

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

What's going on in Macedonia?

by Karl Müller

14 years ago, in 2001, when the small Balkan country of Macedonia, bordering Serbia in the north and Greece in the south, was in the headlines for months. The country was in danger of drifting into a civil war. Macedonian KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) fighters, supported by the Kosovar organisation of the same name and also by US intelligence agencies and the US military, shattered Macedonia through terrorist attacks and aggression against the country's police and military. KLA fighters and a major part of Western politicians and media then spoke of a legitimate fight against the discrimination of the ethnic Albanian population in the country, other voices placed KLA violence, similar to the situation in Kosovo, in a larger geopolitical context. In August 2001, the parties agreed on a deal that entitled the ethnic Albanian population to social and political privileges. Today, one of the former leading KLA fighters, *Ali Ahmeti*, is part of the country's government.

During the past 14 years, it has been quiet around the country. Since 2005 Macedonia is candidate for the EU. It is even

said the country wants to join NATO. However, the government of the country is not supporting the sanctions against Russia by the US government and the EU. Instead, it has agreed to build a transit route in Macedonia for Russia's planned pipeline through Turkey (*Turkish Stream*). The pipeline route through Turkey had been negotiated between Russia and Turkey early in 2015. It is to be built instead of *South Stream*, whose originally planned route through Bulgaria, for the purpose of transporting Russian natural gas to South Eastern Europe and as far as Austria without hindrance, has been hampered by the EU. Macedonia is very important as a transit country for the pipeline.¹

Since two weeks Macedonia has returned into the headlines. The reason was a local police raid in the town of Kumanovo. There are former KLA fighters who were said to have planned attacks. Most likely, they are also involved in drug trafficking. The city is considered as a stopover for drug shipments coming from Afghanistan. It is situated very close to the border with Serbia, but also close to the border with Kosovo, which is the main

trading centre for drug shipments to Europe. During the raid in Kumanovo there was an hour-long firefight in which 22 people died, including 8 policemen.

Western media commented on the events in different ways. Some spoke of too hard an attack by the Macedonian security forces, which had been ethnically motivated and directed against the ethnic Albanian population. Others claim the prime minister of the country stage-managed the firefights in Kumanovo in order to divert attention from his own problems and the dissatisfaction of the population. Moreover, *Richard Howitt* of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament thinks that the citizens of Macedonia have suffered a trauma after the fighting in Kumanovo.

Interestingly, however, even former KLA fighter and current government member *Ali Ahmeti* admitted in an interview with the Austrian newspaper "Die Presse" (19.5.2015): "I cannot deny that we know some of the people who were involved. Some of them were former mem-

continued on page 2

Despotism is certainly no peace concept

by Willy Wimmer, former Secretary of State in the German Ministry of Defence and
Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly



Willy Wimmer
(picture ma)

Macedonia, who? Only weeks ago that was the question asked by many when reports about the flare-up of fighting in a Macedonian town with many dead and injured dominated our weekend news. Throughout

the years Macedonia had got into the shadow of Western European attention. However, that was a different story, when after the end of military conflicts about the Kosovo, fighting had flared up aiming at the further separation of ethnic groups in Macedonia, the state neighbouring the Kosovo in the South. It was the time, when there had

been talk about Great-Albania again, since it was an open secret that Albanian fighters in Macedonia enjoyed the open and secret military support by the US-Army and further American government departments. These forces had been armed and trained by those who knew how to enforce their interests even before the Kosovo war by using the Kosovan KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) for their ends. Thereby the targets had become obvious for everybody.

1. Development and future state structure should depend on the will of one single nation – the USA.
2. The European's task was to be wrangling with each other alternatingly and to be submissive and subservient to American interests.
3. By no means should a satisfying solution that would balance interests be allowed, as you never know ...

4. Shaping the Balkans' structure in such a way that any factual or only suspected influence of Russia or the Russian Federation would just evaporate.
5. As we could experience at the times of the "Wehrmacht", this depended on what ethnic group on the Balkans would be able to obtain a powerful ally abroad that would serve their own interests, in order to unite these interests with those of the mighty ally against everybody else. Naturally, the neighbours were the victims.
6. Realising the model that the Baltic states successfully enforced towards their own minorities: These states' model consists of denying their own minorities any legal status inside the country, comparable to European standards. Any at-

continued on page 2

"What's going on ..."

continued from page 1

bers of the KLA." But only to attack Russia right afterwards saying: "My concern is also why Moscow has made an issue of it. Russia's Foreign Minister *Lavrov* said the Euro-Atlantic enlargement in the Balkans was a provocation for Russia. And a few days ago *Lavrov* asserted during a visit to Serbia, the incidents in Macedonia had been provoked by NATO, the EU and Washington. I firmly reject that."

In fact, the Russian Foreign Minister already expressed several times that the re-try of a "colored revolution" was behind the events in Macedonia (see text on page 3). A few days after the fighting in Kumanovo, there were demonstrations against the Prime Minister in the country's capital and the demand for his resignation and new elections. In Western media, for example the internationally broadcast *Deutsche Welle*, these protests are praised to the skies as an expression of democratic rebellion. The Prime Minister is accused of illegal wiretapping and corruption. Criticism of the government leaders and demands for fundamental policy changes are also the tenor of the opinions voiced by the EU and the US. Louder than in recent years, a forthcoming EU membership of the country is requested by EU politicians. Particu-

larly politicians from the European Parliament are flaunting: The integration process in the EU, so the MP of the European People's Party in the European Parliament, *Edward Kukan*, was one of the important instruments that could help to overcome the crisis. The European Commission called on the Macedonian government to come back onto the "right track", i.e. towards EU membership and EU policy.

Critical voices from Russia and from Serbia – where the operations in Macedonia are observed with the utmost concern, also by the government – are, however, dismissed as "conspiracy theory" – for example by the "Deutsche Presseagentur" (dpa, German Press Agency) on 19 May, or by the newspaper "Die Welt" on 20 May – and are even turned into their opposite. It is said that Russia wants to snatch Macedonia from the Western Alliance and split up the Western alliance. This is spread, for instance, by the SPD politician and former parliamentary secretary in the German Ministry of Defence *Walter Kolbow*. *Kolbow* was parliamentary secretary under the German Defence Minister *Rudolf Scharping* of the SPD, who in 1999 was one of the German spokesmen for the illegal war against Yugoslavia, which violated international law. Even the US government is very interested in the small country in the Balkans. The German channel *n-tv.de* reported

on 20 May: "The crisis in the country increasingly worries the US government. The US government was closely observing the events in Macedonia, said the spokesman of the US State Department *Jeff Rathke*. The authorities would have to examine the accusations against the government, which resulted 'from recent revelations'."

On the other hand, the report on the Swiss website "*Schweizer Magazin*" is interesting, as well. In an article about the demonstrations against the Macedonian government on 20 May it reads: "Last weekend, several thousand demonstrators were hauled out to the place from all corners of the country, many of whom were even paid 500 denars for displaying their demonstration enthusiasm. Instructed by *George Soros* the media were asked to present the number of demonstrators as '100,000' by using skillful camera angles." In addition, the government opponents are said to have employed gangs of thugs.

Anyway, there are good reasons to get a more accurate picture, which goes beyond the reports of the Western mainstream media. This is the purpose of the following compilation to form a first impression. •

¹ An extensive analysis on the significance of the Balkans for European energy supply is provided by *Jens Berger* in his article "Europa und der kalte Pipelinekrieg", *www.nachdenkseiten.de*, 20.5.2015

"Despotism is certainly ..."

continued from page 1

tempt to improve the minority's legal status from outside was re-interpreted as "Russian threat" and the Baltic ignorance was sheltered under the umbrella of NATO Article 5. The Baltic states have perfected the procedure but this can be done in other places as well.

7. The state of "visible fragility" for Macedonia must be kept up by all means, involving the Greek attitude to not even grant their relatives a secured state name, so that internationally the impression is reinforced that the cake has not yet been finally shared.

The state obedient media in our countries did not cover those bloody events in the Balkan state, so the gentle public could not expect to be informed about the real and alleged causes for the conflict. Allegedly it is all about fighting corruption, a corruption that everybody on the Balkans might be suspected of. However, this cannot be a reason to take influence for NATO and EU consorters, since everybody on this globe knows pretty well, how fervently they have just embosomed the Ukrainian corruption. After witnessing that a German Foreign Minister declared heroin production in Afghanistan to be the cornerstone of this country's

economic development, we should definitely no longer believe any of such assertions by European top representatives. People taking to the streets following such slogans should be sure of one thing: They are running after arguments to be found in certain media slip boxes, arguments that even the authors themselves do not believe in.

There are rumors that seem more likely to be true: that the fighting is to take influence on the not completely established plans for the construction of a Russian pipeline for gas supply to Southern Europe. Since NATO, EU and the whole world cannot offer any perspective to those states after the *Lehman Brothers* crisis, it is well-understood that they have become addicted to Russian financial advances. Why drowning in Western hopelessness when the sun is rising – as it used to rise – in the East again? In view of these circumstances, the Macedonian fighting might be the first signal that the conflict has reached a new front, which becomes clear when paying attention to the statements of the Serbian President *Nicolic* about Kosovo's reclaim. The faultline on the Balkans will show a different pattern in future. Who has backed which side? And who will be successful? Moscow is back again, for it was never gone! •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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“... orchestrated not very subtly by foreign parties”

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's answer to a question on Macedonia during Government Hour at the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly in Moscow on 20 May 2015



Sergej Lawrow
(picture thk)

Question: What is happening now in Macedonia is basically another colour revolution. It is the Ukrainian scenario or at least its beginning stage. What do you think, has the time finally come for Europe

to react to these revolutions with more urgency? Perhaps at the preliminary stage of the coups it is advisable to involve international instruments such as the OSCE and the UN Security Council, in order to prevent this from becoming a common practice of changing power in countries? Sergey Lavrov: I totally agree with you. This is a cause for grave concern. The current events in Macedonia are being orchestrated rather unsubtly by external parties. There are attempts to accuse Nikola Gruevski's government of incompetence

and failure to fulfil his obligations to the nation, as well as great many other sins. The real motive is to put pressure on him because of his refusal to join the sanctions against Russia. We know for certain that this pressure is also a result of his support for the South Stream project at the time when he counted on it to benefit Macedonia. Now he is willing to cooperate in other energy supply projects between Russian and southern Europe, including the *Turkish Stream*. It is truly regrettable and disturbing that they are trying to use the Albanian issue to undermine Gruevski's government.

