

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

62nd World Health Assembly in Geneva

Fairness, Transparency and Equity in International Public Health

Interview with Dr. Siti Fadilah Supari at the 62nd World Health Assembly, 20 May 2009



ef. In 2007 the Indonesian Health Ministry publicly announced that it would no longer hand over their bird flu viruses to the WHO's Influenza Supervision Network (GISN), since the system did not pay any attention to the needs and interests of developing countries. The Indonesian Health Minister Dr. Siti Fadilah Supari had revealed that the WHO had violated its own regulations on the exchange of viruses and was practicing double standards, by receiving influenza viruses by the afflicted countries via the GISN and handed them on to commercial enterprises for the development of vaccines. These vaccines, however, were much too expensive and therefore not available in the afflicted developing countries, while industrial countries hoarded them in order to be prepared if a pandemic was to break out. It is due to Dr Supari that this problem was made known to the world public and documented in her book "It's Time for the World to Change". (cf. Current Concerns No 7/8, 2009)

This year's World Health Assembly (WHA) took place from 14 to 22 May in Geneva. It was planned to continue the negotiations on a fair, transparent and just exchange of viruses and the benefit sharing at this meeting, negotiations that had been initiated by Indonesia and supported by many WHO member states.

But the swine flu interfered and the WHA was abbreviated by 5 days with the justification that the health ministers of the member states were urgently required in their native countries to prepare for a possible pandemic. The consequence was that important issues could not be discussed.

Current Concerns spoke with Dr Supari at the World Health Assembly.

CC: *What were the reactions to your book "It's Time for the World to Change"? And what has happened since then?*

Dr Siti Fadilah Supari is the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia. She graduated from the Medical School at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta and she began her career as a General Practitioner in the populous city of Jakarta. In her busy duties as a professional doctor, she continued her Postgraduate Specialist Training at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia in Jakarta. She completed her specialist training, and became Heart and Blood Vessel Specialist. She pursued her full-time research-based Doctorate Program at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia where she obtained her Ph.D. in cardiology. Recognition of her academic performance and works has led her to the post of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in the United Indonesia Cabinet 2004-2009 period led by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

As Health Minister of the fourth largest country, Dr Supari is responsible for the health of over 230 million people.

Dr Supari: My book drew international attention after a journalist from Sydney, Australia, had reviewed the book in his newspaper, claiming I accused WHO of conspiracy to make a biological weapon although nothing I wrote in my book suggests such an accusation. The review gained worldwide attention and drew direct and indirect reactions. Some agreed with the review, others were sceptical. However, there were many who were ready to condemn me even without having read the book. At that time, I was very distressed that these accusations levelled against me arose although they were not addressed in the book.

My book became well-known in my country after it had become well-known around the world. I was overwhelmed by the issues arising from the book, including that WHO demanded the book be withdrawn from publication. But in fact it is not.

In brief, the book contains my notes during my struggle in WHO to reach fairness, transparency and equity in the virus sharing and benefit sharing mechanism, against WHO's 60-year-old mechanism on virus sharing which I considered not transparent.

From your point of view, from the point of view of Indonesia, what are the most important issues at this year's World Health Assembly?

This year's WHA most important topic is the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on health. From my point of view I think the most important issue in this year's WHA is the H1N1 flu pandemic originating in Mexico. The case has given me insights in how problems could have been avoided in Mexico if three principles had been applied: they are fairness, transparency and equity. Based on my observation of the H1N1 Mexican strain, I managed to recognise several controversial issues:

First, WHO named the disease of the pandemic as swine flu, and then changed to a 'new' H1N1 influenza. I found this to be quite unusual and very strange. I do not know exactly why the WHO determined the virus and the determination of the disease was very unusual. Because it should have been called H1N1 Mexican strain, in the same manner as the H5N1 Indonesia strain, or the H5N1 Vietnam strain. But with H1N1 WHO changes the standard. It changes the nomenclature, the way of naming the virus.

This question has to be asked.

Yes, because it is very important to have the right of the name. If it is the Indonesian strain, then Indonesia has the right of the virus. If somebody creates a vaccine from this virus, they need to have the permission from Indonesia. It really concerns me because we do not know who will have the responsibility for the virus. Just a new H1N1. This happened before, always H5N1, ever since then it is H5N1 Vietnam strain, H5N1 Thailand strain. So this is very strange.

Some say that Swine flu is a normal flu, an influenza which developed recently.

It is evident. Actually it is an Influenza A.

Second, the fact that WHO had set the pandemic alert level for Mexico from 3 to 4 and then to 5, all in just one week, had triggered the world to panic. I think to determine the pandemic alert level, WHO should not only

apply transmissibility as an indicator but it should also apply the morbidity rate, what are the mortality rate and also the virological indicators. Is the virus a highly pathogenic virus or just a low pathogenic virus?

If you look closely at the case, the case fatality rate caused by this pandemic is rather low. Currently there are 8,000 cases spread over 39 countries, where 74 people died, which means it is less than 2%. This is a very low figure. The number is much smaller compared to seasonal flu. Moreover, in the laboratory H1N1 is considered low pathogenic. So it is not too dangerous. This is what should be discussed transparently in WHA: should we have a consensus on the naming of a virus? Should we redefine the criteria for declaring the pandemic alert status of a pandemic in a country? This has a huge impact on a country declared in pandemic alert status, like Mexico now. Mexico is currently in a very difficult situation. But on the other side, many companies make a lot of profit, because everybody needs the drugs, needs the vaccines, disposable masks, protection clothes, and other things. It is a big business. The Mexican case is highly relevant to the cause that I am fighting for, and among this is transparency. I mean transparency in determining the virus and the pandemic alert level. I think this is very important to people around the world. Transparency will reduce unnecessary fear and the people still remain vigilant.

The second important point (after H1N1) to me is to come to an agreement and finalize the IGM PIP (Intergovernmental Meeting

"If you look closely at the case, the case fatality rate caused by this pandemic is rather low. Currently there are 8,000 cases spread over 39 countries, where 74 people died, which means it is less than 2%. This is a very low figure. The number is much smaller compared to seasonal flu."

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness) deliberation – this is my work about the H5N1 epidemic in my country – on the establishment of a new fair, transparent and equitable mechanism in virus sharing and benefit sharing. It is to get a new mechanism in virus sharing and benefit sharing particularly of the influenza virus.

How does this proceed? After you had this big success in 2007?

We achieved about 85% to 90% of my efforts to change the mechanism in WHO. But during our efforts in WHO, H1N1 came along ...

Most of the speakers this morning included transparency, equity, "for all countries". This is new and I think this is the success of your work, to change the mechanism and to give new insights. It was very obvious that all countries were demanding this.

Yes. But so far WHO has not had clear, integrated and public measures in terms of an imminent pandemic phase. There should be coherent public admissions such as affordability and accessibility of anti-virus medicine, vaccine and other essential products like masks, etc. Whenever pandemic alert is beyond level 4, WHO is not helpful in a timely and systematic manner in the command-

Asia's New Self-Confidence

thk. The fact that Kishore Mahbubani so impressively describes in his book „The New Asian Hemisphere. The Irrisistible Shift of Global Power to the East“, namely the growing of a new self-confidence of the Asiatic states, is confirmed by the Indonesian Minister of Health, Dr Siti Fadilah Supari. The developing countries, in this case the Asian states in particular, are fed up with being led by the nose by certain industrial nations who dictate the terms of how peoples have to live, via international organizations.

Mrs. Supari has enforced new standards in the WHO by her fearless commitment for the peoples of this earth. She claimed genuine equal treatment of all states with respect to the dealing with illnesses, disease agents and vaccines. To this end, she consequently demands the equality of all states.

It cannot be that a state, in which a disease in form of a new virus has developed, must deliver the viral strain to an industrial nation to the end that this nation can produce the vaccines. Later, this industrial state sells the vaccine to the afflicted state to a horrendous price, although this state has long since been able to produce the vaccine itself. With good reasons, these countries want to free themselves from the dependency on the West and rule their matters independently.

ing countries, with the production capacity, with stockpiling their own generic supplies, often undeclared.

