

# Current Concerns

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## From Mossadegh to Ahmadinejad

### The Anglo-American secret services and the Iranian experiment

by Thierry Meyssan\*

cc. The news of alleged election fraud has spread through Tehran like wildfire, pitching ayatollah Rafsanjani's supporters against ayatollah Khamenei's in street confrontations. This chaotic situation is secretly stirred by the CIA which has been spreading confusion by flooding Iranians with contradicting SMS messages. Thierry Meyssan recounts this psychological warfare experiment.

In March 2000, the Secretary of State Madeleine Albright admitted that the Eisenhower administration had organized a regime change in 1953 in Iran and that this historical event explained the current hostility of Iranians towards the United States. Last week, during the speech he addressed to Muslims in Cairo, President Obama officially recognized that "in the midst of the cold war the United States played a role in the toppling of a democratically elected Iranian government".<sup>1</sup>

At the time, Iran was controlled by a puppet monarchy headed by the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. He had been placed on the throne by the British who forced his father, the pro-Nazi Cossack officer Reza Pahlavi to resign. However, the Shah had to deal with a nationalist Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh. Mossadegh, with the help of ayatollah Abou al-Qassem Kachani, nationalized the oil resources.<sup>2</sup> Furious, the British persuaded the United States that the Iranian dissent needed to be stopped before the country became communist. The CIA then put together Operation Ajax to overthrow Mossadegh with the help of the Shah, and to replace him with Nazi general Fazlollah Zahedi who until then had been detained by the British. Zahedi is responsible for having instituted the cruelest terror regime of the time, while the Shah would cover his exactions while parading for Western 'people' magazines.

#### Operation Ajax – a textbook example of subversion

Operation Ajax was led by archeologist Donald Wilber, historian Kermit Roosevelt (grandson of president Theodore Roosevelt) and general Norman Schwartzkopf Sr. (whose son with the same name led Operation Desert Storm). This operation remains a textbook example of subversion. The CIA came up with a scenario that gave the impression of a popular revolt when in reality it was a covert operation. The highpoint of the show was a demonstration in Tehran with 8 000 actors paid by the Agency to provide credible pictures to Western media.<sup>3</sup>

#### Is history repeating itself?

Washington renounced a military attack on Iran and has dissuaded Israel to take such an initiative. In order to "change the regime", the Obama administration prefers to play the game of covert actions – less dangerous but with a more unpredictable outcome. After the Iranian presidential elections, huge demonstrations in the streets of Tehran are pitching supporters of president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and supreme leader Ali Khamenei on one side, to supporters of defeated candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi and former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on the other. The demonstrations are a sign of a profound division in the Iranian society between a nationalist proletariat and a bourgeoisie upset at being held back from economic globaliza-



Taking a look at the map shows that Iran is surrounded by countries with US military bases. (map roho)

tion.<sup>4</sup> With its covert actions, Washington is trying to weigh on the events to topple the re-elected president.

#### A new weapon: control of cell phones

Once again, Iran is an experimental field for innovative subversive methods. CIA is relying on a new weapon in 2009: control of cell phones. Since the democratization of mobile phones, Anglo-Saxon secret services have increased their interception capability. While wired phones' tapping requires the installation of branch circuits – and therefore local agents, tapping of mobile phones can be done remotely using the Echelon network. However, this system cannot intercept Skype mobile phones communications, which explains the success of Skype telephones in conflict

areas.<sup>5</sup> The National Security Agency (NSA) therefore lobbied world Internet Service Providers to obtain their cooperation. Those who accepted received huge retribution.<sup>6</sup>

In countries under their occupation – Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan –, the Anglo-Saxons intercept all telephone communication, whether mobile or wired. The goal is not to obtain full transcripts of any given conversation, but to identify "social networks". In other words, telephones are surveillance bugs which make it possible to know who anyone is in touch with. Firstly, the hope is to identify resistance networks. Secondly, telephones make it possible to locate identified targets and "neutralize" them. This is why in February 2008, the Afghan rebels ordered various operators to stop their activity daily, from

5 pm to 3 am, in order to prevent the Anglo-Saxons to follow their whereabouts. The relay antennas of those that refused to comply were destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

On the contrary, with the exception of a telephone exchange which was accidentally hit, Israeli forces made sure not to hit telephone exchanges in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead from December 2008 to January 2009. This is a complete change in strategy. Since the Gulf War, the most prevalent strategy was colonel John A. Warden's "five circles theory": the bombing of telephone infrastructures was considered a strategic objective to both confuse populations and to cut communication lines between commanding centers and fighters. Now the opposite applies: telecommunication infrastructures must be protected. During the bombings in Gaza, the operator Jawwal<sup>8</sup> offered additional talk time to its users – officially to help them but de facto serving Israel's interests. Going one step further, Anglo-Saxons and Israeli secret services developed psychological warfare methods based on an extensive use of mobile phones. In July 2008, after the exchange of prisoners and remains between Israel and Hezbollah, robots placed tens of thousands of calls to Lebanese mobile phones. A voice speaking in Arabic was warning against participating in any resistance activity and belittled Hezbollah. The Lebanese minister of telecommunications, Jibril Bassil,<sup>9</sup> filed a complaint to the UN against this blatant violation of the country's sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> Following the same approach, tens of thousands of Lebanese and Syrians received an automatic phone call in October 2008 to offer them 10 million dollars for any information leading to the location and freeing of Israeli prisoners. People interested in collaborating were invited to call a number in the UK.<sup>11</sup>

#### Bluff the population and channel anger

This method has now been used in Iran to bluff the population, to spread shocking news and to channel the resulting anger.

First, SMS were sent during the night of the counting of the votes, according to which the Guardian Council of the Constitution (equivalent to a constitutional court) had informed Mir-Hossein Mousavi of his victory. After that, the announcing of the official results – the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with 64 % of cast votes – seemed like a huge fraud. However, three days earlier, M. Mousavi and his friends were considering a massive victory of M. Ahmadinejad as certain and were trying to explain it by unbalanced campaigns. Indeed the ex-president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was detailing his grievances in an open letter. The US polling institutes in Iran were predicting a 20 points lead for M. Ahmadinejad over M. Mousavi.<sup>12</sup> M. Mousavi's victory never seemed possible, even if it is probable that some fraud accentuated the margin between the two candidates.

Secondly, Iranian citizens were selected or volunteered on the Internet to chat on Facebook or to subscribe to Twitter feeds. They received information – true or false – (still via SMS) about the evolution of the political crisis and the ongoing demonstrations. These anonymous news posts were spreading news of gun fights and numerous deaths which to this day have not been confirmed. Because of an unfortunate calendar overlap, Twitter was supposed to suspend its service for a night to allow for some maintenance of its systems.

#### Independent US-Poll three weeks before the election saw Ahmadinejad leading by a more than 2 to 1 margin

An independent, objective poll was conducted in Iran by American pollsters prior to the election. The pollsters, Ken Ballen of the nonprofit Center for Public Opinion and Patrick Doherty of the nonprofit New America Foundation, describe their poll results in the June 15 Washington Post. The polling was funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and was conducted in Farsi "by a polling company whose work in the region for ABC News and the BBC has received an Emmy award". – The poll results, the only real information we have at this time, indicate that the election results reflect the will of the Iranian voters. Among the extremely interesting information revealed by the poll is the following: "Many experts are claiming that the margin of victory of incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was the result of fraud or manipulation, but our nationwide public opinion survey of Iranians three weeks before the vote showed Ahmadinejad leading by a more than 2 to 1 margin – greater than his actual apparent margin of victory in Friday's election."

"While Western news reports from Tehran in the days leading up to the voting portrayed an Iranian public enthusiastic about Ahmadinejad's principal opponent, Mir Hossein Mousavi, our scientific sampling from across all 30 of

Iran's provinces showed Ahmadinejad well ahead."

"The breadth of Ahmadinejad's support was apparent in our pre-election survey. During the campaign, for instance, Mousavi emphasized his identity as an Azeri, the second-largest ethnic group in Iran after Persians, to woo Azeri voters. Our survey indicated, though, that Azeris favored Ahmadinejad by 2 to 1 over Mousavi."

"Much commentary has portrayed Iranian youth and the Internet as harbingers of change in this election. But our poll found that only a third of Iranians even have access to the Internet, while 18-to-24-year-olds comprised the strongest voting bloc for Ahmadinejad of all age groups. "The only demographic groups in which our survey found Mousavi leading or competitive with Ahmadinejad were university students and graduates, and the highest-income Iranians. When our poll was taken, almost a third of Iranians were also still undecided. Yet the baseline distributions we found then mirror the results reported by the Iranian authorities, indicating the possibility that the vote is not the product of widespread fraud."

Excerpt from: Paul Craig Roberts, Are you ready for war with demonized Iran?

\* Thierry Meyssan is journalist, writer and president of the Voltaire Network.

## Transatlantic Power Concepts and the Attacks on Switzerland

### Regionalization as a means for the breakup of the nation states

by Pierre Hillard, Paris\*

cc. The following article shows that under the cover of slogans like “federal structures” or “more power for the regions” the European Union actually pursues a centralistic power concept. National differences – also in the banking system – are to be leveled. Pierre Hillard attributes the attacks on Switzerland to this policy of Brussels and Washington: Peer Steinbrück’s attacks serve a transatlantic power concept, which aims at destroying variety and at establishing central control.

The principle of regionalization in Europe goes far beyond a simple reorganization of the old continent. In fact, it is about handing over political, economic and financial power to the regions so that they might negotiate directly with the Brussels authorities. This phenomenon is based on the German political will, which succeeded in slipping these measures into politics within the context of the European construction process. This point of view is expressed by Prof. Dr Rudolf Hrbek, professor for political science, in the magazine *Document, Revue des questions allemandes* [Documents, Magazine of the German Questions]: “The starting point of this new series of initiatives was the resolution of the Conference of Prime Ministers in October 1987 in Munich, where a Europe with federal structures was specified as their goal. Two years later the Prime Ministers of

the countries established a working group of their state chancelleries and ordered a report on the countries’ and regions’ position with regard to the future developments of the European Union from them.”

