

Current Concerns

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An Unmistakable No to the Metropolitan Area Strategy

by Erika Vögeli

On July 3rd the association *Metropolitan Area Zurich* was founded. In order to pacify the people it is declared an association under private law which intends to advocate the economic and general development in the area. But you can see at first sight that this is not true. What is being done here is just a poorly masked attack on our democratic and direct-democratic structures. Relevant articles in the media came closer to the truth when they spoke of “breaking Switzerland up”, reshaping the political order, breaking up of the cantons and so on.

It is not true that some officials of the administration founded the association as private individuals: Article 8.1 of the association clearly states “members with the right to vote are the cantons, cities and towns” and these are the political organs which constitute the state “that are within the defined area of the metropolitan area Zurich as it is defined by the Federal Office of Statistics.” They are exclusively represented by *official* Swiss delegates, i.e. members of the governing council; city or district council. Accordingly cantons and districts also pay the membership fee – from tax money! An “operational committee consisting of CEOs of the local government” (Art. 26.1) will schedule the activities of the “association” and will produce the basis for decision-making. They also do this work as local government officials and get paid with tax money. Article 2.1. states: “The association sees the metropolitan area Zurich as a joint living and economic area” – though it covers the sovereign territory of 8 cantons with their own constitutions. It also says that the metropolitan area maintains relations to other metropolitan areas (Art. 2.4.) – seemingly within and outside of Switzerland – and thus takes over sovereign functions for this “area”, which is the sovereign area of the cantons. This should be done only by the cantons or – if relationships to other states would be established – would be an affair for the Foreign Ministry. Furthermore, it is stipulated in article 24.1.: “The meetings of the metropolitan council are not public”. Of course, a “private association” can do this – but as the structures show, this does not comply with its real intentions. By doing so it defies democratic control – with the exception of the decisions of the metropolitan conference – and the imperative to discuss issues publicly, which applies to parliamentary debates.

Article 5 also shows that this association is pursuing other ends. It maintains: “The membership in the association does not interfere with the constitutional competence and autonomy of the cantons, cities and towns. The competencies of the cantonal and communal authorities remain intact. The cantons, cities and towns can freely voice their opinions to all political issues.”



Progress is not promoted by economic and political power blocs but in a reorientation towards a co-existence which is in accordance with human nature and human dignity. This is not least facilitated by direct democracy. (picture thk)

How can an “association under private law” make such a statement? And: What does that really mean? The competencies remain intact – but we add some new ones? Sentences like this are outrageous – because they clearly show the intentional interference in mechanisms of constitutionally regulated democratic structures – without public discussion, without parliamentary debate, without popular vote.

The cooperation of cantons and towns are regulated by structures which are democratically legitimated and well established. Also, in Switzerland, the identification of problematic issues and presentation of proposals for solving them is the understood right of many different groups and lobbies – especially of the political parties (which are, as a matter of fact, associations under private law). Each Swiss citizen can do this with the means of initiative. However, no association and no alliance – and also no party – can and will do this in the name of the democratically and constitutionally regulated structures of towns, cantons or of the federal state. Their principal is the sovereign – that means the citizens with the right to vote or their parliamentary representatives on the different levels – town, canton and federal State. The members of cantonal or communal executive authorities are bound by the constitution of their cantons and their communal regulations. Their competen-

cies are regulated conclusively by these. No member of the authorities can enlarge his executive functions at his or her will. Such behavior is usually called abuse of power, and, depending on its extent, it even might be regarded as a coup d'état. There is only one thing to say: An unmistakable “No”!

Obviously such developments cannot originate from the private interests of some few. Obviously, we are dealing with the implementation of corresponding concepts of the European Union. From the day of its formation, its approach is to eventually undermine the political sovereignty of states and override the democratic structures by entering into an economic contract without democratic legitimation. The “structural” – and therefore incurable – „democracy deficit“, which was assigned to the EU by the German Federal Constitutional Court, is no coincidence, but necessity. That is why the EU evades referendums like the plague. Its end is the implementation of the completely unleashed market: its program is not the fundamental freedom of the citizens, but market freedom.¹ An entry into this totally corrupt machinery of power² will not solve the upcoming economic problems, because it is partly the root of the disastrous development of various economies.

In light of the “Manifesto for Joining the EU” by the *Club Héliétique* dated 31st July, it is obviously necessary to bring into mind the

true story, the real aims and the factual approach of the EU. Those who talk about “Social Market Economy” that provides for “the weakest” does not talk about the existing European Union. By means of regulations and court rulings of the European Court of Justice, the EU has taken away from its member states one instrument after the other so that they can no longer protect their economies and people from the grasp of uncontrolled capital. By doing so, it has robbed its member states and their people of all political influence over their own fate – which is the kernel of human freedom – and thus, turns them into objects to enforce its own economic and power political interests.

Trying to do the same in Switzerland, as well, by installing metropolitan areas and this way unhinging our time-tested system of direct democracy – that is absolutely out of the question.

It is high time to decidedly call for the urgently needed reflection that came up with the beginning of the financial crisis. Or, to quote Peter Ulrich: “A ‘civilised’ market economy in this republican-liberal sense is completely different from an unlimited market society – its core must be understood as a solidly united connection under the rule of law of free citizens. Not social welfare, but the same constitutional *rights and duties* of all citizens constitute the primary point of orientation of a ‘civilized’ market economy in the context of a well-ordered society of free and equal citizens.”³

Progress does not originate in economic-political power blocks – which would be equal to a social-political relapse into the time before enlightenment – but in a self-determined communion of people according to the human nature and the dignity of man, which is – last not least – enabled by direct democracy.

¹ Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider. *Der Vertrag von Lissabon ist ein Grundgesetz des ungebremsten Kapitalismus*, in: *Zeit-Fragen* Nr. 14/15 vom 6. April.

² see: Andreasen, Marta. *Brussels laid bare. How the EU treated its chief accountant when she refused to go along with its fraud and waste*. 2009. (Brüssel blossgelegt. Wie die EU ihre oberste Rechnungsführerin behandelte, als diese sich weigerte, mit Betrug und Verschwendung mitzugehen.)

³ Peter Ulrich. *Die gesellschaftliche Einbettung der Marktwirtschaft als Kernproblem des 21. Jahrhunderts. Eine wirtschaftsethische Fortschrittsperspektive*. Abschiedsvorlesung vom 5. Mai 2009. S. 14.

Brussels is Trying to Undermine the State Structure of Switzerland

“Metropolitan areas” – a tricky creation of European centralism

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich, Switzerland

In his article in “Current Concerns” No. 12 of July 2009, Professor Pierre Hillard pointed to the fact that the so-called regional policy in Europe is actually aiming at a concentration of power in the transatlantic area. It also aims at handing over political, economic and financial power to the “regions”, which up to this day do not represent political units, so that they may assume control beyond the existing federal structures and may negotiate directly with the Brussels and Washington authorities. In this way today's manifold political communities and small economic areas would be destroyed. (“Transatlan-

tic Power Concepts and the Attacks on Switzerland”)

In Switzerland, the *Metropolitan Areas Zurich* and *Western Switzerland* were recently established, without involving the population into the decision-making processes. This is an unparalleled political affront.

The primary aim of the following article is to draw the citizens' attention towards the fact that the trend towards more centralism and spacious units is not in the interest of the active population who want to go on shouldering responsibility for their communities

and shaping their communal lives. The direct-democratic and federal model Switzerland does not merely serve an end in itself, but contains such power to promote personality and community that we have to preserve and recommend it for the benefit of the whole world.

Giant units of 8 cantons and 70 municipalities

On 3 July, the association *Metropolitan Area Zurich* was founded in Frauenfeld,

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We Won't Allow a Wedge Being Driven Between Urban and Rural Populations

by Dr. Peter Küpfer, Switzerland

The freedom of association is a basic right of each citizen in a democracy. It derives directly from the right of freedom of expression and from the basic right to be able to live according to one's own beliefs. These rights are completely bound to the individual, to the adult citizen, who represents himself in a democracy. He can join forces with like-minded people to pursue special interests in order to assist them to achieve better leverage; this is guaranteed by the right of association. It is completely bound to the responsibility of the adult citizen. Those who severely violate the purpose of the association or otherwise disturb its life can be excluded. Withdrawal from an association is possible at any time.

In Switzerland, public personages, in particular state officials, are usually not members of an association. If states or public structures unite for a special purpose, there are traditional and established forms, especially in Switzerland. On the municipal level there are administrative unions, in which various municipalities unite according to the citizens' explicit volition. Thus they are able to find a bet-

ter solution for common public concerns, i.e. a sewage treatment plant, water supplies or others. In case the cantons want to jointly follow similar interests, there is a form for this in Switzerland, the concordat, which regulates in detail the precise terms while strictly observing each canton's sovereignty.

Interest groups or associations initiated or established by the government are frowned upon in Switzerland. They arouse an uneasy feeling within every democrat, reminding him of totalitarianism and a domination of the citizens, as this was part of everyday life and custom in the disastrously memorized communist states. There were the associations, i.e. the GDR's Writers Association, interspersed to the core with dominating operatives and bribed informers.

In a democracy, the citizen must put up a resolute resistance, if a public official suddenly joins an association and behaves like an individual, while pursuing long term goals, which the voter doesn't even know. The social contract, which is fundamental in democracy, is being misused in multiple ways. First of all, the principle

of publicity applies in Switzerland. Those, who want to act in the citizens' interest, have to present themselves to them, then let themselves be mandated accordingly and afterwards give public account of their acting to the citizens. They cannot hide behind an association which wants to enforce certain aims, which the citizen has not even been asked about. And secondly – as is the case with a member of the governing body of a Swiss canton – the elected executive member cannot simply join an association and act out his personal political preferences there. He is as an elected representative in a democratic executive, accountable to his voters and he must do what they want him to do, and not impose his own will on the citizens with the help of a dubious association or a certain lobby group. What sort of un-Swiss skulduggery is this?