Many years ago, there were indeed some dramatic clashes between Slavic people and Albanians. This is when the Ohrid Agreement was signed, establishing peace and concord [13.8.2013]. Later, when, in our discussions with the EU, we raised the issue of rights of Russians and Russian-speaking people in Estonia and Latvia, we asked, “Why did you support the Ohrid Agreement and provided Albanians in Macedonia with a substan-

tial scope of rights but you can't do the same for Russians in Estonia and Latvia?” There was no answer. However, the conflict in Macedonia was settled at the time.

Now there are talks that Macedonia must be even deeper “federalised”, turned into a “flexible federation” or maybe even a “confederation.” Someone even suggested that it should be divided, because of its “artificial” (as they put it) nature, between Bulgaria and Albania. Without reference to Macedonia, the prime minister in Tirana is generally declaring slogans of Greater Albania. Leaders of the Albanian parties in Macedonia use to go to Tirana for instructions. Meanwhile, the US ambassador in Skopje is inviting leaders of political parties and opposition to his office. In late April, there was even a visit organised for permanent representatives of several Western countries and the EU with the OSCE. Some five or six officials without a mandate from the OSCE Permanent Coun-

continued on page 4

Macedonia – Blueprint of “Regime Change” Patterns

Interview with Zivadin Jovanovic*, President of the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals



Zivadin Jovanovic
(picture ma)

Sputniknews: In his recent visit to Serbia, Sergey Lavrov voiced the worries of Russia over the violence in Macedonia and the idea of a 'Greater Albania'.

What kind of support do Albanian nationalists have in the Balkans? And internationally?

Zivadin Jovanovic: We all are, indeed, very worried over the current destabilization of Macedonia. With growing socio-economic problems in the region, here comes grave violence and political destabilization of Macedonia. The idea of Greater Albania is an old one, but it has been propped up by NATO aggression in 1999 and further reinforced in 2008 by the unilateral secession of the Serbian Province Kosovo and Metohija, supported and recognized by USA and most of NATO/EU member governments. There could hardly be any doubt that current destabilization of Macedonia could happen without the will and even support of the same western factors. Statements from various western

capitals, participation of some western ambassadors at the opposition rallies in Skopje, slogans and western propaganda in general, is more than revealing. Serbia, certainly, is one of the most interested countries in the region for stabilization of Macedonia and condemnation of the idea of “Greater Albania”.

Do you think that the current protests are an attempt to destabilize the current Macedonian government? And do you believe that they can be compared to the 'color revolutions' and 'regime change' operations sponsored by the West i.e. in the former Yugoslavia (Otpor! movement), Georgia (Revolution of Roses) or Ukraine (Euromaidan)?

I think that the current events in Macedonia are a blueprint of “regime change” patterns in Serbia (Yugoslavia), and elsewhere in Europe, Northern Africa, or current attempts to destabilize Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina. There are certainly specific details applied from one country to the other, but the main stages and tools are – propaganda machinery generating popular discontent, organizing massive protests and even armed incidents, advancing demands for “changes” and, finally, overthrowing legally elected governments.

Lavrov said that latest developments “occur as the Macedonian government refuses to join sanctions and supports the Turkish Stream”. Is the US interested in destabilizing the region for geopolitical purposes?

I believe Minister Lavrov has it right. USA is afraid losing control over Europe and Europe's cooperation with Russia. In that regard, any project making Europe self-sufficient, secure and independent in the long run, such as *South Stream*, *Turkish Stream*, or any other, Washington considers it contrary to its geostrategic interests and is trying to stop it by all means. Macedonia is, by no means, big nor strong, but considers *Turkish Stream* and free trade with Russia to be in her best interest. Unfortunately, USA have no consideration for anybody's interest, not to mention Macedonia's, except for their own. This is the Imperial logic. But, the time of the world policemen is closing. History continues in spite of imperial prognosis. •

* Zivadin Jovanovic was Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1998 to 2000.

Source: <http://www.beoforum.rs/en/comments-belgrade-forum-for-the-world-of-equals/417-macedonia-blueprint-of-regime-changes-paterns.html> from 19.5.2015

When containment becomes dangerous for Europe

by Stefan Haderer

Europe has emerged as a peace project. Now this corner stone is threatened to crumble in a new Balkan crisis. Macedonia's opposition is doing everything to bring down the government of Prime Minister *Nikola Gruevski*. In a strange way this resembles similar scenarios in Ukraine. Again there is a state that should be "readied for Europe" by all means. The western containment policy seems to be applied to the Balkan as well, where one tries to "clean up" the states from all Russia-friendly connections. The strategy, however, is highly explosive, because the EU will not be able to cope with a cross-border civil war and an intra-European refugee disaster in the long term.

When politicians like Austrian Foreign Minister *Sebastian Kurz* now speak of a "strategy for the West Balkans" and of an EU accession of Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo one should very seriously consider for the time being, whose targets are addressed by this. Is it the interest of those civilians, who continue to live under ethnic tensions and have to deal with the radicalization of terrorists that are sponsored partly by Saudi Arabia? Is it in the interest of the European Union, which would definitely over-strain itself by the early admission of crisis-riddled states? Or is it in the end the interests of the United States, that would like to see a fall of all Russia-friendly governments – in particular those that support lucrative Russian gas projects as *Turkish Stream* in Southeastern Europe?

"... orchestrated not very..."

continued from page 3

cil went to Skopje, called themselves "an OSCE mission", and presented some "recipes" and demands for *Nikola Gruevski*. To prevent similar activity in the future, we made a request with the OSCE headquarters, the OSCE Secretary General and the OSCE Chairman (current Foreign Minister of Serbia *Ivica Dacic*) to deal with this matter and explain how anything like this could have happened.

Considering this number of self-appointed mediators, in my yesterday's address to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe I proposed that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and per-

The path that Macedonia has embarked on, was already predetermined by the administration of US President *Barack Obama*. *Victoria Nuland*, the leading US diplomat for Europe and Eurasia, and wife of the neo-conservative policy adviser *Robert Kagan*, visited the government of *Gruevski* in the Macedonian capital Skopje in July 2014. There she assured the politician and advocate of "Euromaidan", the Ukrainian revolution, that the enlargement of NATO would have the highest priority in the future. Macedonia deserves, so *Nuland* literally, "its rightful place within NATO and the European Union".

Macedonia and Serbia have not supported the sanctions against Russia, referring to their economic situation. It is precisely this step that now becomes very expensive for *Gruevski* and the Macedonian government. One remembers the threat of former US President *George W. Bush*: "Those who are not with us are against us." It is the credo that the world has felt over and again in recent years. But it is also the commandment, which Europe's politicians submit to ever more willingly, by referring to the preservation of democratic values.

A new "color revolution" in Macedonia, as it is feared by Russia, is not inconceivable. That this will stabilize the situation in the Balkans may be strongly questioned – a conflict-free Europe is obviously no top priority at present.

Source: "Wiener Zeitung" from 19.05.2015
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

haps also the OSCE Secretary General visit Skopje, talk to all the participants in this process and make recommendations for consideration by inter-governmental institutions.

This is a very serious matter. I think you are right and, if any similar cases occur in the future, it is necessary to take more prompt preventive measures and request that international organisations send their independent experts and secretariat representatives, and report later. Decisions must be made by official and legitimate bodies rather than behind the scenes.

Source: http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcb3/88ff7ad1c2f54dc643257e4c0022d5e8!OpenDocument

US and Russia are fighting for the energy market in Macedonia

The pipeline *Turkish Stream* can only supply Europe with Russian gas if it passes through Macedonia. The US want to prevent that and want to build the *Trans Adriatic Pipeline* instead. This would supply Europe with gas from Azerbaijan, where the US is the dominating power.

Macedonia is apparently evolving into a new scene for the energy war between the US and Russia. For the Kremlin, it is clear that the United States want to stage a "regime change" to overthrow the current government to establish a pro-Western government, reports *Bloomberg*. In fact, Prime Minister *Nikola Gruevski* is considered a pro-Russian politician who primarily supports the construction of the pipeline *Turkish stream*. The Russian pipeline *Turkish Stream* should run through Turkey and Greece to Central Europe. The only way to get there is Macedonia.

The US, however, would like Europe to be supplied with gas via the *Trans Adriatic Pipeline* (TAP). *Turkish Stream* is a direct competitor to TAP. TAP would transport no Russian, but Azerbaijani gas from the Caspian Sea to Europe. In this case the US would have an enormous controlling influence over the gas supplies for Europe because Azerbaijan is politically, militarily and economically considered as US ally and closely cooperates with NATO.

The Azerbaijani newspaper "Yeni Musavat" reported that the United States are worried by the participation of Greece in *Turkish stream*. The US ambassador to Macedonia, *Jess L. Baily*, openly sides with Macedonian opposition leader *Zoran Zaev*. He is known as "America's man" by the population of Macedonia. The events in Macedonia were the beginning of a wave, which will be directed against all those countries in Europe that support *Turkish stream*, the newspaper said.

The battle for the European energy market is in any case in full swing. The US government wants to detach the European states from the energy dependence on Moscow. Those who see this as help for the Americans, are mistaken. Instead, US corporations are supposed to guarantee the energy security of Europe. US companies should lead the fracking- and nuclear power market in Europe to oust the Russian energy corporations.

Source: *Deutsche Wirtschaftsnachrichten* from 21.5.2015

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The European Union is blind to the military strategy of the United States

by Thierry Meyssan

The political leaders of the European Union are entirely wrong about the Islamic terrorist attacks in Europe and the migration to the Union of people fleeing the war zones. Thierry Meyssan demonstrates here that these are not simply the accidental consequences of conflict in the wider Middle East and Africa, but a strategic objective of the United States.