All this work was also promoted by the government of Lower Saxony in 1996. At that time – Gerhard Schröder was then Prime Minister – the social-democratic MP of the state Lower Saxony was Peter Rabe, the initiator of the draft of the Recommendation 34 (1997) by the “Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe” (CPLRE – Congrès des Pouvoirs locaux et régionaux d’Europe). This document authorizes a political reorganization of Europe. The principle itself is simple. It grants a maximum of power to the regions so that these regions – to the disadvantage of the nation states – may negotiate increasingly directly with the European Union. This procedure completely avoids the intermediate authorities, in this case the national authorities. It obviously pursues the goal of dissolving the nation states in favor of a Europe of regions, or to put more exactly, of a Europe of the euro regions. Thus territorial units are formed, in which several regions from different states unite, as for example the euro region Alsace/Baden or Pyrenees/Mediterranean. This policy leads to the dissolution of the European nation states.

It goes without saying that states like Switzerland, which do not yet belong to the European Union, will sooner or later have to join in the dance. René Schwok who holds the chair “Jean Monnet” in the European Institute of the University of Geneva reported that Switzerland had already become an object of Brussels’ attention. He underlines with satisfaction that Swiss laws have already been adapted to the European directives by almost 50%. This development is logical. If the desire is to establish a united European bloc according to a standardized model, it is in fact necessary to press all the states into the same form – that is to say on all levels. The attacks of the German Minister of Finance Peer Steinbrück against Switzerland are part of this will to destroy the characteristics of the Swiss banking system in order to integrate it more smoothly into a consistent legal framework.

The pretended goal of having to wage a war against tax havens is only the cover for the attempt, to bring down a model, which the Brussels euro fanatics do not have under control. With his attempt to subjugate the Helvetic model, Peer Steinbrück wisely avoids to mention most tax havens’ controlling parent company, the City of London. That is really amazing! This fact must be associated with the intention to press all of Europe into a huge Euro-Atlantic block that is to take

shape in 2015. In view of this immense political, economic and financial restructuring it is necessary to standardize everything.

We may not forget that we face important challenges: the collapse of the US dollar, which is to be replaced by the establishment of a new currency, the name of which has not yet been officially announced (Amero or North American dollar). The establishments of a political, economical and military North American bloc (North American Union), which will unite the USA, Canada and Mexico in the Partnership for Security and Prosperity (PSP), is intended to be completed by 2010.

This bloc, which is to unite with the European Union to form an “Atlantic union” around 2015 – in accordance with the term of the Pan-Europe’s founder, Richard de Coudenhove-Kalergi – must exert absolute control over all niches in the tax and banking systems. In order to achieve this, Switzerland must disappear and dissolve in this new transatlantic structure, which is to become a united Western bloc.

(Translation Current Concerns)

\* Pierre Hillard, professor for international relations at the Ecole Supérieure du Commerce extérieur (ESCE), author of “La Fondation Bertelsmann et la gouvernance mondiale” [The Bertelsmann foundation and the world government], Paris 2009, EAN13: 9782755403350.

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The US State Department intervened to ask them to postpone it.<sup>13</sup> According to the New York Times, these operations contributed to spread defiance in the population.<sup>14</sup>

Messages describing death threats, police bursting into homes, etc. sent by authors who cannot be identified or located.

Simultaneously, in a new type of effort, the CIA is mobilizing anti-Iranian militants in the United States and in the United Kingdom to increase the chaos. A “Practical Guide to Revolution in Iran” was distributed to them, which contains a number of recommendations, including:

- set Twitter accounts feeds to Tehran time zone;
- centralize messages on the following Twitter accounts @stopAhmadi, #iranelection and #gr88 ;

- official Iranian State websites should not be attacked. “Let the US military take care of it” (sic).

When applied, these recommendations make it impossible to authenticate any Twitter messages. It is impossible to know if they are being sent by witnesses of the demonstrations in Tehran or by CIA agents in Langley, and it is impossible to distinguish real from false ones. The goal is to create more and more confusion and to push Iranians to fight amongst themselves.

Army general staffs everywhere in the world are closely following the events in Tehran. They are trying to evaluate the efficiency of this new subversion method in the Iranian experimental field. Evidently, the destabilization process worked. But it is unclear if the CIA will be able to channel demonstrators to do what the Pentagon has renounced to do, and what they do not want to

do themselves: to change the regime and put an end to the Islamic revolution.

English version by J.C.

<sup>1</sup> “Obama Speech In Cairo”, Voltaire Network, 6 June 2009.

<sup>2</sup> “BP-Amoco, coalition pétrolière anglo-saxonne”, Arthur Lepic, Voltaire Network, 10 June 2004.

<sup>3</sup> On the 1953 coup, the reference work is *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, by Stephen Kinzer, John Wiley & Sons éd (2003), 272 pp.

<sup>4</sup> “La société iranienne paralysée”, Thierry Meyssan, Voltaire Network, 5 February 2004.

<sup>5</sup> “Taliban using Skype phone to dodge MI6”, Glen Owen, Mail Online, 13 September 2008.

<sup>6</sup> “NSA offering ‘billions’ for Skype eavesdrop solution”, Lewis Page, The Register, 12 February 2009.

<sup>7</sup> “Taliban Threatens Cell Towers”, Noah Shachtman, Wired, 25 February 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Jawwal belongs to PalTel, Palestinian billionaire Munib Al-Masri’s company.

<sup>9</sup> Jibril Bassil is one of the main leaders of the ‘Courant patriotique libre’, the nationalist party of Michel Aoun.

<sup>10</sup> “Freed Lebanese say they will keep fighting Israel”, Associated Press, 17 July 2008.

<sup>11</sup> The author of this article witnessed these phone calls. Also see “Strange Israeli phone calls alarm Syrians. Israeli intelligence services accused of making phone calls to Syrians in bid to recruit agents”, Syria News Briefing, 4 December 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in “Ahmadinejad won. Get over it”, Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett, Politico, 15 June 2009.

<sup>13</sup> “U.S. State Department speaks to Twitter over Iran”, Reuters, 16 June 2009.

<sup>14</sup> “Social Networks Spread Defiance Online”, Brad Stone and Noam Cohen, The New York Times, 15 June 2009.

(Source: [www.voltairenet.org/article160670.html](http://www.voltairenet.org/article160670.html))

### Why should I look down on the Iranian people’s choice?

Many readers have reached angrily to Thierry Meyssan’s article “From Mossadegh to Ahmadinejad” (published in *Réseau Voltaire*, [www.voltairenet.org](http://www.voltairenet.org), original title “La CIA et le laboratoire iranien”). Meyssan considers it his duty to reply to them. Unfortunately, there is nothing to be corrected; so, far from apologizing he sticks to his guns.

My recent article, “From Mossadegh to Ahmadinejad” caused me to receive numerous and mostly abusive emails. It has been a very long time since I last received so many outraged comments. Most of these readers accuse me of being so blinded by “rabid anti-Americanism” as to defend the “dictatorship of the mullahs” and to ignore the wave of young Iranians fighting without weapons “for freedom”. When read carefully, these emails turn out to be poorly argued, yet they flow with irrational passion; it is as if one could not talk about Iran without being overcome by emotion.

Indeed, Iran is a state unlike others. Following the example of France in 1789 and USSR in 1917, Iran in 1979 initiated a revolutionary movement that questioned fundamental aspects of the triumphant “Western” model; this was done on the basis of a religious faith. Thirty years later, we “the Westerners” continue to experience the expression of the Iranian people as a moral condemnation of our lifestyle, that is to say of a consumer society and of Imperialism. By contrast, we can only find peace of mind by persuading ourselves that reality is a dream and that our dreams are real. The Iranian people would love to live like us but they are held back by a horrendous turban wearing clergy.

I do not know where to start in order to try to explain modern Iran for those who want to understand. Thirty years of propaganda have forged many fake pictures which should be deconstructed one by one. It is a huge task to see through these lies, and now is not the easiest time to do so. I simply want to make a few preliminary remarks.

The Islamic revolution has accomplished huge progress: corporal punishments have become very rare, the rule of law has replaced arbitrary decisions, women increasingly have access to education, religious minorities are all protected – with the regrettable exception of the Baha’is etc. Regarding all of these issues for which we call the current regime despicable, the Iranian people believe on the contrary that it is far more civilized than the cruel dictatorship of the Shah imposed by London and Washington.

The Islamic revolution still has a long way to go. It must also come to terms with its Eastern political system which, in order to make room for everyone, multiplies administrative structures and results in institutional paralysis.

Of course, there is a westernized upper-class who thinks that life was better in the days of the Shah. They would send their children to study in Europe and would spend lavishly at parties in Persepolis. The Islamic Revolution abolished their privileges, and it is their grandchildren who are now demonstrating in the streets. With the help of the United States they want to get back what was taken from their families, which has nothing to do with freedom.

In a few years, Iran has regained her lost glory. Her people pride themselves in assisting the Palestinian and Lebanese people, offering to rebuild their homes destroyed by Israel as well as weapons to defend themselves and reclaim their dignity. They helped the Afghans and the Iraqis, victims of pro Western regimes and then of Western regimes themselves. The Iranians have had to pay dearly for their solidarity, with war, terrorism and economic sanctions being the price.

As for me, I am a democrat. I attach a lot of importance to popular will. I did not understand why the victory of George W. Bush was announced before the result of the vote of American citizens in Florida was known. I did not understand either why, with the upper-class in Caracas, Pedro Carmona should be congratulated for having sent Hugo Chavez to jail after he had been elected president by the Venezuelan people. I do not understand why Mahmoud Abbas should be called “Mister President” while preventing the election of his successor by having the representatives of the Palestinian people illegally detained in Israeli jails. I do not understand why the European Constitutional Treaty application is being orchestrated under a different name after voters rejected it. And today, I do not see which fantasies justify encouraging the population of the northern neighborhoods of Tehran to trample on universal voting and impose Mousavi after the majority of the people chose Ahmadinejad.

