation, and modernisation would lead the subjects astray from the right path as submissive subjects.

For only a few decades Yemen has known something like a pseudo-democratic option, but that was immediately undermined by certain centres of power, by powerful and wealthy families and by Saleh himself. There were three or four centres of power dividing the power between them. In the years 2011 and 2012, there was indeed an opportunity, but at first it was completely destroyed by conflicts in Yemen itself, and then by the intervention of the Saudis. Now the country might even be further thrown back than it was before.

Thank you for the conversation. •

(Interview by *Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller*)

The interview was conducted in July 2015 and supplemented at the beginning of December 2015

“Basic needs are increasingly becoming business affairs”

Interview taken from www.nachdenkseiten.de with Norbert Wohlfahrt*

The fact that neoliberalism is a perfidious societal ideology has long been proven by its practice. Not only did it persuade the poor and unemployed that they alone were to blame for their misery. It also succeeded in safeguarding that the true extent of social poverty has hardly ever become known to the public; that despite ever-rising expenses, the health system served fewer and fewer people and is more and more oriented towards yielding profits for a few. The fact that social work has eroded and hardly anybody does anything to stop it. It means that foundations have triggered off a veritable “re-feudalising boom” in our country and in the meantime investors have been targeting public education. Jens Wernicke, who has long since recognised the privatisation of basic needs, spoke with Norbert Wohlfahrt about the effects of the neoliberal social cuts.

Jens Berger

“Nachdenkseiten”: Mr Wohlfahrt, you have been investigating and publishing for years about Hartz IV, privatisation, the economisation of social work and other topics. You have criticised,

* Norbert Wohlfahrt, born in 1952, is a professor for administration and organisation at the protestant university of Applied Sciences Rhineland-Westphalia-Lippe in Bochum, Germany. He is co-editor of a compendium “Kommunale Sozialpolitik” (Municipal Social Policy) and co-author of some treatises on critique of modern theories of justice, on critique of social policy on services and on the end of local autonomy.

among other things, that basic needs have increasingly become a commodity, with which people do business and seek to make a profit. What does that mean? What do you mean by that?

Norbert Wohlfahrt: Whether nursing, parenting or health care by doctors and hospitals: In most cases, the state or the social security system are responsible for the financing and comprehensive provision of these services. They, therefore, belong to services of general interest. As with medical care, in which the entrepreneurially active doctors want to make profit with the treatment of patients, there are now more and more private providers in the fields of nursing, hospitals and other social services – and the number of private providers is increasing – who aim at making a profit on these fields.

This development which can only be characterised as privatisation leads to the fact that the state or other funding authorities put great pressure on the providers of the service – i.e. charities and private service providers, which operate in favour of the common good and not for profit – to lower the costs of their performance and make it more efficient. They do that by making these operators compete with each other for services and costs, resulting, inter alia, in wage dumpings and successive drops in performance quality. If you like, a quasi-market is generated here on which the current providers must reorient their entire performance structure. Thus the associational welfare institutions

become social enterprises that in competition with others must make their prices, provide quality and reduce costs. Therefore, in recent years the social sphere has become one of the key battle grounds resulting in the deterioration of employment conditions.

In the field of public services the state thus requires more and more ‘competition’, which leads to the disadvantage of existing quality standards and employment, do I understand this correctly? But why does the state act like that, what would be the politicians’ interest in this kind of development?

First of all, we have to look at the service strategy of the European Commission. This provides social services as a business like any other and, therefore, as an area in which the growth of economies, measured in money, is promoted. The essential services of general interest are, however, financed by the cities and municipalities that are chronically underfunded due to the fiscal policy. At the same time growing social expenditure is putting local budgets increasingly under pressure. And they react – not only in the social sphere – with outsourcing and privatisation, but also by attempting to cut costs wherever possible. The deterioration of the quality and labour standards must also be understood as a consequence of tax policy, which on the one hand discharges compa-

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“Germany 2016 - The country needs...”

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membered as a year when a breach of law was committed, a breach of law, which is so dramatic because it was committed by states that are actually responsible for the protection of the law. What is the value of the rule of law, if states no longer subordinate to it? What shall we be guided by and hold fast to when we can no longer rely on the rule of law?”

The same article also contains a quote from the Cologne state law professor Otto Deppenheuer: “We make the state of emergency the rule.” And further down: “Incidentally the people are not treated well: The German people were not consulted in either the case of the euro-billions, nor in the question of the aid for refugees, since in the country the people are considered to be unpredictable. In the end simply that occurred which the paternalism of the elite had want-

ed to avoid. A section of the population feels itself to be homeless or marginalised.”

Have these “elites” really done everything possible to prevent this? Was really no one able to anticipate that the bitter reality of life for millions of people in this country in combination with their confrontation with the beautiful appearance, with the injustice and the lies in politics entails an enormous social time bomb? ...