The leaders of the European Union are suddenly being confronted with unexpected situations. On the one hand, terrorist attacks or attempted attacks perpetrated or prepared by individuals who do not belong to any identified political groups; and on the other, an influx of refugees who cross the Mediterranean, several thousands of whom die along their coasts.

In the absence of any strategic analysis, these two events are considered a priori as being unconnected, and are treated by different administrations. The former are handled by the Intelligence services and the police, the latter by Customs and Defence. However, they both share the same common origin – the political instability that reigns in the Levant and in Africa.

The European Union has deprived itself of the means to understand

If the military academies of the European Union had done their job, they would have been studying the doctrine of its “big brother”, the United States, for the last fifteen years. Indeed, for many long years, the Pentagon has been publishing all sorts of documents on the “Chaos Theory” borrowed from the philosopher *Leo Strauss*. Only a few months ago, an official who should have retired more than 25 years ago, *Andrew Marshall*, disposed of a budget of 10 million dollars annually to research this subject¹. But no military academy of the Union has seriously studied this doctrine and its consequences. Partly because this is a barbaric form of warfare, and partly because it was conceived by one of the intellectual gurus of the US Jewish elite. And as everybody knows, the United-States-who-saved-us-all-from-Nazism can not advocate such atrocities².

If the political personnel of the European Union had travelled a little, not only to Iraq, Syria, Libya, the Horn of Africa, to Nigeria and Mali, but also to Ukraine, they would have seen with their own eyes the application of this strategic doctrine. Instead, they contented themselves with speeches delivered from a building in the Green Zone of Baghdad, from a podium in

Tripoli or on Maidan Square in Kiev. They have no idea what these populations are really experiencing, and at the request of their “big brother”, have often closed their embassies, thereby depriving themselves of eyes and ears on the ground. Even better, still at the request of their “big brother”, they have participated in embargos, thus ensuring that no European businessmen will travel to these areas and see what is happening there.

Chaos is not an accident, it's the goal

Contrary to what President *François Hollande* has declared, the Libyan migration is not the consequence of a “lack of follow-through” of operation “Unified Protector”, but the desired result of this operation, in which his country has played a leading role. Chaos did not evolve because the “Libyan revolutionaries” were unable to agree after the “fall” of *Mouammar el-Kadhafi*, it was the strategic goal of the United States, and they succeeded. There never was a “democratic revolution” in Libya, but a secession of Cyrenaica. There never was an application of the UNO mandate aimed at “protecting the population”, but the massacre of 160,000 Libyans, three quarters of whom were civilians, under the bombardments of the Alliance (numbers from the International Red Cross).

Before I joined the government of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, I remember having been solicited to act as a witness during a meeting in Tripoli between a US delegation and the Libyan representatives. During our long conversation, the head of the US delegation explained that the Pentagon was ready to save us from certain death, but demanded that the Guide be handed over to them. He added that once el-Kadhafi was dead, Libya's tribal society would be unable to name a new leader for at least a generation, and that the country would be plunged into chaos such as it had never experienced. I spoke of this interview on a number of occasions, and since the lynching of the Guide in October 2011, I have never stopped predicting what is now happening.

“Chaos Theory”

When, in 2003, the US Press began to speak of “Chaos Theory”, the White House answered by using the term “constructive chaos”, suggesting that the structures of oppression must be destroyed in order that life might evolve without constraint. But neither *Leo Strauss* nor the Pentagon had ever used the expression

until then. On the contrary, according to them, chaos had to attain such a level that no structure could be built without the will of the Creator of the new Order, in other words, the United States³.

The principle of this strategic doctrine may be resumed as follows – the simplest way to pillage the natural resources of a country over a long period is not to occupy the target, but destroy the state. Without a state, there can be no army. With no enemy army, there is no risk of defeat. Thus, the strategic goal of the US army and the alliance that it controls, the UNO, is exclusively the destruction of states. What then happens to the populations concerned is not Washington's problem.

Such a project is inconceivable for Europeans who, since the British civil war, have been convinced by *Thomas Hobbes*' “Leviathan” that it is necessary to give up certain freedoms, even accept a tyrannical state, to avoid being plunged into chaos.

The European Union denies its complicity in US crimes

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have already cost the lives of 4 million people⁴. These wars were presented to the Security Council as necessary counter-attacks undertaken in “legitimate defence”, but it is accepted today that the wars were planned long before the 11th September, in the much wider context of “the remodeling of a greater Middle East”, and that the reasons given for launching them were in fact propaganda fabrications.

It is common wisdom today to recognise the genocides committed by European colonialism, but rare are those who will accept the figure of 4 million dead, despite scientific studies which attest to its accuracy. It's because our parents were “bad”, but we are “good” and we can not be complicit in these horrors.

It is common practice to mock the poor Germans who maintained their trust in their Nazi leaders right to the end, and only learned of the crimes committed in their name after their country's defeat. But we are doing exactly the same thing. We maintain our confidence in our “big brother”



Thierry Meyssan
(picture wikipedia)

"The European Union is blind ..."

continued from page 5

er", and do not want to know about the crimes in which he has implicated us. Our children will certainly mock us in turn...

The errors of interpretation by the European Union

No West European leader, absolutely none, has dared to publicly express the idea that the refugees from Iraq, Syria, Libya, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and Mali are not fleeing dictatorships, but the chaos into which we have deliberately, though unconsciously, plunged their countries.

No West European leader, absolutely none, has dared to publicly express the idea that the "Islamist" attacks which are affecting Europe are not the extension of the wars in the "greater Middle East", but are directed by those who have also directed the chaos in this region. We prefer to continue believing that the "Islamists" are attacking Jews and Christians, although the great majority of their victims are neither Jews nor Christians, but Muslims. We calmly accuse them of promoting the "war of civilisations", although this concept was developed by the National Security Council of the United States, and remains alien to their culture⁵.

No West European leader, absolutely none, has dared to publicly express the idea that the next stage will be the "Islamisation" of the drug market, on the model of the Contras of Nicaragua, who sold drugs to the black community of California with the aid, and under the orders, of the CIA⁶. We have decided to ignore the fact that the *Karzai* family has taken the distribution of Afghani heroin from the Kosovar mafia and handed it to Daesh⁷.

The United States never wanted Ukraine to join the Union

The military academies of the European Union have never studied the "Chaos Theory" because they were prevented from doing so. The few teachers and researchers who risked exploring this territory were heavily sanctioned, while the Press qualifies the civilian authors who show interest in the subject as "conspirationists".

The politicians of the European Union thought that the events of Maidan Square were spontaneous, and that the demonstrators wanted to leave the orbit of authoritarian Russia and enter into the heavenly bosom of the Union. They were stupefied when Under-Secretary of State *Victoria Nuland*'s comments were published, when they discovered that she spoke of her secret control of the events, and expressed

her desire to "fuck the Union" [sic!]⁸. From that moment on, they were unable to comprehend what was going on.

If they had allowed free research in their own countries, they would have understood that by intervening in Ukraine and organising "régime change", the United States ensured that the European Union would remain at their service. Washington's great fear, since the speech given by *Vladimir Putin* at the *Munich Security Conference* in 2007, is that Germany will realise where its true interests lie – not with Washington, but with Moscow⁹. By progressively destroying the Ukrainian state, the United States has cut the main communication route between the European Union and Russia. You may look at the succession of events from any angle, but you will find no other logical explanation. Washington does not want Ukraine to join the Union, as Madame Nuland's comments demonstrate. Its only aim is to transform this territory into a zone which is dangerous to cross.

US military planning

So now we are faced with two problems which are developing very rapidly – the "Islamist" attacks have only just begun. Migrations across the Mediterranean have tripled in a single year.

If my analysis is correct, over the next decade we will see more "Islamist" attacks linked to the greater Middle East and Africa, doubled with "Nazi" attacks linked to Ukraine. We will then discover that al-Qaïda and the Ukrainian Nazis have been connected since their common inception, in 2007 at Ternopol (Ukraine). In reality, the grand-parents of both have known each other since the Second World War. The Nazis had at that time recruited Soviet Muslims for the fight against Moscow (that was *Gerhard von Mende*'s plan at the "Ostministerium", or Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories). At the end of the war, both organisations were recuperated by the CIA (*Frank Wisner*'s programme with the *AmComLib*, or the *American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia*) in order to carry out sabotage operations in the USSR.

The migrations across the Mediterranean, which for the moment remain a humanitarian problem (200,000 people in 2014), continue to increase to the point of becoming a serious economic problem. The recent decisions by the Union to go and sink the boats of Libyan drug traffickers will not serve to diminish the migrations, but to justify new military operations intended to maintain a state of chaos in Libya rather than solving the problem.

All this will cause serious trouble in the European Union, which today seems like a haven of peace. It is out of the question for Washington to destroy this market which it still considers indispensable, but to ensure that Europe will never enter into competition with it, hence the desire to limit its development.

In 1991, President *Bush* the elder asked one of Leo Strauss' disciples, *Paul Wolfowitz* (as yet unknown to the general public), to elaborate a strategy for the post-Soviet era. The "Wolfowitz Doctrine" explained that the guarantee of US supremacy over the rest of the world demanded the curbing of the European Union¹⁰. In 2008, during the financial crisis in the United States, the President of the Economic Council of the White House, historian *Christina Rohmer*, explained that the only way to refloat the banks was by closing the fiscal paradises in the third countries, and then to provoke trouble in Europe so that capital would flow back to the United States. Finally, today Washington is proposing to merge the NAFTA and the EU, the dollar and the Euro, dragging the member states of the Union down to the level of Mexico¹¹.

Unfortunately for them, neither the citizens of the European Union or their leaders have any idea what President Barack *Obama* is preparing for them. •

¹ "After 42 years of service, Andy Marshall leaves the Pentagon", Translation Pete Kimberley, Voltaire Network, 24 January 2015.

² "Selective Intelligence", Seymour Hersch, The New Yorker, 12 May 2003.

³ "Stumbling World Order and Its Impacts", by Imad Fawzi Shueibi, Voltaire Network, 5 April 2015.

⁴ "Western wars have killed four million Muslims since 1990", by Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, Middle East Eye (UK), Voltaire Network, 11 April 2015.

⁵ "The "Clash of Civilizations"", by Thierry Meyssan, Voltaire Network, 4 June 2004.