Thierry Meyssan

# Computer and Ecology

by Prof. Dr. Jörg Becker\*

The MIT computer scientist *Nicholas Negroponte* enthused in his book "Being Digital" in 1995 that the digital landscape was giving rise to a new generation which was free of old prejudices and ignored the limitations of geographical proximity as the only basis for friendship, collaboration, games and neighbourliness. He described digital technology as having the potential impact of a natural force that would move people towards greater global harmony. *Microsoft* head *Bill Gates* sounded very much the same in his classic "The Road Ahead", in which he claimed that the information highway would also transport its information and offers beyond the borders of the technically advanced world to the developing countries. He felt this would ultimately bring about an increase in wealth worldwide and have a stabilizing effect, and that the gap between the poor and the rich countries would diminish. Thirty years before that, the Canadian *Marshall McLuhan* had carried out media analyses after which he emphatically insisted that, after more than half a century of electricity, man had extended even his central nervous system in a global embrace and thereby eliminated space and time, as far as this affects our planet.

Were these statements not written by experienced managers and theorists around 15 years ago, then such eulogies would have to be designated either as the omnipotence fantasies of adolescent males, the language of glossy advertising brochures, or as ideology; ideology in the classical sense of *Karl Marx*, as a necessarily false consciousness, on the one hand, and on the other, as the controlling knowledge of the political and economic elite, primarily aimed at maintaining and veiling their exploitative class status. Nothing in these quotations is correct, even purely empirically. On the contrary: In the past 15 years, the world has become more unstable, the gap between poor and rich has widened dramatically, the UN order and national law have had to give way to a Darwinist law of the fittest in international relations, the climate catastrophe is assuming increasingly threatening proportions (melting glaciers and polar caps, global warming, depletion of the ozone layer); instead of high-tech wars we see a return to mercenary troops, house-to-house fighting and the simplest blood and thunder, and instead of *Willy Brandt's* plea for "more democracy" in 1969 we have, since 11 September 2001, an increasing dismantling of all the most self-evident civil rights in the wake of a hysterical debate about terrorism and security.

Compared with all this faddish and tendentious chatter about computers, a real debate about computers and ecology involves an analytical return to matter, material, industry, raw materials, production, man's exploitation of finite nature, and man's exploitation of man.

## Toxic Production

Computers conjure up an image of cleanliness, good value, a product that safeguards materials and the environment. Given that the production of a computer actually requires large amounts of materials, this image must necessarily be openly and effectively shattered. According to a UN study, the production of just one workstation compu-



(photo Reuters)

ter requires more than 240 kilograms of fossil fuels, such as oil and coal, about 22 kilograms of chemical products and 1,500 litres of water.<sup>1</sup> The ecological assessment of this production is not environmentally friendly, nor are the local conditions of its production. Many of the metals needed to produce a computer are rare (including copper, aluminium, nickel, zinc, gold, platinum, koltan, cobalt), are often only available in Third World countries, and are cheap to mine in these countries due to exploitative low wages. For example, half of the world's requirement of cobalt come from just two countries, namely, Zambia and Congo. The people living near the cobalt mines in Zambia have a great deal to bear due to the polluted soil in which they can no longer grow vegetables, and due to the polluted drinking water.

The conditions are even worse when it comes to the threats to health around sites producing computer chips. Chips can only be manufactured in so-called cleanrooms. These are special rooms where particle contamination must be kept below strictly regulated levels and where the highest possible cleanliness regulations apply. Nevertheless, serious health problems have arisen in chip production over the years because the regulations in the handling of many toxic solutions are not adhered to or else the instruments and apparatus for their contamination-free handling are lacking. As a result, the risk of cancer, head and muscle pain, breathing difficulties, and infertility is higher, and there is a heightened risk of miscarriage among women.

Often located in tax-free zones, these "chemical factories" are a core element of what feminists like *Christa Wichterich*<sup>2</sup> have often and justifiably described as a typical female "downside" of the globalisation trend driven and dominated by men: poor peasant women in developing countries labour under inhuman working and living conditions at the lowest possible wage rates in special fenced-in zones, so as to create wealth and comfort for men in the northern countries. This applies in particular to many service industries, such as the software industry and outsourced office work, but also to the textile, shoe, toy, and the chip industries.

Not so long ago, the NGO *Greenpeace International* examined production locations of chip manufacturers such as *Hewlett Packard* and suppliers like the US companies *Solecron* and *Fortune* in China, Mexico, Thailand and the Philippines. In many cases, *Greenpeace* was able to ascertain increased contamination of the soil and ground water due to metal residues (lead, nickel, copper), and provide proof of residues of solvents and other poisonous substances.<sup>3</sup>

Not only the women working in the chip factories suffer, therefore, but all the local inhabitants as well, and here in turn the women in particular, given that it is they who carry the social responsibility in traditional societies for the nutrition and health of the whole family.

## Exorbitant Energy Costs

*Google* – the world's largest advertising agency with a small search engine attached for internet research – is currently building a new server centre in Kronstorf in the federal state of Upper Austria in Austria, which has a population of 3,000. Similar *Google* data centres already exist in Belgium and in South Carolina, USA. Such a centre comprises huge industrial buildings of the size of about ten football pitches, and involves investment costs of an estimated 150 million US dollars per centre. What is particularly remarkable is the energy consumption of these *Google* data centres, which are estimated to have the same energy consumption as aluminium plants, known to be very energy-intensive. Just how electricity-guzzling and environmentally-sustainable *Google* data centres are, can be seen from recent press statements by the Harvard physicist *Alexander David Wissner-Gross*. To put it simply, 2 *Google* searches emit 15 grams of CO<sub>2</sub>, i.e., as much as is required to make a cup of tea.

Generally speaking, the different studies of the energy consumption by data centres arrive at devastating results. Estimates by *Stanford University* reckon that in 2005 the energy consumption of all the data centres worldwide was 20 million megawatt hours, and thus twice as much as five years previously. To put it another way: The consumption was just as high as that of the city of Las Vegas, the world's largest electricity consumer. The findings of a study by the US American chip manufacturer *Advanced Micro Devices (AMD)* are just as alarming. According to this study, 14 energy plants in the 1,000 megawatt-class work worldwide exclusively to supply electricity to the world's data centres. In Germany alone in 2008, data centres used the incredible overall sum of 10 terawatt hours, which corresponds to the output of four medium-sized coal-fired power plants. The energy requirement of such large computer centres can also be drastically summarised as follows: If it were not for the use of the internet, Germany could cease operation of two atomic energy plants!

If you add the energy requirement of the mass media to that of the networks and appliances of the computer and information technology industries, then the electricity consumption of these converging industries becomes almost incalculable. If the huge new *Panasonic* TV screen with a diagonal of 1.65

metres, already requires 720 watts in normal use – corresponding to the energy of 34 very bright energy-saving bulbs – in future the energy requirement for all electronic appliances in private households will increase drastically. A study aptly called "The Ampère strikes back"<sup>4</sup> by the British non-profit organisation *Energy Saving Trust* estimates that in the year 2020, 45% of all the electrical energy used in a household will be for such appliances!

And as if all these electricity costs were not enough, the standby costs for televisions, video-recorders, DVD-players, stereo systems etc., are not included in these considerations. Experts estimate these "sleeping" electricity costs for unused appliances in the EU at 4.8 billion Euro; this corresponds to an emission of 180 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and thus to half of the EU's environmental protection target within the EU's framework of the Kyoto Protocol.

## Toxic Disposal

In October 2008 the magazine "Wissen" in the "Süddeutsche Zeitung", Germany's largest daily newspaper, published a shocking report on the disposal of European computer waste in Ghana. Under the heading "Im Höllenfeuer der Hightech-Welt" (In the Hellfire of the High-tech World) it describes the life of African adolescents who live and work on a landfill behind the *Agbogbloshie* Market in Ghana's capital city.<sup>5</sup> This market is Ghana's largest electronic waste dump. Thousands of people live from this waste, especially children from the age of five. They sort the electronic waste into reusable metals, for which they can earn a wage of 2 Euros per day, which they pay as school fees. A *Greenpeace* examination of the soil around this African market came to the following conclusions: the lead content was 100 times higher than the norm at other points in Accra, the concentration of other heavy metals and poisons was about twelve times above the limits, and soil and water were polluted by so-called phthalates, i.e., softeners for plastics like PVC. For the people living on and from the *Agbogbloshie* market, these poisonous substances lead to headaches, breathing difficulties, infertility, diabetes, cancer, heart, liver, lung and kidney disease, brain swelling and muscular atrophy.

According to estimates by the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), about 50 million tonnes of poisonous computer waste are produced worldwide each year – 1 million tonnes in Germany alone. And given that the murderous dynamism of a techno-turbo-capitalism leads to an ever faster spiral of ever shorter and new product cycles, the mountain of e-waste is continuously rising, worldwide, every year. Only 25% of the computers and TV screens sold in the EU are also recycled within the EU; the larger portion of 75% ends up as waste in the Third World. Although a special UN Convention from Basel in 1989 prohibited the export of poisonous waste to developing countries, so as "to control the transborder transportation and disposal of dangerous waste", as there is no clear legal distinction between waste and used commodities, American and European exporters legally declare their poison simply as used commodities. What is more, 80% of the world's computer waste comes from the USA alone, which never signed up to the UN convention from Basel "for practical reasons".

As regards the people living on landfills in the Third World, these mechanisms can be

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\* Jörg Becker is a communication and media expert and a political scientist. Together with Mira Beham he published "Operation Balkan: Werbung für Krieg und Tod" ("Operation Balkans – Propaganda for War and Death") Baden-Baden 2008. ISBN 3-8329-1900-7.

### "Computer and Ecology"

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looked at cynically and in the spirit of the British rock group Queen: The show must go on!

#### To Hell with Prophets

Before asking about the political consequences of such structures, it must be made clear that the issues addressed here are only the tip of the iceberg, and that many aspects have not been considered, for example, the scientifically proven health risks from electro-smog when using UMTS networks (mobile phones).<sup>6</sup> So what does a critical consideration of the ecological consequences of the information society lead to, and what remains to be done?

First, let us recall in this context the *Divine Comedy* by the great 14<sup>th</sup> century poet *Dante Alighieri*. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Canto of the first book, he simply sends all prophets to Hell, where they can only move forwards with their heads turned backwards: "See how he walks with his head twisted backwards, because he thought he saw so far ahead." In other words: The prognostic chatter of self-appointed prophets like Marshall McLuhan, Nicholas Negroponte, Bill Gates and numerous others must be socially denigrated. To put it another way: It is an urgent matter of survival to demand an interdisciplinary and anticipative appraisal of the consequences of technology at the point when it is emerging, and to then have it implemented, practically, politically and legally. Otherwise the mechanisms described here will be perpetuated and speeded up with each new future technology. The most recent example of this is nano-technology, which is being subsidised with gigantic sums of money, yet whose health risks – the human body's lack of immunity against objects the size of a billionth part of a meter... (10<sup>-9</sup> m) – are only now starting to be taken into account, after about twenty years of uncritical promotion.

