

Current Concerns

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“There is a great aspiration for peace and justice” The Independent Expert of the United Nations visited Venezuela

by Prof Dr iur. et phil. Alfred-Maurice de Zayas*



Alfred-Maurice
de Zayas
(picture ma)

As the first *Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order*, I have had the opportunity of defining the mandate and the methodology. I have produced six reports for the Human Rights Council and six reports for the Gen-

eral Assembly, all covering issues of international order including tax havens, investor-state-dispute settlement, bilateral investment treaties, free trade agreements, World Bank projects, the International Monetary Fund and its loan conditionalities, disarmament for development, the self-determination of peoples and the reform of the Security Council. The object and purpose of my mandate is laid down in *Resolution 18/6* of the Human Rights Council, and the parameters of my visit are described in a media statement issued on 27 November 2017¹.

Tasks and work of the Independent Expert

The function of rapporteurs and independent experts is to ask questions, listen to all stakeholders, evaluate documents, and issue constructive recommendations to States. We come in order to help populations better realize their human rights. In order to do so, we try to convince governments that it is in their own interest to cooperate with the United Nations, and we offer them our advisory services and technical assistance. Our function cannot be reduced to condemning governments.

As one of the few Special Procedures given access to Venezuela and Ecuador, expectations for my visit were high. While I could not fulfil the expectations of some sectors of civil society and remain within the parameters of my mandate, I did assure my interlocutors that I would trans-

* Alfred-Maurice de Zayas (United States of America/Switzerland) was appointed as the first *Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order* by the Human Rights Council, effective May 2012. He is currently professor of international law at the Geneva School of Diplomacy. Learn more, log on to: www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/IEInternationalorderIndex.aspx. The Independent Experts are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

continued on page 2

Make 2018 a year of international understanding

by Karl Müller

2018 will be the centenary of the end of World War I. But even 100 years after the end of this slaughter which killed millions of people it might seem that not many of those in power today, in politics, state, economy and society, are aware of what war really means. So there are still enough occasions and reasons to think about war and peace and to ask the question: What can citizens do for peace and against war?

Also before World War I there were warnings of a great war. *Bertha von Suttner* who received the Nobel Prize for Peace for her efforts is only one prominent name among many. Similarly before World War II. And in our times? Many will remember the protests of millions against the imminent Iraq War in March 2003. But even these protests have been unable to prevent the war. Is there nothing we can do?

Wars have many causes. Sometimes it takes decades of research to get a clear picture – important sources are kept secret for a long time; it may happen that

the pieces of the puzzle can be put together only years after the end of a war. But historians and other interested persons concerned about peace are researching the causes of wars also hoping that people might be able to act preventively in future. Are there any insights providing an important role for the citizens?

What can citizens do regarding war and peace?

It does not take a lot of knowledge for one insight: No war can be led if no citizen contributes to it. But this assumption is somewhat utopian. In addition, there are now weapon systems which allow waging a war with less and less active soldiers. The times of mass armies are over. A few thousand of mercenaries are sufficient to cause devastating damage and to put our planet on fire.

But: War lords and ladies of all times have attempted to justify their wars. They were searching approval for their wars. This is called war propaganda. War lies might be a more appropriate term. At least in their own country they are indispensa-

ble for the war lords and ladies. “The first casualty when war comes is truth”. We have all heard this 1914 quote from US Senator *Hiram Johnson*. Of course, it is also valid in the years preceding a war.

Indeed: enemy stereotypes en masse ...

We are witnessing this again today. Enemy stereotypes en masse. To start in our own house: Just read the new US security strategy, the declarations of the EU states regarding questions of security policy or speeches of German politicians regarding Germany's global role. Read the mainstream media. There are not many honest statements, oral or in writing. It is hard to bear how biased and distorted issues are presented, how important facts are omitted. Each war has an ideological side.

The insight is not a new one. The preamble of the *UNESCO Constitution*, the *Constitution of the United Nations Organisation for Culture and Education* states:

continued on page 4



“There is a great aspiration for ...”

continued from page 1

mit their concerns to the pertinent rapporteurs. In particular, issues have been raised which could be examined in more depth by the rapporteurs on freedom of expression, on the right of peaceful assembly and association, on the independence of judges and lawyers, on food, health and on arbitrary detention. I also endeavoured to incorporate some of the concerns mentioned into the narrative of my preliminary recommendations to the States. Where relevant, I will reflect their input in the final report to the submitted to the Council in 2018.