Perhaps some people see the “state of emergency”, which has already become “the rule”, as the perfect counterpart and the appropriate preparation for further radical measures by the government beyond the rule of law – radical measures that may end in the abyss.

More than 80 years ago, on 1 August 1934, shortly after the state-organised murder of 150 to 200 people (during the so-called Röhm Putsch on 30 June, 1 and 2 July 1934), the ideologist of the “state of emergency” Carl Schmitt provided the

formal legal justification for extrajudicial executions and unlawful acts committed by the state in an essay titled “The Führer protects the law”.

We have not gone quite that far yet in present-day Germany. But how will the German government react if more and more social explosives should go off?

There will be readers who now call: Stop, this is a “conspiracy theory”! It would be better to return to what is right, to provide “the German people” with what they are entitled to – materially and politically – because this is precisely what the German Basic Law requires. And it would be better to finally quit trying to constantly stage new “states of emergency” and “lacks of alternatives” in which the law is broken and which wear people out. Politicians who are responsible for such a policy abuse their office. They must resign or are otherwise to be removed or voted out. •

“Basic needs are increasingly ...”

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nies and increasingly dries out municipal budgets on the other.

And the impact of this development in concrete terms? What do you observe about day care centres, care for the elderly, health care, youth welfare, work in prisons and in community work?

The entire social sector is now dominated by the fact that more flexibility in employment must be produced in order to limit costs. This means first of all, that in the past the more or less applicable uniform tariff in this area – the federal employees’ tariff – has been replaced by a variety of tariff deteriorations. Currently, there are about 1,400 such tariffs in the social field, which do not result in paying higher wages and salaries. At the same time, a large part of the workforce is working in jobs without wage agreement. The temporary work contracts for new hires is no longer an exception but long established practice by now. Part-time work, which is not wanted but enforced, applies to a large part of the workforce. And subcontracted work is now already used in social services. In addition, the staffing levels in nursing homes, day care centres and other areas of social services are now so low that more and more employees complain about burnout syndromes and do not know how to cope with the amount of their everyday tasks. A significant proportion of employees in the social sector is now in working conditions that do neither guarantee an income above the basic security benefit, nor can a pension system be funded that would allow a retirement without government support.

Could you please specify one of these examples? What effects do increasing competition and quasi-market concretely have or change in practice?

In the day-care centres, 47 per cent of employees work with a stint of less than 32 hours per week, in nursing homes a little more staff work 40 per cent with a stint of more than 50 per cent of regular working hours, an additional 16 per cent with less than 50 per cent of regular working hours. A quarter of the nursery teachers is employed in a non-tariff-bound employment. Special arrangements allow responsible authorities to ensure the operational efficiency and competitiveness with interventions in the total volume of payment of up to 6 per cent. To ward off temporary emergencies, personnel costs may therefore, for example, be lowered and the payment of parts of the wages up to a maximum of 10 per cent of annual salary be suspended for up to 12 months.

Charities who traditionally see themselves as non-profit providers, have now founded subsidiaries in the field of elderly care, in which the staff is paid less than in-house. The transfer of services and facilities in so-called non-profit limited liability companies is now comprehensively enforced for all charities, because the typical element of non-profit organisations, i.e. volunteering heads in associations, can no longer oversee the business policy of enterprises, let alone can control it. This competition leads to an increased weakening of volunteering in non-profit associations by making former parts of the institutions independent and equipping them with their own professional management. The volunteers acting in the boards of non-profit organisations are thus increasingly becoming a nuisance and the conflicts between volunteers and professionals in the non-profit organisations have taken on a new quality.

Moreover, forms of payment are increasing that can only be described as precarious, i.e. making life impossible without state support. An example of this are the so-called “Plus-X”-contracts. The employees are guaranteed security only on a base salary with a minimum number of working hours. A widespread model are 20 hours “Plus X”. The employees do no longer know at the beginning of the month, what they will get as a salary by the end. And the salary depends on factors that cannot be influenced by the employees. These include the fluctuating workload of the institution, but also the volume of work that is assigned to the individual employees. By making payments that significantly distinguish in their sum, the employee cannot rely on anything, which affects their life situation and life planning massively. Hence some employees – depending on what they earn “Plus X” – may go home with a secured income of only 500 euro.

By way of this payment system, they are susceptible to any kind of blackmail by the enterprise, without obtaining any social protection at the same time. If that goes together with the fact that they have to pay their social security themselves, as is the case in solo self-employment, biographies are created, which can only be described as a difficult and unsafe in all respects.

And all this, these serious mistakes – i.e. all that is simply “overlooked” by politics? How is that possible?

