

Current Concerns

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English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

“Two countries cultivating excellent relations”

Speech of the President of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev

at the Official Meeting with the President of the Swiss Confederation, Hans-Rudolf Merz, in Kehrsatz, Switzerland

thk. It was the first time in the history of both states that a Russian President paid an official visit to Switzerland. The meeting's relevance for both states is not to be underestimated. This was expressed in several statements by both the Russian President and the Swiss President of the Federal Council (Bundesrat), Hans-Rudolf Merz.

President Medvedev arrived on Monday 21 September at Zurich Airport, where he was welcomed by the President of the Federal Council, Merz. After the welcome ceremony he went by a special train to the Federal Council's country residence near Berne, where he delivered his address dealing with Switzerland's role among the leading states and with the relationship between Switzerland and Russia. In doing so, Medvedev showed profound knowledge of the foundations of Switzerland's political system and emphasized the relevance of a neutral micro-state. As Swiss citizens are used to form their own opinion on the exact and full wording of texts, Medvedev's statement is documented in the original.

Mr Federal President, Ms Merz, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Federal Council, Your Excellency,

I would like to thank the Federal Council of Switzerland for this invitation to visit your wonderful country and for the warm welcome I have received.

This is the first visit by a Russian leader to Switzerland in the history of our bilateral relations, and for us, this is a significant, special event. The goal of this visit is to strengthen relations between our two nations and to greatly advance our cooperation in all areas. We are happy to see that our partners feel likewise, which will undoubtedly be conducive to success on both sides.

We also count on reinforcing this common success by signing joint documents.

Russia has a long history of respect for the Swiss nation. As far back as the end of the 18th century, the Russian historian *Nikolai Karamzin* described Switzerland as a land of freedom and prosperity. Here in this land, many of my great countrymen first came up with some of their finest work; at the same time, there have been some very well-known, shining examples of Swiss participation in Russia's development.

Today, we will be marking the 210th anniversary since *Alexander Suvorov's* army heroically crossed over the Alps, and we will continue our observance tomorrow with special events. Switzerland carefully preserves the memory of Suvorov's deeds, which serves as more evidence for the historic basis of our relations. I am happy that tomorrow, I will pay tribute to my ancestors at the site where these events took place. This kind of respectful attitude toward historic events serves as an important condition for successful joint cooperation and partnership and shows the maturity of our civil societies and the politicians in power. Unfortunately, we sometimes witness examples to the contrary, when attempts are made to turn history into an instrument for political pressure.

Switzerland stands as an example of the benefits to Europe's development that result

from having different forms of government. It also demonstrates how people of different ethnicities, cultures, and religions, speaking different languages, can coexist in harmony. Of course, for centuries, Switzerland has stood apart for its tradition of neutrality – and in the 19th century, Russia was a key proponent of Switzerland's neutrality and independence at the Vienna Congress. Even today, neutrality gives Switzerland national sovereignty and credibility as an active participant in multilateral diplomacy and a mediator in settling international conflicts, including in issues that Mr President just spoke about.

Switzerland, a nation free from the problems tied to alignment and other prejudices, holds a dignified position in today's modern, multipolar world, doing everything it can to strengthen it. It is no accident that Switzerland is home to the headquarters of most influential international organisations – all those who work constructively with our governments to promote security, stability, trust, and cooperation, in Europe and throughout the world.

We appreciate our Swiss colleagues' positive attitudes toward the idea suggested by Russia of developing a legally binding agreement on European security. It would be based on a non-aligned approach to providing security in the Euro-Atlantic region. We count on your active participation in the ongoing discussion on the architecture of this security.

Security, in the widest sense of the word, will also be a central topic during our talks in Bern. This is not only a matter of disarmament, weapons control, or preventing and settling international conflicts, but also a matter of financial and economic security. It is particularly relevant on the eve of the G20 summit in Pittsburgh.

I find it telling that two of the major contemporary economic forums currently take place in Davos, Switzerland, and St Petersburg, Russia. Of course, the Swiss forum is much better-known, but we are also striving to develop our own forum. In general, these forums have turned into a platform for discussing ways to intensify the global economy, particularly in the conditions of a global crisis. We are also interested in addressing problems of energy supply, approaching the matter both from the angle of its consumers and suppliers.

To conclude my greetings and introductory remarks, which are directed toward everyone present, I would like to say that Russia supports dialogue among participants in international relations – dialogue that is as fair, open, and wide as possible.

I hope that we can discuss many of the issues mentioned with our Swiss colleagues using the same language, especially since Mr President has just demonstrated his excellent proficiency in our language, and is happy to use it beautifully at any opportunity. I hope that this will help us to hold productive, substantial talks and will be conducive to expanding our bilateral dialogue and cooperation.

I would like to thank you again for your very warm welcome.

Source: http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/speeches/2009/09/21/1054_type82914_221759.shtml

Press Conference with Dmitry Medvedev and Hans-Rudolf Merz



President Dmitry Medvedev and the President of the Swiss Federal Council Hans-Rudolf Merz at their common press conference, 21 September 2009. (photo thk)

thk. On Monday afternoon Switzerland and Russia signed four bilateral treaties, later that day President Medvedev and the President of the Federal Council Merz answered questions of the media. Interest of media representatives to participate in this conference was enormous and the communications team of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (*Eidgenössisches Departement des Äusseren, EDA*) was put to the test – it was professionally mastered.

At the beginning of the press conference the President of the Federal Council Merz, as the host, reported about the subjects of the talks he had with president Medvedev, and the friendly and open atmosphere between the two statesmen became apparent. Firstly Hans-Rudolf Merz pointed out that “both countries had a different history” leading to “different development”, but nevertheless there are historical events shared by both countries, and he drew attention especially to these “points of contact”. He reminded the audience of architects, for instance from the Tessin, who had lived and worked in Petersburg centuries ago, but also of the many farmers and craftsmen who had emigrated from Switzerland to Russia and contributed to the country's development. One event of historical significance was mentioned by Merz as one of these “points of cultural contact”, namely the heroic crossing of the Alps by Russian Generalissimo *Suvorov* in 1799, who led his soldiers in the Second Coalition War against *Napoleon*; it shaped the history of both countries and was praised by Hans-Rudolf Merz as a “prime example of both art of war and steadfastness”. He told the audience that he and the Russian President would travel to Andermatt the following day in order to commemorate together the 210th anniversary of this common historical event.

Common security interests

Secondly, the President of the Federal Council Merz reported about their talks concerning international partnership and stressed the appreciation of Russia's “strategic significance” throughout history and to this day, due to her “size, her population, resources, her culture and history”. For “a small country like Switzerland relations to such countries are essen-

tial and belong to the indispensable foreign efforts”. Important parallels in the current political affairs were appreciated by Merz when he remarked that:

“We are both not members of either European Union or NATO, but we share common security interests. Obviously we discussed this architecture of security politics and the fact that our interests are quite closely related here.”

Moreover, Merz reported about the “protecting power mandate which Switzerland fulfills for Russia in Georgia and for Georgia in Russia”, with which all sides are entirely satisfied.

Free trade agreement in preparation between the EFTA and Russia

The third point covered economy. Merz stressed that despite the global economic crisis trade between both countries had remained stable so far. Both imports and exports stayed nearly constant, certainly speaking “in favour of products and markets”. There are almost 600 companies in Russia which are totally or partially based on Swiss capital, and likewise there are more and more Russian investors who “engage in our country's economy”. And both are convinced that co-operation should be intensified.

The fourth point was referred to by Merz as “bilateral partnership” with Russia. The relationship between Russia and Switzerland is based on a “Memorandum of Understanding” signed two years ago. That document covers and regulates the eight “most important areas of the two countries. On Monday another four treaties were signed, namely one about visa issues, an agreement about repatriation, one about emergency aid and one about sports.

An important issue is the mutual interest in a “free-trade agreement between Russia and the EFTA”, which is “especially desirable and welcome” from the Swiss point of view. At the same time Merz mentioned that the Russian President had promised his support for Switzerland when it will hold the “Mandate for the European Council's presidency from November”, especially in the priority areas of

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"Press Conference ..."

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the European Council which is human rights, democracy and constitutional state issues. So after his short opening remarks Merz summarized the relationship between Russia and Switzerland as follows: "Two countries cultivating excellent relations, with no conflicts and only minor disagreements – due to the peculiarities of the two countries."

Medvedev praises good relations with Switzerland

After these statements President Medvedev made his speech (see original text) and praised the good relations cultivated by the two countries, he too mentioned the episodes of shared history. He emphasized the economic co-operation of the two countries. Regarding foreign affairs, Switzerland has always been an important partner.

Since Switzerland is one of the biggest financial places in the world, Medvedev spoke in favour of her participation in future G 20 summits.

Special emphasis was put by Medvedev on European security. Particularly for Switzerland and Russia, as they do not belong to any alliance, this is a sensitive issue.

Medvedev spoke about security, not only from the political and military, but also from the economic perspective. Russia wants to "take the initiative for a system of economic security" since this is in the interest of both Europeans and Russians. At the end of his remarks the Russian President pointed out that Russia was interested in a more intensive co-operation with Switzerland in various areas and that further negotiations are already scheduled for this October.