Finally, to all those, who see big urban agglomerations as the salvation for the time to come, to take note and remember: Switzerland became strong, because in the course of its long and impressive history it has always acted according to the principle that urban and rural areas

associate on equal terms and that they respect each other as partners with all their differences of views and lifestyles. The here-employed principle of amalgamating vast urban agglomeration sabotages this democratic principle and installs "two speeds" in the development of the country. It is not difficult to guess, which part of the population has the short-end of the stick in this concept: it is the rural population, whose interests the desktop strategists of "Avenir Suisse" have generously ignored for many years. Against this background, the sudden club member activity of many a public official has an unpleasant taste. Does it show the revival of an old revolutionary strategy, i.e. diarchy? The enemies of democracy pretend to move within democratic institutions, but are undermining them at the same time, secretly preparing everything so that they might be taken over easily by the underground organisation when the right moment has come.

It is amazing, how un-selective certain civil circles nowadays are in choosing their means to push through their political concepts, blatantly bypassing their electors.

"Brussels is Trying to Undermine ..."

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joined by executive members of the cantons of Zurich, Aargau, Luzern, Schwyz, St Gallen, Thurgau and by approximately 70 cities and municipalities. Almost simultaneously, on 2 July, the western Swiss cantons of Geneva, Waadt, Freiburg, Neuenburg, Valais, together with the canton of Berne founded a similar metropolitan area. The alleged aim of these monumental units is a closer co-operation "in the living and marketing area" of Zurich and/or Western Switzerland and the joint external representation of their interests.

However, the cantons and municipalities in Switzerland are used to co-operate, and they have done so for centuries. So why invent metropolitan areas? How is it possible that local councilors of Frauenfeld, Rapperswil, Jona or Neuhausen on the Rheinflall are so keen on joining the agglomeration construct of Zurich under guidance of the Zurich member of the governing council Markus Notter, although the Eastern Swiss population has, quite understandably, always resisted to be swallowed by its great neighbor? Would it not be a much more urgent task for the Zurich government to repair the desolate financial situation of the canton instead of arrogating a leading role and plunging the neighbouring rural cantons into the ruin as well? How is it possible that in direct-democratic Switzerland such restructuring is taking place exclusively on the level of the executives, without the population being involved?

How were the member municipalities selected?

Current Concerns asked the mayor of a larger Eastern Swiss municipality, why his municipality was not a member of the association. His answer was that he had never been informed about the planned establishment of a Metropolitan Area Zurich; his municipality had not been contacted. An interesting detail: In the last few years, the mayor concerned has consistently and successfully resisted forced municipality fusions and the transference of municipality competences to the cantons. Something to think about: Could it be that one avoids by all means to invite local councilors who might put up some resistance to this large-scale project?

Three Swiss metropolitan areas as "European engines"

It is obvious that there is a foreign power involved, if such constructs are to be imposed on Switzerland and its democratic-minded population, things which in no way meet the standards of our small-scale structures.

"The Zürich Metropolitan Area is one of the city-based areas which are classified as a "European motor" and plays a leading role in Europe in a number of respects (econom-

ic performance, decision-making and control function, innovation, international traffic, etc.). After the global hubs that are London and Paris, Zürich is the only city-based area in Switzerland that is positioned on the same level as cities such as Amsterdam, Brussels, Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Vienna or Milan." ("Zürich Metropolitan Area Association", www.stadt-zuerich.ch)

Such "high" Brussels classification of the Zurich agglomeration, which is relatively small with regard to its total population, obviously flatters the Zurich inhabitants' ego. Is Zurich no longer able to co-operate on eye level with the other municipalities and cantons? So weak – because the bankruptcy of the canton is coming closer?

Three metropolitan areas are intended for Switzerland, for which the *Federal Office for regional development* has paved the way by organizing and realizing several conferences (for example on 26 March 2007 in Ittigen/Switzerland) and promising financial contributions for years to come. On the homepage of Basel city, you can read (www.medienmitteilungen.bs.ch/2007-09-27-jd-001.htm) that the "spatial concept for Switzerland must consider the three metropolitan areas Zurich, Basel and Geneva appropriately. Only this way the increasing requirements for an international competition between locations can be taken into consideration." But – why does the Brussels headquarter take such interest in the stabilization of the Swiss marketing areas? Moreover, why is it so interested in the metropolitan areas in different European Union member states?

Centralization and dissolution of nation states and federal structures

In *Current Concerns* No 12 Professor *Pierre Hillard* describes that it is the EU's regional policy's goal to reorganize Europe politically: "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 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 (...)"

We must add for Federal States like Switzerland, Germany or Austria that not only the nation states, but also the member states are to be deprived of their sovereignty to a large extent. For example, the 26 Swiss cantons with their large differences in surface, total population, geographic situation, their languages and either urban or rural structure are no desirable partners for the headquarters in Brussels. In order to accelerate the dissolution of the nation states, "territorial units are formed,

in which several regions from different states will be united", Professor Hillard explains.

The following is planned for the *Metropolitan Area Basel* among other details: "The essential aim of the cross-border conurbation project is to strengthen the role of the central city and of the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel in the network of major European cities (...) and a political organisation working to set up an effective cross-border territorial structure. (http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/conurbations/terri_doc_ag_trinational_basel_en.html). The Eurodistrict Basel includes parts of Germany, France and Switzerland.

Just a question: Who wants to rule the Basel region without observing national borders? Foreign policy is a federal affair. The answer is given by *Michael Reiterer*, Ambassador and Director of the EU Commission in Switzerland: "The necessity for action exists with the improvement of the political control in the metropolitan areas." Reiterer underlines the transnational dimension of the metropolitan region Basel.

Michael Reiterer is a well known EU official, who was placed in the surroundings of the Parliament Buildings in Berne by Brussels, so that he may better indoctrinate the Swiss. This gentleman has the order to "politically steer" the metropolitan areas, which the EU wants to impose on Switzerland. The heads of the globalized companies are obviously interested in such a centralistic control of the well-working economy in Switzerland. Thus, they notice in passing: "By means of globalized trade relations the agglomerations merge into metropolitan regions." Since the radius of action of the globalized capital is not limited to Europe, the question may be asked to what extent non-European power centers are interested in streamlining the decision centers.

Metropolitan Area Zurich – all power handed over to the executives?

Let us go back to the establishment of the *Metropolitan Area Zurich Association* on 3 July. It was established by 8 cantons and approximately 70 cities and municipalities, more exactly by their executives, the members of the governing councils, the cities' and local councils' representatives. Further members will follow, because "the Metropolitan Area Zurich covers 238 municipalities in 8 cantons", says the homepage of the "Zurich Metropolitan Conference" (www.metropolitanauraum-zuerich.ch). Who decided this? The eligible voters of the 238 municipalities and the 8 cantons certainly did not.

Organization of the Zurich Metropolitan Area Association

The *Zurich Metropolitan Area Association* is an association under private law. Its bodies are:

The Metropolitan Conference: Meeting of the members (highest body of the association), consists of two chambers, a canton chamber with the eight cantons and a city/municipality chamber, which are filled by one representative of each of the respective executive.

The Metropolitan Council: Association executive committee (runs the association's businesses), consists of the eight members of the governing council as well as eight representatives of the cities'/municipalities' chambers. Auditors are the financial auditors of the canton Schaffhausen.

Further organizational bodies:

The Operational Committee: It is installed by the Metropolitan Council and consists of local and cantonal officials with higher positions. It prepares the decision-making processes.

The Office: It is installed by the Metropolitan Council, runs the administration and maintains contacts to related organizations.

Working groups on economy/living space/transport/society: Inserted by the Metropolitan Council.

Financial means of the association: Granted due to the number of inhabitants of the municipalities and cantons; concrete numbers are not mentioned.

Who grants the money remains unclear.

The Intergovernmental Conference – the establishment of a fourth state level

This extraordinary increase in executive power, which is so unfamiliar to the Swiss, is even emphasized by the establishment of a fourth national level, the "Intergovernmental Conference of the Zurich Metropolitan Area", which is set up by the governments of the eight cantons involved (homepage of the canton Zurich, www.sk.zh.ch). Established at the same time as the association, it will be the actual management headquarters. The main task of the Intergovernmental Conference will be to choose and prepare the projects, which then go through on the nod in the Metropolitan Conference. It is completely unclear what kind of competences this conference will actually have and how its power will be limited and controlled. The Zurich member of the governing council Markus Notter was selected to become president in recognition of his untiring services to the EU headquarters.

The Metropolitan Conference (meeting of the members and thus "highest executive body" of the association) will certainly agree to the decisions of the Intergovernmental Conference, because the members of the Intergovernmental Conference are at the same time members of the canton chamber in the Metropolitan Conference, i.e. they procure half of the votes. This is a most dubious

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“We Won’t Let Them Take Away Our Democracy!” Against the economic totalitarianism of the strategists of metropolitan areas

thk. The foundation of the *Zürich Metropolitan Area Association* raises various questions and shows that something has been planned well in advance in order to circumvent time-proven democratic control mechanisms. This must therefore be repudiated very clearly and decidedly.

The president of the governing council of Zurich, *Markus Notter* (social democrats) is a leading figure in this association and also president of the so-called *Metropolitan Council*, which is part of this association. Also in charge are the president of the city of Winterthur, *Ernst Wohlwend* and the former president of the city of Zurich, *Elmar Ledergerber*, both colleagues in the same party as Notter. The organisation of the Metropolitan Conference grossly violates all Swiss democratic principles and is not at all democratically legitimised. A committee composed only of members of the executives of communities, cities, and cantons, functions as the highest

organ. By this committee, the Metropolitan Council is formed, which will represent the association externally. The vice-president of the Metropolitan Council is, at the same time, president of the Metropolitan Conference.