What other countries support Indonesia's position?

The majority of participants to the IGM PIP support Indonesia's position, as demonstrated at the December 2008 IGM PIP, also on May 14-15, in particular the countries of SEARO (South East Asia Regional Organization) and ASEAN regions (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and most of the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement). In December 2008, Australia, Russia, China and United Kingdom joined in the support. That means a majority of the member states.

In the constitution of the WHO it says: "Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease, is a common danger." In addition, Article 1 says, "The objective of the World Health Organization [...] shall be the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health." What does it need so that these principles are realized? What is the prerequisite for this principle to be realized?

In my view, what is needed is commitment and good will of all member states of WHO, especially of developed countries to create a system that is fair, transparent and equitable – principles implicitly contained in WHO rules, but which have not been implemented in practice.

How can people of good will in our western countries support your warrantable concerns?

By calling on governments to support efforts to finalize the Standard Material Trans-

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ICRC Demands Full Access to Sri Lanka Camps

The Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has called for full access to all displacement camps in Sri Lanka.

ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger said the organisation is barred from visiting some camps in Sri Lanka where people are being held since government forces defeated the Tamil Tiger rebels.

The United Nations say in all nearly 300,000 ethnic Tamils are being housed in displacement camps in northern Sri Lanka in wretched conditions after being driven from their homes.

The ICRC has asked for access to all displacement camps to check on conditions and see how residents are treated, but the present situation is "not satisfactory", said Kellenberger.

"Access that the Sri Lankan government has granted is still not clear," he said, adding that discussions are continuing between the ICRC and the Sri Lankan authorities.

Kellenberger says some of the people in the camps are being "interned" for security reasons. He declined to elaborate when speaking to journalists on Wednesday at the launch of the 2008 ICRC annual report.

State of emergency

Rights activists have criticized the government for preventing people inside the largest camp from leaving. They say those who were uprooted by the civil war should be free to choose where they want to stay.

The Sri Lankan government said on Wednesday it would maintain its state of emergency, including sweeping anti-terrorism powers, after the defeat of the Tamil Tiger rebels on the battlefield.

Sri Lanka's president on Sunday rejected a call by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to lift restrictions on aid delivery to overcrowded displacement camps, saying the army must first finish screening the hundreds of thousands of Tamils.

The government last week declared an end to the 25-year war against the rebels after a three-year military campaign to recapture the region the Tigers had ruled as a de facto independent state. Rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and the top tier of the Tiger leadership were killed in the final battle.

Greater support

On Wednesday Kellenberger called for greater humanitarian support for the 300,000 displaced Tamils.

"The direct humanitarian consequences of the conflict are immense. We have to increase aid," he said, adding that he was especially concerned about medical assistance.

The ICRC president made the remarks at the launch of the ICRC's 2008 annual report in Geneva.

Kellenberger expects humanitarian needs to continue to rise this year due to the deteriorating situation in a number of countries, on top of the global economic crisis.

In 2008 the Swiss-run organisation spent a record SFr1.1 billion (\$1 billion) helping war victims around the world.

The ICRC said deteriorating conditions in many countries, including Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Pakistan had necessitated increased spending.

"Afghanistan, Somalia and Pakistan are three examples of countries where natural disasters and high food prices have made life even harder for poor people already struggling to cope with the effects of war," Kellenberger declared.

The ICRC president said 2008 was marked by the heavy toll on civilians who were either targets or were hit because warring parties fought indiscriminately.

"Much of this suffering could have been avoided if conflict parties had improved their compliance with international humanitarian law," Kellenberger said.

Although it was hard to predict the precise impact of the global economic crisis on war victims, Kellenberger said rising numbers of people living in extreme poverty, higher global unemployment and a significant drop in remittances from migrant workers to their families in conflict areas could have a particularly severe effect on the poorest victims of armed conflicts.

Looking back

Last year, the organisation worked in a wide variety of conflict zones.

Almost half of last year's spending went to Africa, in particular Sudan (SFr109.9 million)

and Somalia (SFr102.3 million), with other major operations in Iraq (SFr95.5 million) and elsewhere in the Israel and the Occupied and Autonomous Territories (SFr62.1 million), Sri Lanka (SFr30 million), Afghanistan (SFr69.8 million) and Pakistan (SFr24.9 million).

The Swiss-run organisation said the higher expenditure also reflects better humanitarian access to victims in countries like Iraq, the Sahel region in Africa, Somalia and Georgia that other relief agencies had more trouble reaching.

The ICRC is currently preparing for an intensifying humanitarian crisis in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. The ICRC and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society said in early May it would provide 120,000 internally displaced people affected by the fighting with food and essential relief items. The ICRC has access to Buner and Lower Dir districts but Swat province remains out of bounds for security reasons.

Earlier this month it also announced it would scale up its operations in eastern DRC in response to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation that has taken place since autumn 2008.

The lack of security arising from ongoing clashes and military operations is exacerbating the already bleak conditions for over 300,000 displaced people and their host communities in North Kivu and is having a devastating impact on people's livelihoods.

Source: Simon Bradley, swissinfo.ch, May 27, 2009

Switzerland Calls on the Parties in Sri Lanka to Engage in Political Dialogue

The Swiss government welcomes the end of the armed conflict in the north of Sri Lanka. Switzerland deeply regrets that this conflict which has lasted for decades has caused countless deaths and that tens of thousands of internally displaced persons have been deprived of their livelihoods.

Switzerland regrets that international humanitarian law has been violated and appeals to all parties to comply with and to ensure respect for international regulations and obligations in all circumstances.

Switzerland calls on Sri Lanka to grant rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to the distressed population, particularly for internally displaced persons. The work of the International Committee of the Red Cross, of United Nations bodies and of other humanitarian organisations in Sri Lanka must be made possible,

in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Switzerland calls on all parties to refrain from incitement to hatred and to work towards reconciliation by means of unilateral or jointly agreed measures. All parties and groupings as well as members of the diaspora should work openly and in conjunction with international institutions to initiate a reconciliation process and a sustainable solution in the framework of a political dialogue.

Switzerland reiterates its willingness to provide support in the areas of humanitarian aid, humanitarian protection and the elaboration of institutional solutions for the protection of minorities.

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 19.05.2009

"Fairness, Transparency and Equity ..."

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fer Agreement and establish a fair, transparent and equitable virus sharing system, with benefit sharing for the country of origin of the virus – this is very important now for Mexico – and the establishment of a virus tracking system and advisory mechanism, through public forums, mass media and petitions.

One argument was when Indonesia stopped sharing the virus with WHO, that the virus does not stop at the border, there is no virus sovereignty.

If I send the virus somewhere, I do not know where the virus goes. This is more dangerous than the virus itself. In my country I keep my virus safe, very safe. We are a big country and we have a lot of scientists to keep the virus. If I send the virus somewhere and I do not know where the virus goes, this is very dangerous, very dangerous. The virus, we keep it in my country. A lot of things can happen. And you can see, I have been fighting now for three years. There is no H5N1 Indonesia strain anywhere else than in my country and now the number of cases is very low. And we can study the virus like other countries do.

Why is the US so interested in getting your virus?

I do not know exactly. If they want to have our virus they can contact me, they can contact us in a proper way, on an equal level –

transparency. They can ask my country, then we can speak, we can ask them, what do you need the virus for and why. We have to sit on the same level – equity.

Actually we want to change the mechanism for all people of the world, not only for the Indonesian people, not for me, not for developing countries only, but for all people. We want it through fairness, transparency and equity. It is a very nice way to achieve more peace in the world and increase welfare.

Thank you very much, Dr Supari, for giving us the opportunity to talk to you.