These developments are not a slip, they are politically desired and indeed commonly known in their impact. They are part of a social policy that focuses primarily on the integration into the labour market and for this purpose the – as the saying goes – “empowerment by self-responsibil-

ity” is propagated. On the one hand politics want more jobs for women, as well, which is why the expansion of child care is being enforced; but at the same time they want to rope in the family and volunteers – such as in nursing, in the integration assistance for people with disabilities and so on – for social tasks. The result of this is that there are fewer and fewer safe and adequately paid jobs and precarious employment is on the rise.

In this way, a new poverty policy, which can only be described as perverse, has developed: On the one hand, there is a rise in the number of those who come to the so-called food banks as persons seeking help, on the other side volunteers are enlisted who then have to organise the supply of the needy. In some areas of social services, the transition between paid work and voluntary work has already become fluent.

With the just ended pay round talks for the day care centres and social workers we could clearly observe how consistently politicians at the level of German “Länder” and communes define an increase of personnel expenses in this area as an “unbearable burden” and drive this development even further. The fact that there is no money for the so-called “social affairs” has not grown on trees but is a result of political decisions that have brought the public sector diminishing budgets and are now confronting our politicians with constraints and the alleged resulting lack of alternatives.

And if this trend continues: Where does it take us? Will the so-called charities of the future probably be commercial providers all of them, with only outwardly different company signs? Will the previous facilities soon perhaps be simply bought up by profiteers, as has already been the case with hospitals and in the housing sector for some time?

The differences between non-profit and profit-oriented providers have already been watered down for some time and this trend will continue. At the same time, more and more private providers discover the health and social market as a business area in which they can make money. In many areas, the non-profit providers are already the minority. Social business groups with economic orientation are emerging wanting to make money.

This is first and foremost done in the field of insurance-funded services, where the rising costs are presently borne by the workers alone. The nursing care insurance, for example, has been designed from the outset so that it will be paid exclusively by the workers – quite contrary to the talk of the so-called insurance based on the princi-

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Austria

“What happened to the EU Withdrawal Referendum?”

by Inge Rauscher, representative of the EU-Withdrawal-Referendum

“What happened to the EU Withdrawal Referendum?” The answer to that question which was recently asked in the column “Freies Wort” by a reader of the newspaper “Krone” is the following: After the official result of 261,056 personal supporters of the withdrawal of the Republic of Austria from the EU was confirmed on 22 July 2015 by the Ministry of the Interior, the respective referendum was officially presented to the Austrian Parliament on 28 August for further consideration. The plenary debate of the National Council about that issue must take place on time by 17 February 2016 at the latest. The constitutional committee that has to prepare this debate, held the first content-related meeting only on 3 December, three months later after presentation in a form, which defies description in terms of democracy. From the ridiculous total duration of 90 minutes for such a com-

prehensive issue, a speaking time of 77 minutes was set for the parliamentary groups and their appointed experts. The representatives of the Referendum got exactly 13 minutes speaking time. We were unable to agree to this mockery and to this de facto incapacitation of over a quarter million very conscientious Austrian citizens. Therefore, we left this joke of referendum-consultation after the beginning of the meeting after presenting a 10-minute declaration of protest in the name of all representatives and members of the non-party personal committee. (Available live in Parliament on the Internet at: <https://youtu.be/eK95ExzWifA>). In this declaration we emphasized that of course we are available for a true expert hearing at any time, at which our appointed experts are able to explain the reasons for a withdrawal from the EU in sufficient speaking time. According to the latest

polls of the IMAS-Institute, the withdrawal is wanted by already 45 per cent of the overall population, making the proponents of an EU withdrawal shortly after the referendum go hand with the prior opponents for the first time, which is also 45 per cent. The binding referendum for the government, as part of the referendum text, is therefore more than justified! A second committee meeting was arranged with the consultation of experts on the withdrawal from the EU to be held on 26 January. In the process, it will be revealed, whether the initiators of the referendum are able to present their arguments in a format, which makes a serious consideration possible for the representatives at all.

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“Basic needs are increasingly ...”

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ple of solidarity. And rising insurance premiums of insurance companies must now be compensated for by the workers alone. But the range of municipally-funded services, i.e. primarily the youth and social welfare, is characterised by growing underfunding, and the elements of competition in this area will increase in the future. The European public procurement law is preparing the corresponding development, as it does in other areas as well.

Finally, it is also to be feared that with the enforcement of more market, the client or customer as an otherwise solvent consumer will increasingly be targeted by the service provider. In health care co-payments and so-called individual health services, which the patients pay out of their own pockets, have already become part of the business policy. And also in the fields of care and pensions, the quality of performance is determined by what I can afford on private co-payments at all. In other words, the gap between good-quality care services and primary health care on the basis of minimum standards continues to widen and expand the differences between rich and poor in society into the area of social services.

Another observable trend is that private capital replaces government funding to finance social services. This investment must of course shed a return payment which ultimately the state must bear. In order to make

it attractive, private capital investments are linked with total returns, which must be achieved in the projects that are financed in this way. This development originating in America and England is also being discussed in Germany under the name “social impact bond” and is already observed tentatively by politics.