The conception already shows a democratically inadmissible accumulation of functions. The Metropolitan Conference forms a pseudo-parliament. At the same time, this conference is composed exclusively of executive members, which amounts to a complete abolition of the division of powers. Confronted with these grave flaws, governing councillor Notter sidestepped the issue, saying – in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 2 July – that “nobody but executive politicians elected by the people” were “active in the association” and that the “meetings of the association” were “open to the public”. Of course this is nothing but crude window-dressing, since the public has no means of participation and no influence. Do we want citizen kings like those

of France in the first half of the 19th Century here in our country, citizen kings, who, once elected, have free reign? And take note of the fact that in votes within the association the towns’ and cities’ votes count in relation to the size of their population and that therefore the cities will always be able to overrule the smaller communities, you feel carried back to the times of the Prussian census suffrage of 1849 or to the Ancien Régime or the Restoration, when the urban patricians treated the rural population as second-class citizens.

Metropolitan area and EU great-power-politics

At the level of Swiss politics, the federation’s policy of agglomeration, as conceived by the Federal Office for Spatial Development, is the idea behind the concept of metropolitan areas. In a position paper issued by precisely this federal office, purely economic arguments are used to target a political reorganisation of Switzerland. This is done by means of the allegation, “The political structures of decision-making are often no longer consistent with the functional areas.” This trite cliché is continually repeated, because it is used to justify weakening the given democratic structures and the creation of undemocratic (public) bodies, which can evade control by the people and the parliament. The article about the metropolitan-area-policy on page 5 explains in detail, that this whole issue is part of the EU’s great-power-politics.

Gross violation of all democratic conventions

Inquiries with sundry local councillors showed that most of them did not know any-

thing about the undertaking, even legislative members of cantonal parliaments were neither informed about their governments’ course of action nor did they participate in the process of decision-making, but had only learnt of it through the press, not to mention the concerned populace, which indeed knew nothing at all. The argument that an association is a corporation under private law and therefore not in need of democratic approbation is unsound, notably because the associated members of cantonal governing councils do not sit in as private person, as can be seen in the case with the Canton Thurgau, where the Chamber of Industry and Commerce headlined on their website, “Thurgau joins the Metropolitan Area” and says further, “This decision was taken by the governing council.” So there is nothing private about the meetings. The urgently required public discussion about these matters is tacitly evaded. But this is not all: Cooperation across municipal and cantonal boundaries are arranged in so-called administration unions, and these are clearly subject to democratic control. The fact, that a different way was chosen here, clearly shows that the promoters of this association definitely want to keep the people from participating in it. This is a blatant violation of every democratic usage.

A glimpse at the statutes of this association gives room for speculation about the reasons. On the one hand, only vacuous catchwords are used under the heading “objectives”, and they admit no lucid statement, let alone explaining a clear concept, on the other hand, the association encroaches on political areas,

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A New Weapon of the Metropole Zürich Trying to Enforce its Dominant Position

“This new structure is definitely a political means of pressure. On the occasion of the latest plenary assembly, *Markus Notter*, SP member of the council, had claimed the following: ‘I am expecting of this Metropolitan Area Zürich that it will enable us to better enforce our interests versus the Confederation’ [...]

‘Do we really need a new organisation with clumsy and complicated arbitrations?’ ‘Yes’, answered *Madeleine Meier*, the person in charge of the Canton Lu-

zern’s exterior relationships. ‘The cooperation becomes increasingly complex because the political segmentation does not follow the developments in the functional areas. Even if the cantonal frontiers are still taboo, it’s high time to talk about them. The Metropolitan Area is an interesting platform in order to bring down certain prejudices.’”

Source: “*Le Temps*” of 23.06.2009
(Translation Current Concerns)

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construction from a democratic point of view. The whole thing resembles the well-known undemocratic EU structures: The Intergovernmental Conference corresponds for instance to the EU Council of Ministers, the Metropolitan Conference has similarities with the EU Parliament, a name which does not match its small competence. Not even in Brussels, however, do the Ministers hold seats in the EU Parliament – whereas the members of the Intergovernmental Conference sit in the Metropolitan Conference and influence the decision making process there.

And where are the people, the sovereign, in these constructs?

Both in the statutes of the Zurich Metropolitan Area Association and in the agreement on the Intergovernmental Conference you can read, “The autonomy of the cantons and the responsibilities of the canton authorities remain comprehensively protected.” The democracy-loving Swiss are rather embarrassed that neither the cantonal parliaments and cities nor the population of the different regions – pardon, cantons – have a say in this whole affair. In reality the cantons, i.e. the members of the Zurich Metropolitan Area Association, are actually not welcome in the metropolitan areas: “Certain disadvantages [e.g. in handling the authorities] result from the relatively strong “splitting-up” of the metropolitan area Zurich into different territorial units (cantons).” (www.stadt-zuerich.ch)

It is hardly conceivable that such a statement should be made by authorities of the city and the canton of Zurich, so used to democracy and federalism: The cantons as “territorial units”, which split up the region? In order to do away with this “splitting-up” of the region, the above-mentioned Intergovernmental Conference was established. Its purpose is to create “consensual decisions” or, to put it differently, the leveling of differences in the cantons’ views.

Small-scale and federal structures for a humane co-existence

We, the population, are the sovereign in our cantons and in our municipalities. And we are well-advised to remind ourselves and the peo-

ple of the other European “metropolitan areas” of the big advantages of our small-scale grass-root structures which guarantee the best foundations for a humane co-existence. Particularly, the importance of the smaller communities as habitats with close relations and beneficial personal and social effects should not be depreciated in today’s world with its enormous economic and human problems. We should not thoughtlessly give up this cornerstone of a federal and direct-democratic state and an economically efficient society.

For the maintenance of the cultural peace between the language regions

Nearly at the same time with the establishment of the *Zurich Metropolitan Area Association* the Western Swiss cantons Geneva, Waadt, Freiburg, Neuenburg, Valais together with the canton Berne established a similar metropolitan area association. There, as well, the population was not included in the decision-making process.

“Schweiz wird umgepflügt” (Switzerland will be broken up)

This was the headline of an article of 21 June 2009 in “Sonntag online”, which reported on “the spectacular change of ends” of the canton Berne, its “breaking off from German speaking Switzerland” and its connection with “the new marketing area” between Berne and Geneva.

This is an odd tone: It has never happened in Swiss history that someone openly attempted to breed discord between German speaking Switzerland and the Romandy (French speaking part of Switzerland). So far, each canton was free to cooperate more or less intensely with any other canton. The relationships were either of economic, ecological and cultural kind, or in the fields of education and health service. Within practically all ranges, cooperation was variously and fine-meshedly adapted to the respective needs and situations among the cantons and among the municipalities. Citizens as well as authorities on all three state levels are used to find solutions to the manifold problems of living together within the individual canton and to discuss and take decisions among the cantons. This corresponds with the federal system of the Swiss Federal State. Never before had they spoken of “breaking up with someone”, if a canton decided to take up

contractual relations with new contracting parties within Switzerland. Do the three planned metropolitan areas (Basel and its environment are intended as the third) serve to sow discord among the cantons? Is the exemplary co-existence of the four language regions, which was carefully developed and preserved over two centuries to be destroyed? The Swiss population will never lend a hand to such a process, as the successful linking of the different languages and cultures is a model for other countries in the world which is just as important as direct democracy or the status of armed neutrality.

Preserve the exemplary co-existence of the four cultural and language regions

How did we succeed in not having greater tensions between Romandy, Ticino and the densely populated German speaking Switzerland? How is it possible that the small Romanesque speaking population in Graubünden can exist? The answer is actually very simple: Such a venture can only be successful if it is based on equality and an equal treatment of all ethnic groups. All authorities in the federation, the cantons and municipalities adhere to this principle. The feeling for the four cultures’ equality and the attitude of mutual respect is deeply embodied in the population; it would never occur to anybody to feel superior or as a German Swiss or to expect privileges, only because the larger part of Switzerland is speaking German.

Equal treatment begins with the bilingual place name signs in all bilingual municipalities, continues with language lessons in school, where the national languages must have priority, so that the people in the different regions can speak to each other. Many people, who consider language peace one of the foundations of the Swiss Federation, are worried about the fact that Swiss schoolchildren are now taught English before the second national language. German, French and Italian are equal official languages in all Federal Agencies: All publications of the Confederation are written in these three languages. At least two of the seven Federal Councillors come from the Western part of Switzerland or from Ticino; in the debates in the National Council and in the Upper Chamber each Member of Parliament speaks his native language, and most of them speak at least two national languages fluently.

The Ticino population gets their mail from Berne in Italian; in the canton Freiburg each official decree, each parliament protocol is available in German and French; in Graubünden, each door of a national office is labeled in German, Italian and Romanesque. The concern about the preservation of the Romanesque language is also a concern of the Confederation, because the production and printing of the necessary small quantities of Romanesque schoolbooks are expensive. Children from Graubünden with Romanesque native language learn Romanesque as their first language in elementary school, even before they are taught German. On TV and radio, the German speaking Swiss channels regularly broadcast programs in Romanesque.

Members of cantonal parliaments, senior civil servants and government officials speak the respective national languages. A situation like in the German speaking South Tyrol, where exclusively Italian speaking foreign officials were put into office by the government in far-away Rome over decades, would be inconceivable in Switzerland.

And what about the remaining cantons?

Not only the equilibrium of the language regions, but also the peaceful co-existence of rural and urban cantons would severely be disturbed if Switzerland was divided into three mega agglomerations. A substantial number of cantons cannot be found in the regional plans of the EU integration office. It is the heartland of Switzerland, the original cantons (Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden and Nidwalden), then both cantons Appenzell, Glarus and Graubünden – the latter being the biggest Swiss canton from his area. The Italian speaking part, Ticino, is also missing, and finally the canton Jura, who is not very much in favor of joining a greater Berne region. Are they all designated to become mere tourist and holiday areas for the stressed people from the increasingly densely populated agglomerations?