Second, the current financial and economic crisis teaches something that any critical mind already knew: The market is destined to fail as a regulatory authority in many conflict situations. Just as the Japanese legislator prohibits inefficient washing machines and the EU Commission certain inefficient light bulbs as of 2009, so numerous computer products must simply be prohibited. It can no longer be accepted that technology companies privatize profits, while the general public has to pay the ecological follow-up costs.

Third, various actions are conceivable which could increase political pressure on companies and governments to finally act. Mention should be made here of the environmental ranking undertaken by Greenpeace, which publishes a list every quarter naming and castigating electronic goods manufacturers based on the quantity of dangerous substances in their products, or else the campaign for fairly-produced computers by the two Swiss development aid church organisations, *Brot für alle* and *Fastenopfer*.

Fourth, journalists specialising in the theme environmental protection – which is not well developed in Germany at all! – should intensify their efforts. A beacon in this context is the Ghanaian journalist *Mike Anane*, born 1962, president of the Ghanaian League of Environmental Journalists, author of a book about environmental journalism, and unwelcome critic of his own government's lax environmental policy.

Fifth, the theorem of a dematerialised New Economy, indeed of a knowledge society, must be critically questioned. On closer inspection, the so-called New Economy turns out to be a prolongation of the old capitalist economy, with its strong footing in an exploitative handling of material and natural goods, all of which are finite. Once again, the emperor is standing around completely naked again!

Finally, a radical, ethically and politically rethinking of all policies is necessary, of the kind already demanded in 1990 by the Catholic theologian *Hans Küng* in his famous book "Projekt Weltethos". At the time, Küng presented five safety rules for future policies:<sup>7</sup>

1. Problem-solving rule: A lot of technological progress creates greater problems that it solves.
2. Burden-of-proof rule: Whoever initiates a technological innovation must prove that it causes no social, cultural or ecological damage.

## Nanoparticles and Ultrafine Particles as Health Hazards

### Nanoparticles (NP) and ultrafine particles (UFP) are mainly inhaled

An important aspect of the nanoparticles/ultrafine particles is the translocation, i.e. the ability to penetrate fabrics. Scientists could prove that nanoparticles/ultrafine particles reach the blood system via the alveoli after being inhaled. It was also shown in experiments that nanoparticles can enter the body through the skin as well as the olfactory epithelium, from where they travel along nerve fibers directly into the central nervous system.

So far no research findings have been published about employees whose specific occupational illnesses could have been explained by an exposure to nanoparticles in the context of nanotechnology. However, references exist that illnesses caused by nanoparticles could develop later, if appropriate preventive measures are not taken:

- Experimental research and animal experiments documented inflammatory reactions to nanoparticles within the alveoli and other parts of the respiratory system. Among other things lung fibrosis (an increase of connective tissue in the lung) was shown in animal experiments after an exposure to nanoparticles.
- Environmental medicine proved a link between the exposure to fine and ultrafine particles and inflammatory reactions of the mucous membranes of the nose, the lower

respiratory system and the alveoli. Asthma patients can be affected unfavorably and allergy predisposition can be increased. Besides that we know that there is a link between the environmental impact of fine particles and cardiovascular diseases; this concerns the frequency of illnesses and the number of deaths from myocardial infarctions and other cardiovascular diseases. To what extent the same applies to nanoparticles remains to be clarified.

- *Carbon nanotubes* (CNT), a special form of nanoparticles, have structural similarities with fibrous types of dust like asbestos, for example. Considering fiber geometry, doubts were expressed that CNT could cause effects similar to those of asbestos. But a recently published experimental research paper suggests a carcinogenic effect of CNT in animals. Nanotubes assimilated into the abdominal cavity caused inflammatory changes similar to those of asbestos and mesothelioma – malignant tumours of the peritoneum – in an experiment with mice. Whether CNT must generally be classified as carcinogenic and if so, in which dose and with which fiber geometry and biopersistence, remains one of the open questions for the assessment of the health hazards employees in nanotechnology face.

The effect of nanoparticles/ultrafine particles compared to larger particles of the same chemical composition is different, i.e. biologic activity depends on the size of the particle. Nanoparticles/ultrafine particles have a tendency to agglomerate, which makes them lose their specific nano-characteristics. On the surface of nanoparticles/ultrafine particles, hazardous materials can be adsorbed and be transported into the cells by nanoparticles acting as a Trojan horse. Nanoparticles/ultrafine particles have, due to their small diameter, a large surface but a small mass. Measurements based on the mass weight (gram per cubic meter) are therefore misleading. For the assessment of the health hazard and the definition of tolerable threshold values, we have to take the numbers of particles, the particle surface, their chemical composition and other parameters like the formation of *Reactive Oxygen Species* (ROS) into consideration. •

Source: suva (Swiss accident insurance agency)  
17 March 2009

Information for media experts:

Dr. med. Marcel Jost, Suva, head physician industrial medicine, Suva, Fluhmattstrasse 1, 6002 Luzern, Tel. +41 41 419 53 94, marcel.jost@suva.ch

## War Preparations in Times of the Cruellest Emergency Situation for the People all over the World...

*bh. Obama* granted a billion-budget, which is needed to fully implement the plans of his predecessor. NASA can put their further activity for the study of space into action, global leadership is to be established on the moon with the help of a military-strategic space station. The moon, however, is only a stopover on the way to Mars, as *James Fletcher*, a former NASA administrator, states. In co-operation with Italy and China, antimatter detectors are installed on the moon among other devices.

This report, recently published in the "Corriere della Sera" certainly pleases all those, who are directly or indirectly involved in the large war machinery. Various branches of science will be involved, beginning with studies on the effect of cosmic radiation on the organism, or the study of the possibilities of preparing

food in such a way that it is edible under Moon/Mars conditions, or making experiments with drive systems of all kinds, beginning with the use of antimatter on a large scale etc.

In times of the most severe financial crisis, we witness a billion-expenditure for such projects. How is this to be understood? The military machinery has never worried about terrestrial emergency situations of individuals or of whole peoples. Its premises are based on total war; that is its concept. And by helping the technological-mental elite with all our universities and technical universities to manufacture ever more refined forms of the destruction of our planet earth and its inhabitants, we are part of the war machinery.

For the sake of completeness, we have to mention that it was the *Hitler* regime

with its best physicists and technicians who were the precursors of projects intending to conquer space. Anti-gravitation, i.e. the possibility of abolishing gravity, was investigated. They were searching for rock bottom energy. The North Pole and the South Pole are once again important factors for such projects. The magnetic field of the earth serves to perform various experiments, and they are not very nice, when it is about the heating of the ionosphere. HAARP, which was established in former times only in Alaska, will now be stationed in Europe. Experts in history are not surprised that the "best recipes" of the Nazis are now realized; overall, there were several thousand patents of German physicists and technicians, which were seized by the victorious allies after 1945. •

3. Common-welfare rule: The interests of common welfare have priority over individual interests.
4. Urgency rule: The more urgent value (the survival of one man or of humanity) has priority over a higher value (the self-fulfilment of one man or a certain group).
5. Ecology rule: The ecological system, which may not be destroyed, has priority over the socio-system (survival is more important than a better living). •

<sup>1</sup> Quoted after: *Computers and the Environment*, ed. by Kuehr, Ruediger and Williams, Eric, Dordrecht and London: Kluwer 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Wichterich, Christa: *Die globalisierte Frau. Berichte aus der Zukunft der Ungleichheit*, Reinbek: Rowohlt 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Brigden, K; Labunska, I.; Santillo, D. Und Walters, A.: *Cutting Edge Contamination. A study of environmental pollution during the manufacture of electronic products*, Amsterdam: Greenpeace International 2007 (<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/cutting-edge-contamination-a>).

<sup>4</sup> [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Publication-Download](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Publication-Download)

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Bitala, Michaela: "Im Höllenfeuer der Hightech-Welt", in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung Wissen*, October 2008, pp. 56-63.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Stewart, William: *Mobile Phones and Health. Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (IEGMP)*, Oxford: DITCON 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Küng, Hans: *Projekt Weltethos*, Munich: Piper 1990, pp. 74-75.

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# Función e importancia del potasio para el cuerpo humano

## Posibles efectos de una elevada absorción de potasio-40 radiactivo

por Dr. Andreas Bau y Dr. Hans Könitzer

Desde febrero de 2009, se dispone de los resultados de los análisis de muestras de suelo procedente de Serbia realizadas por el ingeniero H. W. Gabriel y el Dr. D. Schalch. Ahí se apreciaron cambios notables en la composición isotópica del potasio. En comparación con el potasio natural, se apreció una proporción 100 veces más elevada de potasio-40 radiactivo.

El potasio se encuentra en la naturaleza en forma de compuesto de tres isótopos: potasio-39, potasio-40 y potasio-41, en una proporción del 93,94%, 0,0117% y 6,73%, respectivamente. Es decir, que el potasio-40 radiactivo – fuente de radiación beta y gamma con una vida media muy larga – tiene un porcentaje muy bajo: 0,0117%.

Las muestras de suelo se estudiaron mediante espectrometría gamma y análisis químicos; los resultados son muy fiables y reproducibles. Lo llamativo es el alto porcentaje de potasio-40, hasta 100 veces más elevado que en el potasio natural. Si consideramos que una eventual diferencia en la composición del suelo sólo puede provocar un cambio mínimo (de un uno por mil) en la composición isotópica natural, hay que preguntarse el motivo de una concentración tan elevada de potasio-40.