⁶ Dark Alliance, The CIA, the Contras and the crack cocaine explosion, Gary Webb, foreword by Maxime Waters, Seven Stories Press, 1999.

⁷ "Karzai family hands over heroin trafficking to Islamic State", Voltaire Network, 1 December 2014.

⁸ "What about apologizing to Ukraine, Mrs. Nuland?", by Andrey Fomin, Oriental Review (Russia), Voltaire Network, 7 February 2014.

⁹ "The unipolar governance is illegal and immoral", by Vladimir Putin, Voltaire Network, 11 February 2007.

¹⁰ This document is still classified, but its contents were revealed in "US Strategy Plan Calls For Insuring No Rivals Develop" by Patrick E. Tyler, New York Times, 8th March 1992. The daily also published large extracts on page 14: "Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan: 'Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival'". Supplementary information was provided by "Keeping the US First, Pentagon Would preclude a Rival Superpower" by Barton Gellman, The Washington Post, 11 March 1992.

¹¹ "The attack on the Euro and the dismantling of the European Union", by Jean-Claude Paye, Translation Evan Jones, Voltaire Network, 23 July 2010.

Source: <http://www.voltairenet.org/article187588.html>

(Translation Pete Kimberley)

20 years of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) – Free trade agreements under scrutiny

Investors and corporations benefit – the majority of populations suffers losses

by Henriette Hanke Güttinger, PhD

A number of free trade agreements are currently being negotiated: CETA between the EU and Canada, TTIP/TAFTA between the US and the EU, and TiSA, the Agreement on Trade in Services, to which fifty states – including Switzerland – are party. Negotiations are taking place behind closed doors, and no participation or voice is provided for the citizens in the countries concerned. According to what has leaked out up to date, the contents of the proposed free trade agreements are based on the NAFTA Free Trade Agreement of 1994, which was signed by the US, Canada and Mexico. Twenty years of practical experience with NAFTA show perfectly clearly where such free trade agreements lead to. Investors and major corporations benefit while the majority of the populations in the contracting states – even in the US – slide over onto the loser's side.

With the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement NAFTA in 1994, the then largest single market

From maize to haze

Our study suggests that as these countries pursue broader development strategies, policies influencing the income opportunities of the rural poor may shape the narcotics trade. Policymakers should therefore consider the implications of measures such as trade agreements and agricultural reforms on the rural narco-economy. For example, in the case of Mexico it was hoped that NAFTA would deliver economic gains by more efficiently allocating resources.

Relative price changes (e.g., a fall in the price of commodities such as maize) were expected to initially reduce agricultural incomes but ultimately encourage workers to join more productive,

export-oriented sectors. While Mexican manufacturing has expanded, the reduction in maize prices following the Agreement may have also contributed to the growth of the illicit drug sector. More generally, policies that alter agricultural supports or increase the exposure of rural households to international prices may have similar implications.

From: Oeindrila Dube, Omar Garcia-Ponce, Kevin Thom. *From Maze to Haze. Agricultural Shocks and the Growth of the Mexican Drug Sector. Center for Global Development. Working Paper 355. February 2014 p.27* (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lang=en&id=177334>)

worldwide emerged, in which all tariffs and trade restrictions were practically abolished and have remained so until today. To begin with, the NAFTA embraced the US, Canada and the emerging country Mexico, and thus 250 million Americans, 90 million Mexicans and 27

million Canadians, with a gross national product of more than seven billion dollars annually. The US accounted for 85% of this sum, Canada for 10% and Mexico for 5%. This shows that the United States dominated their contractual partners Canada and Mexico from the beginning, or, to put it straight: "NAFTA put an elephant to bed with two mice"¹. In the US, the agreement met with serious misgivings and stubborn resistance on the part of Democrats, trade unions and the environmental movement. Nonetheless, Clinton managed to push through the deal. In this process, the central argument was: "NAFTA means jobs – American jobs and well-paying American jobs."² Twenty years later, it is becoming apparent that the objections to NAFTA were more than justified.

Tools of American foreign policy after 1989 – free trade agreements

There is an intimate correlation between NAFTA and the realignment of American foreign policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the emphasis had been on a strategy of military containment, the "global containment" to challenge the socialist states. After 1989, the United States sought to assert itself as the leading power of a unipolar world order. The re-orientation of its foreign policy, which was developed under Clinton in 1993 as a "Strategy of Enlargement" served this purpose. In essence, this was meant to enforce global free trade, free markets and democratisation as understood by the US. States which did not submit to

Defend self-determination of peoples

Stop the planned CETA/TTIP-TAFTA/TiSA dictatorship of the big companies and investors

hhg. On 19 December 1966, the self-determination of peoples was enshrined in the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" of the United Nations as follows:

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

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

Primarily the former colonial countries, supported by the socialist countries, took a stand for the right to self-determination. First plundered and bled to death during centuries and by the first and later by the second world, the self-determination of the third world was to allow future development in dignity. Both the former colonial powers and the US then tried to prevent the codification of the right to self-determination – fortunately without success.

Attacks on the peoples' right to self-determination

Since 1966, countless attempts can be observed to restrict the right to self-determination of peoples or even to eliminate it. Submissive governments (often under pressure from the IMF and World Bank) have signed and are still signing – however, without being mandated by their peoples to do so! – contracts that declare whole countries with their populations free for looting. The latest example for that are the planned enslavement contracts CETA, TTIP/TAFTA and TiSA with which the power of large companies and investors shall be expanded.

Literature on the subject:

Michel Chossudovsky: *Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order*, 2003.

Naomi Klein: *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 2008.

Jean Ziegler: *We Let Them Starve: Mass Extermination in the Third World*, 2012.

Maria Mies: *Krieg ohne Grenzen (War without borders)*, Frankfurt 2009.

Jean Feyder: *Mordshunger. Wer profitiert vom Elend der armen Völker? (Murderous hunger. Who benefits from the misery of the poor countries?)*, Frankfurt 2010.

"20 years of NAFTA..."

continued from page 7

these ideas and insisted on their right of self-determination were to be forced into line with a carrot and a stick. The newly established WTO as well as a global network of trade agreements was to serve the enforcement of the "Strategy of Enlargement". The aim was a globalisation tailor-made for US economic interests. NAFTA fits this framework.³ The currently pending free trade agreements ranging from CETA to TiSA have to be seen in this context as well.

20 years of NAFTA – the consequences

NAFTA has now been in force for twenty years. Its consequences are clearly visible in the countries involved.

Corporations and investors are suing states

Since 1994, the volume of trade has tripled. Corporations and investors have been the main beneficiaries of NAFTA. The contract protects corporations and

2,000,000 Mexican farmers lost their subsistence because of NAFTA until 2007

"The UNCTAD Trade and Development Report for 2007 notes that two million farmers in Mexico have lost their work since the US, Canada and Mexico signed the North American Free Trade Agreement NAFTA in 1994. In the context of this new free trade zone imports of North American crop and, in particular, those of maize sharply rose, since they were heavily subsidised and could therefore be sold on the Mexican markets below production costs. Not least for that reason the often illegal Mexican immigration into the United States continues unabatedly. Every year, about 700,000 Mexicans leave their country and cross the border with the USA partly risking their lives."

Jean Feyder: *Mordshunger. Wer profitiert vom Elend der armen Länder? (Murderous hunger. Who benefits from the misery of the poor countries?)*

Frankfurt am Main 2010, p. 97

(Translation Current Concerns)

investors from expropriation and government action which could affect their returns. In the twenty years of the NAFTA's being in operation, numerous legal actions were initiated by corporations and investors, such as against the State of Canada, which had prohibited the import of gasoline containing the poisonous MMT as an additive. Because of this, the *US Ethyl Corporation* brought an action against Canada in 1997. A settlement was reached. Canada revoked the interdiction and paid a high indemnity sum.⁴

Jobs are lost

In the US, jobs have been lost most notably in the industrial sector. According to the "taz", the NAFTA is directly to blame for the loss of about 700,000 jobs. The *US Bureau of Labor Statistics* noted in 2014 that due to the neoliberal global economy five million jobs have disappeared in American industry. "Wages are stagnating in all three countries, and families are struggling to pay the costs of health insurance, education, housing and pension insurance," says the president of the American Federation of trade unions AFL-CIO.⁵

Sellout of Mexican agriculture

Since in the negotiations Canada carried through the exclusion of its agriculture from the agreement, NAFTA includes the agricultural sector only of the US and Mexico. Between agriculture in the US and in Mexico there was originally a fundamental difference. While the US had a modern industrialised agriculture, a large part of the labour-intensive Mexican agriculture was operated in cooperatives, the "ejidos". Since the Mexican Revolution of 1920, the "ejidos" had been protected by the Mexican Constitution and could not be sold. During the NAFTA negotiations, the negotiators of the United States called for access to Mexican land. President *Carlos Salina* gave in to this pressure and enacted the Agricultural Act of 1992, which annulled the protection of the "ejidos". The consequences ensued accordingly. The Mexican agriculture, which was the basis of existence for a third of the population, lost out in the competition with the industrialised US agriculture. With NAFTA American subsidised maize came onto the Mexican market, and this was cheaper than the maize produced by Mexican

peasant farmers. The situation was similar in respect to other agricultural products. Many "ejidos" and peasant farmers had to abandon their farms and sell their land. Transnational investors were the gainers.⁶ Other smallholders abandoned food production and began cultivating opium and marijuana. Accordingly, drug trafficking and the crimes of violence associated with it increased.⁷ The Mexican labour market was not able to provide jobs for the former farmers. Accordingly, poverty and illegal emigration to the United States increased massively.

Outlook

Negative consequences of globalisation as have become apparent also after twenty years' experience with the NAFTA induce a deeper reflection on how it is all to go on. Conclusions can be drawn from historical experience. This debate is being conducted widely, and criticism of a free trade which undermines economies, is becoming louder and clearer. The population must be allowed to take part in the discussion about "What kind of economy do we want?" in all the countries. That is the foundation for the exercise of the right to self-determination, as it is required by international law.