"Tax evasion was never encouraged"

In the following discussion which also covered the bank secret and UBS issues, Merz reiterated how the compromise with the USA had been negotiated and that between the two constitutional states of Switzerland and the USA and how an "Agreement" had been established allowing for mutual administrative support according to the OECD standard rules of § 26. He also elaborated on the difference between tax fraud and tax evasion since this difference is still of practical relevance within Switzerland. In Switzerland "the private sphere is especially protected", and the bank secret serves primarily for the "protection of privacy". For that reason the state does not interfere with the bank accounts of individual persons. So far the bank secret had never encouraged fraud or evasion. Merz emphasized that both matters of fact had always been regarded as criminal offences and were prosecuted. "Tax evasion was never protected." Only the degree of penalty is lower in tax evasion as compared with tax fraud. The protection of the private sphere will stay intact in Switzerland. Merz added that Switzerland will soon disappear from the so-called grey list of the OECD since all obligations had been met.

Bank secret a "basic right"

The Russian President, who in his capacity as a lawyer had also worked on the bank secret issue, defines this conflict as one between private and public law. Controversies may develop between the private sphere and public interest, in which case privacy has the priority in his opinion. That does not mean though, that the state should have no power to safeguard its interests. As far as international issues are concerned the OECD standard should be observed, and an agreement should be made. This will be part of G 20 negotiations. Should Russia have to approach Switzerland regarding issues of Russian citizens, which might happen, these issues should be settled "based on the signed treaties and agreements with Switzerland". However these would be singular cases, as Merz had already stressed. "Every state has of course the right to tax its citizens, that goes without saying, that applies to Russia too, but one must not interfere with basic right of the citizens" and he would count "the bank secret as one of the basic rights of the citizen".

Co-operation on an equal footing

When he was asked about the project of a security agreement in Europe and which role

Ladies and gentlemen, my task has been greatly facilitated, because my colleague, Mr President Merz, told you everything that we talked about over the last four or so hours, the time that I have been on the territory of the Swiss Confederation.

First of all, I would like naturally to thank Mr President and my Swiss colleagues for their warm and cordial welcome, for their true hospitality, which we felt from the moment we arrived in Switzerland.

And we really did have a productive exchange of views on various issues. Mr President has mentioned almost all of what we talked about, but he outlined four areas, and as a guest I must identify a minimum of five, otherwise it would seem that we did not have enough to talk about.

I will start with history. Of course, the history of our countries is very different – they have different geopolitical situations and sets of traditions. On the other hand, we have a lot of interesting episodes in our common history. Of course, one of the key pages is associated with Generalissimo Suvorov's crossing the Alps.

We are very grateful to our Swiss friends for commemorating this event which is essential not only for our country but also for the history of Switzerland and, in our opinion, was an important mission by a Russian military commander that was crowned with success.

And of course we are very pleased that the anniversary of these events will occur during our stay: We will fly tomorrow and see how it looks today and perhaps imagine how it was 210 years ago. We have enough imagination to conjure up Generalissimo Suvorov and the soldiers who bravely crossed the Alps to achieve a very important political and military result.

But this is not the only shared page in our history. Mr President talked about the large numbers of our compatriots who travelled between the Russian Empire and the Swiss Confederation both at that time and, incidentally, continue to do so today. I can say that if it used to be primarily traders who travelled between our two countries, now business representatives do so with pleasure and are finding more and more points of contact.

Of course for me certain cultural references are very important, because as someone who was born and raised in St Petersburg it is very noteworthy that some of the magnificent palaces which were built there are associated with the name of *Domenico Trezzini*, and this is also part of our common cultural heritage. I talked about this during an interview with the Swiss media and would like to emphasise it again.

Now let us talk about where we stand today. In fact we consider Switzerland to be one of our most stable and important trading partners. The economic crisis has not had a great impact in this regard, although of course there has been a drop in trade. Let us hope that all these ties will be restored soon. We feel quite confident about the prospects here, not only because of the general economic recovery in the world, but also because the amount of investment that exists between our two countries is quite significant and measured in billions of dollars. Swiss direct investment in Russia in 2008 amounted to about 4 billion dollars. Russia's companies in turn invested considerable sums in Switzerland. I do not have to single out the companies involved – everybody knows who they are. Let me just say that major Swiss companies such as Nes-

Switzerland could play here, Medvedev replied that those states without membership status in any alliances such as EU or NATO should be interested in it.

The security level has considerably decreased in the last 15 years. "There are no ideological alliances any longer, but still the

tle, *Schindler Group* and others operate successfully in Russia. Russian companies in the Swiss market are also well known: *Renova*, *Rusal* and other businesses are very actively involved in the Swiss economy.

For this reason after the news conference we will be meeting with what Mr President called the *creme de la creme* of Russian-Swiss business. I am sure that this exchange will be interesting.

The third dimension of our relations involves foreign policy. For us Switzerland has always been and will always be an important foreign partner. We appreciate the mediation efforts being made by the Swiss Confederation which has been given credence to assist in settlement of the consequences of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and we are grateful to our Swiss partners for acting as mediators currently representing our interests in Georgia.

I also think that the upcoming Swiss presidency in the Council of Europe will truly serve to strengthen democracy and civil society, and will contribute to achieving the goals that the institutions of the Council of Europe have set themselves.

Another subject to which I would like to draw your attention is the efforts made to overcome the consequences of the crisis: We talked about these, including those efforts being made by the Group of Twenty. We exchanged our views on who should make decisions affecting global economy, how representative the Group of Twenty actually currently is, what role Switzerland might play in such discussions. We concluded that Switzerland, because it is such an important financial centre, should participate actively in the discussion of various issues on the agenda related to the settlement of the crisis and the creation of a new financial architecture. On this score there are different opinions, but my own view is that this is crucial, not only for Switzerland but for the future of international finance.

There is one subject which definitely affects all of us, the future configuration of security systems in Europe. I once again drew attention to Russia's initiative in this regard, I mean the possibility of a treaty on European security. If we confine ourselves to Russia and Switzerland, we are much closer because we are not involved

in the significant number of alliances that exist on the European continent, and therefore we are very concerned about how these issues of security will be addressed. In my opinion the current system still has flaws. This was readily apparent in the 1990s and unfortunately there was another conflict that occurred last year. So I think that work on this treaty will continue. Our Swiss colleagues have said that an exchange of views on this subject and a discussion of this document are of interest to them.

This issue involves global energy security, and I believe that this topic is also in essence a reflection of our common approaches to the issue of how we are to live in Europe, to provide not only political and military security but also economic security.

I once again drew attention to Russia's initiative aimed at establishing a new energy security regime, and I think that discussion of these issues should be continued. It is in the interests of all Europeans, and certainly in Russia's interests.

That makes for four subjects. Of course the future is very important for us, and we believe that the future bodes extremely well for our relations, that there is great potential for their development. We have agreed to further improve our treaties and agreements. And following the signing today of the four agreements which Mr President just mentioned, in the near future we intend to intensify work on other documents. In the month of October there will be a meeting of the inter-governmental commission, which will be considering six new documents. These involve important agreements in the field of scientific and technical cooperation, intellectual property and in several other areas. If we can move forward on these documents, then of course we will create a very strong regulatory groundwork for future progress.

These, then, are the results, and everything that the President of the Swiss Confederation and I have not talked about you can now proceed to ask us. Thank you.

Source: http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/speeches/2009/09/21/1428_type82914type82915_221782.shtml

Ceremony at the Suvorov-Monument with the Russian President, 22 September 2009

"Today's celebration has once again shown how greatly revered the son of Russia, the great General Suvorov is in your country, and how much you respect our shared history. And we are deeply grateful to the federal, cantonal and local authorities, and to those in charge of Switzerland's armed forces, to everyone involved in preserving the memory of these events and taking care of the various monuments." Excerpt from the speech of the Russian President at the Suvorov-monument. (photo thk)

security level declines." He views the importance of Switzerland as a neutral state in its "ability to moderate". Switzerland could mediate between other states and this was very important for security structures. "Switzerland as a nation has always been very successful and reliable in this regard."

At the end of the press conference the impression remained, that the representatives of both states had met with openness and mutual respect as well as the clear will to achieve co-operation on an equal footing. •

Israel as Protecting Power of the Sunni World?

Does Israel now succeed Great Britain and the USA as a “regional policeman” in the Middle East – a new edition of the “Devil’s Game” according to Robert Dreyfuss?

ts. The rhetoric concerning a possible Israeli war of aggression against Iran is becoming worse and worse – high Israeli officials openly discuss this option while the Israeli media dispute Zbigniew Brzezinski’s statement that the US Army would refuse to allow Israeli bombers to fly over Iraq including all the consequences.¹ And while the big war drums are beaten louder and louder, Israeli and American politicians, secret service people and members of think tanks bring into play another figure as a solution of the problems in the Middle East.

And so Dr John Chipman, general manager of the *International Institute for Strategic Studies* (IISS) formulated the following at a conference in Geneva²: “Most Arab states share with Israel the assessment that the Iranian regime frequently acts as a potentially destabilizing force. But that congruence of strategic interest cannot easily find public expression because the unsettled Israeli-Palestinian issue leaves Arab states unable to ally themselves with Israel.”