“Social impact bond”? Is this a kind of public-private partnership? What do we have to expect if this kind of development is enforced – and why do you consider this development a problem?

Indeed, we can call it a kind of public-private partnership. A funder expects a return on his investment – which in view of the risks fluctuates between 5 and 12 per cent in the cases observed by me. The state, that funds the entire thing, will pay this return if pre-scheduled effects occur, so for example, a predetermined rate of offenders were sent to labour or children were spared home care. The effects to be achieved are determined in advance and reviewed externally. That way the state uses private capital to finance services and is thus – the more extensive this capital is involved in the social sector – more and more dependent on these loans and therefore on the favour and the interests of investors.

The entire system of publicly funded general interest is becoming a field of social investment, in which social action is understood as something that provides a financial gain, which can be determined and measured in monetary terms.

The social impact bond is a good example of the triumph of economists; their principle of efficiency penetrates even into areas that actually completely evade economic assessment procedures. The credo of the founder of the Bertelsmann Foundation that everything is measurable and can be measured, will now also apply to those areas that do not carry out productive work. A development that other areas including education will soon experience.

How can we fight against this? What can employees do? And what would be the role of trade unions in this case?

The vast proportion of workers in the social sector are women, who so far have a very low level of unionising. This is also related to the charitable tradition of social services in Germany, where with the “Bundesangestelltentarifvertrag” (Federal Employees’ Collective Agreement) as a collective tariff, which all branches of the charities have more or less accepted, little reason was given for workers to unionise. However, this has proven to be a disaster of employment policy in the current situation: a fragmented employers’ side is confronted with an only slightly unionised and not uniformly acting employees’ side.

Therefore, defensive measures must currently be directed toward containing the regulatory chaos in this sector. For this purpose, for example, sectoral agreements with a generally binding declaration can

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“All of us have something to give”

by Nicole Duprat*

We are in Switzerland in a country known for its artful watchmaking and its accuracy. It seems important to me that we all reset our watches. We should know what we want and what we do not want. We should understand what we are talking about when talking about freedom, sovereignty and dignity and about developing a common understanding of democracy.

In a world where language has become a Tower of Babel, an instrument of power and manipulation, there is, in the service of truth, an urgent need to call a spade a spade and to agree on common terms which are valid for all people – not only in Europe but across the planet.

Freedom, sovereignty and dignity, these are three terms that are indissolubly united by the one reality and include a life in peace from generation to generation. Direct democracy is a form of government in which all individuals – i.e. the people as the sovereign – cooperate and live together in peace and which supports the individual to act justly. It is useless to say that everyone should be free if there is no way of living in peace. Freedom without citizenship, freedom without peace is no freedom.

It has precisely to be defined, what democracy means and what it does not mean

* Teacher from Vallabrègues, France; Paper read at the 23rd September talks of “Mut zur Ethik” on the topic “Freedom, sovereignty and dignity of man – safeguard against despotism and war”, 4–6 September 2015

“Basic needs are increasingly ...”

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contribute, which apply to all workers in an industry and help to restrict competition in order to lower personnel costs. At the same time union strategies must be aimed at actively organising more members. It is, therefore, of particular disadvantage that the churches and ecclesial associations which are still employing the overwhelming number of staff in the social sector, may nullify the right to strike with the ecclesiastical labour law, because they hold tight to the concept of an alleged “service community” which has long been outdated by competition. Unfortunately, the legislature does not intend to take into account contemporary requirements. All the more important is the increase in union density in church and non-church staff to exert more pressure in this area.

Thank you for this interview.

Source: www.nachdenkseiten.de of 21/12/2015
(Translation Current Concerns)

and how it works. To my knowledge Switzerland is the only country that lives direct democracy, and I greatly admire that. However, I am always a little saddened when I realise, that despite this system, characterised by plebiscites, initiatives and referendums, the voters have decided, for example, in favour of drug delivery points or pre-implantation diagnostics.

In *Carl Gustav Jung*’s late work, entitled “Present and Future” I learned about the difference between mass and people. Mass is only a conglomerate of people with very different opinions, easily to be influenced by disinformation. The people, in contrast, consists of individuals and only if a number of mature personalities come together, society may be balanced, because then a carefully considered activity becomes possible.

Subsequently it has to be emphasised that all parliamentary democracies, such as France and many other countries around the world, merely serve to consolidate the power of those elected, while the voters have nothing more to say. Resolving upcoming issues cannot proceed from ideology-led party politics, which are hardly capable of performing anything other than dividing people.