- ¹ "NAFTA put an elephant in bed with two mice" Martin Walker: Clinton, The President They Deserve, London 1997, p. 292, quoted in Patrick Keller: *Von der Eindämmung zur Erweiterung – Bill Clinton und die Neuorientierung der amerikanischen Außenpolitik*, Bonn 2008, p. 131 (From Containment to Enlargement: Bill Clinton and the Re-Orienting of American Foreign Policy, Bonn: Bouvier 2008).
- ² "NAFTA means jobs – American jobs, and good paying American jobs". Clinton in: Keller: *Von der Eindämmung zur Erweiterung*, p.135
- ³ cf. Keller: *Von der Eindämmung zur Erweiterung*, pp. 9-25
- ⁴ Source: *taz.de* from 1 January 2014, 20 years free trade. Fewer jobs, fewer peasant farmers.
- ⁵ Richard L. Trumka quoted in Barbara Eisenmann: NAFTA Free Trade Agreement or blueprint of the neo-liberal investment regime, *Deutschlandfunk* (Germany World Service) of 21 November 2014
- ⁶ Jens Winter: *Transnationale Arbeitskonflikte. Das Beispiel der hegemonialen Konstellation im NAFTA-Raum* (Transnational labour disputes. The example of the hegemonic constellation in the NAFTA region), Münster 2007, pp. 135-137
- ⁷ This connection is attested by the following study, which is available on the internet: Oeindrila Dube, Omar Garcia-Ponce, Kevin Thom: *From Maize to Haze: Agricultural Shocks and the Growth of the Mexican Drug Sector*.

“Against the global dictatorship of globalised finance capital, its satraps and mercenaries”

by Thomas Kaiser



Jean Ziegler
(picture thk)

The emeritus professor of sociology Jean Ziegler is known for his pronounced speeches. Be it a statement before the UN Human Rights Council in his capacity as Special Rap-

porteur on the right to food, in which he castigated the crimes of humanity letting people starve alongside profitable fields owned by the international agribusiness, or a statement before the Advisory Board of the UN Human Rights Council, in which he vividly depicts to the audience the devastating effects of unilateral coercive measures on the affected population. This attitude also becomes clear in his latest book “Ändere die Welt – Warum wir die kannibalistische Weltordnung stürzen müssen” (Change the World – Why we have to overthrow the cannibalistic world order).

“Hunger and poverty are back in Europe”

Ziegler’s latest book addresses so many aspects that a representation of the contents in one article can only be just a small selection. It grants an insight into his thoughts and wealth of experience, which he gathered throughout his travels and international mandates. His experiences and impressions have always contributed and still contribute to the dispute of today’s globalised neo-liberal system; experiences that go under the reader’s skin, for instance when Ziegler describes that in emerging countries such as India and Brazil there exists a poverty of unimaginable proportions alongside an ever increasing wealth. The empty eyes of those half-way starved silently accuse the screaming injustice in a world that lives in such an abundance, that 30 percent of the food is trashed, a world in which the 200 richest people of the planet have more assets than the size of the French GDP. The fact that the opening of the divide between the rich and the poor is not only to be observed in the emerging or developing countries, but also once more in Europe, represents a new dimension of the neo-liberal economic system that claims to produce prosperity for all. “Hunger and poverty are back

“Each individual is always the product of a collective and specific contingent, historical, dependent socialisation, but the innermost core, the absolutely unique eludes classification. Hence one’s own conscience, typically neglected by Marxist theorists, is a mighty historical power.” (p. 59)

in Europe. According to UNICEF in 2013, 11 percent of children under 10 years were malnourished in Spain.” (p. 15) Not to mention other countries such as Greece or Portugal, which also have a very high youth unemployment rate with all the social consequences related to that.

Human compassion

For Ziegler it is clear: all this must not be. Today we would have the chance to eradicate poverty and hunger. “The physical suffering that still plagues hundreds of millions of our contemporaries could be eliminated tomorrow.” (p. 20) When reading the book, we begin to understand from what Ziegler draws his optimism. Resulting from the conviction that nothing must remain as it is, and that there are always ways to change the situation (the world), a great creative strength emerges.

An episode at the beginning of the book, which took place in Brazil, guides the reader through his reading: It reflects what we sense in all of Ziegler’s statements together with his combative nature: his human compassion.

“I shall never forget the little boy’s eyes. I rose under a pretext and found him outdoors, sitting on the rocks by the sea. His name was *Joaquim*. He showed neither anger nor sadness, fear tied up his throat. His story was commonplace: His father, a traveling cane cutter, suffered from tuberculosis and had had no work for two years, his four younger siblings and his sick mother had been waiting for him since the morning in a shanty of the slums on the other side of the lagoon. The money he earned by selling a few nuts in the evening was the family’s entire income.

Joaquim had feverish eyes and was tormented by hunger. The cook stuck his head out of a window of the tavern, and I asked him to serve the boy on the rocks a meal. When the meal arrived, Joaquim spread an old newspaper over the stones. With trembling fingers he poured one plate

after another – rice, chicken, feijão, caruru, salad, cake – out on the newspaper, tied up the parcel and disappeared in the darkness. Although he himself was plagued by hunger, he carried the meal to his mother, his father and his brothers and sisters.” (p. 12)

This boy is representative for millions of children, although living in abject poverty, but have still not lost their sense of responsibility for their family.

“The peoples’ longing for independence, freedom and happiness”

In this book, the reader gets the impression, that Ziegler is trying to reflect his work for a juster world battling against the man-made social injustice, which today is a bitter reality, more than ever. Undoubtedly embodied by Jean Ziegler, in the chapter “Of what use is an intellectual?” he tries to answer the question about an intellectual’s usefulness. He focuses on various sociologists and explains how their ideas have acted as a model, for example in the struggle against colonialism and in helping to build freedom movements.

The mutual cultural influence forms the context in which the desire of the peoples for freedom and independence and the desire of some individuals to support these developments come together: “In this way the efforts of an intellectual to understand the world, as it is, and to change it, concur necessarily with the desire of the peoples for independence, freedom and happiness.” (p. 41)

Anyone who cares about the situation of the people in our world, is guided by ideas that match his inner convictions. That Jean Ziegler, as he pointed out in the talk with the Radio SRF, understands himself as a Marxist, shows his political background. Due to his frankness, he leaves no doubt where his mental, his philosophical home is. That is more sincere than some others who speak the expansion of the

continued on page 10

"Against the global dictatorship ..."

continued from page 9

welfare state, in word and deed, however, think about a sellout of the Service Public along with TTIP and TiSA, because they may help shrewd businessmen to pocket a lot of additional money.

"One's own conscience ... a mighty historical power"

Based on Marxist theory, Ziegler starts out from the concept of the class society which develops according to its economic conditions. But he would not be Jean Ziegler if he was not adding his own point of view to Marxism. Despite all the dogmatism inherent to Marxism, Ziegler has gained the following insight: "Each individual is always the product of a collective and specific contingent, historical, dependent socialisation, but the innermost core, the absolutely unique eludes classification. Hence one's own conscience, typically neglected by Marxist theorists, is a mighty historical power." (p. 59)

The issue of conscience which Ziegler here places in the centre of human acting and feeling is of central importance. The results of modern anthropology confirm the insights that *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* and *Immanuel Kant* gained more than 200 years ago. Man is a social being at core. Counteracting this fact is an economic order which "glorifies merciless competition between people" and pushes aside "millennia of patient efforts and civilisation". (p. 79)

Where are "social justice, fraternity, freedom and mutual endorsement? The universal tie between human beings, the common good, the freely accepted order, the law which liberates, foul volitions that will be transformed by the general rule (Kant), the social contract (contrat sociale)?" (p. 79)

Ziegler severely criticises the neo-liberal economic theory since it does not serve the common good but spurs on individual enrichment. The fathers of this theory, *Adam Smith* and *David Ricardo*, were convinced that unimpeded commerce would generate welfare for all. "According to Smith and Riccardo, there is an upper limit for the accumulation of wealth. This limit is defined by the satisfaction of needs. This theorem is valid both for individuals and for companies." (p. 81) With respect to individuals, this means: "If a certain amount of bread is available, distribution to the poor will take place almost automatically." (p. 81) The idea that wealth is spreading top-down may be true in some cases and is well-conceivable, in case there prevails a deeply humane disposition. But in a world which over-emphasises individual freedom, the common good falls by the wayside. "Under these

conditions the global war against the poor [...] is getting all the worse." (p. 83)

"The state is also a stronghold for the weak"

When Ziegler starts investigating the role of the state, the nation state, he is starting out from the basic concept of Marxist theory which regards the state as the instrument of domination by those in power: "The state apparatus is a weapon in class struggle. The governing class uses it exclusively to advance its class interests." (p. 135) This statement is of course true for autocratic states and dictatorships. But is it true in general?

In spite of all criticism of the policies of many states and in spite of the Marxist view that the state is an instrument of the rich, Ziegler concedes: "In some limited areas, the state is a force of progress. Without state intervention, old and young people, employees and workers would be at the mercy of the raging capital without any protection. Due to the state all over Europe there are great schools, universities, cultural institutions, hospitals, social security systems, labour courts and manifold efficient institutions protecting employees, pensioners and unemployed persons. The state is using the tax system to create internal transfers of income. It is a warranty for at least some basic justice." (p. 152). The positive role of the state eventually is a result of the era of enlightenment which has put man into the centre of state activity, thus laying the fundament for the creation of the modern citizen state which has reached a very high level of development in the Swiss direct democracy. Thus the modern democratic state has developed from an institution serving the powerful to an elected representation of its citizens. "Therefore the state is also a stronghold for the weak. But this stronghold is slowly decaying." (p. 152)

"Privatisation of the state is destroying the freedom of man"

This is the starting point for Ziegler's marked criticism of present conditions. "The globalised financial capital's increase of power, the neo-liberal dogma of 'less state', the privatisation of the world – meanwhile all this is weakening the states' capacity of regulation. These developments are overrunning parliaments and governments. They render most elections and nearly all referenda meaningless. They are undermining the ruling capacity of public institutions. They are suffocating law." (p. 152)

This is exactly what *Marc Chesney*, professor of economics, bluntly explained in his book "De la Grande Guerre à la crise permanente: La montée en puissance de l'aristocratie financière et l'échec de la démocratie" (From the Great War to

the permanent crisis: the rise of financial aristocracy and the failure of democracy). The state is dominated by economy which determines the taxing system, the local conditions, thereby dictating politics the general framework conditions that serve interests. In such a system, it is not the citizens, but the big financial and economic corporations that control politics. If economy is above politics and government activity is seen exclusively from an economic perspective, the democratic political system, in which the people is the sovereign, has come to an end.