The two-state solution nothing but a pretext?

Concerning the two-state solution of Palestine next to Israel, Chipman argued that in private moves certain Israeli think that the main strategic purpose of arriving at a two-state solution would be to legitimize Israel in the eyes of moderate Arab public opinion. That in turn would permit Arab states to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel and to work alongside Israel against such continuing threats from Iranian supported regional groups or even Iran itself.

Chipman also made clear that a two-state solution may not lead to immediate peace; however, it would create the political legitimacy for Israel that would allow certain Arab states to support Israel against radical groups that are also threatening those same Arab states.

So far Chipman’s statements. A State of Palestine is thus above all intended to confront Iran with an united front of Arab states in alliance with the nuclear power Israel? The Gulf States, up to now depending on the military power of the USA, intimidated by the former common enemy *Saddam Hussein* – remember Kuwait 1990/1991 and its protection money payments to the USA in the 1990’s – those Gulf States now threatened by Iran and so, again intimidated, depending on Israel? As a new edition of the neo-conservative war strategy of the provoked so-called “clash of civilizations”, this time however internal Islamic, between the Shiite Persians and the majority Sunni Arabs,



Arab oil fields – above the Shaybah oil field in Saudi Arabia – in future under Israeli military “shield”? (photo reuters)

with Israel as the lucky bystander tipping the scales?

Arabs and Israeli against Persians?

Dan Meridor, deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Israeli intelligence service said exactly the same thing when he stressed at the conference quoted above, that it was Iran, which holds the leadership over the revolutionary Islam; therefore an Iran possessing nuclear weapons would endanger not only Israel, but also the Gulf States. Israel’s highest secret service agent pointed out that if the formation of two states, Israel and Palestine, was ahead, the US leadership was of great importance. At the same time however, the USA would urgently have to solve the problem of the nuclear armament of Iran.³

Mordechai Kedar, Israeli professor for Arab studies and according to Swiss radio *DRS* member of the Israeli secret service for many years, is currently on tour through Europe, claiming to render the Europeans sensitive to the threat by Iranian missiles, which could also reach Europe. The same Mordechai Kedar expressed in an interview in the mentioned program with remarkable similarity to Dan Meridor and John Chipman that the Saudis did not support the Arab brothers in the war against the Shiite *Hizbollah* in South Lebanon 2006 but supported Israel. Moreover, with the attack of Israel on the Gaza Strip at the beginning of 2009, the Saudis did not support the Sunni Hamas, because of their background support by Iran, but they supported Israel. Why? The ex secret service agent Kedar gave the following answer: Saudi Arabia has a conflict with the Shiites, and also has problems with the Shiites in their own country. The Saudis feared that in their homeland and in Iran the Shiites could take over Shiite areas in the East of Saudi Arabia, which would be particularly volatile as it is the area in which the large oil fields of the Saudis are situated.

The old game of “divide et impera”?

Answering to the remark of the *DRS* journalist that Israel seemed to be the bottleneck in a much larger conflict in the Middle East, the secret service trained Kedar outlined the course of the fronts as follows: For example the Emir of Qatar forms a coalition with Iran, the *Hizbollah* and the Hamas today. Other states would also change the sides, towards Iran, if the world did not do anything against Iran. Egypt and Jordan were both worried, but Saudi Arabia feared Iran most. The Saudis knew that they were the next tar-

get of Iran, after Iraq, reported Kedar. They were all in fear of Iran in the Middle East. Yes, the danger for the direct neighbours of Iran was bigger than the danger for Israel. All these Arab states were nearer to Iran, and besides less able to defend themselves than Israel. Israel was in a much better position. Kuwait and Bahrain did not have a possibility of resisting an Iranian attack. The Iranian Ayatollahs, however, would hate the Sunni Arabs, therefore it did not matter to them, if Arab Sunnis died in an attack against Israel.⁴

These three statements show that behind the scenes obviously not only the planning but also the complete transformation of the Middle East is in full swing. The future may show whether in this process the role of the policeman at the Persian Gulf – not fully free from selfish motives – is transferred from the USA to Israel. Believing *Robert Dreyfuss*’ remarks in his book “Devil’s Game”, according to which it were the British, who organized the Muslim Brotherhoods in order to use them as instruments against Arab nationalism, and believing his remarks that Israel originally supported the Hamas in order to weaken the Fatah; the task transfer from the USA onto Israel is nothing else but a part of a tradition, in which the Devil’s Game, the satanic principle of “divide et impera”, has been predominant for decades.⁵

Realization of “blood borders” due?

In any case, we should observe the general geopolitical situation and re-read *Ralph Peter*’s article in the *Armed Forces Journal* with the ghastly title “Blood Borders”. Peter describes the Middle East before and after the transformation along the “blood borders”, in which the separation into Sunni and Shiite states, a three-part Iraq, an amputation of Saudi Arabia especially around the eastern areas rich in oil, likewise Iran, the reduction of Pakistan with the new state of Baluchistan, a free Kurdistan etc. are dashy.⁶

In addition, we shall see whether the contrast between Brzezinski-Obama-America and Netanyahu-Israel will turn out to be genuine or only superficial. According to Brzezinski’s concept in his book “The Grand Chessboard”,⁷ where he claims that it is necessary to control Eurasia in order to control the world, and in which the individual states are nothing but figures in a game of chess, a manipulated mass, which are played off against each other, and according to his latest essay in *Foreign Affairs*⁸ the chessman

Iran is momentarily urgently needed, in full possession of its forces. Why? As a “natural” arch-enemy of the Sunni and Wahabbite Taliban, Shiite Iran should assist NATO in the Afghan disaster and thus save the western military alliance from breaking apart. True to the motto: The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

It remains to be seen whether in Machiavellian Brzezinski line of thinking Iran are to likewise be played off against Israel, and the Sunnis are to be played off against the Shiites, or whether Israel is needed as regional power in order to contain Arabs and Persians.

“War is obsolete!”

Finally, we may not give up hope that conflicts in the age of nuclear weapons can be settled peacefully and on the grounds of international law. It is still true that the worst of all crimes is a war of aggression, as laid down in the Nuremberg principles after World War II. Or, to say it in the words of the US officer *Doug Rokke*, who was to remove the radiating uranium ammunition for the Pentagon after Gulf War I: In times, in which weapons are used, which can never be eliminated because their radioactive half-life amounts to 4.5 billion years, for example, we must say: “War is obsolete”. Especially and above all a nuclear war of aggression against a country, that has never before attacked any other country in its history. •

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¹ see Haaretz.com, 21/09/2009; www.haaretz.com

² The 7th IISS global Strategic Review “The new Geopolitics”: www.iiss.org/conferences/global-strategic-review/global-strategic-review-2009/plenary-sessions-and-speeches-2009/sixth-plenary-session-dr-john-chipman/

³ www.strategische-studien.com

⁴ Kontext of 9/17/2009, 9.06 am in Swiss Radio DRS. www.drs.ch/www/de/drs/sendungen/top/kontext/5005.sh10097933.html

⁵ Robert Dreyfuss. *Devil’s Game. How the United States helped unleash fundamentalist Islam*. New York 2005. ISBN 0-8050-8137-2. www.robertdreyfuss.com

⁶ www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/06/1833899

⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski; *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its geo-strategic Imperatives*. Basic Books, New York, 1998.

⁸ www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65251/zbigniew-brzezinski/an-agenda-for-nato

South America to Resist US Military Presence

by Gisela Liebe, Switzerland

Europe is being demonstrated by South American states how to put up resistance to US military presence. On 28 August, the 12 Unasur (Union of the South American Nations) member states met for talks in Bariloche, Argentina to discuss the new military treaty between Colombia and the USA. With this treaty, the US are allowed by Colombia to make use of and expand seven military bases, where up to 1,400 US troops may be stationed.

Most of the South American states reacted highly alarmed to the expansion of US military presence in Colombia. Venezuela and Ecuador in particular feel directly threatened. In the run-up to the summit, Argentina and Brazil were also clearly against the new US military bases. Argentina's President *Cristina Fernández de Kirchner*, who initiated this summit, unmistakably remarked: "We cannot allow the USA, after having exported to us the economic crisis and the swine flew, to bring a war-like situation to our region, as well."

In the run-up to the conference Bolivia's president *Evo Morales* suggested "continental plebiscites" on US army presence outside the USA, and said: "This way the peoples of the continent, not the imperiums would decide upon this deployment." According to the constitutions of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua, the deployment of foreign troops is not allowed. The USA had to clear their air base in Manta, Ecuador. Reconnaissance and transport planes that had been stationed in Manta until today shall now be transferred to Colombian air bases.

It does not come as a surprise that the expansion of US presence in South America is quite apprehensive. The US hegemonial strive in South America continues to be pursued determinedly, also under *Obama*. As it is often the case in South America, the USA justifies its military presence with the war against drug trafficking. Since 2001, the USA has already invested 346 million Euro in the so-called *Plan Colombia*, without any remarkable success.

The summit of *Unasur* in Bariloche lasted eight hours instead of the envisaged four. The entire conference, where all 12 South American heads of state were present, had been live-broadcasted. President Barack Obama did not attend the conference.