I also want to make a brief comment on Greece, a country where I completed an internship during my teacher training in the French school in Athens. With *Socrates*, Greece has developed a democracy model, it has given birth to the century of *Pericles* and to the definition of mass by *Pythagoras*. In the current Greek situation, *Alexis Tsipras* did not understand the fact, that the Euro does not mean Europe. Because he was paralysed by the fear of leaving the Euro zone, the other Eurozone member states could put pressure on him. They conjured up a disaster for the case that Greece would leave the Euro zone, and as a result, by the capitulation of *Alexis Tsipras* – and it was a capitulation indeed, followed by a terrible, neo-colonialist agreement, patronising Greece – this country has been turned into a colony without any sovereignty. In other words, Greece is between *Scylla* and *Charybdis*. Just as *Alexis Tsipras* wanted to know the people’s opinion on the European institutions, he should also have asked, whether they consented to leaving the Euro zone. The Greek crisis is not about the debt – because this is merely the propaganda to which the empire has taken recourse in order to deprive the western countries of their sovereignty.

Recently I saw a video by the French politician *François Asselineau* in which he revealed the founding myth of the

EU-fathers. He pointed out that *Robert Schumann* had been closely associated as an agent of American intelligence and *Walter Hallstein* as solicitor had been closely related to *Hitler* and *Mussolini* and both were taken on by the Americans, in order to destroy the nations of Europe and to bring them under subjection of the dictates of the empire. Since General *de Gaulle* knew about the Hallstein Plan, he had decided for a policy of the empty chair, that is to say, France had sent no representative into the EU-Commission.

I would like to emphasise that a democracy without *demos* (people) cannot exist, since there is no such thing as a European people or nation.

The statements of certain presidents of European member countries are based on a double lie: The first lie identifies the Euro with Europe and the second lie identifies the European Union with Europe. Both lies are hideous. The Euro zone is not the EU. There are countries that belong to the EU, however not to the Euro zone – Great Britain for instance, as well as Sweden, Poland and Hungary. And the EU is far from covering the whole of Europe, there are independent countries such as Switzerland, Norway, Serbia, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. All these countries are part of the geographical and cultural Europe, without being a member of the EU. Are they trying to make us forget that the EU is only a political and economic alliance between some countries?

Most Western societies are characterised by the theories of relativism or of American modernism. Caught in the contradiction between international law and human rights exploited a tool, they have led to the emergence of talking chat-democracies by calling on high standing principles that allegedly justify the right to interfere in the affairs of foreign countries, to conduct so-called just wars, to fight “terrorists” and to build a global dictatorship.

The chaos in the world does not come from the souls of peoples, from races or religions but is due to the looting and violence by those in power. Let us be on our guard!

Relativism asserts that the good or the better is based on ideologies. It presents the human being as soulless, merely moved by social, cultural, psychological and biological forces that alienate him from himself.

Real democracy, however, appreciates the positive values that are reflected in the individual’s common sense and in the community spirit of the collective.

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What will become of the Nobel Peace Prize?

A journalist from Austria has taken up Fredrik Heffermehl's analyses

by Rainer Schopf

Four years ago, *Zeit-Fragen* has reported about the work of the Norwegian Fredrik Heffermehl. Heffermehl has written a book (*"The Nobel Peace Prize. What Nobel really wanted"*), in which he looked back on the history of the Nobel Prize and critically reappraised the awarding practices of the past years. Now the Austrian journalist Emil Bobi has revisited Heffermehl's criticism in a new book, *"The Nobel Peace Prize. The Truth behind the Honor"* (2015, ISBN 978-3-7110-5147-9) and added new facts, in particular about the wastage of the endowment money. But there is also a silver lining on the horizon, showing that the criticism is making an impact. This year's award ceremony is showing this.

Emil Bobi requotes the historical origin of the testament of Alfred Nobel in detail and shows how the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize has been manipulated by the Nobel Prize Committee in the last seventy years. In addition bibliographic notes about Alfred Nobel's friendship with Bertha von Suttner and his struggle for worldwide peace are to be found.

The Nobel prizes shall be awarded to those people "who have provided the greatest benefit to mankind in the past year" (p. 22). The Nobel prizes (in medicine, literature, physics and chemistry) are awarded by the *Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Karolinska Institute* in Stockholm and handed over by the King of Sweden. They are awarded with quite a few exceptions without controversy and have a high prestige and reputation throughout the world.

The Nobel Peace Prize is something special. In his third and final testament dated 27.11.1895 Alfred Nobel contrived, inspired by Bertha von Suttner, a prize for the champions of peace in three sections:

1. Fraternisation of Nations, establishment of politics of trust,
2. reduction or abolishment of standing armies as a result of a policy of reliance and
3. further development and discussion of his ideas in the frame of peace congresses.