Dr Siti Fadilah Supari, PhD: *It's Time for the World to Change – In the spirit of dignity, equity and transparency – Divine Hand Behind Avian Influenza*, ISBN 978-979-17357-0-4; the book is best obtainable with the publishing house: PT. Sulaksana Watinsa Indonesia (SWI), Tel./Fax: +6221 86614125, Mobile phone: +62 818813154, Email: swi_ptina@yahoo.com

Sri Lanka: Displaced People Anxious For News from Families

Displaced people in Sri Lanka not only need food, water and medical care. Thousands need to know whether relatives are alive and well. The ICRC is extending its work in IDP camps, but the needs are overwhelming, explains Jacques de Maio, ICRC head of operations for South Asia.

What are the most pressing needs of displaced people in the camps?

The over 250,000 displaced people (IDPs) have many needs. In several waves of displacement over recent months, most lost almost all their personal belongings. Tens of thousands of them who were trapped in a narrow coastal strip in the north-eastern part of the country are the most vulnerable. They went through the harrowing experience of repeated forced displacement and living in a combat zone. A quarter of a million people now need food and drinking water, proper sanitation and shelter, access to medical care and essential items such as cooking utensils. Supplying the needy is an enormous task that is being undertaken by the government, several United Nations agencies, the ICRC and partner organizations in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and other local and international aid organizations. There is still a vast gap to be filled between what is being provided and the needs that must be met – for instance, thousands of people still lack adequate medical care. However, over and above material needs, many displaced people are anxious for news from loved ones with whom they lost contact during the displacement and fighting of the past few months.

What exactly has the ICRC been able to do over the past few days?

The ICRC has registered over 2,000 so-called surrenderees in three „rehabilitation centres“ in and around Vavuniya and in other places of detention since 26 May. This registration process is continuing. Its purpose is to ensure the ICRC can keep track of each individual potentially at risk who is currently living in the centres set up by the Sri Lankan government.

In the last two days, the ICRC has gained access to previously restricted areas of Manik Farm, a large IDP camp in Vavuniya. We are continuing to distribute dry food, kitchen utensils, clothing and hygiene kits to IDP

families in Manik Farm. So far, the ICRC has distributed supplies of this nature to over 2,400 families living in zones 3 and 4 of the camp.

In principle, the ICRC has access to all IDP camps. However, there is still too big a gap between the IDPs' humanitarian needs and what humanitarian organizations can currently do. The ICRC encourages the Sri Lankan authorities to do all it can to help IDPs, and to allow humanitarian agencies to operate wherever they are needed.

What can the Red Cross do to help restore family links?

Every year, the worldwide Family Links Network set up by ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Society tracing services helps hundreds of thousands of people restore contact with their loved ones or otherwise clarify what happened to them. In Sri Lanka, the ICRC and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society have been helping displaced people and detainees restore and maintain contact with their family members for decades. With over 250,000 displaced people living in camps, there is currently a huge need to provide a way of exchanging family news. The ICRC and the Sri Lanka Red Cross are offering to make their experience and their network available to the authorities in charge of the camps.

Can you explain the goal of ICRC visits to detainees?

Since 1989, the ICRC has been granted access by the authorities to visit people held in prisons and police stations. ICRC delegates monitor the detention conditions and treatment of people arrested in connection with the armed conflict, and share confidential reports with the authorities concerned. In 2008, the ICRC provided nearly 25,000 detainees in some 150 detention places with recreational items, such as indoor/outdoor games and books. We regularly visited six Sri Lanka Army servicemen held by the LTTE throughout the entire period of their captivity, and are happy that they were recently able to return to their families. We also conduct regular visits to security detainees in Boosa Detention Camp in southern Sri Lanka, and to former LTTE personnel in the hands of the security forces; in May, we spoke to over 2,500 of them.

Source: ICRC, 29 May 2009

“Is this your way of thanks?”

Concerning tax policy our opinions differ. A critical debate is absolutely legitimate and the issue should be discussed publicly. Nevertheless, Switzerland is an important country. It is a country of stability. Especially in the next years it will be very important for Germany to have friends worldwide who look after the stability of their currency. [...]

I do not know where this style [Steinbrück's and others'] comes from. In any case it is an indecent style. It is not respectable that someone acts as a Prussian master rider. This is in contradiction to what Konrad Adenauer, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt und Helmut Kohl built up after the war: that is to recognize that all surrounding states are friends and partners. [...]

What country has accepted German refugees in times of war when the Nazis ruled? Where could Social Democrats seek and find refuge from the Nazis? The Swiss exile saved people like Wilhelm Hoegner, the later Prime Minister of Bavaria. [...]

I would like to say: “What country was the first to shake hands with you after the war? What country was the first to carry out a football match with you? Is this your way of saying thanks?”

The former German Finance Minister Theo Waigel (CSU) in an interview with the Swiss “Tages-Anzeiger” in the edition of 15 May

“Switzerland might serve as a role model for us, even today”

“It would be wiser to negotiate with friendly countries instead of threatening them. This applies to Switzerland in particular, a country with a long democratic tradition, which already started its democratic development as early as 1291. Even today Switzerland could serve as a role model for us; just think of the instruments of direct democracy in the country. We must not boss the Swiss about. We do not have to teach them, but in case of doubt we should negotiate with them to achieve agreements.”

Extract of the contribution of Hermann Otto Solms, member of the Bundestag for the FDP to the debate of the Bundestag on 7 May, where he directly addressed the German Finance Minister Steinbrück.

“Memories we would not like to revive”

“Representatives of major states might be advised to be twice as polite as usual when dealing with minor ones. There are memories we would not like to revive.”

Former German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher in „Maybritt Illner“, a TV programme of ZDF on 7 May 2009.

“The more appalling we found the Minister's remarks”

“In Burkina Faso our entire population took offence at Minister Steinbrück's remarks. Moreover we were taken back by the comparison with tax oases. It also made us a little angry. After all Burkina has been maintaining excellent relations with Germany for years. [...] Our financial market is very transparent, which was repeatedly assured by the Germans. The more appalling we found the minister's remarks.”

Burkina Fasos' ambassador in Germany, Xavier Niodogo, in an interview with “Stuttgarter Nachrichten” from 8 May.

(Translation Current Concerns)

Stop attacking Switzerland!

Neither the German tax problems nor the world economic crisis will be solved by an envy and degradation campaign against our neighboring country. It must not become political practice to dictate other sovereign states their domestic policies and to enforce them via blackmailing, verbal and economic attacks or diplomatic blunders. This is a gross violation of international law and such blunders have been the cause of dreadful wars in the past. Those who do not accept this fact should step down from their political office.

Whoever wants to negotiate an issue with Switzerland has to do so by taking diplomatic or legal action: Everyone has to respect the sovereign country with its political structure. It is the Swiss people's right to be as it is. Germany could learn a lot from Switzerland's direct democratic, subsidiary and federalist structure — even with regard to Initial signers:

Prof Dr Jörg Becker, political scientist, Solingen, Germany

Jürgen Elsässer, author of “Nationstaat und Globalisierung”, Berlin, Germany

Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer, Institute for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, Hanover, Germany

Dr Eike Hamer, Institute for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, Hanover, Germany

Prof Dr Maria Mies, social scientist, Cologne, Germany

Brigitte Queck, political scientist, Potsdam, Germany

tax issues. This is true for everybody who participated in this concerted action, from the top of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) down to Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Even if so-called political and monetary internationalists choose to make an example of Switzerland which might later be applied to other countries in one form or another, let us be plain and clear: We won't fall again for the German Government's dirty tricks such as the alleged genocide that triggered the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia and the intended subsequent fragmentation of the once multi-ethnic country. Even if it runs contrary to the German politicians' desire to loot their own people, Switzerland remains a resident-friendly country and a model of democracy!

That is why: Hands off Switzerland! Instead, start creating conditions in our country that we, the citizens, may live!

“Germany was Europe's biggest tax haven until July 2005”

What happened is that some of my colleagues say one thing today and another tomorrow, and do not stick to agreements. And some adopt a tone that we find unpleasant. [...]