All this development eventually leads to the state's privatisation and thus to the end of democracy. "The privatisation of the state is destroying the freedom of man. It annihilates its citizenship." (p. 157)

"The nation ... is at risk to die"

That the captains of industry invent new strategies all the time and that they use every possible and impossible means to strengthen and expand their influence internationally can be seen from various agreements by which the powerful seek to secure and if possible to increase their own privileges and profits. Indeed, Jean Ziegler has not spared with criticism of the new free trade agreement, mainly between the EU and the USA, called Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). This agreement involves the creation of the largest free trade zone in human history. Negotiations are being carried out behind closed doors, but now and then some small pieces of information are leaking out. According to Ziegler much more is at stake, however, than simply free trade: "If the TTIP enters into force, the states' economic and financial policy will be definitively at the mercy of those cold monsters, the multinational private corporations. The key clause of the agreement deals with the creation of arbitration courts. Should the agreement be signed, should the European Parliament give its consent, should the 28 Parliaments of the member states ratify it and should it enter into force every private multinational corporation could take legal action against any government that would take a decision that is contrary to the corporation's interests and wishes." (p. 161) The consequences would be devastating. "If TTIP is successfully negotiated and ratified, the all-pervading global power of corporations will definitively become a reality." (p. 162)

But we are not that far yet. Resistance is mounting. In our neighbouring Germany the people have taken to the streets and are demonstrating against these monster-treaties which serve only the multinationals and no-one else. While the Swiss

continued on page 11

“Against the global dictatorship ...”

continued from page 10

Federal Council leaves it open (does not provide a clear answer) whether and in what manner it wants “to dock on” to TTIP, signatures are already being collected in many European countries for an EU initiative to resist the conclusion of the agreements. Nearly two million signatures have been collected so far. If resistance is growing the EU member states will hardly be able to disregard their own populations.

Since the economic developments just outlined above would lead to the total destruction of democratic nation states in case they will be enforced, Ziegler concludes: “A nation at the mercy of neoliberal ideology and the privatisation of the world is on the verge of dying.” (p. 176)

Today, three quarters of African nations have no sovereignty

Taking the case of the African continent, Ziegler shows what the destruction of nations and of social cohesion looks like. Here, Ziegler is in his element (at his best). Anyone interested in colonial history will learn many interesting things. Using different countries as an example he depicts the sorrowful history of African nations which – considering the tragedies that have occurred in the Mediterranean before the eyes of the public over the last few weeks and months – is a shattering reality even today. The time of colonialisation which had led to the destruction of African culture is responsible for today’s fragmentation of the African continent and thus for a large number of present-day conflicts. Borders were drawn in accordance with the interests of the colonial powers, they were not based on the tribal areas of the African inhabitants at all.

“The major and medium colonial powers disposed of Africa at their own discretion. They fragmented the continent, carved out their possessions, dispersed the populations, destroyed cultures and traditional collective identities; they pillaged, plundered, raped and looted the wealth of the soil, of the forests and of the people just as they pleased, according to their own self-centred interests.” (p. 196)

When after the end of World War II, the colonial powers France and Great Britain gradually had to set the conquered territories free because of their own weakness, but also as a result of the wave of sovereignty which swept through the countries of the oppressed states, they were officially granted their independence, but they were and are not truly sovereign, even today. “Africa with its 54 states is the most fragmented continent on the planet today. The projects of Bamako and Manchester, the dream of the liberation of the Af-

rican continent, and the Pan-African upheaval ended in failure. Three quarters of the African nations are not sovereign, even today.” (p. 180)

As part of their policy the European colonial powers cultivated local elites in the conquered and occupied territories who were lifted into government positions thereby helping them to continue exerting an influence on the policies of the countries which they had “released into independence”: “State terror was relentless. The true nationalist leaders had to be eliminated at any cost in order to transfer the power to prepared local elites who were helped to power and controlled by their colonial masters.” (p. 191)

“It makes me suffer to see the suffering of the other”

Although in the chapter about the formation and development of societies Ziegler’s analysis repeatedly quotes the Marxist theory of class struggle and he defines it as the dominant constituent, he ultimately refers back to the anthropological basic elements of human existence. “Everyone wants to be happy, wants to eat, to be protected from fear and loneliness. Everyone – on which continent he may live, whatever nation, class, culture, ethnicity and age group he belongs to – fears death and hates illness. A reflecting consciousness is inherent in every human being ... Among all living beings, man alone has an awareness of his identity. Any malnourished child is something people cannot bear to have to look at ... The suffering of the other makes me suffer, it hurts my own consciousness, it breaks my heart, it makes me unhappy, it destroys, what I perceive as an indispensable ‘value’: the desire not to suffer, to eat, to be happy. It destroys the most precious thing in me: my ‘human nature’ ...” (p. 258) These values don’t need further definition, they are inherent in man. “These values are potentially universal because they are constitutive of mankind.” (p. 258)

Although Ziegler is again and again drawing a picture of our current world situation that is by no means a cheerful one – towards the end of the book the reader is rewarded for his patience, which he had to keep up when going through the chapters the sociological models. Everywhere, Ziegler sees small spots of resistance developing against a world which moved away from genuine humaneness and humanity.

“A new historical subject, the global civil society, is standing up today against the worldwide dictatorship of globalised financial capital, its satraps and mercenaries.” (p. 259)

Whether it is the *Via Campesina*, an international movement of peasants, founded in Jarkarta in 1993, or the movement of the landless in Brazil or the Con-

fédération Paysanne by the French farmers, founded by *José Bové*, who holds a seat in the European Parliament as a representative for the farmers today; “Via Campesina”, explains Jean Ziegler, “has mobilised all peasant movements against the neo-liberal concepts of trade in agricultural products.” It is a paradox that in Africa the peasants in particular are most threatened by starvation. With the financial crisis of 2007/2008 the situation “of farm workers and their families has greatly deteriorated. After the ban-ditry of the international banks had ruined the financial markets, the large predators – the hedge funds, the multinational banks and so on ... turned to the world’s natural resources.” (p. 265) By speculation in agricultural products they drove up the prices of basic food-stuffs, so that they were no longer affordable by the population, especially in the developing countries and allowed the international speculators to pocket whopping profits at the same time. Resistance comes up and even “the Swiss Government” supports “the rights of farmers and their battle against transgenic seeds and their right to a Court of Jurisdiction abroad.” (p. 271) Ziegler spreads confidence despite all inconvenience, not least nourished by his conviction that man as a basically compassionate being is able to act in solidarity. “Inhumanity that is done to somebody else, destroys humanity in me’ I repeat the insight of *Kant* and take it as my own.” Everybody carries the *categorical imperative* in himself. He is the motor of the global civil society. Awareness of identity – I’m the

continued on page 12



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The importance of direct democracy for securing social peace

World War I and the post-war period (Part 1)

by Dr rer publ Werner Wüthrich, Switzerland

In these weeks a number of events will take place in Switzerland the topic of which will be direct democracy in Switzerland. Reform proposals on how the requirement rules for popular initiatives might be tightened are brought forward. The media broadly debate the issue as well. In particular, we frequently hear that the people were unable to cope with the challenging issues in the fields of finance and economy and that EU law, international law or the global world in general would be setting limits to the direct democracy of a single state. The following lines should show that the historical importance of referendums and popular initiatives cannot be estimated high enough for the development of Switzerland. Even more: Especially in difficult times, referendums and popular initiatives have always had beneficial effects on Switzerland's political development.

The starting point for this analysis is the 14 June vote on a popular initiative that proposes to introduce an inheritance tax at the federal level that will raise a 20 per cent tax on inheritances exceeding two million Swiss francs. It is a kind of tax on wealth that would affect only two percent of the taxpayers. In the following, however, it is not so much the content of this initiative that plays a minor role but the fact that the people are voting on a federal tax. On one hand, this is unique in the world and on the other hand this is a tradition that began in World War I, when the people in Switzerland voted in several polls

"Against the global dictatorship ..."

continued from page 12

other one and the other one is me – is essential for man." (p. 274)

His plea, "Change the world" has something encouraging. People are not object, but subject in a (democratic) society. "There is no impotence in democracy, there is no helplessness. Most oligarchs come from North America and Europe. Endorsed by their constitution, citizens of these countries have all democratic rights, freedoms, and tools that are necessary in order to overthrow the dictatorship of companies" (p. 278) Ziegler encourages people to reclaim their democratic rights, to overcome the injustices of this world. "... and the cannibalistic world order will collapse – as early as tomorrow morning." (p. 278)

(Quotations translated by *Current Concerns*)

"The Swiss people manifested their high political maturity by a 93 percent Yes vote for the so-called 'war tax', despite their difficult living conditions – the highest approval that a federal bill has ever reached to date."

on how to finance the costs of national defense, and later, after the war, on how to repay the debt.

14 June 2015 reminds us of a very special date. Years ago, almost exactly one hundred years ago – on 6 June 1915 – there was the first vote on a federal tax in Switzerland right in the middle of World War I. Let us recall the events of that time and their impact on the political development of today's federal state.

One or the other readers may object that there have been earlier nation-wide constitutional referenda. That is right – but not on a federal tax because they have never existed before. Prior to 1915, the Federal Government was exclusively financed by tariffs and duties. Income and wealth taxes were left to the communes and the cantons that used to vote on taxes much earlier.