Whereas Colombia's President *Álvaro Uribe* defended the military treaty as an effective assistance against drug trafficking and put emphasis on the fact that Colombia did not give way by an inch of its sovereignty, nearly all other heads of state, with the exception of President *Alan García* of Peru, voted against the military bases. Uruguay's president *Tabaré Vázquez* said: "Uruguay stands



Population and governments resist US military bases. (photo Reuters)

for sovereignty. Therefore, we reject installing foreign military bases". *Hugo Chavez* asked Colombia to present the wording of the treaty in order to know what it is really about. He quoted from the White Paper of the US Southern Command Air Force, where the objective of the military bases to achieve military control in the region is being explained.

Rafael Correa [President of the Republic of Ecuador and current President of *Unasur*] presented an extensive documentation, compiling arguments why there should be no US bases in Latin America. "Ecuador had a US military base in Manta. Let us not be fooled: there is no way to control what the US Americans are doing on the bases they had been granted by Colombia. Who should control them?" *Correa* said it would be impossible to verify if a given plane is starting from the military base to control the drug traffic or if it is intercepting communication of other countries or interfering with their surveillance radar. "We have experience in this in Ecuador; we should no longer be naïve." He proposed that the defense council of *Unasur* should deal with the topic extensively. *Correa* reported how US troops on the military base in Manila were in command of the local security forces. This was confirmed by *Evo Morales* who took the view that foreign military bases should be banned from Latin America.

Correa and *Morales* pointed out that the presence of the DEA, the US Drug Enforcement Administration, not only did not help in the fight against drug trafficking, but it

increased it. The Brazilian President *Lula da Silva* pointed out that the South American countries have made great progress in their cooperation. He proposed that the *Unasur* should seek their own solution for the issue of drug traffic, independent from the US: "Our colleague *Uribe* is trying to prove us that the US bases in Colombia have been

existing since 1952. I would like to tell him in all friendship: If they have not succeeded in fighting the guerrilla and the drug traffic in all these years, we should think of other ways to solve this problem in *Unasur*."

"The majority of drug consumers are not living on our continent. It would be good if the US, instead of fighting drug traffic within our states, would do so within their own borders – but drug consumers are also voters, of course." *Lula* proposed a meeting with *Obama* so that the US President could clarify his political intentions in South America. In addition, he demanded a legal warranty that the US troops could not be utilized for military missions outside Colombia.

At the end of the summit, a common declaration was adopted, confirming the intention towards a peaceful cooperation and resolving of conflicts within all *Unasur* states. The presence of foreign forces should threaten neither the sovereignty and integrity of a South American nation nor peace and security in the region. The Foreign and Defense Ministers of the *Unasur* states plan to meet in September to debate confidence-building mechanisms and to analyze the contents of the US white book on "Strategy for South America". The South

American Defense Council of *Unasur* had been founded in March 2009. At the same time, the South American Council against Drug Trade was commissioned to work out as soon as possible a strategy and an action plan which can serve as a base for fighting the illegal drug traffic more efficiently to dedicated authorities.

Unesco Declares Ecuador Free from Illiteracy

Two years after President *Rafael Correa*'s initiation of a literacy campaign in his country, the *Unesco* declared Ecuador to be free from illiteracy.

Within only two years the illiteracy rate was successfully lowered from 9.3% to 2.7%. About 420,000 people learnt to read and write. The director of the office for national education in the Ecuador Ministry of Education, *Mery Gavilanes*, outlined the five different programmes wherewith different target groups had been reached.

The programme "Manuela Sáenz" was directed towards the Mestizo population, to whom 500,000 course books in the Spanish language were distributed. For indigenous and rural communities the programme "Dolores Cacuango" was developed, in which instruction took place exclusively in *Kichwa*,

one of the Quechua languages much used in Ecuador. Teaching material for further languages and nationalities is being prepared. A special programme, "voluntad", was implemented for convicts in the 34 rehabilitation centres of the country. A programme of their own was also developed for the border provinces near Peru and Colombia, as well as for people with different handicaps, as for instance Braille for the blind.

Altogether, 12,000 literacy facilitators were employed. 190,000 students from the senior classes were also included in the programme. Their activities as literacy teachers were made a constituent part of their own school education to gain their high school certificate.

Source: *teleSur-PI/ve-PR*, 8 September 2009

Sri Lanka

Human Rights Must Be Observed – Reconciliation Is Needed

After an armed conflict lasting twenty years, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) laid down their arms on 17 May this year. On the following day, the government of Sri Lanka proclaimed the end of the war, and President *Mahinda Rajapakse* promised to uphold the Tamil minority's rights and to close the country's ethnic divides. Contrary to this promise, the human tragedy of the Tamil population continues to this day. The reports from Sri Lanka are alarming ("Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 12 September). Around 300,000 Tamil refugees are still kept in internment camps under deplorable conditions. The UN's international organizations and the ICRC have no access to the camps. And, according to "Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka", the situation of media representatives has not improved. On the contrary, threats and intimidations have increased.

Whatever both war parties were guilty of, in the course of the clashes, both parties are said to have seriously violated international humanitarian law. Since the end of the war, the responsibility for observing the human rights of the defeated Tamil fighters and of the civilian population lies with the Sri Lankan Government. The international community must demand that the Sri Lankan Government abides by international law and must invite both parties to reconcile. As a reminder article 3 of the *Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*:

Art 3. In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

(1) Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

- (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- (b) taking of hostages;
- (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment;

(d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

(2) The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.

An impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the Parties to the conflict.

The Parties to the conflict should further endeavour to bring into force, by means of special agreements, all or part of the other provisions of the present Convention.

The application of the preceding provisions shall not affect the legal status of the Parties to the conflict.

UN General Assembly – Decided Criticism of War Monger Party

Evidence of increasing self-confidence of the majority of nations

km. A few days before the opening of the 64th General Assembly, on the 14th of September, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the 63rd UN General Assembly, held his farewell speech. The outgoing President emphasized why the General Assembly, which represents the vast majority of states and nations, gained some more of the respect and significance which it was originally entitled to. This was accomplished through various initiatives, one of it being the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, which took place from 24th to 26th June 2009.

A few days ago, the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown suggested that the G 20 should become a kind of world government (*Spiegel Online* of 22 September). In contrast to this, the President of the General Assembly stated: G 8 and the G 20 will continue to be significant minorities. However, this is more due to the fact that they are rich and powerful than to their demonstrated ability to do things well. We cannot and should not forget that, after all, it is because of the extremely grave errors committed by them, and the Bretton Woods institutions run by them, that the world is currently undergoing what could well turn out to be the worst crisis in history.

In his speech to the General Assembly, the Swiss Federal President Hans-Rudolf Merz also made some spot-on remarks regarding the G 20: "The G 20 has taken over a role in discussing important global issues. This development must not take place at the expense of other nations or global institutions such as the UN. The G 20 lacks legitimacy;

basic considerations of due process are absent in the sanctions procedures. The members of the G 20 themselves are not subject to the same scrutiny. Switzerland advocates a level playing field and a much better consultation among non-members of the G 20."

However, many leading political representatives linked to the US government still behave as if they could set the tone. This seems to resemble the state Third Reich Germany was in after the Battle of Stalingrad in the winter of 1942/43. Each objective observer knew that with this devastating defeat the war was lost. But the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Josef Goebbels, was not shy of calling for the total war in February 1943. Are the leaders of the western superpowers still not aware of the fact that they have lost all credibility throughout the world during the last 20 years? That their policies failed miserably at the expense of billions of people? That there can be no return to political expansion of power? That even refined strategies and deceptions in the style of Obama or Brezinski are of no avail?

The Iranian President has also held a speech to the UN General Assembly. There is still a great deal of polemics against it from the West which replaces the desire to find out what was actually said, for example: "The era of capitalist thinking and imposition of one's thoughts on the international community, intended to predominate the world in the name of globalization and the age of setting up empires is over. It is no longer possible to humiliate nations and impose double standard policies on the world community."

A few days before the President of the General Assembly had said: "I believe that it is not far-fetched to note that the whole world knows that, among many other truths, some of our most powerful and influential Member States definitely do not believe in the rule of law in international relations and are of the view, moreover, that complying with the legal norms to which we formally commit, when signing the Charter, is something that applies only to weak countries. [...]"

Certain Member States think that they can act according to the law of the jungle, and defend the right of the strongest to do whatever they feel like with total and absolute impunity, and remain accountable to no one. They think nothing of railing against multilateralism, proclaiming the virtues of unilateralism while simultaneously pontificating unashamedly from their privileged seats on the Security Council about the need for all Member States conscientiously to fulfil their obligations under the Charter, or be sanctioned (selectively of course) for failing to do so. The sovereign equality of all Member States and the obligation to prevent wars are, for them, minor details that need not be taken very seriously."

A few lines before he said: "We are at a critical juncture on the path that we set out upon in San Francisco 64 years ago. The institutions established at that time, like all institutions, have undergone a natural, gradual and inevitable process of attrition. As a consequence, the present crisis is affecting both international economic governance and policy.