El potasio-40 no aparece como resultado de la desintegración del torio o del uranio. Esto excluye al uranio como origen del potasio-40. Éste sólo puede proceder de la transformación de otro elemento, debida a la radiación. Así, por ejemplo, del calcio-40 no radiactivo se obtiene potasio-40 radiactivo mediante el bombardeo de neutrones. Como el análisis de las muestras indica también una elevada concentración de otros isótopos radiactivos como el carbono-14 y el berilio-10, se puede concluir que los isótopos mencionados se han formado por reacciones nucleares que tuvieron lugar allí mismo. Esto apunta al uso de armas que provocan tales reacciones nucleares (armas atómicas tácticas).

¿Qué peligros para el organismo humano se derivan de una absorción elevada de potasio-40 radiactivo? A continuación, exponemos en primer lugar los fundamentos médicos de la importancia del potasio.

### Función e importancia del potasio para el cuerpo humano

Nos referimos ahora al potasio natural, al que ingerimos a diario a través de los alimentos. El potasio se presenta en la naturaleza sólo como catión (ion positivo). Es el catión más importante de todas las células de los organismos humano y animal, e indispensable para la función celular. Productos alimenticios ricos en potasio son las bananas, la carne, los albaricoques, los kiwis, las grosellas, las patatas, la coliflor, el repollo, el hinojo, las espinacas y el apio; también los hongos y las nueces.

El cuerpo humano sano es capaz de autorregularse y tolera muy bien una ingesta elevada de potasio con los alimentos. Es decir, que una elevada ingesta de potasio – por comer muchas bananas, por ejemplo – no provoca un aumento del contenido de potasio en las células. Otra cosa sería si ingiriéramos potasio cuya composición natural se hubiera modificado debido a una alta concentración de potasio-40.<sup>1</sup> Ese potasio-40 que se encuentra en el suelo en gran cantidad como consecuencia de las guerras lo absorbemos a través de los alimentos. Pero también puede llegar al cuerpo humano también a través de nubes de polvo.

Es un hecho de la química que los isótopos de un elemento químico no pueden diferenciarse químicamente entre sí. La bioquímica del metabolismo de humanos, animales y plantas no puede por tanto distinguir entre el potasio-39, el potasio-40 y el potasio-41. El organismo asimila la mezcla de isótopos que se le ofrece. Le resulta imposible separar el potasio radiactivo del no radiactivo en los procesos metabólicos.

Es una cruel y conocida realidad que las guerras se utilizan continuamente para probar armas nuevas. Y, aun cuando en este sector se guarda un estricto secreto, los debates públicos son mal recibidos y a veces reprimidos por todos los medios, cualquiera puede entender que los innumerables científicos e ingenieros al servicio de la industria armamentista no se ganan el sueldo haciendo simplemente remodelaciones de armas viejas.

Sin embargo, esto no puede seguir ocultándose. En Iraq, en Somalia, en Serbia y en Kosovo, en Afganistán, en Líbano y en Gaza, en todas partes donde EE.UU. y sus aliados han librado guerras o suministrado armas, han sembrado no sólo la muerte y destrucción inmediatas. De todos esos países llegan noticias alarmantes sobre heridas y enfermedades desconocidas, o acerca de un aumento nunca visto de enfermedades cancerosas, o informes sobre daños genéticos y malformaciones en los recién nacidos.

En el territorio de la ex Yugoslavia, fue llamativa la aparición de ciertas enfermedades muy poco después de los bombardeos. Otro hecho notable es el aumento masivo de tumores múltiples: las personas contraen no sólo un tipo de cáncer, sino dos o tres a la vez.

Entre tanto, hemos ido adquiriendo algunos conocimientos; por ejemplo, sobre el llamado uranio empobrecido. El polvo de uranio, que, por choque o combustión, se libera en forma de nanopartículas y atraviesa barreras biológicas como la hematoencefálica o la bar-

raera placentaria, acaba penetrando en las células, con graves consecuencias radiotóxicas y quimiotóxicas.

Pero el análisis de las muestras de suelo serbio ha arrojado más resultados. No sólo se ha encontrado uranio y productos derivados de su desintegración, sino también otros elementos o sustancias radiactivas. Esos descubrimientos plantean cuestiones muy serias: por ejemplo, en relación con la composición isotópica que se observó en el potasio, que no aparece en la naturaleza y no está relacionada con los productos derivados del uranio, pero que es un efecto conocido a través de las pruebas atómicas. ¿Qué significa esto? ¿Qué armas se han utilizado aquí? Después del bombardeo de la estación nacional de televisión, en el centro de Belgrado, donde murieron 16 trabajadores, dos de los 16 cadáveres no aparecieron por ningún lado. Se “evaporaron” literalmente, según informa la película “Yugoslavia: la guerra evitable”.<sup>\*</sup> El calor producido por la munición utilizada tuvo que ser inmenso, de tal magnitud que no hay casi otra explicación posible que la utilización de armas radiactivas o una explosión atómica a pequeña escala. ¿Se probó aquí una nueva generación de armas atómicas?

En vista de los problemas de salud en los países afectados, similares a los observados en los soldados de EE.UU. y de la OTAN que han regresado a casa, el derecho internacional obliga a los países que han utilizado esas armas a dar las explicaciones oportunas. La humani-

dad tiene derecho a saber qué está sucediendo aquí y qué implicaciones tiene sobre sus medios de subsistencia. Y sin demora. De lo contrario, todo lo que se diga acerca del derecho, los derechos humanos y la democracia, pero también sobre la ecología y la protección del medio ambiente, se convierte en farsa.

Nos encontramos aquí ante claros crímenes de guerra, crímenes cada vez más evidentes, y quien contribuye a encubrirlos se convierte en cómplice. Esta es una consecuencia que la comunidad internacional extrajo de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y que estableció con las correspondientes reglas del derecho internacional. Todos los gobernantes y mandatarios de la alianza bélica son directamente responsables.

El artículo de esta página explica los efectos en el organismo del radiactivo potasio-40. Muestra, entre otras cosas, cómo destruye los mecanismos de autorreparación de las células; esto es, importantes funciones defensivas del organismo contra la formación de células cancerosas. Y nos permite también hacernos una idea de los efectos de la producción y utilización de esas sustancias sobre la vida en el planeta.

Erika Vögeli

<sup>\*</sup> “Yugoslavia: the avoidable war”, USA/A 1999/2001, dirección: George Bogdanich y Martin Lettmayer. Versión en inglés, en internet: [video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5860186121153047571](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5860186121153047571) (1ª parte) [video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6371060303901674397](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6371060303901674397) (2ª parte)

### El potasio es el factor más importante de la contaminación radiactiva corporal

El 98% del potasio presente en el cuerpo se encuentra en el interior de las células, y sólo un 2% fuera de ellas. “La carga radiactiva en los seres humanos proviene sobre todo del potasio-40, y es de aproximadamente 0,2 milisievert por año. Si la concentración de potasio-40 se multiplica por cien, la carga alcanza un nivel muy preocupante (¡20mSv/a!)”.<sup>1</sup> Se comprende así que el isótopo radiactivo potasio-40, que en las zonas investigadas se encuentra multiplicado por cien, al ser transportado a las células con la ingestión de alimentos, dañe las funciones vitales del núcleo – la parte de la célula más sensible a la radiactividad – y los orgánulos de la célula, sobre todo las mitocondrias.

#### Mitocondrias:

##### la central energética de la célula

Para entender la importancia de la función de las mitocondrias, haremos una breve digresión para explicarla. Las mitocondrias son formaciones ovales de unos 300–800 nm de longitud y unos 100 nm de espesor, y son, junto con el núcleo, los orgánulos más grandes de la célula. Están recubiertas de una membrana doble y se encuentran en las proximidades del núcleo celular. Las mitocondrias tienen un ADN propio (ácido desoxirribonucleico, el portador de la información genética), y disponen por tanto de la capacidad de sintetizar sus propias proteínas. Son el “aparato respiratorio” de las células y su función principal es la síntesis de ATP (adenosín trifosfato), el portador más importante de energía para todos los procesos metabólicos. Por eso se las llama también la “central energética” de las células.

#### Daños en la autorreparación de las células

La energía en forma de ATP es necesaria, entre otras cosas, para la producción del antioxidante glutatión (GSH) contenido en la parte soluble del líquido celular. El GSH es

el sistema primario de reparación de la mayor parte de las estructuras celulares que han sido dañadas por radicales libres. Esos radicales libres son partículas químicas con gran poder reactivo, y la radiactividad (radiación ionizante) provoca su formación.

El GSH tiene además una función protectora contra las mutaciones químicas (modificaciones de la información genética producida por ciertas sustancias), que representan un peligro para las células. Se considera que esta función antioxidante del GSH protege contra el cáncer, ya que neutraliza los efectos de los radicales libres. Pero sin el portador de energía ATP no se puede producir suficiente GSH, y el mecanismo de reparación de las células deja de funcionar.<sup>2</sup> El potasio-40 que llega a las células a través de los alimentos daña el núcleo celular, así como la síntesis de ATP en las mitocondrias y, con ello, el proceso de reparación.

#### Fallos en la eliminación de metales pesados

El GSH cumple otra función importante: ayuda a las células a deshacerse de metales pesados tóxicos. Los metales pesados se ligan al GSH y son transportados desde la célula hasta la vesícula biliar, donde son eliminados. Ese proceso cumple una doble función: por un lado, puede liberar a las células de excedentes de GSH y, por otro, desintoxicarlas de metales pesados.<sup>2</sup> Se entiende así por qué un deterioro de la insustituible función de las mitocondrias debido a la presencia de sustancias radiactivas, por ejemplo potasio-40, tiene consecuencias tan devastadoras.

#### Peligrosa variación de la concentración de electrolitos

El ATP proveniente de la “central energética” de las células es necesario en otra función imprescindible para la vida humana. Los líquidos corporal y celular son, debido a los iones que poseen, electrolitos. La presencia de ciertos iones en las membranas biológicas de las células y orgánulos celulares produce

en estas membranas potenciales eléctricos indispensables para las funciones vitales. En este sentido, es de fundamental importancia sobre todo la relación entre los iones de sodio y los de potasio. En el interior de la célula hay más potasio, en el exterior más sodio. El equilibrio entre el sodio y el potasio se mantiene por medio del efecto combinado de la bomba sodio-potasio y la permeabilidad de la membrana celular. La bomba sodio-potasio es un sistema enzimático que demanda un alto aporte de energía: consume de un 30% a un 70% del adenosín trifosfato (ATP) que se forma en el cuerpo. A la importancia fundamental del ATP nos hemos referido ya con anterioridad al explicar la función de las mitocondrias. Sin un abastecimiento suficiente de ATP, se producen fallos en la bomba sodio-potasio y alteraciones de la permeabilidad de la membrana celular. Estas perturbaciones provocan finalmente peligrosas variaciones de la concentración de electrolitos en el espacio intra y extracelular, y producen, entre otras consecuencias, un cambio en el volumen de la célula.