Such a concept may correspond with the visions of some bureaucrats in Brussels; it is, however, in complete contrast to the carefully designed Swiss model of federalism and direct democracy. The question for us, the citizens is, whether we want our state structure and our peaceful co-existence be broken up as outlined in this article. ●

The Airport Noise Dispute and EU's Metropolitan Strategy

sl. On 18 October 2001 Federal Councilor Moritz Leuenberger (Social Democratic Party) and then German Minister for Traffic Kurt Bodewig (Social Democratic Party) signed a bilateral treaty to regulate air traffic. As the treaty accounted mainly for German interests, Swiss parliament refused its ratification.

Since then state of affairs have been unpleasant. On 4 April 2003 the German Luftfahrt Bundesamt enacted an ordinance which regulates the conditions for landings and take-offs which cross German territory on and from Zurich Airport. These regulations go far beyond the scope of the bilateral treaty. Restrictions for flights across southern Germany are extended, exemption clauses for landings from the north during the curfew are constraint, and waiting space above German territory has been closed although about 70 percent of all air movement is caused by German planes whereas Germany suffers only 2 percent of the noise.

In order to maintain airline operations the densely populated regions in the south and east of Zurich Airport are now affected by air traffic noise. There are immense protests by the people living there. Many objections are pending; their handling is stalled by the proper authority, and at the same time they are losing their delaying effect. So far no court has confirmed the legality of landings and take-offs of planes that cross the densely populated region in the south and east of Zurich Airport.

The private company *Unique (Flughafen Zürich AG)* has a free hand to advance the expansion of Zurich Airport continuously¹. From a press release from 12 June by *Unique* "European Air Space Project" can be followed that this profit-oriented corporation feels obliged to anything but the Swiss sovereign:

"Leading corporations of the European air industry including the airport operator *Unique (Flughafen Zürich AG)* have signed 16 agreements in Brussels today to implement the *Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research (SESAR-) Initiative* of the European Commission. This unique cooperation laid

Outrageous Theses on Airport

It is downright outrageous: District Administrator Bollacher of Waldshut («Neue Zürcher Zeitung» vom 25. Juni) continues pretending that Switzerland is exporting without good cause aviation noise/fly-over noise to the North. And it is even more outrageous that there is no action on the official Swiss side against such distortions and that there is no one clearly pointing out that the Canton of Zurich had to bear 95 % of the noise before the one-sided German flight restrictions, other regions however only 5 %, of which only 0,4 % were "exported" to Germany. The conflict about the aviation noise would never had escalated in such a way if the Swiss negotiators would have laid the correct cards on the table right from the beginning, so that the German population would not have been misled by grotesque figures of some poli-

ticians from Waldshut and Stuttgart. In a juridical decision concerning the airport Zürich contra the administration district of Waldshut, dating from 5 years ago, the Administrative Court of Stuttgart claims, without any objection till today, that in the time before the German restrictions 95 % of all descents and departures went over the German territory – in reality it were 80 % of the descents and equal to 0 % of the departures!

It is not by accident that the noise measurements concerted/stipulated by Merkel and Couchevin over a year ago are not on the table up to now – the German side would have difficulties to explain the difference between its pretences and the facts. When is Switzerland waking up?

Nils Groten, Gockhausen

out for seven years is going to create a common European air space independent of national borders. It should be only orientated to operational requirements and thus contribute to a safe, efficient and economical management of air traffic in Europe by 2020. *Unique (Flughafen Zürich AG)* is involved with about 4 mio Swiss Francs in the form of staff, i.e. experts for the European project. [...] As airports are the hubs of the European air traffic network they are assigned a central role because they have to handle the densest traffic and a huge amount of data.

An important aspect of the SESAR project is an integrated view of air traffic. One flight does not just start with the take-off and end with the landing at the destination airport but has to be considered as a continual process chain. In order to optimize air traffic as intended by SESAR airports therefore have an important part."

The SESAR initiative of the European Commission is tightly connected with the

European area development plan, which aims to integrate Switzerland and connect it with the EU without participation of its people. Disregarding any national borders this programme divides Europe into so called metropolitan areas merely based on profit-oriented criteria. There are to be three such areas in Switzerland: western Switzerland (Geneva), Basel and Zurich. In this context *Alain Thierstein*, associate professor in urban design and spatial development at ETH Zurich, said in August 2004: "Zurich Airport has to be considered as a large-scale production- and innovation system, which is integrated into the European metropolitan region of northern Switzerland."

What about the representatives of the people, who have fought against citizens' suffering from the noise level? Let's look at two of them, both members of the executive on communal or federal level. *Elmar Ledergerber* (Social Democratic Party), until spring this year mayor of Zurich, and at the same time

member of the board of *Unique*, signs on the behalf of the *Metropolitan Conference Zurich* project, and on federal level he is member of the political adviser group "Area concept Switzerland" of the *Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE)*. Have citizen's charges remained unheard because he serves the interests of supra-national powers? Federal Councillor Moritz Leuenberger, Head of the *Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications*, "negotiated" a bilateral treaty with Germany in 2001, unfavourable for Switzerland, and he has not lifted a finger for the affected Swiss citizens so far. Why? He is also head of the *Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE)*, responsible for the elaboration of "Area Concept Switzerland", a concept orientated on the EU project on metropolitan areas, which intends to integrate Switzerland into the metropolitan network of the EU power construct in the form of three metropolitan areas, without participation of the Swiss people. Therefore he is promoting the megalomaniac development of Zurich Airport in the midst of a residential area, instead of accounting for the objections of people. Within the context of the revision of the current spatial planning law he is pushing the establishment of "Space Concept Switzerland" on a legislative level.

These are two examples of representatives of the executive who are abusing the trust of the people by betraying the unique model of the direct-democratic and free Switzerland to the diktat of Brussels. That is national treason!

¹ Until 2000 the management of Zurich Airport (FDZ) was formally owner of the airport as an entire complex. It was part of the Department of Economy of the Canton of Zurich and was responsible for construction and operation of runways, taxiways etc, the operation of the airport, negotiations and implementations of operation regulations, and it was the airport's political representation. Since 6 April 2000 *Unique (Flughafen Zürich AG)* has been the owner, a private corporation, of which the Canton of Zurich owns 33 percent. Thus there is no longer any direct-democratic control.

"We Won't Let Them Take Away ..."

continued from page 3

where matters are arranged on a municipal and cantonal level. So, in full awareness of discarding established structures of direct democracy an association is founded here, that is made up only of members of the executive and does not admit representatives of the people. Scandalous!

Interference with the sphere of personal privacy

By means of the Metropolitan Conference members of the executive can now press ahead with projects and undertakings, create pseudo-majorities, in order to then pressurise the cantonal parliaments.

The "spheres of activity" given to this association by itself comprehend pretty nearly everything relevant for human coexistence, in public as well as in private. So the "spheres of activity" are called economy, living environment, transport and society, and there is no specification of their contents.

International competitive edge in unbound capitalism is at the centre of the metropolitan-area concept. Everything must be subjected to profit maximisation. Where only filthy lucre counts, there is no room for human needs. Structures which have stood the test of time, which have evolved and been honed to a fine point, are in the way of a policy based solely on economics. The political and therewith the individual freedom of every single citizen is sacrificed to the addiction to consumption and to the striving for power of certain individuals. Yet human existence has more to offer than consumption, recreation, and possibly the exercise of power. It notably comprises the equivalent social coexistence of all people and their joint effort towards the solution of pending problems.

Direct democracy and federalism – the best system of all

In the course of its history Switzerland has developed a political system that is perfectly able to master these tasks, because the participation of everyone in the political process is guaranteed. Direct democracy prevents indi-

viduals from becoming so powerful that they are able to dominate others. Democratic control ensures that the common weal, the welfare of all people, remains to the fore. It is all the more scandalous that certain circles are trying to dismantle this tried and tested system and to introduce something new, that will

"Great-Zurich is collecting its strength in a new structure, which will be mainly politically active"

Interview with Markus Notter, socialist member of the cantonal government, who has presided the preparatory operations during the last two years (extract)

Le Temps: This Metropolitan Area is stolid and organized in a complicated way. Will it still be possible to take decisions?
Markus Notter: It is an experiment. In two or three years we will see, whether this structure has proved its worth. However, it is almost not possible, to proceed differently with eight cantons and a multitude of communities.

Innumerable inter-cantonal organisations as the Greater Zurich Area are still existing?

The GZA is a marketing-organization, but it is not a coincidence, if such corporations spring up like mushrooms. It can be felt more and more that the cantonal borders and the reality of life are not compatible any longer. If one espouses the federalist model as an inherent part of our political culture then one has to have appropriate structures. Currently a radical territorial reform is not conceivable. A debate about cantonal merging wouldn't lead anywhere. Therefore, this alternative movement exists. It is attempted to soften up the borders by new ways of cooperation.

By the Metropolitan Council a new supra-cantonal political level is established between the cantons and the Swiss Confederation?

No. This would not be constitutional. The balance in Switzerland would be in danger. Our decisions are only recommendations, there is no obligation to follow them.

You advocate a network of métropoles, mainly Arc lémanique, Basel and Berne. What remains in between, just gaps?

The agricultural area has to redefine its role. The country's economic engines have also a responsibility for the development of the hinterland. As without recreation areas, without touristic attractions this country is nonviable. However, until the beginning of the 1990s the regional policy and the agricultural policy were characterized by concerns about the agricultural areas. Since this policy has changed a little, it is believed that these regions will be left to themselves. But we must not exaggerate!