There is broad consensus that the United Nations Security Council is incapable of ef-

fectively addressing many crucial issues related to international peace and security and that it requires comprehensive reform in order to overcome the increasing limitations arising from its restrictive methods and narrow decision-making base.

Only a strong General Assembly, which vigorously exercises its deliberative, policymaking and decision-making roles will be capable of enhancing multilateralism as the best option for relationships between States. It must be borne in mind that the most significant revitalization has been the capacity demonstrated by the General Assembly to address existential economic problems that it had been unable to tackle for almost three decades. Revitalization is a political rather than a technical issue."

The outgoing President of the General Assembly concluded with the following words: "All of this, and many other equally serious anomalies, is what has brought many to believe in the urgency of the need to reform the United Nations. But during this year as President of the General Assembly, I have come to the conclusion that the time has already passed for reforming or mending our Organization. What we need to do is to reinvent it, and we need urgently to do it ad majorem gloriam Dei, which is to say, for the good of the Earth and of humanity."

The division of mankind is no natural law. It would be a benefit and a tremendous relief for mankind if all governments respected and supported human rights. The nations could have a big share in getting their governments to act accordingly. •

"Lebanon is More Than a Country, Lebanon Is a Message"

by Professor Roger Achkar, Lebanon

Numerous conflicts have occurred between Muslim and Christian nations, countries, groups, tribes and confessions throughout the history of mankind since 632 BC. In Lebanon, the two religions have shown that they are perfectly capable to live together in peace and harmony for many centuries if a well balanced power sharing system can be further promoted and maintained.

The Lebanese consensual system that brings together nineteen (19) different confessions who were destined to live together, has a Christian Maronite Head of State. The Maronite Church, who struggled for the establishment of the Lebanese Republic with the help of the French, is a part of the Roman Catholic Church since the 8th century and is the most powerful Christian Church in the Middle East. This Church has promoted and maintained relations with the Western World in general and with Catholic Western countries in particular for the past fourteen (14) centuries. It is crucial for the survival of this consensual system that the President of the Lebanese Republic be a member of the Christian Maronite community for obvious historical reasons.

The Christians have been frequently persecuted and massacred in the Middle East and the world. Western countries have maintained a detailed record of the massacre of 1860, when the Ottoman Turks have assisted members of the Druze community to massacre Lebanese and Syrian Christians in an attempt to exterminate all Christians in Lebanon and Syria. French, Austrian, British, Prussian and Russian diplomats, further to the military intervention of Napoleon III of France and his troops, agreed to appoint, for the first time, a Christian ruler over Mount Lebanon because it became obvious that this is the only way to considerably reduce the risks of potential massacres of vulnerable Christian minorities who have been a target for the past fourteen centuries.

It is worth noting, that at many occasions in their history, Lebanese Christians and Muslims have assisted each other to get rid of foreign rulers. Shias and Christians, for example, have assisted each other to get rid of Mamelouk rule in Lebanon.

The Mamelouks, Sunni Muslim slaves of Turks, had bitterly persecuted and massacred Shia Muslims in Lebanon before conducting massacres against Christians. When Lebanese Shia and Sunni Muslims waged war against each other, Maronite Christians had the opportunity to be peace mediators between them which has strengthened their position in Lebanon.

The Lebanese political consensual system has therefore naturally developed and flourished during fourteen centuries of Muslim and Christian cohabitation and cooperation. This system is a healthy model of peaceful relations between the two religions in a single country. This model, if respected, will promote peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East and the world.

It may be appropriate to mention at this stage that Telelumiere, the Christian Maronite religious TV channel that spreads the Gospel of Jesus Christ mostly in Arabic throughout the Arab countries and the world, organizes occasional meetings with Muslim Sheikhs to conduct comparative studies between the two religions on air.

The Lebanese consensual system has therefore demonstrated that it is a definitive factor of stability between Islam and Christianity in the Middle East and the world. This is why Pope John Paul II said during his visit to Lebanon in 1997: "Lebanon is more than a country, Lebanon is a message". The Lebanese consensual system will inspire Arab and Middle Eastern countries to better integrate and accept minorities which will certainly prevent potential future wars, conflicts and hostilities. Religious minorities will definitely be better protected and their rights respected if they are allowed to be represented in the government.

Humanity never needs weapons when there is love, respect and understanding among peoples and religions. The gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 26:52 says "He who takes the sword, dies by the sword" and according to the Apocalypse 13:10 "He who takes the sword must die by the sword, and this is the perseverance of the Saints." •

Solidarity with the Somali People instead of "Operation Atalanta"

Interview with Carlo Sommaruga, member of the Swiss National Council



Carlo Sommaruga

On 15 and 16 September the Swiss National Council ("Nationalrat") discussed the Swiss involvement in the "Operation Atalanta". Meanwhile the National Council voted against this intervention. A broad alliance has been formed across all party lines opposing the deployment. Carlo Sommaruga, National Councillor of the Social Democratic Party, strongly rejects a Swiss intervention. In the following he defines his position.

Current Concerns: What's your view on the Swiss soldiers' intervention offshore Somalia?

Carlo Sommaruga: Switzerland and its soldiers have no place in the "Operation Atalanta".

Why should Switzerland stay out of that intervention?

"Operation Atalanta" is primarily the result of several European heads of states and of Javier Solana declaring their will to set up a European military power. Being a depositary state of the Geneva Conventions as well as being a neutral state – even if it is about an active neutrality – Switzerland cannot assent to such political and military actions, particularly if it has no influence on the concurrent circumstances.

This is not a UN-"Peacekeeping" or "Peacemaking" operation – that is not the issue. We are talking about a police operation in international waters having a clearly confined mandate: i.e. the protection of the North's economic interests. The question would be entirely different, if it was an UN-armed force with the clear goal to protect only the UN-ships. Here these ships only serve as an alibi.

Should Switzerland not help other states?

The question of solidarity is of particular importance in a society. But the vital point is knowing with whom one should demon-

strate one's solidarity. Real solidarity is the one you build up with women and men, particularly with those living in situations of war or violence. Solidarity does not mean cooperation with European states, which have come to the political decision to set up a naval force. In this case true solidarity is the one with the Somali people. These people suffering and depending on international help are located on Somali ground, not on the sea. For this reason, the international Swiss operation must primarily focus on the mainland.

How could Switzerland contribute to pacifying the situation in Somalia and off the coast?

Switzerland should make humanitarian aid and aid to developing countries their priority. Concerning humanitarian aid these millions of Swiss francs budgeted for the participation in the "Operation Atalanta" could be spent on the World Food Programme which does not have sufficient means to help the Somali people. Within the framework of the developmental aid Switzerland can contribute to strengthening the rule of law in Somalia. It calls on many years of experience in this field of cooperation.

By the way: Peace and economic development in Somalia can only be re-established by strengthening the Somali authority of the state. Somalia should also be given the means to protect its territorial waters and its coasts against looting or devastation of the natural resources, especially caused by over-fishing or by the illegal disposal of waste.

Which role should Switzerland play within international conflicts according to your opinion?

Switzerland has to become active in the field of mediation and facilitation [Good Services] in cross-national conflicts or in areas of tension. One example is the conflict between Turkey and Armenia. We have a large competence in this area, which is internationally accepted.

Mr Sommaruga, thank you very much for this interview. •

Northern Ireland's Steps towards Reconciliation

An exemplary peace model also for other trouble spots in this world

by Dr Titine Kriesi, Switzerland

When in 1969, London's domineering political elite decided to send troops to Northern Ireland; the war against Irish-Republican Catholics was to continue for some more decades, following many centuries of British colonial policy. After nearly 40 years of – euphemistically called “troubles” – a peace treaty was settled in May 2007. Peace between so-called archenemies? Not long before, somebody who dared to believe Catholics and Protestants were capable of such a conciliatory step ran the risk to be mildly smiled at as a dreamer. Once more, the question was raised whether it was not another trick in order to start a new religious conflict for a further “divide et impera”. However, against all prophecies of doom, the Irish have now worked things out together in order to solve their problems and to establish a future of peace and reconciliation. Northern Ireland committed itself to dialogue and peace. Neither for the population nor for the Northern Irish, for the Irish or for the British politics there is no turning back. In the following, we will take a closer look at what was possible before and after 7 May 2007 – especially concerning the important role of the peace process as a model and a dawn of hope for other trouble spots in our world, i.e. in the Middle East, in Sri Lanka, Africa or somewhere else.

At the end of the 1980s, secret negotiations between the Irish-republican Sinn Féin party and the British government started.¹ In 1998, they led to a peace agreement, the so-called *Good Friday Agreement*². Its most urgent concern was the political agreement between all political parties with the priority to finally finish four decades of violence.³ Everybody who had taken part in the agreement should be able to pursue the respective political goals using peaceful and democratic means, without having to fear discrimination or repression. The uniqueness of this agreement was that different points of view were included.⁴ This outcome was absolutely different from all earlier attempts.⁵ Before the *Good Friday Agreement* there were parties, as for example Paisley's “Democratic Unionist Party”, which had refused any dialogue with the Republicans for decades. Nevertheless, looking back, the accomplishment of the *Good Friday Agreement* seems to have been the lighter part of the enormous task of implementing the agreement. Defying all difficulties, however, more progress was made possible than ever before in Irish history.