Test for direct democracy in World War I

When World War I began, it soon became apparent that the funds of the Confederation were by far not sufficient to cover the mobilization and the rapidly increasing expenditures for national defense. As a remedy, the Federal Council considered a progressive direct federal tax on income and assets for the duration of the war. The discussion initially focused on the question of whether this new tax should be introduced via martial law – that is, without a referendum – or whether one should follow the ordinary process during which parliament would submit a constitutional article to the people for decision. Out of a deeply rooted democratic attitude, politicians chose the latter, which was not self-evident at the time, especially in the situation of war. The Swiss people manifested their high political maturity by a 93 percent Yes vote for the so-called "war tax", despite their difficult living conditions – the highest approval that a federal bill has ever reached to date. A year later a vote on the stamp duty followed, which owners of securities had to pay. Once again, the people agreed – if only by 53 percent. Then, the Social Democrats submitted a popu-

lar initiative aiming at introducing the direct federal tax on income and wealth in the long run – that is beyond the war. The demands the state had to address had increased, so more taxes were required to tackle future challenges in the long run. 54 percent of the voters rejected the bill on 2.6.1918. These polls undoubtedly reinforced the sense of unity among the people.

After the war, the question of repaying the "war debts" of approximately 1 billion Swiss francs (the present value is about 10 billion) was raised. While other countries dealt with these domestic debt via inflation, the Federal Council suggested the continuation of the extraordinary tax of 1915 – initially adopted only for the duration of the war, until these debts would be paid back. On 4.5.1919 the people agreed to and accepted the plan of the Federal Council with a high percentage of 63 percent Yes votes. (This tax was to be abolished only 12 years later.) This time, however, there was some opposition. The Social Democrats disagreed. The workers had been hit much harder by the hardships, privations and problems of the war than the middle classes and the rich. They also pointed out that some people had even benefited from the war and that it was more than fair that the rich and profiteers of war would have to pay for the war debts. In 1921, the SP (Socialist Party) submitted the popular initiative for "the imposition of a one-time capital levy" for the rich. A citizen with a fortune in today's value of 10 million Swiss francs would, for example, have to give 20 percent of his fortune, and the richer ones even more. Legal entities, i.e. mainly public companies, would have to pay 10 percent of the business assets. A small minority of just six per thousand of taxable persons would have been affected, and they had reason to fear that the vast majority would decide against their interests. In order to enable a company to pay them, it was suggested that these new taxes could be paid in securities and treasury shares instead

continued on page 13

"The importance of direct democracy"

continued from page 12

of money. The state would thus have become the co-owner of private enterprises. This would have led to the "nationalization of the means of production" and to communism as the Marxists called for and as *Lenin* practiced in Russia, the opponents of this bill protested. Income tax – so the SP – should be used to pay off the war debts and support social purposes. The referendum Sunday of 12.3.1922 was to go down in the history of direct democracy. Almost all voters – 86.3 percent – went to the polls and massively rejected the popular initiative with 87 percent of the votes. This is definitely going too far, was the message to the initiators. Large parts of the workers had voted 'no'. These record-high turnout has never been achieved once more to date.

General Strike in 1918

There is another remarkable point in connection with this vote. The "repayment of war debts by the propertied classes" was a central demand during the country's general strike in November 1918. Just a few facts about this general strike: In Autumn of 1918, some left-wing parties and most trade unions called for a nationwide strike. It was justified by the plight, which many Swiss workers had suffered during the war. Prices had doubled, while wages had not changed much. The food rationing had started only in 1917. The wage replacement during military service was regulated inadequately. The country was generally ill-prepared for the long wartime – with the greatest impact on the working class a situation that had embittered them.

In addition there were other reasons that deepened the political divide. *Lenin*, *Trotsky* and other Russian revolutionaries had been staying in Switzerland as asylum seeker for quite some time and had been agitating from there. Especially *Lenin* commented on domestic issues in Switzerland and radicalized parts of the Left with his revolutionary ideology. So the SP party program of 1920 contained a whole passage about the dictatorship of the proletariat – following the Leninist model. However, this point was discussed controversially even within the party. (cf. "*100 Jahre Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz*", Zurich 1988, p. 47)

The general strike planned for November 1918 was announced in newspaper articles and pamphlets with some revolutionary pathos, so that the Federal Council was considering a military operation. Above all, the army leadership was pushing in this direction in order to meet any possibly attempted coup early. The Armed Forces Staff of General *Wille* even presumed that a coup might succeed and

worked out a strategy for a "counter-revolution". It is obvious that *Wille* was not the general for the whole Swiss people as *Henri Guisan* would be during World War II.

When immediately prior to the strike, the Social Democrats all across the country were calling for commemoration of the October Revolution in Russia, which had taken place a year earlier, the Federal Council and the army leadership responded in an exaggerated manner. They mustered large sections of the army – about 95,000 troops – to guard the stations, government buildings, banks, switchboards etc. – facilities that in case of uprisings and revolutions were always the first to be occupied. In some communes vigilantes were founded.

The military presence was so massive that the strikers rightly felt provoked and expressed their protest. At 107 localities in Switzerland 250,000 strikers finally went on strike at the same time.

In the Zurich area, where major riots had been expected, 8,000 men were in service and the cantonal government moved its headquarters temporarily to the barracks. The strike committee called for level-headedness and urged the workers not to allow the huge contingent of the army to provoke them. On the "Fraumünsterplatz" clashes came about and shots were fired. A Swiss soldier lay dead on the square – killed by a pistol shot. It may be assumed that there were snipers who were interested in escalation. The Zurich commandant equipped the soldiers with hand grenades and gave the order to use them if the soldiers were shot at from windows. The strikers usually behaved in a disciplined way. Nevertheless, there was a risk that such situations might result in a bloodbath.

When later the political situation did not significantly become less tense, the Federal Council supported by parliament demanded an ultimatum to end the strike, which the strike committee complied to. Thus the strike ended after only three days.

The main reason this serious situation came out unscathed, was the fact that the demonstrators until only a few days before the event had carried the same uniform as the opposing forces. Both the soldiers and their commanders had done their duty in this difficult situation, in general with a high sense of responsibility. On the other hand, the strike committee had repeatedly called for nonviolence and for moderation and had always observed that a strict ban on alcohol was abided by during the events. Nevertheless, the situation was dangerous, and it is almost a miracle that only one casualty had to be mourned during the strike. In other European cities such as Munich, Berlin, Vienna and Budapest, there was

also political unrest in these weeks, which was much more violent and where actually revolutionary attempts were made. In England, France and northern Italy there were big strikes as well.

In the subsequent legal and historical analysis of the events in Switzerland, however, it turned out that here and there a few weapons and some explosives were found. However, there were no plans for a coup, as particularly General *Wille* had incorrectly assumed. Domestically, these days were undoubtedly the absolutely lowest point in the history of the Confederation. Even with respect to foreign policy the strike had consequences. The Federal Council broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, because it probably rightly assumed that *Lenin* had abused Swiss hospitality and had been responsible for the strike. The relations with the Soviet Union were not resumed until after the Second World War. How far *Lenin* had been responsible for the radicalization of parts of the Left at the end of World War I, is still controversial today.

The country's general strike was dangerous for another reason, as well. The often fatal Spanish Flu was rampant. Already 300,000 cases had been registered. It must be assumed that the big size of the crowds had led to numerous infections and deaths. The Army statistics showed 200 victims of the Spanish Flu.

Rejection of the class struggle and rapprochement at a difficult time

So what do the events around the general strike have to do with our topic of direct democracy? – Very much. After World War I there were numerous referendums. After the strike had ended some agitators still had their say. So the partly Marxist-indoctrinated strike committee commented on the termination of the general strike as follows:

"[...] We were unable to voice our demands. The workers succumbed to the power of bayonets. But they are not defeated. On the whole, it has gained a weapon of great and terrible meaning for the first time, if need be. This weapon needs to be strengthened and sharpened."

There was, however, no expansion and intensification of the general strike – because of direct democracy. So almost all points on the list of demands of the general strike were later individually voted on in the months and years to come and the workers experienced that most of their concerns won a majority – a unique process worldwide. The list of these referendums is long and impressive.

“The importance of direct democracy”

continued from page 13

- On 13.10.1918 the people accepted a popular initiative of the Social Democrats with 67 percent calling for the proportional votes for the National Council.
- On 10.8.1919 the people agreed on the premature dissolution of the National Assembly and new elections under the new procedure by a 71 percent yes-vote. (The Social Democrats nearly doubled their number of seats.)
- On 21.3.1920 the Federal law establishing the employer-employee order was rejected with a wafer-thin 50.2 per cent No-votes.
- On 31.10.1920 the people said Yes to shorter working hours on the railways and transport companies (SOEs).
- On 12.3.1922 they massively refused – as already reported – the popular initiative for the “imposition of a one-time property tax” to pay off the war debt.
- On 17.2.1924 the people agreed to the legal introduction of the 48-hour week in a referendum with 57 percent yes-votes on.
- The creation of an old-age and disability insurance was a key point on general strike’s list of demands. In addition, there was a whole series of votes: On 12.6.1925 the people laid the foundation for the introduction of Old-Age and Survivors’ Insurance (OASI) in the Constitution with 65 percent of the votes.

A first attempt to establish the OASI definitely failed in 1931 in a referendum with a clear 60 percent No-votes. The economic crisis and the World War II then delayed this ambitious project, which was resumed immediately after the war. In 1947, the people agreed by 80 percent yes-votes on the OASI in a turnout of 80 percent of the voters – whose outlines still apply today.

- In the list of demands of the general strike of November 1918 the workers had demanded the “security of food supply in consultation with the agricultural producers”. In three polls – this included a popular initiative – the people decided to a turn away from the lib-

eral agricultural policy before the war. The federal government was given the task of promoting the cultivation of grain, storing supplies, preserving flour mills and monitoring the grain trade. In 1914, 90 percent of the crop had been imported, which became increasingly difficult during the war, therefore there had been incidents of starvation and serious political tensions. That should not happen again. During World War II, Switzerland was significantly better prepared to feed the population adequately.

- In addition to these economic bills, a popular initiative originating in French-speaking Switzerland was adopted in 1921 with 71 percent yes-votes, which subordinated such international agreements, which were either unlimited or settled for a period of more than 15 years, to the referendum, which meant that also the Swiss foreign policy was democratized in the sense of people’s rights.