Source: "Le Temps" 3 July 2009 (Translation Current Concerns)

seriously disrupt the equilibrium of city and country and permanently interfere with our peaceful coexistence. In the course of history there have always been forces that wanted to turn Switzerland upside down. But up to today we have managed to defend the direct-democratic principle and time-proven federalism. If we are confronted again with such ambitions today, it is important to remember our strengths and to counter these machinations with all our conviction. It is a question of our democracy, and we won't let that be taken away, under no circumstances.

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Serving the Uncontrolled Capital

Metropolitan areas in Switzerland follow EU plan

by Karl Mueller, Germany

The concept of the metropolitan regions (or areas) and its social, economic and political key part serves uncontrolled, internationally acting capitalism. It is a worldwide concept, oriented towards the target of the predominating globalization ideology of the last 20 years.

As early as in 1995, the German government's national "Raumordnungspolitische Handlungsrahmen" (Political Framework for Regional Planning) states with regard to the "European metropolitan regions" that "as engines of the social, economic and cultural development they are to maintain the achievement and competitive power of Germany and Europe." The largest enterprises of a country, respectively the world are to have their head offices or important branches in a metropolitan region.

European Spatial Development Perspective ESDP

In the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP), adopted in 1999 under the German Red-Green council presidency, it is laid down that this is a matter of "facilitating their integration into the global economy". Moreover, "the greater competitiveness of the EU on a global scale demands a stronger integration of the European regions into the global economy. (...) The creation and enlargement of several dynamic global economy integration zones provides an important instrument for accelerating economic growth (...) in the EU. The creation of several dynamic zones of global economic integration, well distributed throughout the EU territory and comprising a network of internationally accessible metropolitan regions and their linked hinterland (towns, cities and rural areas of varying sizes), will play a key role in improving spatial balance in Europe. Global and high quality services have also to be taken more into consideration in metropolitan regions and cities outside the core area of the EU."

Among those metropolitan regions are the *Trans-European Networks* (TEN) ("a contribution of the EU to the conversion and development of domestic markets"), which should connect the metropolitan regions, planned by the EU and laid down in the EEC Treaty (articles 154 – 156). Among these planned projects is the TEN 24, the railway axis *Lyon/ Geneva – Basel – Duisburg – Rotterdam/Antwerp*, which also crosses Switzerland. To a certain extent this railway line explains the special interest of the *Deutsche Bahn AG* (Railway Company) in the access to the *Lötschberg tunnel* in Switzerland.

Not developed from the grassroots level – in municipalities, regions and nations

The concept of the metropolitan regions has not developed from the grassroots level in municipalities, regions and nations. Instead, it was steered on a global level from above and pushed through from top to bottom. The ESDP, designed under German Red-Green leadership repeatedly refers to the UN conferences in Rio (1992) and in Istanbul (1996), where the points were set on an international level with *Agenda 21* and *Habitat II*, in order to get the internationalistic socialists and Greens on board of the big business globalization boat. It was attained using the cliché of "sustainability" and intended to break the natural resistance against globalization.

The *Agenda-21*-slogan "Think globally, act locally" must therefore be understood as a central plan of a few which is to be enforced in the municipalities. There, however, it is to go down as a necessity of local, social and ecological requirements which allegedly demanded a worldwide dissolution of proven political structures. A new version of this fraud is the current demand for a "Green new deal".

The EU is also planning for Swiss areas

Concerning Switzerland, ESDP already speaks of integrating Switzerland into the European spatial development plan: "Increasing interrelations with Switzerland and Norway



OECD Territorial Reviews: Switzerland 2002

Is deceiving and disregarding direct democracy in Switzerland really worth it? Is undermining and then destroying effective political structures past the people's wish worth it? Or doing everything in order to be submissive to an undemocratic European Union? Doing everything for globalization with its disrespect to human beings and its uncontrolled capitalism? During the last 20 years, the price that the people have had to pay has become obvious, a price that the people will continue to pay in the future. Is having the "winners" of globalization in one's neighbourhood and hoping for some breadcrumbs to drop really worth it? Is falling for the deceptions and throwing all the achievements of history overboard really worth it? And diminishing the chances for another, a more humane approach to society, politics and economics?

[both no EU members] and these countries' obvious interest in co-operation confirm the need for enlarging spatial development beyond the EU-15 territory [1999]." (Emphasis added by the author) The EU therefore aims at a "pan-European strategy for spatial development".

However, this means that the EU ignores the sovereignty of non-EU member states and is making plans for their regions!

Unfortunately, this corresponds with statements from within Switzerland. Thus the report of the Federal Council of 19 December 2001 "Agglomerationspolitik des Bundes" (Agglomeration policy of the Federation) states that the "planned commitment of the Federation for urban areas" already represented "no isolated initiative or a particularly innovative action of Switzerland". Rather Switzerland is said to be "already behind compared with foreign initiatives or threatened to be behind". The concept of the Federal Council would therefore add "to an international and European context", and the considerations of the Council would be heading "in the same direction as the considerations of the EU". (Emphasis added)

This is expressed even clearer in a study of the ETH (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) Zurich of 2003 entitled "Too big to be true? The European metropolitan region Zurich". There the question is raised whether the metropolitan region of Zurich takes over "the work of an integrating motor towards the EU by its economic and political heavyweight for the non-EU country Switzerland". (Emphasis added) The question is answered only indirectly: "The competition for the best location is taking place on a benchmark level, for which Switzerland is only insufficiently prepared with its small and federal structures." Does that mean Switzerland is to change its developed political structures – past the people's interests – only to submit itself to an ever more doubtful globalization and the plans of the EU? It is illuminating what the ETH report continues with: "The OECD stresses the Metropolitan Governance for Switzerland, i.e. the controllability of functional metropolitan regions, as one of the central challenges for a sustainable regional development." (Quotations: *Translation Current Concerns*)

No contribution to the promotion of the common wealth

Everyone must be aware that the concept of metropolitan region does not contribute to the promotion of the common wealth, but that it destroys the equality of living conditions in a country and thereby fundamentally violates a great number of human rights. The concept is part of a plan, which above all serves the wealth and increase in power of a few, especially those financial players in the background of multinational companies and financial establishments. The concept of metropolitan regions cannot be judged appropriately, if the devastating worldwide consequences of globalization of the past 20 years are being ignored. Among these consequences were the attacks on central values of our common life; the brutalization of growing parts of our society,

unfortunately including the youth, by brutalizing media products; the erosion of the middle class in the industrialized countries, indispensable for democracy; hunger and alarming poverty of an increasing number of people in the world; the widening gap between rich and poor; the unscrupulous imperialism of exploitation and suppression; and the wars of the past 20 years which destroyed so much.

OECD report of 2002

The 2002 OECD review "OECD Territorial Reviews Switzerland", quoted in the ETH study, proves how absurd and inhumane the whole concept of the metropolitan regions is.

The OECD is a transatlantic link joint, a planning apparatus of globalization politics – working in particular for the freedom of capital turnover – and of attacks on those national economies oriented towards the common weal and of attacks on the peoples' sovereignty.

The OECD review goes back to a resolution of the OECD in 1999, which established a spatial development committee that was to "examine" the spatial development of all member countries.

The preface to the report considers globalization as an irrefutable natural law and states that this globalization "is increasingly testing the ability of regional economies to adapt and exploit or maintain their competitive edge".

Equality of living conditions in Switzerland ...

Initially, the review concludes that the former Swiss policy resulted in the following: "Switzerland's internal disparities, i.e., differences in cantonal economic performance, are relatively low in the OECD context". Moreover, "the federation succeeded in maintaining a high standard of living across the whole country". This was, for example, achieved by public institutions such as railway and post service, which create jobs also in peripheral areas. Investment of cantonal road infrastructure "contains a strong element of redistribution towards rural and mountainous areas. Public procurement by the federal administration has a strong bias towards economically disadvantaged regions".

The decentralized tax policy which is so typical for Switzerland, the OECD states in 2002, "does not appear to increase differences in public service delivery, however, and may even reduce disparities between urban and rural areas. Concern about their tax revenue leads cantonal governments to follow closely citizens' demands and to provide good service levels even in remote areas. (...) In fact, redistribution at the subnational level has increased. In general, tax competition appears to be beneficial in terms of public service quality across the whole country."

... is incoherent with globalization

The review states that this initial situation which was so beneficial for Switzerland and the Swiss was untenable due to globalization with its deregulation, liberalization and privatization. "The carefully balanced system of territorial policies and policy tools to ad-

dress disparities has, however, come under pressure".

However, OECD does not call globalization into question, but the above mentioned Swiss politics, instead. In Switzerland, there is an "increasing mismatch between functional and political regions". This means: for the OECD the deep-rooted, direct-democratic confederation of Switzerland, subdivided into reasonable units, does not "match" globalization. In a derogatory way, OECD comments: "In fact, economic and social life of the 21st century rests on a late 19th century territorial structure. The functional organization of the country overlaps with its politico-territorial structure, creating various gaps and inconsistencies". Then the going gets rough: "This is particularly apparent in urban areas". Swiss regional policy is recommended to concentrate less on mountainous and economically disfavored areas but instead to cover all types of regions, in particular urban ones. The amendment to the Constitution of 2001 facilitated this process.

In a globalised world, the promotion of a region's competitiveness is considered to be more important than the reduction of disparities. Direct measures, however, like tax reductions, might meet with resistance within the EU. Therefore, the OECD recommended the development of "market-based policy instruments (...) which favor concentrated settlement structures" and which enable the cantons "to develop a more coherent spatial structure across their territories".

The authors of the review are well aware of the consequences: "With various reforms in fiscal, sectoral and regional policies ahead, there could be a trade-off between more efficiency and maintaining regional equity". But apart from a suggestion for certain "compensation mechanisms" (e.g. the fostering of national parks and regional parks), the OECD fails to reflect the preconditions to its plans.