A sidelight on history

The Gaelic tribes of Ireland were being oppressed in the course of Anglo-Norman conquest starting from the 12th century.⁶ The Presbyterian Scottish (English) settled among others in the north of the Catholic island and suppressed the Irish over centuries in the course of the British colonisation. It was only a coincidence that the confessions were different and it has never been the cause for war. As a matter of fact, it was the claim for power, however, which made religion its instrument, and insofar the religious-racist divides were very old. In 1921, Ireland was divided and disintegrated into two states in order to secure power: The “Free State of Ireland” in the south (predominantly Catholic, which became the “Republic of Ireland” in 1948) and the newly created artificial state “Northern Ireland” (with two thirds of Protestants), which was governed by the application of its emergency acts and which became a constitutive part of the United Kingdom. The pro-British protestant “Unionists” of Northern Ireland, who regard themselves as members of the British nation, wanted to become members of the union with Great Britain, in order to secure their own dominance.

The Catholic minority in the state was to be kept away from governing, in order to exclude unification with the southern Republic of Ireland. Thus the so-called religious-racist divides did not become smaller, but larger and deeper.



“Since the peace treaty and the establishment of the common government, life in Northern Ireland has changed for everyone. [...] The peace, long overdue, made it possible that the people could begin a new century with a lot of hope and confidence. This chance may not be lost: Equality in dialogue and partnership without the claim to power are required.” (photo caro)

1968 – Catholic citizens claim their civil rights

The Protestant side, which felt connected to Great Britain, formed a one-party power in Northern Ireland for nearly five decades. That meant, among other things, that the constituencies were manipulated in favour of the Protestants; however, Republican clubs, the Republican Party Sinn Féin and the Irish-Republican Army (IRA) were forbidden. Catholics were discriminated because of their religion, e.g. when they applied for housing and jobs. Those who possessed a house – mainly Protestants – were allowed to vote; this was however refused to the usually poorer Catholics. Rights and claims of (Irish-catholic) Republicans were openly ignored by the state. The division of the island had not made things better: Since 1921 until the new outbreak of riots in 1968, violence against Republicans was institutionalised. The civil rights march in Derry on 5 October 1968 tried to counter such injustice.⁷ A new chapter of Irish history was thereby initiated. At the same time, this march also marked the beginning of a rapidly escalating conflict, which led to a long war resulting since 1971 in a mass of innocently interned, condemned and tortured people convicted under the Special Powers Act.⁸ From now on, civil and human rights for Catholics were persistently claimed and grinded out by different organisations.

1998 – The Good Friday Agreement brings about historical change

30 years later, in 1998, the *Good Friday Agreement* came about after a tough struggle. It was accepted by all participating partners, approved by the parties supporting it and accepted in a popular vote.⁹ Moreover, the peace agreement fixes a number of important fundamental rights like the right of freedom of religion and opinion and a special Human Rights Charter for Northern Ireland in addition to the European Convention on Human Rights.¹⁰ By fixing the same rights for all those mentioned in the *Good Friday Agreement*, the “Unionists” saw their union with Great Britain in danger. Moreover, the Protestant part of the population that had been privileged so far, feared to lose its privileges. Besides, they saw themselves deprived of their Protestant identity by a demographic development (1 million Protestant/500,000 Catholics) shifting towards a Catholic majority. For this reason, the agreement, which should have granted ultimate equality for the Catholics, has met with tough resistance up to our days.¹¹

Never use violence to solve political conflicts

Following London's direct rule (with small interruptions), Northern Ireland was entitled to autonomy. In accordance with the *Good Friday Agreement* all those involved were obliged never to use violence as means of solution of political conflicts. On the contrary: They should be willing to negotiate and establish peace. Those who had been privileged up to now had problems in committing themselves to equal rights. Privileges, however, should now belong to the past. Catholics were to have equal rights. An end should be put to the war against a phantom, against completely normal citizens, who did nothing else than demanding equal rights. It was a tortuously slow process to accept the challenge and to follow the same path as partners from now on. Nevertheless, during the 9 years starting from 1998 until the peace treaty on 7 May 2007 progress was obtained, which in former times had been beyond thinking.

2007 – Peace treaty results in an all-party regional parliament

One day after the peace treaty, on 8 May 2007, the first all-party government was established – an important break in Ireland's history: The two largest parties, the DUP with *Ian Paisley*¹² as Prime Minister and Sinn Féin with *Martin McGuinness* as its deputy, wanted to form a joint government and co-operate in peace. *Peter Hain*, British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said, “...what happened on the 8 May 2007 showed the world how a ‘Shared Future’ can emerge from even the most bitterly divided and blood stricken past. And we must never forget how much misery and suffering that caused.”¹³ The contrast could not be bigger: The pro-British Paisley wants a united Northern Ireland with Great Britain, while the pro-Irish McGuinness is proud to be an Irish Republican, who fights for a united Ireland.¹⁴ The fact that they got together nevertheless, shows the unusual persistence, with which the aim was pursued – recalling the terrible death toll that had been paid over centuries. For nearly two years now the former adversaries have run the independent regional government together. The development, which was given a push, changed the life of each individual citizen. Key element of any co-operation, so McGuinness, has always been peace and reconciliation.

Significant historical changes since 2007

- For the first time all Irish institutions for both states were established by the govern-

ment. Thus the Ministers of the Republic of Ireland and of Northern Ireland discuss trans-boundary topics that affect the life of all people on the whole island.¹⁵

- The “Government Of Ireland Act” of 1920 (that divides Ireland into the two states “Free State Ireland” and “Northern Ireland”) was withdrawn by the British Government (!). At the same time, the British Government committed itself explicitly to respect the result of each future vote over the course of the border between Northern Ireland and the remainder of the island, which is to take place at least every 7 years, even if the result of the vote should be the territorial unit of the island.
- The establishment of a human rights commission both in Northern Ireland (6 counties) and in the Republic of Ireland (26 counties) and an all-Irish committee of both commissions.
- With the *Good Friday Agreement* in 1998, a police ombudsman had already been introduced whose office examines all complaints over a failure of the police independent of denomination, including significant historical cases. This authority has worked satisfactorily during the last 10 years and has led to uncover important police scandals (an example of it is the evidence of the co-operation of the former Northern Irish *Royal Ulster Constabulary RUC* with the pro-British murder commands).
- The plans for the democratization of the police in accordance with the recommendations of the “Independent Commission on Policing” were to be implemented. The police was almost exclusively Protestant before 1998, but then the “new” police (Policy Security of Northern Ireland PSNI) tried to achieve a 50:50 relationship between Protestants and Catholics since 2001 (in the meantime every fourth policeman is Catholic).
- Renewed public investigation into the massacre of 1972 or “Bloody Sunday”, which was preceded by a “civil rights protest against internment without process”¹⁶. Thousands of witnesses were summoned and made a statement, not least the highest members of the British Government and the British Army, like e.g. the former Prime Minister *Edward Heath* and general Sir *Mike Jackson*. (Today, on the 37th anniversary of the massacre, the families of the victims are still fighting for justice.)
- The co-operation of smaller and larger communities produces positive change:

The Theory of Direct Democracy

by Dr Rene Roca*, Switzerland

Little research has been done on direct democracy in Switzerland. For political scientists and jurists, however, this form of democracy with all its facets has become a topic from time to time. In Switzerland as well, the science of history focused mainly on social and economic history. The history of democracy as political history has been largely ignored. It is necessary, however, to minutely reconstruct the historical context in which Switzerland's political system developed. Only then the social sense and the political value of the direct democratic institutions will become accessible and only that will provide an insight into the social psychological context which our political culture is embedded in.

Birth and development of direct democracy in Switzerland

The roots: republicanism and communalism

Switzerland, of all European countries, possesses the oldest and most stable of republican traditions. The definition of the term "republic", i.e. "res publica" points to a crucial element of democratic culture. An affair, a political problem, becomes a "public matter" that means a matter that concerns all citizens of a specific political area. In his research approach of republicanism the British historian John G.A. Pocock emphasizes the fact that since the 16th century an alternative civic humanist model has been developed. This "republican model" has at its core the ideal of the self governing community of economically independent and protective citizens, able to defend themselves. The citizen, who is politically active, strives for freedom and stability as his ethical objectives. These civil

* Three years ago Dr René Roca founded a "Forum for Research of Direct Democracy" and has already organized 9 seminars. He has been establishing a multidisciplinary network of researchers for a mutual exchange of knowledge. Thus, a prolific debate has already been unfolded. Next year he will be organizing a big conference on the topic "Current State of Research on Democracy in Switzerland". He himself has been working on a habilitation on "Genesis and Development of Direct Democracy in Switzerland".

virtues call for the individual to subordinate his private interests under the "bonum commune".

In Switzerland, the republican roots go back to the late Middle Ages. So a second research approach comes into focus, that of communalism. The Swiss historian Peter Blickle points to the communal self-organization of the old "Eidgenossenschaft" and in this context to the significance of the cooperative working together in the communities/municipalities as the democratic primordial cell (the three "selves": self-determination, self-help, self-responsibility). Thus Switzerland possessed ideal conditions – building on a specific democratic culture – to be able to further develop certain pre-modern forms of democracy. In this process the reception of the 18th century Enlightenment was of great significance.