It is awarded by a committee of five people "who are to be elected by the Norwegian Storting (Parliament)" (p. 22). The Nobel Peace Prize is handed over by the Norwegian King in Oslo. In the view of Emil Bobi the peace prize is "not awarding peace, but abolition of war" (p. 23). According to Fredrik Heffermehl Alfred Nobel was therefore ahead of his time. Fredrik Heffermehl saw the concept of common security and of a general and complete disarmament as an important component of the diplomatic discourse, as found in *Olof Palmes* politics and in the *Charter of the United Nations* three or four decades ago. In 1905 the prize was awarded Bertha von Suttner. Since the Second World War its allocation is increasingly controversial, as for example to the EU, to *Arafat, Rabin, Peres* and *Obama*. He at least hinted in his award speech in 2009 that awarding to him might not really be justified. "But perhaps the most profound issue surrounding my receipt of this prize is the fact that I am the Commander-in-Chief of the military of a nation in the midst of two wars." (p. 59) Thereby Obama disqualifies himself for the Nobel Peace Prize. How could there be such mistakes?

A retrospective glance at the history: Never in history Norway was a great power. In the Peace of Kiel in 1814 Denmark had to cede his province of Norway as war reparation to Sweden, because it had lost the war on the side of Napoleon. Now Norway became a colony of Sweden and remained so up until 1904. At the time

of Nobel Norway was well known for its competence in matters of peace, conflict resolution and its financial support of the peace movement of Bertha von Suttner. Therefore, he has entrusted the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Norwegian Parliament. In 1948, this Parliament fatally decided to delegate the power of decision over the deployment of the members of the Nobel Committee to the political parties. Since there are not anymore experts but the political parties are represented according to their proportional representation. The peace-loving mood in Norway changed after the painful experiences with Nazi Germany. Fredrik Heffermehl: "Friends of peace are replaced now by friends of defense" (p. 175). Only strong allies, like the United States or Great Britain should now ensure security to Norway. Neutral Norway became a founding member of NATO. It developed to something Alfred Nobel wanted to get rid of: "a strongly armed, standing army in alliance with other heavily armed, standing armies" (p. 176). According to Fredrik Heffermehl the Committee members are "not only far less qualified, but also unwilling to follow Nobel's intentions" (p. 176). The price lenders "should leave the Award Committee of the Nobel Peace Prize, as they are the wrong ones" (p. 186), Emil Bobi postulates.

Just a few figures describing the wastage of the endowment: Before the award ceremony the 60 best head chefs in Sweden discuss the menu with the local culinary art professors, planning it for six months, prepare it in five days and get it served by 260 selected waiters. The administration and the party makers consume two-thirds of the endowment-money. And the planned *Nobel-Centre* in Stockholm asks for a budget of 130 mil-

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"All of us have something ..."
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In this context I would like to quote the physician *Albert Schweitzer*, whom I appreciate very much: "There will come a day when the seeds of goodness will sprout and spread in the hearts of men". This day has come, here and now. Now we have to acknowledge that the chaos and the spirit of division have gained the upper hand, because man is cut off from the 'bonum commune'. If we rediscover Conscience in its universal dimension, it will allow the individual to reflect on his or her individual and collective responsibility, on his or her

human task dwelling in his heart, and on his dignity.

Protecting this human dignity means to fight tirelessly against the inhuman globalised economic system, it means to refuse being a slave of money and banks, being a slave of television messages and television pictures that are only there to dunn down the masses.

Michelangelo was a genius who – standing in front of a block of marble – already saw the envisioned artwork in front of him. He worked on the stone only to remove the superfluous material from the work of art. This can only be achieved by a hand

that obeys the intelligence of reason. Of course we are not all Michelangelos talented as sculptors. But everyone can strive, at whatever place he is, to muster the intelligence of his heart and his reason, and the skills he has developed, to meet his vis-à-vis with true humaneness. The world's future depends on this: that the one, who was spared suffering in his life, feels called up to alleviate the other's pain. Everyone has something to give: Not a grand speech, but some concrete fair and balanced activity with common sense.

Thank you for your attention. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The art of track reading

Footprints in the snow – but left by whom?

by Heini Hofmann

What natives, Indians and trappers still have in their blood, is lost to us modern people of civilization: the fine art of track reading. Only gamekeepers and hunters still learn it. Hence, let us look a little over their shoulders.

Just as our shoes, bicycle or car tires, the feet of animals leave footprints behind when moving in snow, mud, sand or wet soil. These animal tracks are most obvious in the fresh snow. One, who knows how to read them, will find a book open inspite of seven seals.

Footprint, track and trace

The single footprint, called *foot seal*, is typical for each species, depending on whether in mammals it is a plantigrade (paw of the badger), a digitigrade (paw of the fox) or a tiptoe digitigrade (hooves of hoofed deer). Even with winged birds, the cursorial bird (toes of the pheasant) shows a very different footprint from a floating bird (webbing of a mallard).