OECD recommends "carrot and stick" for Swiss policy makers

In order to force many on board the globalization ship' and despite the resulting destruction of the equilibrium, the OECD in 2002 recommended a better coordination between the federation, the cantons and the municipalities and mentioned that the "Commission Tripartite" conference "consisting of the three levels – federal, cantonal and municipal – was founded to promote vertical co-operation in policy fields relevant for the metropolitan areas". In the special recommendations for Swiss metropolitan areas, the OECD recommended the "integrating (of) the Swiss cities into the network of European cities".

The OECD recommended "a carrot-and-stick policy" to the federation: "The stick could consist of a Federal Act on Horizontal Partnerships and/ or the obligation for cantons or municipalities to create or join metropolitan associations. The carrot could consist of basing intergovernmental transfers on the willingness of metropolitan municipalities to co-operate".

Is it really worth that?

To conclude: Is deceiving and disregarding direct democracy in Switzerland really worth it? Is undermining and then destroying effective political structures past the people's wish worth it? Or doing everything in order to be submissive to an undemocratic European Union? Doing everything for globalization with its disrespect to human beings and its uncontrolled capitalism? During the last 20 years, the price that the people have had to pay has become obvious, a price that the people will continue to pay in the future. Is having the "winners" of globalization in one's neighbourhood and hoping for some breadcrumbs to drop really worth it? Is falling for the deceptions and throwing all the achievements of history overboard really worth it? And diminishing the chances for another, a more humane approach to society, politics and economics? Obviously, these are mere rhetorical questions. Nevertheless, we have to think about them. •

Being and Remaining True to Oneself

Today as in the old days – the Swiss say No to centralism, foreign rule, militarism and exploitation

ts. The Swiss communities and cantons have been the core of our political system from ancient times. Building upwards co-operatively from the grassroots, our population has united in voluntary association over centuries, joining forces in the quest for freedom.

For instance, the *Oberallmeind-korporation Schwyz*, which is the oldest co-operative in Switzerland, still holds a quarter of the territory in the canton Schwyz, and actually was the foundation out of which the canton developed.

This principle of voluntary association and co-operation is what the model of direct democracy is all about, and later centuries only developed it into today's sophisticated system with instruments such as initiatives and referendums, doctrines such as federalism and eternal armed neutrality – recent scientific studies found out that direct democracy is not only economically successful, but people also live happier lives.

With the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva and the tradition of the Good Services, Switzerland has won its reputation as a peace model worldwide and still holds this place in the hearts of all people. Unsuspecting of any imperial schemes, Switzerland guarantees fair intermediation in international crises.

The Swiss model of living together peacefully despite close proximity of different cultural contexts and languages, its federal structure and protection of minorities, is viewed as an ideal and antidote against Machiavellian policies of "divide et impera" throughout the world.

In any place on earth with ethnic conflicts the Swiss model would be a blessing, be it Sri Lanka, Israel/Palestine, the Balkans, several African countries and, and, and.

High Finance and their fifth column

No wonder certain elites possessed by greed for money and craving for power would like to get rid of exactly this role model. A model, which works successfully, and could do so on any continent, in any country, if people were only allowed to have their way. What would people give for a peaceful life, if they were only allowed to live without mischief made by others and civil wars created from outside, which are only intended to get hold of natural resources or achieve geostrategic goals?

How exactly do these circles plan to destroy the Swiss peace model? High finance started their attacks more than 10 years ago with infamous allegations regarding the behavior of our country during the World War II. They succeeded in recruiting a willing fifth column just like the one at work during the World War II, which wrote down outrageous historical misrepresentations in new school textbooks and engaged in a total revision of the Federal Constitution under false pretenses, aiming at a gradual dissolution of Switzerland. Willing collaborator elites were on the knocker of certain US American booze factories, betrayed their own ideals and instigated legions of spin-doctors to manipulate our own people.

However, since the Swiss people unlike most others in Europe have not given up their right to decide about their own affairs yet and don't delegate these decisions to representatives tuning in to other pipers, the country stood on its traditions and fought off all attempts of both NATO and European Union to gain control. One didn't want to become a useful tool in the hands of any super power.

Unfortunately the spin-doctors of the collaborator elites and non-patriots succeeded in alluring Switzerland into NATO's training camp, the "partnership for peace", thereby blowing a breach into the principle of eternal armed neutrality. The application for membership in the European Union was also never withdrawn.

Nevertheless, behind doors a scheme was cooked up against municipal autonomy and



It has never been and will never be easy for Switzerland to assert and preserve the variety of its peoples' particular natures which makes it so different from other countries. Switzerland is not subdivided into prefectures, provinces or cantons according to the French example. It is composed of several races, languages and confessions and is subdivided into small governing units that differ according to their size and number of inhabitants whose sons live together fraternally. This situation requires quite a lot of political balancing and mutual understanding. (picture mt)

federalism in order to break Swiss resistance. By propagating fusion of municipalities into ever larger entities Swiss people were meant to get used to the idea that only big communities are supposed to be fit for the future. Since fusion of cantons never had the faintest chance to be accepted, one resorted to the scheme of "metropolitan areas", which is discussed in this issue of *Current Concerns*. For some reason they fit exactly into European Union standards and provide insidious opportunities to dissolve nation states from within, to deliver them to dictates from Brussels and the invisible lobbyists.

Independence or foreign rule?

In this dangerous situation of Switzerland today, with an internal group of corrupted, blackmail-prone, internationalist, neoliberal betrayers at work, historical retrospection helps. Looking back often sharpens the eye for presence and future.

In 1948 *Enrico Celio*, then president of the Bundesrat (Executive Federal Council), laid down his thoughts about the four Swiss constitutions between 1798 and 1848 in a foreword for the anthology "1848-1948 Swiss Democracy", Murten 1948, under the title "Being and remaining true to oneself"; thoughts still valid today in their basic meaning and principles. Just substitute names of today's megalomaniac politicians or unholy alliances such as NATO or EU whenever "Napoleon" or the "Holy Alliance" is mentioned!

Focusing on the antagonism of independence and foreign rule, Celio writes:

"Out of the four constitutions shaping the fate of Switzerland between the French Revolution up to the middle of the 19th century, the federal constitution of 1848 is the only one which truly deserves to be called Swiss in its origin and content. Certainly the one of 1798 does not, concocted in Paris and agreed on with the Directorate and Bonaparte, although it was ratified without any discussion later at home in Aarau, by a congregation of Swiss notables commissioned by French drum sticks. The result was the fragile building of a Helvetic republic, which had to be given the pompous name "the one and undividable" in order to obscure its foreign nature. It was a farce: the Swiss cantons – core of the Swiss political system – were degraded to prefectures; their number of originally 22 was decreased to 19 and finally 18, and the old communities of Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Glarus and Zug disappeared for a short while from the stage of history." (p. 13).

In other words, destruction of organically grown structures as a means to destroy identity, abolition of people's sovereignty, degradation of cantons to prefectures, i.e. pure administrative entities under command

from the Centre – then Paris, today Brussels, the London city or Wall Street?

Swiss men as cannon fodder for imperial powers?

Celio proceeds:

"Just as little Swiss was the following constitution of 1803, the so-called 'mediation' constitution. Its appearance is that of an eagle, but a foreign one with crooked claws. Napoleon may have been a genius, but this genius was a dictator possessed by the demon of insatiable ambition. As a moderator, he made the construction of the Helvetic state look like a federation; the Swiss were enthused when the red-green-gold tricolor of the Helvetic Republic was replaced by the old canton flags. However, their enthusiasm was short-lived. Very soon, our ancestors learnt that the hard and high price they were supposed to pay for this mediation was Swiss neutrality. The 'mediator' did not even hide it: 'La neutralité vis-à-vis de moi', he wrote, 'est un mot vide de sens, qui ne vous est utile qu'autant que je le veux'. (Neutrality towards me is a word without meaning, which is useful to you only in as far as I want it.) Indeed it did not take long for a new contract of alliance with France to be signed, which delivered to him four good regiments of four thousand Swiss soldiers each." (p. 13)

Note: When he realized that he had not succeeded in breaking Swiss determination to defend their freedom at the first attempt, Napoleon acted affable as if he was backeddalling. But in fact he forced the Swiss to serve in his army during his megalomaniac wars for world domination. So the scheme goes like this: Attack a country, militarily or in the media, try to sack its wealth, force it to accept obvious or clandestine centralistic structures, and then get their people as slaves or soldiers to fight abroad for your own interests, of course under the pretext of liberty, equality and fraternity – and today? Crusade for democracy? Aggressive wars illegal under international law, under the pretext to defend human rights? Soldiers at the horn of Africa – what for, exactly?

Foreign rule debases the people

He who thought dictators were satisfied with pressing soldiers into their armies gets disabused by Celio:

"Seven years later (1810) the Ticino was occupied by Napoleon's Italian army, and – ironic fate – ten years later Helvetic territory will be occupied by allied troops under the pretext of saving Switzerland from the Napoleonic yoke. The Emperors of Russia and Austria as well as the king of Prussia will hold court with their entourage of gen-

erals and diplomats in Basel, the arrival of the Austrians gets celebrated in Bern with an 'illumination of the city'. Our dignity had been debased to that level by the 'mediations' act." (p. 13f.)

Celio talks about a lack of dignity here – what about the dignity of our wannabe big players, who do not get tired of chumming up with the power blocs?

The next constitution discussed by Celio is a didactic play about what will happen if the principles of federalism are violated, if special alliances are formed, if the towns think of themselves as something better than the countryside and a discordant Switzerland turns into the playground of smart foreign agents gaining influence. Celio writes:

"Napoleon's downfall did not result in an independent constitution for the Swiss either. The Federal Treaty of 1815 is full of foreign influence, too. Instead of Napoleonic hegemony, the intrigues of the Holy Alliance, instead of cantonal prefectures an alliance of cantons without real coherence, without any central power. Again the cantons could agree on capitulations with foreign powers independently and form special alliances among themselves. Military capitulations? Special alliances? Both were meant by the high protectors to foster discordance between the Swiss. And behold – the towns subdued the countryside, the aristocrats the people, the cantons eyed each other with suspicion."