The idea of the sovereignty of the people

The British historian Quentin Skinner, who, in the past, frequently co-operated with Pocock revitalized the field "history of political ideas". Skinner emphasizes the significance of the historical context in which ideas develop and of the political actors who pick up an idea in a specific way and put it into political practice.

In the course of the Enlightenment the democratic development in Switzerland gained special momentum and dynamics. It was discussed comprehensively and was enriched with own ideas. The enlightened natural law which laid the foundation for the concept of equality and which transferred the contract theories onto the level of the national state seemed to have been manifested politically in the form of the Swiss "Landsgemeinde"-democracy.

This "Landsgemeinde", a pre-modern form of democracy, served as a reference model for the people's movements of the 19th century. On this basis a bold merging of tradition and modernity was possible and gave birth to direct democracy.

The Geneva philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered the "ideal state" to be

realized in the Swiss "Landsgemeinde". In his work "Contrat social" he depicts this as follows: "If you observe the happiest people in the world, if you see, how a group of peasants settle the state business under an oak tree and always behave sensibly you cannot but feel contempt for the refinement of the other nations which render themselves famous and miserable by such means of art and secret-mongering, can you?" (Fourth book, chapter 1)

Seen from a point of view of the history of ideas, Rousseau was the creator of the concept of "people's sovereignty" and defined it as follows: "For the same reason that it cannot be alienated, sovereignty cannot be deputized; it essentially consists of the common will and the will cannot be deputized. So the delegates of the people are not the people's representatives, they are merely its mandates [...]; they cannot ultimately decide. Any law that is not decided on by the people itself, is invalid, it is no law at all." (Third book, chapter 15)

Pathways to direct democracy in Switzerland

With these words Rousseau describes the contents of a debate which was initiated in the cantons in 1830 starting out from the "Landsgemeinde"-democracy: People were searching for ways to improve the indirect democracy, promoted by the French revolution and by Helvetia, with elements of direct people's rights and to ultimately solve the issue of power. The first example of a direct democratic institution was the so-called "Veto", (antecedent of today's referendum.) Beginning with 1830 the "Veto" gained acceptance in all Swiss cantons in different forms and was the hitherto most radical manifestation of the people's sovereignty. In this sense the "Veto" was the decisive step forward to a genuine "true" sovereignty of the people. In the second half of the 19th century, referendum and initiative also won through on the national level, which is unique in the world up to this day.

This development of direct democracy was successful mainly because of four conditions:

a) Starting from 1830 a new culture of assembly ("Volkstage") developed in the Swiss cantons, linking to older forms and challenging the elite. These people's movements were conservative on the one hand, however, they also carried early-socialist positions.

b) Political actors enforced the principle of publicness, which meant that all political affairs concerning the community had to be publicly discussed.

c) Since 1830 the press was developing and the freedom of the press was enforced against quite some resistance. Newspapers made public debates possible and eventually defined the political agenda more and more.

d) Pioneers like Heinrich Pestalozzi pointed to the significance of education. The elementary school system developed in a communal frame and became an important task of every single community. This way the communities/municipalities strengthened their reputation of "schools of democracy".

Conclusion

Democracy is basically a moral achievement. The above mentioned British historian Pocock contributed an important social-psychologist element in the context of the history of democracy. The question of the ethical dimension of political processes is always a question of the image of humanity ("Menschenbild") as well. It is part of a positive "Menschenbild" to believe that humanity is capable of political participation. This is taken up by Pocock's definition of a "positive" freedom, underlining with this term the fact that man must actively mould his surroundings in order to preserve freedom he achieved.

The direct democratic development in Switzerland during the 19th century was also the beginning of a discussion of virtues in this country during which increasingly more justice and more peaceful conditions were established. •

- The co-operation of Unionists and Republicans has proved to be meaningful, because the quality of life of families and their neighbours has improved. (The communities, Hain says, are however still split in some parts. There are still too many so-called peace walls, which divide the communities.)¹⁷
- Continuation of "integrated" schools: Public education was separated according to denominations in 1921; the first integrative school with 28 pupils, i.e. Protestants and Catholics in a mixed class was opened in 1981. In 2008 there were already 62 (!) mixed schools with 19,000 pupils or 6% of all pupils in Northern Ireland.
- The "Irish Language Act", which demands the linguistic equality of English and Irish (Gaelic), was to be legally embodied for the first time. This is all the more important, if one considers that in the 1980s persons, who identified themselves to the British occupying power only in Gaelic or spoke their native language in court, were arrested.¹⁸ (In the Republic of Ireland, however, Gaelic has been the official language for decades.)
- The composition of the new victim commission was to acknowledge victims and survivors of every background – especially Republicans and security forces – equivalently.
- On 18 November 2008, the Protestant Prime Minister Peter Robinson (Paisley's successor of 5 June 2008) and his Catholic deputy McGuinness agreed on the assignment of police and jurisdiction from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. The schedule of the implementation is open. A "historical event", Robinson and McGuinness said. Robinson went on: "The agreement, which we achieved, represents a very satisfying resolution to the most difficult issues [...]".¹⁹

Acknowledging injustice for what it is contributes to peace

Since the peace treaty and the establishment of the common government, life in Northern Ireland has changed for everyone. Soldiers, checkpoints, tanks disappeared from the streets. The British troops withdrew after 38 years.²⁰ Politics, too, seem to have irreversibly changed. This success, McGuinness claims, was only achieved, because each citizen, who got mad at the discrimination of a part of the population, made his own contribution for the fight against injustice by clearly acknowledging injustice as what it is.²¹ The British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, emphasized in a reconciliatory way that they had to find means in order to master the past; the needs of the victims and the survivors would have to be met.²² This should also happen in view of the murders of March 2009, who did not find any support and aroused only deep abhorrence.

The peace, long overdue, made it possible that the people could begin a new century with a lot of hope and confidence. This chance may not be lost: Equality in dialogue and partnership without the claim to power are required. The same process is urgently waiting in other countries. Northern Ireland showed it: Stop the war, start the dialogue and establish peace. •

¹ Today's Deputy Prime Minister, Martin McGuinness, was chief negotiator of Sinn Féin on its way to the Good Friday Agreement. (As deputy IRA commander-in-chief he had been one of the most wanted terrorists in the 1970s, and later became Minister of Education.)

² Adams, Gerry, today's president of Sinn Féin, met with Tony Blair in October 1997. He was the first Sinn-Féin-leader to speak with a British Prime Minister since the partition of Ireland in 1921. Their negotiations led to the Good Friday Agreement.

³ cf. Adams, Gerry: The Good Friday Agreement: A historic and defining event. *An Phoblacht*, April 3, 2008, p. 2 and 1; Adams praised among oth-

ers the English Prime Minister: Blair had "made a significant and import contribution to the Irish peace process". Hain Peter: *Political developments in Northern Ireland since March 2007*. House of Commons Library, 15 November 2007, p. 8.

⁴ Adams spoke in Gaza and Israel about the Republican's fight and the Northern Irish peace process. He called for an end to all armed conflicts and emphasized that a dialogue including all parties concerned was the most important thing. Many of those he had talked to placed their hopes in the Good Friday Agreement to establish peace in Northern Ireland. "If the political will is there", Adams said, "then this will also be true for the Middle East." (cf. Gerry Adams in Gaza and Israel. In: *An Phoblacht*, 23 April 2009.)

⁵ "Die Palästinenser schauen inzwischen neidisch nach Nordirland. Und viele Forscher sagen, warum kann man hier im Land einen Lösungsversuch nicht so angehen, wie man das in Nordirland gemacht hat, nämlich dass alle Parteien miteinander reden, und zwar ohne Ausschluss irgendeiner Seite [...], wir stehen eine Woche vor 40 Jahren israelischer Besatzung [...]" (Interview with Helga Baumgarten, political scientist at the Palestinian university Birzeit. In: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*, "Nordirland als Vorbild für den Nahen Osten", 25 May 2007, p.2)

⁶ Otto Frank: *Der Nordirlandkonflikt. Ursprung, Verlauf, Perspektiven*. Munich, 2005, cf. pages 7, 9, 85.

⁷ McGuinness, Martin: "Forty years ago, on the streets of this city, men and women from different backgrounds, from different generations, from different political roots came together as equals and we demanded our rights." Derry 1968: A turning point for Civil Rights and the North. *An Phoblacht*, 9 October 2008.

⁸ Adams, who spent several years in the concentration camp Long Kesh, said to "The Guardian" in summer 2004, that the photos of the torturings in Abu Ghraib had not been a new sight for him, since he had systematically been tortured together with like-minded prisoners in the 1970. cf. McGuffin John, 1973, Internment, p.1. www.irishresistance-books.com/internment/intern8.htm.

⁹ "[...] (Nordirland über 71,1%, Republik Irland über 94,5% Ja-Stimmen)." Wolff, Stefan: Zur Menschenrechtssituation in Nordirland nach dem Friedensabkommen. In: *MenschenRechte*, 3/1999, pp 42–45.