The footprints that string together when in movement form the track



Amazing is the incredible skill of the chamois as a good climber, and this even in snowy and icy steep slopes. (picture AWT)

Instructions for the preservation of animal tracks

HH. Those who would like to act as deer-chasing *Sherlock Holmes*, can preserve a distinctive footprint of a wild animal in mud, wet soil or frozen snow by employing a plaster cast and use it for comparison purposes later on:

- Thoroughly clean the animal footprint of leaves or pine needles.
- Press a ring of stapled cardboard strips into the substratum around the footprints.
- In a tin mix a runny modelling plaster solution (alabaster).
- Cautiously pour over a small stick (thus no damage occurs and no air bubbles are trapped) until the footprint is covered by about 2 cm of the solution.

- After about 20 minutes, carefully dig out the plaster mould together with the cardboard border and leave the plaster some hours to finish hardening.
- Remove cardboard border and with an old toothbrush clean the imprint, then label it (species, location, date). If you want to produce a positive print from this negative print, spread the negative evenly with Vaseline, encircle it again with a cardboard border and pour plaster in it a second time. This way a print results, as was found in the field.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

or trail. When deriving the footsteps of hoofed game, i.e. of deer, roe deer, rock deer or chamois or even of wild boars (boars) the expert speaks of a scent. All other step images, such as those of rabbits and squirrels or of predator game such as martens, foxes and badgers are called trails or tracks. When winged game is concerned, it is called spoor – as opposed to scent, track and trace with furred game.

And whatever can be read out of that! A footprint cannot only reveal the species, but can also say something about the sex and age of the individual. Further to the direction of travel it is also indicative of the pace, whether the animal moved along slowly, trotted

urgently or whether it was even on the run.

Pulling, toddling and escaping

Depending on the type of movement, the game's steps of the right and left legs are more or less limited according to the width of the body, with the legs set aside an imaginary centre line. There is a gap between the left and right paralleled tread, while the longitudinal distance of the individual footprints show the stride.

During leisurely pulling and rapidly trotting or trolling the hoofed game put the hind legs more or less exactly in the footsteps of the forelegs, so that such footprints effectively consist of two superimposed kicks, namely the rear above the front leg-footprint.

When escaping, however, equalling a gallop, the movement occurs abruptly from the repulsive hind legs on the forelegs, while the rear fly over the front, so

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"What will become of the Nobe ..."

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lion euros by 2019, with rising tendency. Emil Bobi: "There is rise to a scandal bit it is not yet surfacing in the Nobel Foundation [...]. Politicians are already pulling their fingers out, in the executive authority the accusations have long been known – but they are ignored unanimously." (p. 35) Oslo has become vulnerable long since. The innermost core of the company Nobel Prize is in danger to lose its worldwide reputation.

But the criticism has an effect and in my view it has left marks. The Oslo Committee has become more cautious in awarding this year's Nobel Peace Prize. Not another NATO member, but Tunisian Democrats were awarded. A Quartet of Trade Union, League of Human Rights, Law Society and Employer's Association was honoured for its development of a pluralistic democracy. At a time when Tunisia was on the brink of a civil war, a peaceful political process resulted from a crisis, it says in the explanatory statement of the award ceremony. The negotiations lead by the Quartet since sum-

mer 2013 showed that dialogue is the only way to peace. This could be a model for the (civil) wars in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel and around the world. Fredrik Heffermehl will now argue in the frame of the *Nobel Peace Prize Watch* further to consider Nobel's intentions in the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize. And all people are called upon to actively support the parties in conflict around the world in their peaceful dialogue and to promote the ideas of Nobel within the framework of peace conferences.

(Translation *Current Concern*)

"The art of track reading"

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that the former face the latter, and thus much more, the faster the escape.

Stringing, hobbling and nailing

Individual species also show very particularly typical lane images. Such is for example the running of a straight line (quiet trotting) of predator game. This is particularly pronounced with the fox when putting the print of the forelegs as well as the hind legs exactly onto each other as well as without any gap straight in succession, whereby the trace image resembles a string of pearls.

This is quite different with hares: As they only walk in two very similar ways, hobbling or fleeing, they show a completely different track, namely the so-called hare jump. The hind legs here do not step into the footsteps of the front limbs, but the much longer hind legs are put in pairs in front of the shorter forelegs. With squirrels it is the same.

Martens also move hopping, however, they put the treads of the front into those of the hind legs, so that the track sequence shows only two pairs of parallel footprints. Another special feature of the badger's trace is, when the powerful claws of its front paws imprint the treads in front of the toe pads and this way leaving behind a kind of "nailed" track.