That's exactly what would happen if Switzerland were to be dissolved into metropolitan areas – to the benefit of easily identifiable parties abroad ...

However Celio also gives credit to the positive aspects of the Federal Treaty of 1815:

"Anyhow it has to be said, that the year 1815 brought positive and valuable developments, too, namely the acceptance of the Valais, of Neuenburg and Geneva into the Swiss commonwealth, the Tagsatzung (meeting of delegates of the individual cantons) was empowered by the Federal Treaty of 1815 to muster its own Swiss army, and – most importantly – Swiss neutrality, without which Switzerland would possibly not have prevailed throughout the storms breaking loose in Europe and the world for more than a hundred years, was recognized by the Vienna Congress." (p. 14).

This is exactly the same neutrality, which finally today has been weakened by our membership in "partnership for peace" – and which would be turned into waste paper by joining the EU.

People's sovereignty versus hegemonial policy

Let us continue with Enrico Celio's appreciation of the 1848 Federal Constitution – his words are a reminder to the future generations of what we would lose if we gave in to the EU's demand of giving up our excellent structures like the communal autonomy, tax sovereignty and federalism. Let us draw the conclusion that the introduction of the metropolitan areas concept would mean a step backward into the Ancien Régime, a fall back beyond the epoch of Enlightenment, a system of inequality, a lack of solidarity and the war of all against the rest:

"Only the constitution of 1848 was really Swiss. A people, organized in political structures for centuries and with a rich, glorious past, a people, who is longing for independence from foreign countries and for internal freedom, can neither bear foreign intervention or foreign influences on the long run, nor tolerate riots or fratricidal war. Thus the knowing insight of the Swiss that they were no longer free and proud like their ancestors, that the humiliation of

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“Switzerland is giving the world a permanent impulse to freedom”

Official speech by Federal Councilor Ueli Maurer, head of the Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection and Sports on the occasion of the 1st August celebration at Welschenrohr (31st July 2009) and at Meilen, Oberwil-Lieli, Marthalen, Volketswil and Wildberg (1st August 2009).

We, the Swiss people, love peace. We, the Swiss people, avoid dispute. We, the Swiss people, like to please everybody. All these are basically positive qualities. Certainly, the world would be a lot friendlier if it took these Swiss qualities of modesty, reserve, and striving for concord as a model.

However, the need for understanding and agreement may be overdone. We are observing a little too anxiously, who is thinking what of us. And if someone with a big mouth gets cheeky and slanders us, we are intimidated and stammer some apologize – wincing and crouching has become our standard reaction.

The Swiss national hero Wilhelm Tell, so aptly portrayed by Friedrich Schiller, became a symbol of freedom and independence, because he neither winced nor crouched.



(picture www.admin.ch)

I believe we shouldn't pay so much attention to what others tell about us but should act the way we consider right, in accordance with our values, in accordance with our democratic and constitutional convictions. And also – if it becomes necessary – we may point to what we are doing, to what we are achieving, to what we are giving the world.

And we are giving the world a lot – ideally, materially and in terms of humanitarian services. In particular we offer three things: we offer freedom, we offer progress and we offer Good Offices.

Permanent impulse to freedom

Switzerland and freedom – these two things belong together. Swiss freedom was proverbially

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“We are still characterized by a healthy rural way of thinking”

Speech by Executive Federal Councilor Micheline Calmy-Rey, head of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, on the occasion of 1 August 2009 celebrations in Windisch/Switzerland

Dear Mrs Member of the Grand Council of the Canton Aargau,

Dear Mr Mayor

Dear fellow citizens, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am extraordinarily happy to be here again in the canton Aargau on the most beautiful day of the year, on 1 August. Today, we celebrate the birthday of our country. In its own way, each state celebrates its prominent historical events. We do not celebrate battles, war heroes or a certain personality. We celebrate a common courageous act. We celebrate a peaceful act of political self-assertiveness, of human dignity and of taking one's fate in one's own hands in view of the threats the communities in the original cantons had to face. What we celebrate is still up to date and I think more than ever.



(picture www.admin.ch)

neighborhood or with friends in the garden, they discuss, they enjoy themselves, they admire a beautiful bonfire on the mountain or fireworks in each municipality. Numerous volunteers untiringly help preparing and realizing these events. Besides that, it is holiday time and numerous tourists from within the country and from abroad meet with the local population in many Swiss tourist regions. In our country, the human being, the dialogue, a speech and the informal gathering are in the focus of our attention, in every corner of the country. This symbolizes a vivid direct democracy and federalism. Therefore, I myself look forward to the 1st of August each year. Even if this year, the festive mood is cast by certain concerns and fears.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today the economic crisis has directly or indirectly become obvious for nearly all the

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“Being and Remaining True to ...”

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not being accepted as a European state any longer, their desire to participate in the freedom movements which had emanated nearly everywhere in Europe from the unfortunate experiences of the past fifty years, resulted in the reform of 1848. It eliminated the recent period of a degrading past and established a more brotherly and safer future. There are no more political alliances between one canton and another or between groups of them which would harm the federation of citizens; there is no more possibility for the cantons to sign alliances and contracts with foreign powers. From now on, this right is exclusively in the hands of the Confederation. The cantons' constitutions are ensured by the Confederation, provided they are republican and democratic. Post services, tariffs and the monetary system become a Swiss federal affair. The legislative body of the constitution is made up of two chambers – the National Council and the Upper Chamber – the implementing power being the Executive Federal Council. In order to show that Switzerland is becoming a modern state, not only politically but also concerning justice and knowledge, the Federal Court and the possibility of founding a Swiss Federal Institute of Polytechnics and a Swiss Federal University are introduced.

Based on these foundations, the Federal Constitution of 1848 is the most solid, most perfect and most autonomous constitutional entity among all basic laws that Switzerland had ever passed and that had determined the Swiss state since the French Revolution.” (p. 14f)

What Celio could not foresee at that time: That one of his colleagues would lead his people up the garden path in the 1990s and submit this proven constitution of 1848 with its direct-democratic amendments to a concealed total revision.

Being true to oneself and staying so – as a person and a nation

In the following, some more of Celio's ideas are reprinted. A comment is redundant, their contents speak for themselves. The reprinting has been worth the effort, if the text gives fresh heart to our fellow Swiss who have become tired and disheartened by the continuous media influence; they can recall what is substantial, what corresponds to human nature and what the “Willensnation” (nation created by its own will) Switzerland once wanted and is still wanting to be. Celio writes:

“Being true to oneself and staying so! That is the first and fundamental prerequisite for the independence of a personality in human society; it is also the first and fundamental prerequisite for the independence of the state within the community of states. It has never been and will never be easy for Switzerland to assert and preserve the variety of its peoples' particular natures which makes it so different from other countries. Switzerland is not subdivided into prefectures, provinces or cantons according to the French example. It is composed of several races, languages and confessions and is subdivided into small governing units that differ according to their size and number of inhabitants whose sons live together fraternally. This situation requires quite a lot of political balancing and mutual understanding. If these two characteristics were missing or would become minor, its future would be serious, if not completely questioned.”

“Being true to oneself and staying so! The sense and the practice of the republican freedom, of Swiss democracy and independence are far older – we occasionally forget that – than the liberal and democratic achievements of the French Revolution. Swiss neutrality, which is based on the will of the Swiss and the agreement of the fellow citizens, is very different from that of other peoples. It is static, if one may say so, and does not need to be re-proclaimed with each threatening world conflict; the others' neutrality, however, requires a renewed declaration in each new case of armed conflict. The sovereignty of the Swiss state differs from that of most other states by the fact that it is harmoniously divided among the cantons and the Confederation in accordance with the requirements of a Federal State and in the spirit of an ancient tradition, while elsewhere sovereignty – except for the United States perhaps – is concentrated in a national assembly or with a president of the republic or a monarch. Although they seem to be similar in many parts, our constitution differs from the constitution of the United States, in particular by the fact that the decision on the constitutionality of laws is not conveyed to a judicial instance in the form of the highest high court. It is, however, conveyed to the legislative and executive organs of the Confederation, the Federal Assembly and the Executive Federal Council. This underlines the political and democratic character of the Swiss constitutional mechanism, as the people interpret and judge their own constitution by the party representatives in parliament.

Many other more or less important, obvious or less obvious characteristics under pub-

lic law make the Swiss Confederation a state of its own on the grand chessboard of peoples. It requires of all citizens that they almost jealously keep an eye on their traditional characteristics. As these are good in the deepest sense, they have withstood the impact of the centuries and at the same time have not prevented the progress of the state, but encouraged and have always been a reason not only for admiration, but also for other peoples' respect.

Being true to oneself and staying so: in the customs, too, i.e. in this sum of characteristics, to which the Swiss owe the reputation to be a people that always preserved the sense for God and the past, for regular work and quality, for moderation and hospitality in their public as well as in their private lives.” (p. 15f)

A determined ‘no’ against centralism and exploitation

Celio finishes his trailblazing essay with the request to the Swiss people to retain a core of substantial characteristics which “enable it to exist now and forever as a free and independent state and to contribute to promote the sense of order and international solidarity.” (p. 16)

Being true to oneself and staying so, this should also be the motto of the Swiss population in 2009 in view of the malice of our time – and even if centralism and exploitation come sneaking up in the disguise of metropolitan areas this time, they Swiss sovereign with his determined ‘no’ will make them bounce off!

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“Switzerland is giving the world ...”

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bial even before the French Revolution made freedom its political agenda. It fascinated the philosophers in the Paris salons and disturbed politicians at the European princely courts.