A very large number of the population’s very fundamental concerns – especially of the working class – was decided on direct-democratically in those years. They included two popular initiatives of the So-

al strike” or even “strike” lost their importance in the vocabulary of workers. A first sign of a significant change was already manifest in the last months of the year 1920. With a significant majority the Socialist Party refused to join the *Third International* founded by Lenin – a decision that was also supported by the party’s basis in a ballot.

The peace agreement between the unions and employers’ associations of watches, machinery and metal industry in 1937 turned out to finally pave the way for a world of work more or less without strike – until today. The counterparties were no longer involved in a class struggle against each other, but faced each other as social partners who shared a common interest in the prosperity of the company. In contrast to the instrument of strike, referendums or collective agreements in Switzerland are not about wresting a concession from the government, the Parliament or an employer; instead they constitute a free decision by the citizens and the contractors and therefore have a very different quality. It is an entirely different political culture that has emerged and which has a balancing and moderating effect.

“The peace agreement between the unions and employers’ associations of watches, machinery and metal industry in 1937 turned out to finally pave the way for a world of work more or less without strike – until today.”

cial Democrats on federal taxes. Numerous other polls were to follow over the decades. The workers who had been defeated in the nationwide general strike made the experience that their concerns were taken seriously and that there were better ways to enforce them. This included collective agreements that were increasingly negotiated in the 1920s between the organizations of employers and trade unions. Terms like “revolutionary gener-

These considerations can also be continued and deepened for the difficult period of the economic crisis in the 1930s. It may be said that during this time, the great number of referenda and popular initiatives helped to cope with the crisis politically and economically and thus contributed significantly to the sense of unity and the successful development of Switzerland. More on this topic is to follow in the second part. •

Literature is culture ... and it should not be dumped

Peter Sodann collects books from the GDR

by Moritz Nestor, Klaudia and Tankred Schaer



Peter Sodann (picture ts)

When Peter Sodann welcomes us, we immediately think of the "Tatort" detective superintendent Bruno Ehrlicher. Sodann has

played the role of the Dresden detective, who was always carrying a briefcase and who could not be upset by anything and who solved the most complicated cases, with great success for many years.

We meet with him in order to visit the Peter-Sodann-Library which he founded some years ago. It is located in a recently renovated manor in Staucha in Saxony. Here in this corner of Saxony about 4,000,000 GDR books found a home. Sodann experienced how books from bookstores and libraries were taken to the landfill truckload-wise after the wall came down. And he says:

"In 1989, a little girl came to me and said: 'My parents send me, and they ask you to come to the union hall.' It was about the union library in Halle an der Saale. There were many trucks, and everything was to be taken away, and I told them: 'But you throw away your past.' They answered that they did not care and ordered me to get out of their way, or something serious would happen. So I left, and from that day on I started to collect, because I wanted to keep my past."

Peter Sodann set out to do something about all the libraries that were supposed to be unceremoniously destroyed. "We cannot dispose of our own history," Sodann says. In 1989, he appealed to his contemporaries not to destroy the books, but keep them. Many people responded to this call, and since then thousands of books have been stored in banana boxes. Today the motto "In the banana boxes of the West lies the knowledge of the East" can be seen in the small theatre that Peter Sodann operates in Staucha.

It is Peter Sodann's concern that people remember the story: "Forget is the mother of neglect". Many of his friends had written books during GDR times, and now they are already forgotten. The book landscape in eastern Germany has changed radically since 1990. Of the original 150 state-licensed publishers of GDR there exist barely a dozen in an independent form. The number of employ-



Peter-Sodann-Library (picture ts)

ees has fallen below one-tenth. Less than one percent of produced German book sales take place in this part of Germany, now.

Is Peter Sodann only an old, backward-looking communist with GDR nostalgia? For a long time Sodann realized performances together with Norbert Blüm, a former German politician. In many respects, there are parallels in the life story of the politician Blüm and the theatre director Sodann:

"Well, Blüm is also a toolmaker like me. I've learned in the electric plants Sonnewitz, a nation-owned company, he has learned to be a toolmaker at Opel's."

Both discussed the history of the GDR a lot. Peter Sodann remembers the conversations with Norbert Blüm, and what he told him:

"I know about the many mistakes we have made. You know about the mistakes that you made. It will take a long time, because what we want to achieve is related to education and culture. There were attempts in the German Democratic Republic, attempts in the Soviet Union, attempts wherever communist or at least socialist thinking prevailed and things emerged; there were these attempts to have an educated people, to have a clever people. I was allowed to study again from the very bottom. Since I am grateful to the State I cannot condemn it. That this very state locked me up and told me that I was a counterrevolutionary, who I

was not, that's a different matter. I can even forgive them today, that is the way it is. – But if you are always trying hard to do something well, which cannot be done well because it is related to money, and to the stock exchange and to a land distribution that cannot be successful This is what we were always talking about."

Peter Sodann calls himself a praying Communist:

"Why should I not believe in God? If I lived by the 10 Commandments, I would respect God, because he created this earth. It is round and has lakes and rivers and all sorts of things. And then this gift that he has given us, we should take care of it. Well, so I live in God, and I also pray."

Peter Sodann is first of all an Impresario, director and actor, not a librarian. Still, he gets down to the task of bibliographic collection of titles of all publishers of the former GDR in all editions. Each book is collected in two copies: one as a reference copy, the other to be lent. The books are registered by publishers. In the GDR, there were 150 state-licensed publishers. Peter Sodann then calculated how many meters of shelf-space was needed for the entire book production of these publishers: There are ten kilometers of shelves. He could bid on the necessary shelves by a happy coincidence. The German National Library in

"Literature is culture ..."

continued from page 15

Leipzig was redesigned. The old shelves were left behind and could be purchased cheaply – Sodann had to offer just a little more than the scrap dealer.

There are still many not unpacked boxes of books, and a lot of help would be necessary for the project. If adding the entire stock, there are around four million books. Meanwhile 600,000 books are digitally recorded.

In 2007, the association "Peter Sodann Library e.V." was founded. Purpose of the association is to promote, maintain or expand a collection of literature published in the Soviet Occupation Zone and the GDR from 1945–1990. The collection should be available to the public in a reference library. The association advocates the prevention of the continued loss by the destruction of publications such as fiction, children's literature, science, culture and sport and many others from the time between 1945–1990, and is committed to its preservation and storage.

In March 2007, 15 workers began to arrange and catalogue the Sodann book collection as part of a job creation scheme. In November 2007, a second project with the same staff started.

Now a young man helps with cataloguing the books as an employee of the

Giving hope to humans

"Giving people hope, but not the hope of election posters, but the hope of a peaceful life without terror and violence, the hope of a life in deep harmony with the world, that is what we can do and what we must do. If this hope still exists – and it does exist, the utopian dreams of a better living together of human beings, I am firmly convinced of that. The only possibility to leave behind the misery of wars, hunger and distress is by education and culture. This is not a modest, but a necessary task."

from: Peter Sodann. "Mai-Reden und andere Provolationen", March 2002. "Bibliothek gegen das Vergessen", Stuttgart, 2nd edition 2008, from the chapter "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters" (Questions asked by a reading worker), p. 151

Library lest we forget

"I come from a reading country (where people read a lot). Literature was an enclave for hopes, dreams, ideals. The clashes took place in the books, which were willingly prevented in real life. Literature was meant to enlighten, to connect, to deliver backgrounds, where they should not have been. Books described the everyday life beyond mealy-mouthed ideology. The authors and poets were respected. They received prizes and awards and Stasi files, which sometimes contained more pages than the poet had ever written. That much attention was paid to them. Perhaps rightly so, because in the good books, even in those of Soviet authors (such as *Valentin Rasputin*, *Chingiz Aitmatov* or *Vasily Shukshin*), there was already thought and told what then, in 1989, led to the turnaround.

Ideas once conceived could not be prohibited, they were in the world and stayed in the world. The ideas were followed by action. Then the turnaround came over Germany, the divided fatherland became one again, promoted by the East. But what happened to the literature of the East? In Halle on the Saale, there was a clubhouse of the un-

ions with a large library, there was the house of the German-Soviet Friendship with a library, there were the branches of the city library. The important thing about them were not the collected and catalogued books, but the real estates that were in demand and were to be sold. The literature was no longer lust but burden. Trucks drove up, were loaded with the printed and suddenly now worthless paper and headed to the urban garbage dump. Forward and not forgotten? At that time, the book burning by the Nazis came to my mind. Now, however, the process was much less spectacular. Who cared? It happened quietly, without resistance. I tried to call to halt the machinations, but no one listened to me. That's why I decided, at that time, to set up – whenever and if possible at all – a library where all the books are to be found that have gone over the counter at GDR times since 8 May 1945 according to *Schabowski* best and most sensible statement: 'The Wall is open'."

from: Peter Sodann. "Mai-Reden und andere Provolationen", March 2002. "Bibliothek gegen das Vergessen", Stuttgart, 2nd edition 2008, p.130f.

Federal Voluntary Service. Although much is still to be done, the visitor nevertheless gets a good insight into the structure of the library and examine the literature.

Today an attempt is made to secure the library's finances via the sale of books (www.antiquariat-peter-sodann.de). There are books to buy that are redundant or not belonging to the collection field, i.e. that have been published before 1945 or after 1990.

The theatre is still a particular concern of Peter Sodann. He has been impresario of the theatre in Halle for many years and has established a cultural island in the heart of the city for more than 20 years.

Here in Staucha Sodann shows us his theatre in the province, which should be a political theatre. The entire ceiling is festooned with old lamps from GDR production. Sodann knows what happens in the audience when the lights go on: The

visitors remember "their" lamp, they are open to the past and mentally prepared for the play.

We can only hope that the planned "Akademie gegen das Vergessen" (Academy against forgetting) may soon begin its work. Then there will also be a cultural island with a library, theatre and research center in Staucha, which will have a tremendous influence far beyond the regional level. 25 years after the accession of the GDR to the scope of influence of the West German "Grundgesetz" (Basic Law), it is time that the GDR is no longer painted in black and white, but take a closer look is taken – to face the people in the GDR and their achievements with justice and equality, without a know-it-all attitude. That would be beneficial for all Germans. "Critical analysis" means honesty and respect in dealing with the history and cultural achievements of the other. It was a real pleasure for us to get to know Peter Sodann. •