For example, we Luxembourgers don't like it at all, if someone like the Social Democratic Chairman Franz Müntefering says, nonchalantly, allegedly humorously, that in the past they used to send soldiers to solve the kind of problems they are now having with us. We don't think this is funny. We were an occupied country, once, and we suffered from the German occupation. Thank God we no longer need soldiers to fix a problem. [...]

Belgium, Luxembourg and Austria agreed to satisfy the OECD tax standards regarding so-called “exchange of information on request.” In other words, if a German tax office has questions about the tax information provided by one of its clients and asks us for help, it can receive any information it desires. After this commitment was made, the EU heads of state agreed at their summit meeting in March that none of us would be placed on a list of tax havens or whatever you want to call it. That is what is put down in the public communiqué. But only a few days later

[at the G20 summit] at which small countries like ours are, of course, not represented, precisely the opposite step was taken. [...]

In 2003 in Europe, however, we agreed on a rule governing the taxation of interest income, under which the three countries – the three that have now been ostracized – would collect a withholding tax on the interest income of foreigners and turn over most of these revenues to the home countries. [...]

Who, in the 1980s and 90s, objected to the sensational advertising of German state-owned banks that used their Luxembourg branches to attract customers? I did. But the state governments responsible for these banks couldn't care less about this problem. And was there any moral outrage in Germany about the fact that, until July 2005, Frenchmen, Italians, and Belgians – none of whom lived in Germany – were not required to pay any taxes at all on interest income from their bank accounts in Germany? Germany was Europe's biggest tax haven until July 2005.

Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker in an interview with the “Spiegel” on 11 May.

Resolution*

The Parliament, in view of the recent statements made by German Finance Minister Peer Steinbrueck, in which he compared Luxembourg's banking transparency laws to those of Burkina Faso in Africa,

- recalls that these statements endanger the relationship which has developed impeccably between Germany and Luxembourg since the end of World War II,
- condemns without any reservations the verbal gaffe of Federal Minister Peer Steinbrueck as well as the missing respect for Burkina Faso that is implied in his statement,
- asks its President to convey this resolution to the German Bundestag.

Source: Resolution of the Luxembourg Parliament of 6 May 2009

** The Resolution submitted by Charles Georens was unanimously adopted by the Luxemburg Parliament (60 votes).*

“Luxembourg or Austria or Switzerland are not the biggest problem”

“I do not think that Luxembourg or Austria or Switzerland are the biggest problem with regard to tax evasion. There are real loopholes. There are even some in the European Union. [...] Interestingly enough the hot Canary Islands have not been mentioned.”

EU commissar Günther Verheugen (Social Democratic Party) in „Maybritt Illner“, a TV programme in ZDF on 7 May 2009.

“When bigger states have their will irrespective of the smaller ones”

“I am always worried when bigger states enforce their interests irrespective of the interests of the smaller states. Unfortunately this just happened with Germany's participation and presumably under the aegis of France. I have been pointing out that Switzerland is an extremely consolidated confederation, even though there are tax differences such as between Zug and Zurich. However, this has never hurt the federal state. Quite to the contrary. We should try to preserve Europe's diversity, a colourful Europe. If we enforce conformity, we will destroy Europe's substance. We mustn't steamroll the smaller states! Like any child the European Union is shaped by its parents, in our case by France and Germany. Unfortunately French centralism is now being pushed on with German rigorousness.”

The former foreign minister of the Czech Republic, Karl Prinz zu Schwarzenberg, in an interview with the “Tages-Anzeiger” on 13 May.

“Emotions to satisfy base instincts”

We cannot accept the steamrolling of others. These are emotions to satisfy base instincts or election purposes. [...] [Steinbrück] abuses Austria and our co-operation with European states.”

The Austrian Minister of Finance Josef Pröll (Austrian People's Party ÖVP) talking to the “Frankfurter Rundschau” on 13 May.

“Government has lost compass”

It never happened before that a Finance Minister threatens friendly nations with cavalry and whip – just to score a little in his election campaign. In former times he would immediately have been dismissed. Instead the Chancellor sits next to him on the governing bench and watches Herr Steinbrück spreading the image of the ugly German in the whole world. What are we gambling with? This government has lost the compass of the civil centre, not only with regard to its financial policy characterized by expropriation and wrecking premiums.”

Chairman of the Free Democratic Party in Germany, Guido Westerwelle, in an interview with the “Welt am Sonntag” on 10 May.

“Damaged Germany's reputation”

“Steinbrück has repeatedly left blood on the international carpet with his inappropriate and unnecessary remarks in the discussion on how to proceed internationally against tax evasion, and with this he has damaged Germany's reputation.”

Bavarian Minister of European Affairs Emilia Müller (Christian Social Union) in a letter to the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democrat), quoted in the “Passauer Neue Presse” on 7 May.

What Is Behind the Attack on Switzerland's Bank Secret?

What does the Nato war of aggression on Yugoslavia in 1999 have to do with the attacks on the banking secrecy in Switzerland?

by Brigitte Queck and Dr Hans-Jürgen Falkenhagen

Are German politicians really worried about the closure of tax havens where fraudsters may transfer their millions of evaded taxes?

If that was the case, German politicians and administration and business representatives who have evaded millions of tax money would certainly not go unpunished, while at the same time German employees who failed to render account of 1 euro and 38 cents, are fired – as recently happened to a cashier and labor union representative in the supermarket chain *Kaiser's*. And certainly those big German companies that produce cheaply abroad and pay no or very little taxes but transfer their profits to Germany would be found out, tried and punished, wouldn't they? But the German Government even approves of the loss of jobs by these machinations.

Instead they accuse small and honest Switzerland of not relinquishing their banking secrecy!

No state in the world has any right to interfere with the interior affairs of Switzerland

The banking secrecy goes back to the year 1934, the time of the Great Depression when Europe's populations had lost their confidence in the money that would buy less and less every day. At that time the Swiss Government vouched for the Swiss bank. Last not least the bank secret was established in order to protect the citizens from the state's encroaching on their possessions in times of crisis, when the state likes to draw on the citizens' money to serve its own ends.

To reproach Switzerland of encouraging tax fraud is wrong, because tax fraud is severely punished in Switzerland. Many people might not know that the Swiss citizen is authorized to participate in decisions concerning the amount and designated use of his tax money. That is unique in the world, isn't it? The bank secret in Switzerland is statutorily regulated and no state in the world has any right to interfere with the interior affairs of Switzerland.

The attack on Switzerland is an attack on a sovereign state

All this does not explain, however, why Switzerland is being pushed into the role of a scapegoat and demonized at times of the world finance crisis. It is noteworthy that in 2002 the so-called *Kronberger Talks* took place under the aegis of the former German Foreign Minister *Fischer* and the *Bertelsmann Foundation*, modeled on the *Mitchell Report* (George Mitchell was Senator of the US Government). *This conference culminat-*

ed in the suggestion to abandon the sovereignty of states world wide, on behalf of US world hegemony, and to create new associations of states from the Middle East up to India, in order to control them more effectively.

This would explain why European countries as junior partners of the US are striving to integrate Switzerland politically into the Confederacy of the European Union. The attack on Switzerland is an attack on the country's sovereignty via the Swiss bank secret and may be the Swiss currency, later on. It is an attack on a sovereign state that has not yet completely submitted itself to the EU and has not yet joined NATO.

As you can read under *www.german-foreign-policy.com* of 8 September 2006 the Americans have for years been recommending a complete ethnic restructuring of almost all states of the Near and Middle East. By the dissolution of several confederations of states new subjects under international law are to be created, along the lines of tribal and religious affinity. These recommendations for a complete subversion of today's order of states were published in the *Armed Forces Journal*, of June 2006, by an enterprise that is responsible for the edition of about 10 military journals. The income of this group amounted to 7.6 billion dollar as they wrote in a self-definition:

The region maps, published under the name of *Ralph Peters* even recommend the smashing of present Saudi-Arabia. The reason given for that plan is Saudi-Arabia's "tremendous oil wealth", that is altogether "undeserved": The control of the Persian Gulf and its oil wealth is to be wrenched from Iran and the complete coastal flank is to be passed to a new federate state, a part of former Iraq which is still to be founded. This way both opponents of western hegemony are to be deprived of the material basis of their autonomy.