Fascination and thought incentive

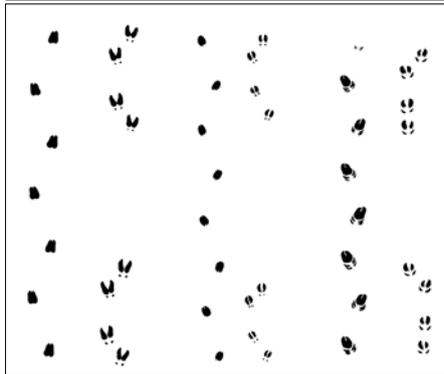
Animal tracks and trails in the snow are a fascinating phenomenon, so to speak, the mute sign language of the animate nature. They are indirect evidence of wild animals searching food or establishing social contact. If, however, flight-tracks are dominating, which unfortunately is increasingly the case, this is cause for concern.

Despite some ingenious survival strategies of wildlife, the winter, especially in the mountains, means a balancing act between life and death. Any additional disorder – for example, by winter sports enthusiasts away from the slopes and trails – causes unnecessary wearing out of the animals, this way putting their lives at risk since they are living at the energetic subsistence level.

Therefore, let us show consideration of the wildlife during winter sports - especially in mountain winter – and let them rest in their shelters and let us not disturb them in their social structure. Much rather we should be pleased with the tracks and traces in leisurely gaits, free of fear, flight, and perhaps fatal stress.

(Translation Current Concerns)

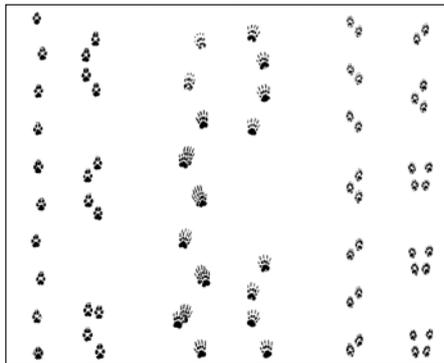
HH. The difficult thing about reading tracks is that in real life footprints and tracks can hardly ever be found in such picture-book quality.



A. Tracks of hoofed deer

From left to right: migrating and fleeing track of deer, red deer and wild boar. In flight the hooves spread apart, which reduces sinking in into the snow, and behind them the dew claws can be seen.

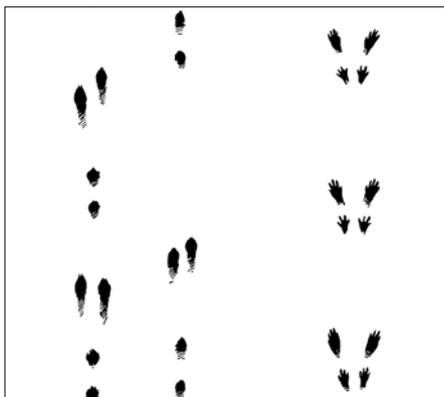
(Drawing AWT)



B. Tracks of predator game

From left to right: traces of a fox at leisure and in flight (clearly visible, the so-called running of a straight line), badgers and martens (the latter with pair jump).

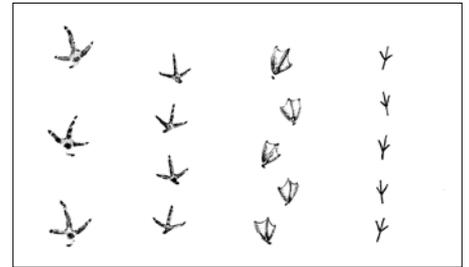
(Drawing AWT)



C. Hare and quirel

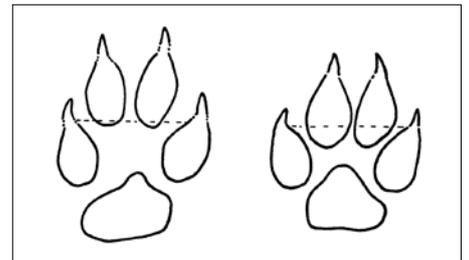
Left: Trace of a scampering and a fleeing hare in so-called hare jump. Right: Trapezoid-shaped track of a squirrel skipping on the ground. Both put their hind paws in front of their forepaws.

(Drawing AWT)



D. spoors of winged birds

From left to right: The traces made by wood grouse, pheasant, mallard and crow. (Drawing AWT)



E. Fox or dog?

Their footprints look confusingly similar: That of the fox (left) is a longer-stretched, and the two side toes only reach the balls of the paw only in the rearmost part.

(Drawing E: EMW)

Avoid disturbances!

HH. If you like to go for animal tracking à la Winnetou in winter, you can do so with pleasure without disturbing the deer, if you abide by the following rules:

- Don't leave the paths. You don't need to, because the deer's tracks cross the human footpaths, anyway.
- Stick to existing routes, also on skis or snowshoes.
- Avoid dawn and dusk. These are the times when the deer is on its way.
- Keep out of protected zones and sanctuaries. Avoid deer yards, as well.
- Leash the dog, in case you have taken it along.

Such considerations will hardly reduce your own pleasure, but help the deer to avoid unnecessary waste of energy due to provoked fleeing – so that it may survive the severe winter time just for this reason.

(Translation Current Concerns)