For our view of the state is so very different from that of other countries: We are concerned with the citizen, not with the state. The citizen comes first. The state is only a means to an end. Our state has no national, historical or religious mission. Our state is meant to secure the maximum of freedom to us, the citizens.

Therefore we often look for our own solutions, we dare to draw up our own draft. We go our own way with Switzerland; and since the people have the last word in our country, our way is more citizen-oriented, is more tax-efficient and more liberal.

This is the special case Switzerland. It may only be criticized by someone who prefers enforced unity to bottom-up variety; by someone who believes that the world is precisely planable, by someone who still believes in centralism, commanded economy, socialism.

The special case Switzerland rubs off on foreign countries as well. For this liberal special case Switzerland incites competition – far beyond our national borders. As long as there is one spot in the world where the nationals are real citizens, the regimentors and regulators, the restrictors, patronizers and bureaucrats have a lot of explaining to do. Any prohibition may start the question: “Why do we not dare more freedom ourselves? Why should we fail in what works in Switzerland?”

No wonder Switzerland is being criticized for its own way, for our freedom is a provocation for all who form their political system in a less liberal way. In former times those were the princess, today these are the bureaucrats. The recent reactions in London, Brussels or Berlin are merely a feed back to our practiced freedom. However there is not only the echo of the administrations but also that of economic reality: Enterprises and entrepreneurs, pressed by the revenue offices, evade the pressure by coming to Switzerland. Because our state is more reserved, because the tax burden is less oppressive, because we acknowledge property as what it is.

As long as Switzerland sticks to its liberal order, we are providing for competition of systems. If foreigners transfer their assets to Switzerland, if foreign enterprises transfer their registered seat to Switzerland, it means only one thing: Switzerland is more competitive. All other states are invited to regain these companies – not by means of pressure and power but by better conditions.

Competition is reviving: Competition of the systems just as well as competition of market participants. History provides the evidence for this: Those epochs were economically flourishing and spiritually creative, that had many small states pitting themselves against the others and trying to do better. Examples are the Greek Antiquity, the Renaissance of Upper Italy, Weimar's Classicism. At those times there was the unrestricted competition of the state and society systems at work.

Switzerland is giving the world a permanent impulse to freedom, if only by the fact that we grant more freedom to the citizens than anywhere else. And we may be proud of that.

Progress

Switzerland is a microstate, with reference to its area, its population. But Switzerland is important economically – as an education, as a research center, as a production and trade center, as a financial center. As early as in the 19th century the freedom of research, practiced in Switzerland has led to our universities' international reputation. The high standard has been preserved to the benefit of the innovative research center Switzerland, that has extra-ordinarily well-trained young men and women at its disposal. In spite of being a midland, Switzerland has established itself as trade center – ranging from the art exhibition of Basel up to the Zurich Bourse.

Our financial centre has been positioned so successfully that from all over the world funds were placed with us. The proprietors highly estimate our services, the security, the stability. Today Switzerland is the greatest trust manager in the world.

Switzerland manufactures highly-valued products. Swiss produce is worldwide acknowledged and famous for its high quality. Swiss quality is proverbial. This becomes also visible by its export rates. Small Switzerland ranks fourteenth among export nations. We are buying goods world-wide. Swiss enterprises invest world-wide. Its direct investment into foreign enterprises puts it on the fourth place internationally. According to newest statistics Switzerland has created 2.35 million jobs abroad.

Switzerland's contributions to the world economy are impressive. Our enterprises and all of us are helping to create prosperity world-wide and to contribute to progress world-wide.

Good offices

The battle of Solferino saw its 150th anniversary in June this year. At that time the industrialization was continued on the battlefield with its huge hosts and a new dimension of human suffering. The bloody war between Sardinia, France and Austria ended with the Peace of Zurich. And just as then at Zurich the neutral ground of Swiss cities ever and again offers ideal conditions for peace talks.

Above all, however, the improvised sick-bays in the Lombardy became the native birth-place of the Red Cross. Since then Switzerland has alleviated suffering in miserable quarters of the world.

To all those who point a finger at us and slander us as profiteers, because we do not participate in international adventures, we answer: “For one and a half centuries we have been retrieving human beings from the wreckage that you have been leaving behind everywhere in the world with your big power mania.”

This is a task which we can only fulfill in such a trustworthy way because we have no ambition as to power politics. The great powers who want to safeguard resources and transport routes for themselves are no credible helpers and mediators. Switzerland, however, that has ever since stayed out of conflicts, is trusted by all parties. Up to this very day it has always been clear: Our neutrality forbids us to take sides.

This valuable trust, however, can easily get lost. If we participate in military operations we become involved with the opposing parties. We must not put the reputation at stake that we have built up during the past 150 years, since Solferino. Neither put at stake our possibilities to help where others destroy.

Militarizing our foreign policy does not help anybody. Neither does our army that enjoys support by our population merely as a defense army. Nor do we help the people in the war regions who need neutral helpers instead of more intervention troops.

Our position in the world is built on our distance to big power politics. This is what we may and must emphasize: The impulse to freedom, the contribution to progress, the good offices show how connected to the world Switzerland is. Openness does not mean to blindfoldedly sign international treaties, agreements which hardly anybody abides by except ourselves. Openness is much more: Openness means respect, means exchange, means sympathy. Openness is what human beings profit from, not the governments, die NGOs or supra-national organizations.

And what we are giving the people of the world is nothing to sneeze at, neither ideally, materially or in terms of humanitarian services. We are enriching the world by our freedom impulses, we contribute to progress and help the needy. This is a great contribution for a small country. Reason enough to meet our critics with matter-of-factly and steady self-confidence. •

Source: www.admin.ch
Translation Current Concerns

“We are still characterized by a ...”

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people in this country. Tens of thousands of motivated workers lost their jobs in the last months. Many people have friends, who are affected by job loss or bankruptcy of their company. Young people, who have seen nothing else than a booming economy so far, are now confronted with problems of looking for an apprenticeship or searching employment after having finished the apprenticeship. Fear has replaced boundless optimism.

Fear as well as boundless optimism were, are and remain bad advisors. The 1st of August offers an opportunity of reflection to us. What made Switzerland strong, successful and wealthy? The crisis should remind us of certain virtues, which I regard as Swiss national virtues.

Even if we have not been farmers any longer for some time, we are still characterized by a healthy rural way of thinking. We still know that trees do not grow into the sky, even if they get the best care, and we also know that the soil is of no great use if we excessively leach it out. The freedom we enjoy and the creative leeway we gained, are only then effective if we do not constantly go too far. Too many managers risked the credibility of our economic system with their wages. In the past, our banks were a symbol for a dignified restraint. This has been nothing else than conventional nostalgia for many financial geniuses. It is due to them, that we must now pay a high price.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we enjoy the prosperity, which we have today, because we have gained it by our own efforts, but also because we are open to foreigners and the world is open to us. This openness cannot be taken for granted, especially in times of a crisis. We all know that separation and protectionism are enticingly tempting. Our country profited strongly from the globalized markets. We make every second franc trading with foreign countries, and thus a large part of our prosperity depends on the foreign markets.

We are reliable: We must preserve our handicraft and engineering, the work ethic of the watchmakers. This includes the confession to maximum performance, which we need, in order to be able to master future challenges. In this respect, we must invest into good training and call for a high quality level in public services, too. This pays off in the long term and establishes competitive advantages on an international level.

Ladies and Gentlemen! Modesty, restraint, openness, reliability, and solidarity. Together we are stronger, and not the strong one is strongest alone, is Switzerland's slogan, which we should remember on the occasion of such a celebration. Our welfare state was and will always be there to help the weaker and poorer people in this country. In this crisis, one or the other elite banker, who lost his job and whose children are in their training

period, may be glad that there is an unemployment benefit. A few years ago, the same person would have grumbled about high taxes and the welfare state getting out of hand.

Finally, our strength is also that different cultures live together. There are no minorities in our country; however, all cantons and language regions together constitute it. This can be seen on 1st of August. We must take care of it. Our country, our system is set up to get over well and emerge stronger from the crisis. We take care of our fellow men and women and cultivate our virtues. In addition, the readiness for change is required. History teaches us that no state of affairs in this world develops in a linear way. Windisch with its quiet testimony of the Romans reminds us of it.

We were witnesses of events, which our direct ancestors would never have believed to happen. 40 years ago, the first man landed on the moon. 20 years ago, at the border between Austria and Hungary, the first holes were cut into the iron curtain. If someone was catapulted from the seventies directly into the year 2009, he or she would rub his eyes in disbelief and would find it hard to understand the world. Today we witness ever faster and more profound changes in many areas. They also have substantial effects on the foreign policy of Switzerland.

First, there are the geostrategic shifts of power: Asia will soon constitute half of the world's economy; newly industrialized countries such as China, India, Brazil or Russia are developing into the largest national economies of the world. Europe and the West lose their importance. Economic power also wants to acquire political power sooner or later. All the more, if the country possesses vital raw materials. We can already observe this process with some states today. Our foreign policy must be oriented towards it and develop trusting bilateral relations with the help of a constructive but also quite critical dialogue.

Despite nearly boundless technological possibilities, we are confronted with large global risks and challenges today. We can fly to the moon and develop vaccines against new flu viruses in very short time. Nevertheless, the climate change, the shortage of water resources, migration pressure, food security or the further spread of nuclear weapons are vitally important to us.

Today mankind can handle these threats only in cooperation and not “one against the other”. The Swiss Confederation can ensure its independence and its welfare, as our Federal Constitution specifies, only by pursuing a strong and active foreign policy. Just like the three Swiss citizens did more than 700 years ago on a small scale. The 1st August thus conveys a message that is still valid in our times.

I wish you all a merry celebration full of atmosphere and I thank you for your attention. •

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