Estas explicaciones ponen de manifiesto la importancia fundamental del potasio para el mantenimiento de las funciones vitales del organismo. E igualmente ponen de manifiesto el peligro mortal que para los procesos vitales representa el potasio-40 radiactivo: un subproducto de un arma y una guerra absolutamente inhumanas.

(Traducción *Horizons et débats*, revisado por Javier Fdez. Retenaga)

<sup>1</sup> Ing. H. W. Gabriel, Dr. D. Schalch. *Gammastrahlung, Energie der Beta-Strahler, Prüfung von Veränderungen der natürlichen Isotopenverhältnisse* (Gammaespectrometría, energía de las radiaciones, estudio de los cambios en la relación isotópica natural). *Horizons et débats*, nº. 13 del 6 de abril de 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Dra. Rosalie Bertell. *Berufsrisiken des Krieges* (Riesgos profesionales de la guerra). *Zeit-Fragen*, nº. 41, del 11 de octubre de 2006.

# The Utopian Ideas of the Latin American Subpopulations Living in Geneva

by Dr. Emmanuel Broillet\*

Dr. Emmanuel Broillet, cultural anthropologist from Geneva, accomplished a highly topical scientific study after completing field studies on the immigration of Latin American groups from Melanesia and Central America to the city of Geneva. The study was submitted to the University of Fribourg/Switzerland as habilitation treatise. On the one hand, in his research Dr. Broillet examined the problem, how this specific group of immigrants presented and integrated themselves in their new 'homeland'; on the other hand he investigated into the question which mental and cultural treasures the Latin American immigrants had retained from their own Indian culture despite enforced emigration from their country of origin. He calls these resources that are still vivid among them "utopian thought", which they would not allow to be cured from even after 500 years of terrible ethnic exanguination by colonial history. These resources have been manifest until today in the political emancipation movements in Latin America. The editorial team of "Current Concerns" is pleased to publish the results of this valuable research work in several parts and to contribute to the development of intercultural understanding and dialogue from a scientific point of view as well as to put the fundamental meaning of the Latin American culture up for discussion.

In the following, I present a summary of my habilitation treatise at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). It is a socio-cultural study of the utopian body of thought of Latin American minorities living in the city of Geneva. It consists of an introduction, six parts and a conclusion. I have dedicated the last four years to the realization of an anthropological study, which is aligned to certain political and socio-cultural aspects of the present. I studied the utopian ideas of the Latin Americans not only in the context of globalization and international migration, but also and particularly in connection with the effects of modern age, with ethical questions and the colonizing of the American continent by the Europeans.

Now let us look at the problem that was investigated. Why did I choose this topic?



A marketplace in La Paz, Bolivia. After centuries of colonial exploitation and humiliation the Latin American population is about to bethink of their own strength and to control their fate. Thus they make use of their own inherent values including the basic value of a living community spirit. (picture keystone)

This anthropological research project is part of my postdoctoral studies respectively my habilitation treatise, which I will defend at the University of Fribourg. Apart from that, the research project falls into a time of intensive debate on the nature of civil society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Debates are taking place both on international level and within national authorities, governments, non-governmental organizations and Latin American academic institutions. Since the processes of globalization are today structuring the transnational (inter-state) community via the existing diasporas, anthropological studies are being requested, which may illuminate the use of the new relations among the peoples. If the economic, political and communicative integration is being extended to the five continents, the same is true for the formation of transnational subjects and variety of communities.

All over Latin America, the ongoing discussions on neo-liberalism and post-modernism are seen with enthusiasm by international agencies and national governments. "Humane development" and "fair growth" have therefore become leitmotifs for the realization of new forms of negotiation within those organizations that work on the problem of social differences and development. At the same time, however, post-modernism includes an intensified exploitation of immigrated workers, racist oppression, the discrimination and exclusion of women. We may not forget about those living on the forgotten side of history when we exchange arguments about neo-liberalism and postmodernism, about social classes, cultures and economic systems.

What the autochthonous Latin American population believed to be the history of Latin America is indeed nothing else than the history of their countries' colonization. The history of colonization, which they regarded as their own, increased their powerlessness, their self-devaluation; it favored everything in the outward world and at the same time nourished the rejection of the present, so that their histories are hardly accessible to historians. The usually applied methodology enables us to get access merely to the colonial historiography.

The historiography of Latin American natives ignores data and listed facts. With regard to their history only if they look closely at and accept their Indian nature and culture, will they be able to penetrate these impenetrable zones of silence. In this sense, their literature is historical. Their vision of being

Indian, which they place at the center of all creativity, enables them to reconsider their existence, thereby realizing the mechanisms of alienation, and above all recognizing its actual beauty. This point of view relieves them from the load of their historical chaos. Owing to this vision, they find their way back to the "magma", which characterizes them. It releases them also from the anti-colonial literary militancy, so that while they are studying themselves they will no longer be guided by ideology, but by the desire to recognize themselves in their origins.

The special wealth of the members of ethnic Latin American groups is their mastery of several languages: the native language as a starting point, then English, Spanish and/or Portuguese as languages of colonization and now French as the language of their choice in Geneva. These languages are one of the sources of their powerful richness in expression, as the Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Nobel Prize Laureate in 1982) pointed out. Starting from these language varieties he was able to introduce a poetry which marked a complete breach with what had been valid up to then; he did so by connecting the highest political requirements with deeply rooted poetry. Today, language is the antidote to the historical colonial domination, a language, which is able to express, who the Latin American natives are, their presence in this world as well as their deep rootedness.

One of the restrictions to Latin American creativity is the obsessive preoccupation with the universal. This is a syndrome of the colonized people; they are afraid to be nothing else than these devaluated persons and they are ashamed of wanting to be what their masters are. Thus, the colonized person – in highest subtlety – accepts the values of the latter as his reference points of an ideal world. Here are the origins of the Latin Americans' "outwardness", i.e. his orientation towards the outward world as well as their aesthetic ship wreckage. Nevertheless, the Latin American literature ridicules this outwardness, this artificial orientation towards the western values. The autochthonous want to deepen their Indian culture and their Indian nature in full consciousness of the world. To put it briefly, they want to think the world (itself). This "complex thought" or "utopian" idea can help and must help them thereby, because by establishing bonds with one another, their view extends immensely.

Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico, just to name a few, are five countries, which are regarded as the spearhead of the indigene movements. They have close links with other movement from democratic nations. In my research work, I will thus examine the establishment of a transnational community amidst the current dominating and globalizing economic and political model. The concentration of ethnic minorities in the countries of Latin America, which were originally Spanish and Portuguese (Brazil) colonies, as well as the definitions of difference and development favour international agendas. Increasing acting and the power of social indigene movements and the political organizations plead for transnational processes as well as political ideas of an indigene identity. Realistically seen, one cannot say any more that "los indios" represent socio-economically isolated groups. On the contrary, the eloquence of a "transnational" native allows him to take part in the international exchange of ideas among persons at conferences, with the help of electronic communication and other

sources of information.

Concerning the choice of my topic and the research perspectives, this study examines the negotiated relations between the national participants, i.e. the Swiss – whose aim is it to meet the "other" with respect and integrate the immigrated people and (thus) defend national ethnic or religious interests – and the members of the Latin American groups. The primary interest of this research is the way, in which the Latin American Diaspora responds and reacts in view of the present development. It seems right to assume that this Diaspora differs from other transnational communities in Geneva with respect to its social positioning in the guest city.

I will finish with a delicate remark from an article entitled "The Battle for Latin America's Souls" published in "The Economist" of 20 May 2006 and quote Richard Nixon who gave Donald Rumsfeld the following advice: "Latin America does not matter (...) people don't give one damn about Latin America." I want to illustrate thus a certain attitude which is the result of 500 years of colonization and modern age. This attitude continues with the recall of the bloody war which took place in Salvador, in Central America, between 1979 and 1991, and in which the US actively participated.

Up to then, "The Economist" writes, "Nixon was right". However, the world continues to develop and nowadays journalists from all over the world concentrate on Latin America. Without any doubt, there is some fundamental change. Is it due to liberal democracy and the capitalist market which is at stake due to the economic crisis, as "The Economist" assumes? Or is it attributed to other values, to the utopias that I worked out in my study? I will try to present that in my next contributions to *Current Concerns*. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

\* As a cultural anthropologist, Dr Emmanuel Broillet works together with the international Bureau of Education (IBE, UNESCO) in Geneva, and recently also with the Center for European Higher Education (for Australia and Switzerland). He graduated with a master's degree at the University of Queensland in Australia and finished his doctorate at the University of Berne. Since the early 1990s, Dr Broillet accomplished ethnographic studies in Melanesia (New Caledonia) as well as in Central America (El Salvador). His research included the development of a new theory of the dynamics among the members of a group as well as of the dynamics which enables change and progress.

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## Current Concerns

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# Djibouti – Bridge between African and Arabian States

## The Horn of Africa (part IV)

by Prof. Dr. Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo

pk. From time to time in the past, *Current Concerns* published several analyses on the great African trouble spots by Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo. In his previously published articles, the emigrated Congolese historian commented on the complex situation at the Great Horn of Africa. Here, crises have become very frequent of late, first and foremost the Somalian and the Sudanese crisis. The Great Horn is of paramount importance with respect to the geopolitical reorganization of the world directed by the United States of America, an importance which the local population had to pay for with years of turmoil, undermined state institutions, and un-speakable sufferings of civilians. For driven by their geopolitical interests the players do not shrink back even from genocide when it comes to redistributing the maps. The author, who is closely acquainted with the effects of this strategy, summarizes the modern colonial and post-colonial history of each country and points out the conflicting priorities and their impact at present. This results in a riveting overall picture which, however, could not be more alarming. The many acting forces may be complex, but the overall game is soberingly simple and brutal: Wherever national and regional interests stand in the way of geostrategists, a bloody war will crush everything to free the way for profiteers pursuing hegemony and looking for cheap resources. This explains the suffering, but is also an urgent call for action to all those unwilling to sell their sense of justice.