The parceling of whole state systems

This ethnicistic aggression of the Western powers is being substantially promoted by the German foreign policy – this is the conviction of the French historian *Pierre Hillard*. According to Hillard the Kroneberger talks dealt with a "complete transformation of the political, economic and religious institutions of the Muslim resource states, in order to weld them tightly together with the euro-atlantic axis", and, while the European presence in the region will be extended step by step, adequate means have to be provided to support "US-American self-assertion".

The parceling of whole state systems is well-known to the Bertelsmann Foundation that plays the role of a trailblazer in this context. On the dawn of the war against Yugoslavia, for example, the Foundation recommended to apply "the ethnical principle" and to mobilize the so-called "Volksgruppen" (ethnic groups) against Beograd, in the words of the Foundation "ethnical minorities defined by blood relation who may claim territorial rights". An ethnical partition plan concerning Hungary, Rumania, Russia and the northern Caucasian was also created with the help of Bertelsmann. This way several UN member states are threatened with the loss of their statehood!

In the US military journal *Armed Forces Journal* there is talk of the allegedly perpetual "flowing" of state borders that "follow" the biological migration of the tribes and "Volksgruppen". Because of "unnatural" territorial formation these formations should change their shape "right now", and this applies to "the Congo over the Kosovo up to the Caucasian region".

Pretexts to launch attacks on the sovereignty of states

How can this be achieved? One might disclose a "little dirty secret, derived from 5000 years of history": Ethnic cleansing works!

This way politics has granted absolute to the arms industry to go on waging wars and to make money therewith. And this works best – as they found out – if one renders the other states leaderless or if one installs *Quisling*-regimes that serve the interests of the international monopoly capital. In order to achieve that goal the most diverse pretexts were searched and found to launch attacks on the sovereignty of the targeted countries:

- Before the NATO attack on Yugoslavia the term of the Kosovo- Albanians "genocide" was spread, that allegedly the Serbs had committed as well as the necessity to "prevent a second Auschwitz"(!). These accusations were raised in order to be able to attack Yugoslavia and to occupy Kosovo militarily. Today there is no longer a multi-ethnic Kosovo.
- Before the NATO assault on Afghanistan the USA even claimed article 51 of the UN Charter – "individual or collective self-defense" – as a basis for their aggression, since the attack on the USA had allegedly come from Afghanistan and the USA now had to assume a "defense position". Of course they knew that one can draw on article 51 only as long as an attack from outside has not been fended off. Mean-

while many in the world know that part of the US-Government, of the secret agencies and the army had themselves staged this assault of 11 September in order to have a pretext for waging NATO's worldwide "anti-terror-war" above all against the Muslim countries.

- The Gulf Wars I-III were said to be about the alleged abolishment of dictator *Saddam Hussein*, but in reality it was about the extinction of a powerful competitor in the region and about the installation of a regime that would be completely subordinate as well as about the loss of the dollar's world monopoly position which the US feared to be imminent since Saddam Hussein's announcement that he was going to trade all future oil sales in euro instead of in dollar, and last not least it was about the stealing of the country's natural resources.

What makes up the sovereignty of a state?

In this context it is important to realize what makes up the sovereignty of a state?

Features of a country's sovereignty are:

- an own language,
- an own state,
- own borders,
- an own legal system,
- an own culture,
- an own police and army, but also
- *an own currency.*

In *Foreign Affairs* of June 2007 we read that countries who want to save their sovereignty despite the globalization process insist on keeping their own currency.

Germany as the performing agent of the USA, whether led by the Christian Democrats (CDU) or by the Social Democrats (SPD) did not keep its own currency but submitted completely to the EU-integration process, in which it was permitted, by grace of the USA, to take a leading position. And into this conceptual scheme Switzerland is now to be forced by the USA in interplay with the EU, Germany in particular; Switzerland that might be a model for many European countries with its institutions like The Red Cross, and other conjoint institutions.

Oppressing developing countries that are rich in resources

There is another aspect we would like to point to: For some years now some developing countries that are rich in resources but refused to submit to the American dictation of high finance and monopolizing corpo-

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The Right of Self-Determination of Peoples

The Right of Self-Determination of Peoples has roots in natural law and is acknowledged both in customary international law and in the positive international law.

For example Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations states that the purpose of the United Nations is "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace" (Art. 1, part 2) and "to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion" (Art. 1, part 3).

In Article 55 the Charter of the United Nations states that the member states are obliged to shape their relationships "based on respect for the principle of

equal rights and self-determination of peoples", to create "conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations".

Article 1 in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR – 19.12.1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR – 19.12.1966) read:

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

2. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

3. The States Parties to the present Covenant, including those having responsi-

bility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations."

In the General Comment No. 12 (1984) the Human Rights Committee has stressed that these rights of the peoples establish corresponding obligations for the signatory states of the two covenants, that they have to comply with according to the Charter of the United Nations.

The Right of Self-Determination of the Peoples is ius cogens in the sense of Article 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of May 23, 1969. It belongs to the mandatory rules of the international law. If the Swiss Federal Council should conclude a contract under the political-military pressure of foreign countries and should this contract compromise the Right of Self-Determination of the Swiss People, this contract would be null and void – as Dr. rer. Publ. *W. Wüthrich*

has stated in *Zeit-Fragen* No. 16 of April 21, 2009. This is the case because – as was shown above – the Right of Self-Determination of the Peoples is a peremptory norm of general international law accepted and recognized by the international community of States as a whole as a norm from which no derogation is permitted and which can be modified only by a subsequent norm of general international law having the same character (see Art. 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of May 23, 1969).

In other words: Without a clear decision of the Swiss Sovereign – which in Switzerland happens to be the Swiss People – the banking secrecy in Switzerland cannot be abolished. Germany as a state and the members of the German administration are obliged to respect this factual and legal situation under international law.

Dr. iur. *Andreas Mylaeus*,
lawyer, München

In Democratic Ireland 'No' Means No Against EU chicaneries and mind control

by Dr Titine Kriesi, Switzerland

In June 2008, Ireland said 'No' to the Lisbon Treaty. Next autumn the Irish are to vote again. The EU functionaries' attitude towards the Irish becomes obvious in their attempts to persuade them to change their mind. In doing so, they do not even refrain from manipulation, chicanery or tricks. As if the two million euro EU juggernaut propaganda, which rolls in Ireland with high-ranking EU commissioners' lecturing, were not enough! (See Current Concerns No 6/2009) Now it is the Irish government that follows with a propaganda tour and squanders tax funds. In times of enormously rising unemployment rates, the majority's opinion is to be manipulated with the hollow promise that a 'Yes' to the Lisbon Treaty would provide the country with assistance in times of a serious economic and financial crisis. The Irish should finally understand that if they changed their opinion, they would be better off... This time, citizens' movements expect the campaign against the Irish 'No' to be even harder and dirtier.



(photo caro)

The heads of state and governments of the EU refused to admit defeat concerning the result of the Irish vote. In order to make the majority change their minds, the most primitive manipulation methods and offenses were used, also on the part of EU Germany. The Irish were for example called "choleric" (by the Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD); the German Ambassador warned of "terrible consequences" after a 'No' vote in autumn. Patricia McKenna, chairman of the Irish People's Movement, says, "It is extremely arrogant of Germany to be putting pressure on Ireland to accept a treaty that they have not even ratified themselves, yet. Chancellor Merkel would be well advised to study the genuine concerns of her own citizens instead of trying to browbeat Ireland into voting again on something they have already rejected."¹

"What Is Behind the Attack ..."

continued from page 4

rations have been subjected to severe sanctions by the EU. By cutting off their money supply in a first step the EU expect to finally subjugate them in forthcoming wars. For such countries Switzerland has been a reliable

partner so far. That is why the monopolizing bourgeoisie ascribes great importance to the concerted attack on Switzerland and welcomes the participation of certain left-wing circles including the *Social Democrats (SPD)* and *The Left (Die Linke)*. And that is why the aggressors are trying to break Switzerland's resistance. This goal is to be achieved – as is the long-term strategy plan according to the French historian Pierre Hillard – by splitting Switzerland up and allocating the Italian speaking region to Italy, the French speaking part to France and the German speaking part to Germany.