¹⁰ cf. Wolff, Stefan. Zur Menschenrechtssituation in Nordirland nach dem Friedensabkommen. In: *MenschenRechte*, 3/1999, pp 42–45.

¹¹ McGuinness, Martin: *Keynote Speech Ard Fheis*, 29 February 2008, p. 2f.

¹² On 5 June, Peter Robinson became successor of Paisley; like Paisley he is also president of the Democratic Unionist Party DUP.

¹³ <http://www.nio.gov.uk/statement-by-peter-hain-secretary-of-state-for-northern-ireland-9-may-2007/media-detail.htm?newsID=14391>

¹⁴ cf. "We oppose [...] any effort to impose unity through violence or the threat of violence." <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/dott/ba161005.htm>

cf. Hain, Peter: Azadeh Pak: *Political developments in Northern Ireland since March 2007*, House of Commons Library, 15 November, p. 6.

¹⁵ cf. Adams, Gerry: The Good Friday Agreement: A historic and defining event. *An Phoblacht*, April 3, 2008, p. 2: Social, economic and cultural programs for mutual understanding and reconciliation between the communities is supported.

¹⁶ Internments under the "Special Powers Act" after 9 August 1971 mean that mainly innocent people were arrested etc. In: McGuffin John, 1973, *Internment*, p. 1.

¹⁷ cf. Hain, Peter. Azadeh Pak: *Political developments in Northern Ireland since March 2007*, House of Commons Library, 15 November, p. 6.

¹⁸ cf. Osuch, Florian, Belfast. Irisch im Kommen. AG Friedensforschung an der Uni Kassel, aus: *junge Welt*, 25 August 2007.

¹⁹ *An Phoblacht*, 20 Nov. 2008, p. 2.

²⁰ After the withdrawal of British troops, 5,000 soldiers remain stationed. "Sie trainieren dort für den Einsatz im Irak und in Afghanistan – und können jederzeit von der nordirischen Polizei zu Hilfe gerufen werden." cf. Wührer Pit.: *Operation Schweiz*. *Schweizer Wochenzeitung WOZ*, 16. August 2007.

²¹ Adams, Gerry: "ensure that commitments given in the Good Friday and St. Andrews Agreements are impelmented" in: *An Phoblacht*, 8 Januar 2009.

²² cf. Hain, Peter: Azadeh Pak: *Political developments in Northern Ireland since March 2007*, House of Commons Library, 15 November, p. 6.

Sustainability Needs New Economic System

World Resources Forum presents declaration on 17 September 2009

thk. From 15 to 16 September, the first World Resources Forum was in session at Davos/Switzerland. Dr Xaver Edelmann, member of the executive board of the EMPA (Eidgenössische Materialprüfungs- und Forschungsanstalt – Swiss Federal Laboratories for Material Testing and Research) officiated as president of this forum. The meeting's main topic was the industrial nations' unrestrained and wasteful exploitation of resources. At the same time, ways to massively reduce the wasting of resources were envisaged and discussed.

Since the consumption of fossil fuels is on everyone's lips these days, it was rather the boundless exploitation of metals which was made the main topic. For the production of mobile phones alone, 40 different chemical elements are needed. Two tons of materials are needed for the fabrication of a laptop weighing two kilograms.

Xaver Edelmann considers the current crisis as a chance for a fundamental rethinking – no more fooling around in a throwaway society but turning towards a responsible dealing with resources. We need a pivotal change of our consumer behaviour and thus of our economic system towards one that is not only based on economic growth but also on a consideration of social aspects. Xaver Edelmann firmly believes that individuals as well as the society are capable of learning and thus a fundamental change of behaviour will emerge. We must slip these thoughts and insights in the economic disputes so that they can be discussed on a wide basis. One of the aims is to have these thoughts influence the WEF (World Economic Forum). We are replicating the press release and the resolution of the World Resources Forum below.

Climate change is only a symptom of another even greater problem: our current economic system needs too many natural resources. On 16th September, the participants of the World Resources Forum (WRF) in Davos launched a declaration listing suggestions how to solve this problem. Core message: Politicians must internationally agree on per capita targets for natural resource extraction and consumption. On 15th and 16th September international leading experts convened in Davos and Nagoya (Japan) for the first World Resources Forum (WRF).

The German Environment Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, warned in his message to the WRF: "Europeans use ten times as many natural resources as people in Africa or Vietnam. If all people on this planet follow our Euro-



Dr Xaver Edelmann (photo zvg)

pean resource consumption model, we would need at least two more planets by 2050." Humans today extract 60 billion tons of raw material from the crust of the earth each year which is 50 per cent more than 30 years ago. Though the world economy uses fewer resources to produce one Swiss Franc or Euro of GDP than 30 years ago the overall resource use is still increasing.

New political framework

The participants in the WRF acknowledged the random extirpation of natural resources as the principal physical cause for the increasing ecological degradation and instabilities, including climate change. This is why the WRF Declaration suggests to massively reduce the material input into the western economy and to drastically increase resource productivity at the same time. To meet this enormous challenge we need to come up with huge technical innovations.

As long as the price for natural resources is low compared to that of labor, industry will not deliberately move in that direction. Only governments can provide incentives by adjusting the economic framework conditions. The prices for natural resources need to tell the ecological truth. Political measures like the ones above plus an increased resource productivity will leave room for developing countries.

Source: www.worldresourcesforum.org/wrf_declaration

Declaration of the World Resources Forum

Preamble

The recent financial crisis has dramatically shown how flimsy the banking and investment institutions are that were supposed to be so robust, and how vulnerable they are to false expectations of continued rapid growth and consequent over-exploitation of the monetary and fiscal arrangements that serve as surrogates for the real economy.

What is true of the economic system is also true of the ecosystem. Beyond a critical threshold, the services that the biosphere has evolved and provided over millions of years can breakdown with little warning and with much loss to human, social and economic values.

The underlying deficiencies that can cause failure or collapse of ecosystems are much the same as for economic systems: short term profit maximization, toxic by-products, wrong pricing signals, and the failure by governments to implement precautionary policies because of insufficient controls and inadequate early warning systems. The surprise element is enhanced by the absence of proper accounting methods and the scarcity of requisite skills in systems analysis and management.

The extent to which the economy and material wealth can grow are constrained by the limits set by the Earth's resource endowments. Technology and innovation can in some cases extend these limits, but rarely by very much.

We, the supporters of this Declaration, strongly believe that economic stability in our finite world depends on how quickly we can introduce low impact production systems that can satisfy human needs and bring quality of life to all people.

Traditional environmental technologies are no longer enough. Decoupling the meeting of human needs from the use of nature's resources will require radically new infrastructures, goods, services, processes, systems and business models. While some changes in lifestyle, consumption patterns and production systems will certainly be necessary, it is technically possible to achieve this without abandoning the things that we value most.

It is now widely accepted that wellbeing is more than material consumption. Human fulfillment includes factors such as education, health, safety, freedom from violence, environmental quality, social embeddedness, leisure, and equity. Despite huge technological progress, many aspects of human wellbeing have not increased in industrialized countries since the mid 1970s; some are even declining.

We call for a new global strategy for governing the use of natural resources that generates fair access to them for present needs while maintaining their availability for future generations. By combining efficiency and resource productivity targets with sufficiency norms evolved through participative mechanisms, it should be possible to avoid the traditional type of growth rebound effect sometimes experienced.

[...]

Call for Action

For the reasons stated above we urge political leaders to adopt a strategy of resource governance consisting of the following elements:

1. Seek international agreements on world-wide per-capita targets for natural resource extraction and consumption to be effective by 2015 at the latest, the main objective being to bring about an absolute decoupling between economic development and resource use, the implication being less resource inputs for more value.
2. Introduce effective policy measures to greatly enhance resource productivity as well as curbing demand over time, in the form of standards, higher taxes on resource use with the possibility of reduced taxes elsewhere, cap and trade mechanisms, etc.
3. Introduce with urgency resource use targets in areas of particular concern – like fresh water, marine resources and tropical forests – to put a halt to the rapid destruction of ecosystem services and biodiversity.
4. Focus research and development on the goal of increasing resource productivity. The resulting innovation will create space for economic and social development. As a side-effect, national economies and cities will become less dependent on resource imports, in particular fossil energy carriers.
5. Seek societal consensus by 2012 on ecological and economic indicators (on micro-, meso-, and macro-levels) in tune with the laws of nature and beyond GDP. These indicators must be applied by industry and governments when reporting on the progress attained toward sustainability, and they must become the subject of learning processes at all levels of education.
6. Reshape the framework conditions for the economy to account for the scarcity of natural resources and recognize the need for their extraction and sale to promote the environmental sustainable development of the countries in which they take place.
7. Seek dialog with the business community to help redesign business models where revenues would be increasingly derived from quality of services rather than by selling material products.
8. Initiate process to rethink lifestyles and help develop consumption patterns based on sufficiency and careful use of natural resources. Traditional knowledge, wisdom and spirituality should inspire help frame education and policies.
9. Strengthen education to increase awareness for resource limits, especially among economists, and foster the ability of decision makers to analyze long-term and systemic trends and to implement sustainability-driven innovation.

The full text of the Declaration in English you can find here: http://www.worldresourcesforum.org/wrf_declaration

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