Under the circumstances, Djibouti is the most stable country on the Horn of Africa, but it is also the country that is the most depending on its former colonial power, i. e. France.

In strategic position, Djibouti dominates the Bab el Mandeb, the strait between the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Yet before the Berlin International Africa Conference of November 1984 to February 1985 (Berlin Conference), the French established themselves there and occupied the port of Obock with the aim of commanding a naval base on the sea route between the Suez Canal and India and of breasting the British presence in Aden, on the other side of the strait of Bab el Mandeb. After the Berlin Conference, this French settlement grew rapidly and it changed its original rank of protectorate (9 February 1888) to that of a colony (20 May 1896)

### The Colonisation (1862–1977)

Although the French had been present in the area, they did not establish their colony, which they called "Côte Française des Somalis" until 1896. Like all French colonies, it was given a direct political administration. In this system, which was the rule in sub-Saharan Africa, "assimilation was the only practicable way towards development, but this goal could not be reached, except by a very small minority of indigenous Africans".<sup>1</sup> When, after World War II, this policy was updated because of the changes taking place in the colonial empires, the French colony successively became a member of first the Union Française (1946) and then the Communauté Française (1958). While three French colonies gained their independence between 1956 and 1958 (Morocco, Tunisia, and Guinea) and the majority of the other colonies did so in 1960 (with the exception of Algeria, which only gained its independence in 1962, after the gruelling eight years long Algerian War from 1954 to 1962), so-called French-Somalia had to wait for almost twenty more years for its independence.

Why this long delay? Possibly it was in consequence of the slogan which had entrenched itself in many minds and which said that in certain cases African nationalism was not tantamount to the demand for full independence, but wished for an adaptation of the colonial situation.

In the year 1967 the status of French Somalia changed once again, and it became the "French Overseas-Territory of the Afars and Issas" (named after the two largest

demographic components): "The population is composed of around 60% of Somalis (of whom the Issa make up about 40%) and of 35% of Afar of Ethiopian provenance; both groups are Muslims."<sup>2</sup> This territory was released to independence as the last of the French colonies in Africa, namely on 27 June 1977 under the name of "Republic of Djibouti", with the capital Djibouti.

### The first years of independency and their consequences (1977–2008)

First of all, let us take a closer look at domestic policy. Facing the question, which system of government the new independent state should prefer to choose, Dschibuti had opted for a semi-presidential regime. The first President, *Gouled Aption*, (an Issa) tried to have his own political party *Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progrès* (RPP) (People's Movement for Progress) registered as the only one. When elections took place, he was replaced by his nephew, *Ismaël Guellen*, the party's official candidate, who has remained in power from 2000 until today.

This political monopoly situation of one party could not be accepted by Dschibuti's other political leaders, in particular, by the Afar who saw themselves as marginalized. Tensions grew from the resulting frustrations and finally led to the war between the Afar and Issa (1991). The Afar formed an insurgent army under the banner of the *Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et de la Démocratie*, *FRUD* (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy). They wanted to fight against a government which, from their northern bastions, favoured one ethnic group only, namely the Issa.

The government predominantly consisting of Issas, tried to put down the rebellion, but without any success. Due to the intervention of France a first peace treaty was signed in December 1994. In 2000, both ethnic groups agreed on sharing the power, which included the strengthening of the multi-party system that had already been introduced in 1992, the election system and the introduction of an ethnic quota regulation.

As a conclusion, we may say that the post-colonial history of the Republic Djibouti was dominated by the tensions between the Issa and the Afar on one hand and the conflict between Islam and Christianity on the other. Regarding the confessions, we can say that Christianity, meant as an exogenous power (Europe and Ethiopia), had also difficulties to implant itself in a country which was to a great extent (more than 95%) populated by religious communities of Sunni observance.<sup>3</sup>

So, we are facing a hegemonic form of Islam which is also sometimes intolerant and a Christianity whose members are a minority and whose leaders and followers have to take a low position, especially today when the Islamic integrism plays a major role. Finally, a further significant fact is that – because of the internal conflicts in Ethiopia and Somalia – many refugees have settled in this country and are adding fuel to the fire in the already difficult relationship between Issa and Afar of Ethiopian origin. Lawlessness is rampant and unemployment resulting from the situation are further facts which have to be considered in order to understand this special socio-political landscape. There are four languages in use: French, Arabic, Somali, and Afar. From the economic point of view, Djibouti profits from its location at a crossroad of the economic streams on land and sea as well as from the transit of international goods on the axes Africa-Asia and Europe-Asia. Furthermore, it is a link between Ethiopia and Eritrea on the one hand and between Africa and the Middle East on the other. The majority of the population lives a nomadic life or are peasants. We will now cast a glance at the areas of conflict with regard to foreign policy.

### Foreign Policy

This point is about the relationships between the Republic of Djibouti and its neighbour-

ing states and the European centres of power. First, let us consider the relationship between Djibouti and Somalia. A conflict of borders has been settled. This does not change the fact though that Djibouti feels potentially threatened by the Somali nationalism. However, Djibouti has put itself at disposal for negotiations with the war waging parties of the region by especially engaging itself for peace making in Somalia.

Next Djibouti and Ethiopia: No considerable tensions between both countries have yet come up. They maintain normal interstate relations, especially trade relations. In this respect, both states have established mixed commissions on governmental level as well as on local administration level which are supposed to settle daily conflicts and problems in border areas. A particularly severe problem are the conflicting points of view concerning the Somali conflict: Ethiopia opted for intervention, whereas Djibouti tried hard to play the role of the mediator. Therefore, Ethiopia accuses Djibouti to play the game of the war lords; this is probably because of the existing ethnic affinities between some Djibouti political leaders and certain Somali war lords (Issa).

Next there are the relations to Eritrea. They are shadowed by border conflicts. In the same way as Morocco claimed historical rights on Mauritania at a certain time (between 1956 and 1963), Eritrea is nourishing similar claims with respect to Djibouti. Therefore, the armies of both countries hold each other in check. As to Djibouti's the relationship to France, Djibouti has opted for the maintenance of privileged strings to the former colonial power. Not only is France Djibouti's most important trading partner, France is also maintaining a big military base in Djibouti, as it was the case for Chad and the Central African Republic until recently. Officially "the French intervention is very limited and restricts itself only to the surveillance of borders in order to prevent any interference by the Ethiopian, Somali or Eritrean neighbours who themselves are in very unstable political conditions."<sup>4</sup>

It even seems that Guellen – since he is in power – has strengthened the relations to France and has positioned himself on the side of Ethiopia with respect to the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Simultaneously, he gave green light to the reinforcement of the French military presence in Djibouti. It is obvious that this military presence has a deterrent effect, especially with respect to the country's security. The result was that this small country, located between the Red Sea, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, is able to maintain its position and does not slip off into completely unstable circumstances.

Regarding the relationship between Djibouti and the other non-African powers, it can be stated that they have improved considerably with respect to the United States of America during the last years: "The USA have been maintaining very positive relations to Djibouti since long and this partnership has continuously deepened. The harbour of Djibouti is increasingly called at by American ships. Since 2002, Djibouti has been the stage for manoeuvres of the Combined Joint Task Force at the Horn of Africa regularly, which has had a positive effect on Djibouti and other nations at the Horn of Africa. Djibouti also plays a growing role in international diplomacy as a bridge to other countries at the Horn of Africa and between African and Arab states."<sup>5</sup>



The Horn of Africa includes Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia. We sometimes speak of the Great Horn of Africa, which comprises also Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. This is a vast region, which is still in the focus of the superpowers whose interest has recently been attracted by the fact that vast oil reserves have been discovered (Darfur in Sudan and Albert Lake on the Congolese border). Moreover, all the great powers with geostrategic ambitions have been aware for centuries, that those who installed themselves in the Horn of Africa monitor the shipping routes from Suez to Asia and at the same time control the Middle East on a military level.

On top of this, it may be one of the particularities of Djibouti that it holds a key-position in the battle against al-Qaeda-terrorism in the Pacific and the Persian Gulf since 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

"After the terror attack of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, the Djibouti army offered its help to the United States for the combat against terrorism. The *Combined Joint Task Force of the Horn of Africa* plays an important role in the battle against terrorism. It consists in diverse military and civil elements coming from different countries with the aim to end the terrorist activities. Some American troops are stationed at the barracks of Le Monier in Djibouti in order to fight the Al-Qaeda terrorists in neighbouring Yemen. The American government also sent a ship with 200 marines to Djibouti. The military forces of the US and Djibouti closely cooperate. The American forces use the naval and air-force facilities of Djibouti."<sup>6</sup> It is not a secret: The allies of the United States within the European Union (besides France, in particular Germany and Spain) deployed their civilian and military people in this Task Force based in Djibouti. Is Djibouti then an exception in this very unstable region?

Yes, when considering the facts: The transition from political and ethnical war to peace has been accomplished successfully, because it was the choice of the United States and its allies to install it as a bridge in the battle against terrorism and consequently assign to it a key-position in regional geopolitics. So Djibouti is well protected and its stability is secured by the latter, at least until new orders are given.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

<sup>1</sup> Grimal, H., *La décolonisation de 1919 à nos jours*. Paris, Editions Complexe, 1999, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Djibouti Country Afrieta Free Encyclopedia Articles at Questia.com Online Library.*

<sup>3</sup> Compare Dubois, C. et Soumile, P., *Des Chrétiens à Djibouti en terre d'islam, XIXème–XXème siècles*, Paris, Karthala, 2004

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, fr.: Histoire de Djibouti

<sup>5</sup> Cf: Knight, J., "U.S. Policy in the Horn of Africa, December 7, 2007", [www.state.gov/p/af/rfs/rm/97261.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/af/rfs/rm/97261.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Cf: "Military of Djibouti", [MapsofWorld.com](http://MapsofWorld.com)

Recommendations for further reading:

Coubba, A., *Djibouti. Une nation en otage*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1993.

Id.: *Le Mal djiboutien: Rivalités ethniques et Enjeux politiques*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996.