Dishonest Irish government against the majority of the Irish people

In fact – Ireland had hardly rejected the Lisbon Treaty that the Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen planned a second vote in a concerted action with Sarkozy, Merkel and EU President Barroso lampooning the people's will. After Brussels has saddled its EU taxpayers with an expensive propaganda lecture tour through Ireland, including an advertisement campaign, the Irish government now wants to bleed the taxpayers with radio and Internet campaigns. This happens despite the Irish Broadcasting Complaints Commission's complaint against the EU Commission which had been allowed; it forbade EU propaganda for the Lisbon Treaty as "political advertisement". Spending 500,000 Pounds in order to convince the voters of something against which they had already voted 'No' was a scandalous waste of the taxpayers' money, Dublin MEP and Sinn Féin Vice-President Mary Lou McDonald said.² From sheer dis-

content with his own people, Cowen had initiated an analysis about the voting behavior shortly after the election result – an unjustified and deeply dishonest demand of a dishonest government, McDonald added.

"Warranties" for Ireland – a further putrid EU trick

Ireland expressed doubts in relation to the Lisbon Treaty concerning tax policy, its neutrality, militarization, social and family policy and the adequate representation of all member states in Brussels' EU Commission. Therefore, Sarkozy intended to serve the Irish a piece of candy before the second vote which was to grant them particularly Irish watertight warranties for the treaty. Several times, Cowen repeated that the warranties for the Lisbon Treaty, which were promised by the EU leaders last December, would have to be legally "robust", in order to reassure the public about the treaty.³ "Whilst I respect the fact that other member states do not wish to re-ratify the Lisbon Treaty, I made it clear that for my part the legal guarantees will have to be attached to the EU treaties at the next possible opportunity."⁴ However, it does not seem to be so easy. Liberal MEP Andrew Duff disagreed and said that adding an Irish-specific protocol with legal guarantees was not legally possible or could take several years to be accomplished. He cited the example of Denmark which had to wait for five years. Most EU analysts assume that the EU member countries will not agree with a new EU reform treaty for many years.

Stop EU pressure, EU offense, EU flattery

However, Dick Roche, Irish EU Minister for European Affairs, is convinced: Including specifically Irish doubts is not a problem for the remaining 26 EU member states. "When we have finalized our legal guarantees to the mutual satisfaction of Ireland and the other member states, (...) they will represent a comprehensive package of measures designed to address all the key concerns of the Irish people regarding the Lisbon Treaty."⁵ Why are you being so hectic, Mr. Roche? We all know that things can be done well only if one has all the time in the world.

Roche lectures that the necessary lessons are to be learned from the Irish 'No'. After all, the Irish people had shown genuine understanding for Brussels' requests and they were willing to respond positively to the drafts. In the meantime, the Irish had achieved a greater level of understanding (sic!).⁶ In an unabashed manner, he advises Ireland to take decisive action to bring the Government's finances under control, ensure the health of the banking system and improve its competitiveness within the European Union. In

order to steer Ireland out of recession, it must secure its position in the European Union. The best way was anyway, if Ireland voted 'Yes' then the Lisbon Treaty could be ratified. It was only owing to the EU assistance that Ireland got back on its feet.

The EU is increasingly dominated by a few large states, which all cause legal uncertainty. However, they will stop at nothing if only the Irish – finally – vote 'Yes'. EU manipulators deliberately divert from a matter-of-fact discussion, with the result that most of the 500 million EU citizens – and others – have no idea about the dangers included in the Lisbon Treaty, such as a centralized loss of sovereignty, neo-liberalism, EU/USA/NATO militarization, death penalty – and which rights and freedoms actually get lost and what hollow promises mean.

Citizens' movement: no military dimension!

The Irish peace organization Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) takes a completely different view by intending Europe to be a partnership of independent democratic states without military dimension (Partnership Europe). The Swedish citizens' movement *Folkrorelsen Nej till EU* (Citizens' movement No to EU) declares its solidarity with the Irish citizens' movement. MEPs from different European countries oppose the Lisbon Treaty. In a common open letter "Yes to the Lisbon Treaty – No to democracy!"⁷ they attacked the treaty and

Citizens' movement demands declaration of neutrality

- Ireland will not take part in decisions about or the implementation of defence matters
- Ireland will not block the development of a closer cooperation between the other member states
- Ireland will not take part in passing military actions nor in contribute to finance implementation of such measures.

Source: Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA), in: *Kritiksa EU-Fakta No 112, February 2009*

encouraged the Irish population to reject it with the coming referendum. Moreover, as the Irish citizens are the only citizens in Europe who have the right to vote on the treaty, the signatories ask the Irish to seize "this opportunity and vote for all of us".

What, if the Irish torpedoed the vote with a 'No' vote in autumn? This would mean an end to the Lisbon Treaty and Jochen Scholz, former lieutenant colonel of NATO Air Force, would be right that the "Lisbon Treaty a still-birth".⁸ If the EU wants to be democratic from the beginning, Ireland's 'No' deserves attention and respect: No is no. •

Current Concerns is an independent journal produced by volunteers that is not supported by advertising.

Any financial contribution is greatly appreciated.

Current Concerns

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

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

Subscription details:
published regularly
annual subscription rates: SFr. 72. –
€ 45. – / £ 28. – / \$ 66. – (incl. postage and VAT)

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

Printers: Druckerei Nüssli, Mellingen, Switzerland

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters to the editor. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *Current Concerns*.

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Aggressive continuity of US foreign policy

We think: Germany should not feel all that sure. Helping the USA as their junior partner today may not prevent Germany from becoming disreputable tomorrow just as happened to Iraq some time ago.

Until today the USA led by the Presidents *Bush Senior* and *Bush junior* have always succeeded in realizing their world hegemony plans step by step true to the motto "Divide et Impera" (divide and rule) by means of lies and deceit, even towards their own population (see 9/11). Since today's President *Obama* is advised by the same counselors as his predecessors and is as well depending on the military-industrial complex – or is even financially supported by these circles – we will have to expect another round of aggressive US policy.

We ask: Why should Germany keep following such a state that exists only at the expense of others – of us and of the whole world – why should we go on with that instead of searching new and reliable allies? •

¹ Press statement of People's Movement, 28. January 2009, www.people.ie

² www.anphoblacht.com, 30 April 2009

³ "Irish Times", 2 April 2009, ww.irishtimes.com

⁴ Loc. Cit.

⁵ "Irish Times", 5 May 2009

⁶ Loc. Cit.

⁷ "The Examiner", May 22, 2008. The plea was signed by Harry van Bommel MP, The Netherlands; Jeremy Corbyn MP, Britain; Jean-Paul Lecoq MP, France; Lars Ohly MP, Sweden; Paul Schäfer MP, Germany

⁸ letter to the editor by Jochen Scholz, 20 May 2009

«¿Es ése el agradecimiento?»

«Nosotros tenemos un concepto distinto de la política fiscal. Así todo un cuestionamiento crítico al respecto es legítimo, y el tema puede discutirse también públicamente. No obstante Suiza es importante, es un país estable. Justamente en los próximos años va a ser importante para Alemania tener amigos por todo el mundo que velen sobre la estabilidad de su moneda. [...]

No sé de dónde viene ese estilo [el de Steinbrück y otros]. De todas maneras es un estilo insolente. No es aceptable que alguien se presente como un jinete prusiano aficionado. Esto está en contradicción con lo que establecieron después de la guerra Konrad Adenauer, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt y Helmut Kohl: reconocer que todos los países que nos rodean son amigos y asociados. [...]