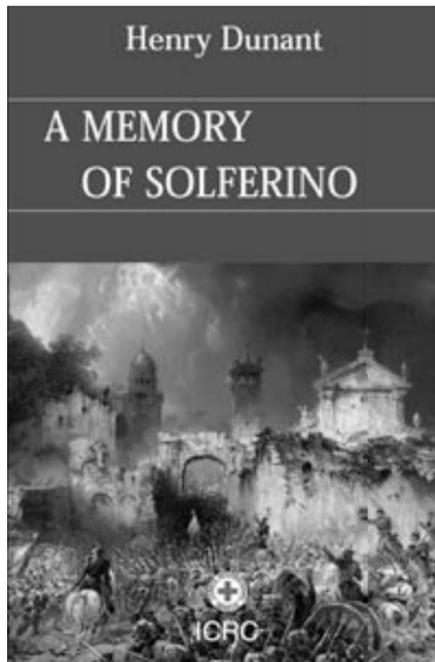
Dubois, C. et Soumile, P., *Des Chrétiens à Djibouti en Terre d'islam, XIXème–XXème Siècles*, Paris, Karthala, 2004

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# The Battle of Solferino and the ICRC – How an Inner Attitude Became a Worldwide Movement

Increasing commitment of international youth

24 June 2009 is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Solferino, a battle which should enter history like hardly any other military event before. Although not being involved in the battle at all, the Swiss traveler Henry Dunant played a crucial role there. Traveling through Lombardy, Dunant was witness to a dreadful massacre. Affected by the misery of the killed and injured, he took the initiative and founded an organisation, which was later rewarded worldwide and which is hard to imagine to do without today: The International Committee of the Red Cross.



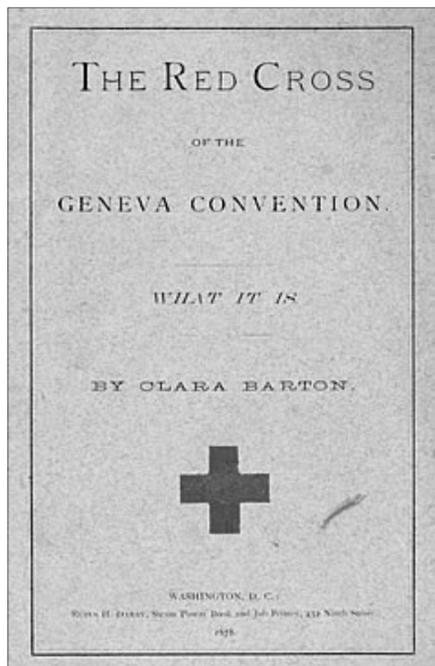
thk. At that time, on 24 June 1859, almost 300,000 soldiers stood face to face on the battleground: Austrian troops on the one side and French troops supported by Sardinian and Piedmont's soldiers on the other. The battle took 15 hours, leaving tens of thousands of dead and wounded on the battleground.

When in the evening of 24 June, the Geneva businessman Henry Dunant arrived in Solferino he was a witness to this human disaster and wrote down what he saw in his book "A Memory of Solferino": "The stillness of the night was broken by groans, by stifled sighs of anguish and suffering. Heart-rending voices kept calling for help. Who could ever describe the agonies of that fearful night!

When the sun came up on the twenty-fifth, it disclosed the most dreadful sights imaginable. Bodies of men and horses covered the battlefield; corpses were strewn over roads, ditches, ravines, thickets and fields; the approaches of Solferino were literally thick with dead."(p. 11)<sup>1</sup>

## "The International Committee for Relief to the Wounded"

When Henry Dunant returned to Geneva a few days later, he wrote down the strong im-



pressions of his experience in a moving and arousing description. Inspired by the idea that he wanted to draw a conclusion from the dreadful events he published his notes in 1862 and called the book "A Memory of Solferino", already mentioned above. He sent it to prominent personalities in politics and the military and thus launched the initiative, which later led to the establishment of the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded. In order to allow this committee to work unhindered, it needed an international consent, which all countries had to commit themselves to. Due to Henry Dunant's ceaseless efforts, the first Geneva Convention was passed as early as 1864, regulating the treatment of wounded soldiers on the battleground.

As soon as in the French-German War of 1871 the Red Cross was active. Dunant himself traveled to Paris in order to help caring for the injured. Since this time, the Red Cross has had an unrenounceable place in our societies.

**Neutrality as a condition for genuine humanity**  
Neutrality, as Switzerland laid it down in its Constitution of 1848 as the fundamental

## Events in Solferino, 23-27 June

On 24 June, 1859, Henry Dunant, a Geneva businessman travelling through Italy, witnessed the horrors of war at the Battle of Solferino. He reached out to help the wounded soldiers, regardless of which side they had fought on, and organised volunteers to provide relief. It was there that the idea of the Red Cross and Red Crescent was born. Dunant suggested that relief societies be established to care for the wounded during wartime – an idea that would lead to the world's largest humanitarian network. A century and a half later, the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement continues to protect and care for the vulnerable in 186 countries worldwide.

From 23 June to 27 June, Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers from more than 150 countries came together, in Solferino, to discuss their vision for tackling today's and tomorrow's humanitarian challenges. The meeting will result in a declaration to be presented to the international community, Swiss officials and the leadership of the Red Cross Red Crescent on 2 July. The Swiss Red Cross is organizing a group of young people who will travel from Solferino to Geneva to present a declaration, outlining their vision of today's humanitarian challenges, to Swiss authorities and representatives of the United Nations and international organisations. A torch-lit procession, following the footsteps of those who took injured soldiers from the battlefield of Solferino to the first medical outpost in Castiglione, concluded the commemorations of Solferino. Thousands of supporters marched under one call to action: Our world. Your move. Free and open to the public, the open air Humanitarian Boulevard will feature a series of activities and exhibits highlighting disaster response and preparedness, health and safety, and humanitarian values.

Geneva's famous jet d'eau will be lit in red on 24 June. Several key sites related to the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement will also be illuminated during a two week period, including the Hôtel de Ville and Musée Rath.

Source: www.icrc.org



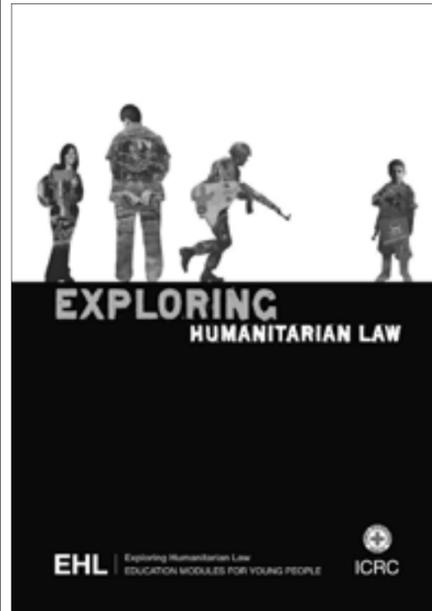
The picture shows the participants of the International Conference for Physicians in 1919 in Cannes, on the occasion of which the League of the National Red Cross Societies was founded. ISBN 92-9139-041-0

principle, is also the strict obligation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as the society was called since 1876. For Henry Dunant, this principle had been a conviction in life even before he established his international relief organisation. Helping the wounded and victims of war may not differentiate between friend and enemy, but must always be humanitarian help. In Solferino, this inner attitude attracted the attention of those women, who cared for the wounded together with Dunant. Thus he wrote:

"But the women of Castiglione, seeing that I made no distinction between nationalities, followed my example, showing the same kindness to all these men whose origins were so different, and all of whom were foreigners to them. 'Tutti fratelli', they repeated feelingly. All honour to these compassionate women, to these girls of Castiglione!"

This spirit of neutrality and thus of genuine humanity are the basic concept of the ICRC and provide it with the opportunity of being present in armed conflicts in order to work in the spirit of genuine humanity. The ICRC was intentionally established in Switzerland, since only a neutral state can offer this irrefutable basis.

Above all, we have to be aware of this special meaning of the Red Cross when we point



www.icrc.org/eng

out to its irreplaceable value and remember the Battle of Solferino 150 years ago.

## The Swiss Henry Dunant lays the foundation stone for Humanitarian International Law

The International Committee of the Red Cross considerably promoted the emergence and development of Humanitarian International Law in Henry Dunant's tradition and the awareness in people's minds. In the course of the decades, there were a variety of further developments of the Red Cross idea.

90 years ago, after the First World War in 1919, the league of the Red Cross Societies was brought into being, which was renamed into International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 1991. The idea was – similar to the League of Nations – the establishment of an organisation that works on the improvement of the health, the prevention of diseases and the relief of suffering worldwide. In 1864, Turkey signed the Geneva Convention and founded the first national organisation of the Red Crescent in 1868, which in 1929 was awarded the same status as the Red Cross in the sense of the Geneva Convention.

The advancement of Humanitarian International Law and the adoption of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions can be traced back to the initiative of the ICRC. Exactly 60 years ago, i.e. in 1949, the four Geneva Conventions were adopted and ratified by almost all states on the globe. The conventions form the core of Humanitarian International



(photo thk)

Law, which offers the fundamental humanitarian guidelines for military conflicts until today.

## Enormous commitment of the international youth

The year 2009 thus represents an anniversary year for the Red Cross in many respects: 150 years after the Battle of Solferino, 90 years after the foundation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 80 years of Geneva Convention related to the treatment of prisoners of war, 60 years after the revision and signing of the four Geneva Conventions. For this reason, different events take place, which are particularly intended to open the young generation's minds for the idea of the Red Cross and its humanitarian approach. "Our world - your move" is the motto for different events and celebrations.

The commitment of the youth concerning questions of humanity and international law are also an outcome of the different initiatives of Red Cross and Red Crescent. The numerous events around the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary offer opportunities for teachers and lecturers, to directly introduce the learners to this worthy task in order to make a contribution to more humanity and peace into our world.

<sup>1</sup> The complete book can be downloaded at [www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0361/\\$File/ICRC\\_002\\_0361\\_MEMORY\\_OF\\_SOLFERINO.PDF](http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0361/$File/ICRC_002_0361_MEMORY_OF_SOLFERINO.PDF)