¿Quién acogió a alemanes en tiempos de guerra cuando dominaban los nacionalsocialistas? ¿Hacia dónde podían escaparse de los nazis los socialdemócratas? El exilio suizo salvó a personas como Wilhelm Hoegner, el ulterior ministro presidente de Baviera. [...]

Yo diría: ¿Quién fue el primero que les extendió la mano después de la guerra? ¿Quién disputó un campeonato de fútbol con vosotros? ¿Es ése el agradecimiento?»

El ex-ministro de economía Theo Waigel (CSU) en una entrevista en «Tages-Anzeiger» del 15 de mayo

«Suiza podría también hoy ser un ejemplo para nosotros»

«Sería mejor que negociara con países amigos en lugar de amenazarlos. Esto vale sobre todo frente a Suiza, que comenzó su proceso democrático ya en 1291, es decir frente a un país con una larga tradición democrática. Aún hoy Suiza podría ser un ejemplo para nosotros; recuerde simplemente los instrumentos de democracia directa en Suiza. Nosotros no tenemos que darles ningunas indicaciones a los suizos. No tenemos que darles lecciones, sino en todo caso negociar con ellos para llegar a resultados en común.»

Extraído del debate parlamentario del 7 de mayo en el que el diputado por la FDP Hermann Otto Solms le dirigió la palabra directamente a Steinbrück

«Recuerdos que nunca más queremos revivir»

«Tal vez es un buen consejo a los representantes de los estados más grandes, de ser especialmente corteses con los países más pequeños. Hay recuerdos que nosotros nunca más queremos revivir.»

El ex-ministro del exterior Hans-Dietrich Genscher en la emisión del ZDF «Maybritt Illner» el 7 de mayo.

«Por eso nos quedamos tan atónitos frente a las manifestaciones del ministro»

«Burkina Faso, toda la población nuestra ha tomado muy mal esa manifestación [de Steinbrück]. Primero la comparación con oasis fiscales nos cayó totalmente de sorpresa. También nos exasperó un poco. Después de todo el gobierno de Burkina mantiene excelentes relaciones con Alemania desde hace años. [...] Nuestro mercado financiero es completamente transparente, lo cual siempre nos fue confirmado por los alemanes. Por eso nos quedamos tan atónitos frente a las manifestaciones del ministro.»

El embajador de Burkina Faso en Alemania, Xavier Niodogo en una entrevista en «Stuttgarter Nachrichten» del 8 de mayo

«Hasta julio de 2005 Alemania era el paraíso fiscal más grande de Europa»

»Lo que pasó es que algunos de mis colegas hablan hoy de una manera y mañana de otra y no se atienen a los acuerdos. Además hablan en un tono que nos cae muy mal. [...]

Por ejemplo, a nosotros luxemburgueses no nos gusta nada cuando el presidente de la SPD Franz Müntefering en tono jovial, aparentemente humorístico, dice que antes se hubieran mandado soldados para solucionar problemas similares a los que tienen ahora con nosotros. A nosotros no nos parece cómico. Nosotros ya estuvimos bajo ocupación alemana y la hemos sufrido. [...]

Bélgica, Luxemburgo y Austria han consentido en aceptar un llamado «intercambio de información a pedido» según los estándares de OCDE. Es decir, cuando un fisco alemán tiene dudas sobre la honradez de uno de sus clientes y nos pide informes, recibe de nuestra parte toda la información deseada. De esto resultó que los estados de la UE y los gobiernos en su reunión cumbre en marzo acordaron de no poner a ninguno de nosotros en la lista de los oasis fiscales. Así figura en la aclaración pública al cierre, pero unos días más tarde [en la cumbre G-20] en la que nosotros los pequeños países no participamos, se hizo exactamente lo contrario. [...]

Nosotros acordamos en Europa una regularización para la tributación de intereses, según la cual tres países – los tres ahora excluidos – recaudan un impuesto basado en la fuente a los intereses de capitales extranjeros, y la mayor parte de esa recaudación retorna al país de origen. [...]

¿Quién se opuso en los años ochenta y noventa a la publicidad sensacionalista de los bancos alemanes que atrayeron a sus clientes con sus filiales en Luxemburgo? Yo fui. Los gobiernos competentes para esos bancos poco se preocuparon. ¿Y alguien se escandalizó en Alemania por el hecho que hasta julio de 2005, franceses, italianos, belgas, todos no residentes, no necesitaban pagar tributos por los intereses de sus cuentas bancarias en Alemania? Alemania

Acabar con los ataques a Suiza

Ni los problemas fiscales alemanes ni la crisis financiera se van a solucionar con una campaña de envidia y degradación contra nuestro país vecino Suiza. No debe convertirse en práctica política, el dar indicaciones sobre política interna a estados soberanos, e imponerlas a través de extorsiones, ataques verbales y económicos, o medidas diplomáticas equivocadas. Esto es contrario al derecho internacional y en el pasado ya fue motivo para guerras terribles. El que no tenga esto en claro, mejor que se retire de la actividad política.

El que quiera negociar algo con Suiza, tiene que tomar el camino de la diplomacia y del derecho: todos tienen que respetar un país soberano con sus estructuras políticas. El pueblo suizo tiene el derecho de ser como es. De sus estructuras federalistas de democracia directa – también del sistema fiscal – construidas desde las comunidades, Alemania podría aprender bastante. Esto es válido para todos los que han participado en esta acción, desde la cabeza de partido de la SPD hasta la canciller Angela Merkel.

Cuando incluso los llamados universalistas políticos y económicos quieren instituir un ejemplo en Suiza que después se podrá aplicar en otros países, entonces permitan que se les diga: con trucos como el supuesto genocidio antes del bombardeo de la OTAN en Yugoslavia y el premeditado posterior despedazamiento de un país multiétnico, no nos dejamos envolver más por un gobierno alemán. Aún cuando los deseos de los políticos alemanes de saquear a su propio pueblo no logran realizarse: Suiza sigue siendo un país amigo de los ciudadanos y un modelo de democracia!

Por eso: quitar las manos de Suiza y lograr en el propio país condiciones que permitan a nuestros ciudadanos vivir en él.

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Brigitte Queck, diplomada Ciencias Estatales, Potsdam*

fue hasta julio de 2005 el paraíso fiscal más grande de Europa.»

El ministro presidente de Luxemburgo Jean-Claude Juncker en una entrevista en la revista «Spiegel» del 11 de mayo

«Luxemburgo, Austria o Suiza no son el gran problema»

«Yo no creo que Luxemburgo, Austria o Suiza sean el gran problema en la cuestión de la evasión de impuestos. Existen verdaderos refugios fiscales. Hay incluso algunos en la Unión Europea. [...] Es extraño que a las clientes islas del canario no se las menciona.»

Comisario de la UE Günther Verheugen (SPD) en la emisión «Maybritt Illner» del ZDF el 7 de mayo

«Cuando los estados grandes imponen sus intereses sin tener consideración con los pequeños»

«Siempre me resulta preocupante cuando los estados grandes imponen sus intereses sin tener consideración con los pequeños. Lamentablemente esto ha ocurrido ahora, con la participación alemana y bajo la dirección de Francia presumiblemente. Siempre señalé que Suiza es una confederación muy sólida, a pesar de que hay grandes diferencias en los fiscos, por ejemplo entre Zug y Zurich. Esto no ha dañado al estado federal. Tendríamos que tratar de mantener la diversidad en Europa, una Europa no-uniforme. Cuando exigimos la uniformidad destruímos la substancia europea. No se puede pasar de largo por los países pequeños. Pero como cada niño, también la UE está marcada por sus padres, en este caso Francia y Alemania. Lamentablemente ahora el centralismo francés se está impulsando ayudado por el esmero alemán.»

El ex-ministro del exterior de la República Checa, Karl Príncipe de Schwarzenberg, en una entrevista en el «Tages-Anzeiger» del 13 de mayo

«Emociones para satisfacer bajos instintos»

«El que nos pasen por encima no lo podemos aceptar de ninguna manera. Esas son emociones para satisfacer bajos instintos o por cálculos electorales. [...] [Steinbrück] infringe contra Austria y nuestro trabajo conjunto con los países europeos.»

El ministro de economía Josef Pröll (ÖVP) en una entrevista en «Frankfurter Rundschau» del 13 de mayo

«El gobierno ha perdido la brújula»

«Esto no se ha dado nunca que un ministro de economía de un país amigo amenace con la caballería y el látigo sólo para ganar algunos puntos en la campaña electoral. En tiempos anteriores hubiera sido despedido en el acto. En lugar de eso, la canciller sigue sentada tranquilamente en el banco del gobierno al lado del ministro y mira como el Sr. Steinbrück divulga la imagen del alemán malo por todo el mundo. En realidad ¿qué estamos poniendo en juego? Este gobierno ha perdido la brújula de la parte media de la sociedad, no sólo en la política económica con expropiaciones y primas de desguace.»

Presidente del FDP alemán Guido Westerwelle, en una entrevista en «Welt am Sonntag» del 10 de mayo

«Se ha dañado la reputación de la República Federal Alemana»

«Steinbrück, reiteradamente ha dejado platos rotos sobre el parquet internacional, con comentarios fuera de lugar e innecesarios en la discusión sobre el proceder internacional contra la evasión de impuestos, y con ello ha dañado la reputación de la República Federal Alemana.»

La ministra bávara para Europa Emilia Müller (CSU) en una carta al ministro del exterior Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD), cita extraída del «Passauer Neue Presse» del 7 de mayo

Resolución*

El Parlamento, considerando las recientes declaraciones del ministro de economía alemán en las que comparó la transparencia fiscal de Luxemburgo con Burkina Faso,

- recuerda que esas declaraciones ponen en peligro las relaciones entre la República Federal de Alemania y Luxemburgo que se habían desarrollado de manera ejemplar después de la segunda guerra mundial,
- condena sin reservas el desliz verbal del ministro Peer Steinbrück así como la falta de respeto que puso en evidencia frente a Burkina Faso,
- ruega a su presidente de presentar la presente resolución al presidente del parlamento.

Fuente: Resolución del parlamento luxemburgués del 6 de mayo de 2009

* La resolución presentada por el diputado Charles Goerens fue aceptada por el parlamento luxemburgués por unanimidad (60 votos).

War – 150 Years after Solferino

The ICRC has started a sensitization campaign around an exhibition with current photographs

by Luc Debraine



Afghanistan

Landmines have been used indiscriminately in Afghanistan for the last three decades. Hundreds of thousands lie unmapped and undiscovered. Landmines have left an estimated 100,000 or more Afghan people disabled. (photo James Nachtwey/CICR/VII)



Lebanon

The conflict in Tripoli pits militias, sects and neighbourhoods against one another. It is a complex affair whose origins go back to the civil war in Lebanon. The latest round of fighting began in early May 2008 and peaked in July and August. The conflict erupted in Beirut where members of what was then the opposition party confronted the ruling loyalists on the streets of the city. The fighting soon reached Tripoli, endangering approximately 150,000 inhabitants. (photo Franco Pagetti/CICR/VII)

All pictures were provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross.



Lebanon

Nahr el-Bared is a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon where, for almost four months in 2007, the Lebanese army battled an armed group called Fatah al-Islam. About 400 people died in the fighting: Lebanese soldiers, Fatah al-Islam fighters and civilians. Much of Nahr el-Bared was reduced to rubble and most of its 40,000 inhabitants fled to the adjacent Beddawi camp or elsewhere in Lebanon. They lived for months in conditions that were often precarious. For the oldest among these Palestinian refugees, it was the second or third time they had been displaced. The camp is gradually being rebuilt, but as of late 2008 thousands of inhabitants had still not been able to return. (photo Franco Pagetti/CICR/VII)



Philippines

On the island of Mindanao, a child plays in front of his family's temporary home in an evacuation centre on the frontline between government forces and armed opposition fighters. While some families were able to find shelter in schools and public buildings, others are living more precariously, sometimes sleeping on nothing more than sections of cardboard. (photo James Nachtwey/CICR/VII)

150 years ago, Henry Dunant, a Swiss businessman, witnessed the end of the battle of Solferino in northern Italy. He was so shocked by the fate of wounded soldiers who were put out of their misery by bullet or bayonet that the citizen of Geneva, decided to act: In 1863 he established the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as an objective, neutral and independent organization.

150 years after Solferino, the ICRC is taking the opportunity to celebrate this anniversary by launching an international sensitization campaign in favor of its work. More precisely, the ICRC wants to "remind everyone of his or her responsibility in the effort to relieve human suffering". The campaign entitled "Our World. Your Move" is grouped around a photographic exhibition which was opened on May 8 in Geneva and will be shown in 40 countries worldwide.

The ICRC has joined forces with "Agentur VII", a cooperative of photographers which includes as members the most talented and committed photo journalists. The goal was to focus on countries which are only little covered by the media, are involved in a war or are undertaking efforts to shake off the burden of years of conflicts and abuse of power. These photo journalists have visited displaced people, families separated by the fighting or people helping wounded and traumatized persons.

James Nachtwey visited the Philippines and Afghanistan; Franco Pagetti went to Lebanon and Colombia, Ran Haviv to Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Christopher Morris to Liberia and Antonin Kratochvil to Georgia.

The photographs in the exhibition are accompanied by carefully formulated captions that evoke empathy in the beholder. Not by making the subject matter seem unbearable or by excessively estheticizing the suffering, but by preserving the dignity of the women, children and men brutalized by the war, while fulfilling very high formal standards.

Due to the talents of the members of "Agentur VII", the exhibition serves its goal perfectly: to show, within all the despair, some hope. All participating photographers

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“War – 150 Years after Solferino ...”

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have a longstanding experience of working in crisis regions. Some of them, like Antonin Kratochvil, who left his country Czechoslovakia in 1967 at the age of 20, have been refugees themselves.

In addition to this very impressive exhibition, the campaign “Our world. Your move” is also widely covered on the website www.ourworld-yourmove.org. Moreover, this spring a book with photographs from the archives of the ICRC, titled “Humanity in War” will appear.

“Our World – in War”, photographs of “Agency VII”, Espace SIG du “pont de la Machine”, Geneva, until June 30, Monday to Friday 9 am to 6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am to 5 pm.

From August 31 to September 20, the exhibition will be shown in open air on Quai Wilson in Geneva.

Source: *Le Temps*, May 8, 2009

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Liberia

Amputee football has been the source of enormous hope and solace for one of the most marginalized groups in the country: young men. They are, most of them, victims of the war. That some of them took part in it only adds to the stigmatization of the group. “When you ask them how they felt after being amputated, most of them say that they wanted to kill themselves,” says Paul A. Tolbert, senior coach of the national amputee football team. “Life no longer had meaning for them. Amputee football restores their hope. Take the guy who was named the most valuable player in the recent African Cup for amputee football. He was a very good player, but he lost hope when his leg was amputated. When I went to recruit him, I told him, ‘You can make it. There is still a chance for you.’ He has gained hope and, what’s more, now knows that what he could not do, win a war when he had two legs, he is now doing on one leg.” (photo Christopher Morris/CICR/VII)



Democratic Republic of Congo

Roger Bimael is a 17-year-old who was separated from his family and given up for dead by his mother. He was reunited with his family by the ICRC. Respect for the family unit is implicit in the idea of respecting human dignity. Every year, the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies help hundreds of thousands of people (displaced persons, refugees, detainees and missing persons) get back in touch with their families or learn the fate of missing relatives. (photo Ron Haviv/CICR/VII)



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Jakob Kellenberger, President of the ICRC

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