Not “publicly denounce”, but listen and offer suggestions

I have listened to hundreds of stakeholders and received a wealth of information from them, which I still must study and digest before I give final form to the reports. One thing should be clear, my approach has always been, and will be, to listen and offer constructive suggestions about how to reform legislation, regulations and practices that result in violations of human rights.

A new look at the realities of Venezuela and Ecuador

I have endeavoured to give a fresh look at the realities of Venezuela and Ecuador, aware of problems of poverty, corruption, scarcity of certain food items and medicines, failure to ensure free, prior and informed consent in the extractive field, inflation, inefficient distribution, inaction by government, repression of dissent. There are many diagnoses of the problems and many causes. My intention is to recommend viable solutions, within the limits of my mandate, and my approach has always been result-oriented.

This visit included a very high number of meetings with ministers of both coun-

tries, ambassadors, diplomats, church leaders, academics, economists, professors, students, civil society organizations, individual victims, who told heart-rending stories, with relatives of persons in detention, who delivered petitions for transmittal to pertinent actors. I have made an effort to balance my meetings between different groups and was not only passive in receiving information but proactive in the search of truth and demanding targeted information.

Examining joint efforts to promote social progress

The mission has focused on examining joint efforts to promote social progress and better standards of living consistent with the provisions of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the agendas of the world social forums since Porto Alegre.

It bears repeating that the World Summit in September 2005 reaffirmed that “democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.” The Summit Outcome Document also stressed that “democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing,” and pointed out that “while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy.” Accordingly, the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian models deserve attention.

Literacy, free education, poverty reduction ...

The impacts of social models prevalent in both countries, as well as in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Cuba, on the international order reveal possibilities of greater regional integration and cooperation with inter-

national organizations, particularly the United Nations system, which can offer advisory services and technical assistance to States to ensure that social progress is not achieved at the expense of civil liberties. I looked at progress in the field of the elimination of illiteracy, free education from primary schools to university, programmes to reduce extreme poverty, provide housing to the homeless and vulnerable, phase-out privilege and discrimination, expand medical care for all, including the very young and the elderly.

... and coercive measures by other states

Among the obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights I inquired about the adverse economic measures adopted by several states aimed at directly and indirectly affecting the good functioning of the targeted State or restricting its regulatory space. The United Nations has condemned unilateral coercive measures since decades, notably since the landmark study of the *Sub-commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights* in the year 2000. Currency speculation has been one of the preferred tools to destabilize targeted economies, so too the activities of credit rating organizations, which, although they have no democratic legitimacy, do severely impact the financial ability of States to issue bonds and obtain financing.

Many problems: from capital flight in tax havens to “terrorism”

The escape of national funds into tax havens has negatively impacted the ability of States to meet their financial obligations, and international cooperation is necessary to ensure the repatriation of funds that were illicitly taken out of the respective countries. It also appears that interna-

continued on page 3

“There is a great aspiration for ...”
continued from page 2

tional criminal groups are responsible for theft of public resources, food items and medicines, which have found their way into neighbouring countries, affecting the enjoyment of human rights by populations for whom these resources were originally intended. The *UN Office on Drug and Crime* can help states tackle some of these problems. In Venezuela there has been widespread sabotage of public property, arson against public buildings, hospitals and other institutions, destruction of electricity and telephone lines, etc., sometimes associated with electoral campaigns. I am concerned about reports I have received about these acts of sabotage, which could even be considered under the rubric “terrorism”.

While the Venezuelan government tends to blame outside causes like sanctions and the drop in the price of petroleum, it is also important to understand the multiple errors made by government in trying to tackle these problems. Many observers have pointed out that there are too many ideologues and too few technocrats in public administration. Some are worried about the weight of the military. The lack of regular, publicly available data on nutritional status, epidemiology, inflation and the budget has complicated efforts to provide humanitarian support and increased negative speculation about the state of the overall economy and about food and health sectors.

The government could also exercise more flexibility with monetary policies and provide incentives to the private sector – as has been done in other countries that have maintained social models while easing exchange and loosening price controls – in order to ensure that entrepreneurs are not driven out of business by high replacement costs and feelings of insecurity. I also hope that, in both countries, government will engage more with a diverse group of non-governmental actors, and work together to resolve social and political problems.

Willing cooperation from the governments of Venezuela and Ecuador

I must express my appreciation to the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian governments, which made every effort to answer my questions and provided documentation and statistics, including through power-point presentations, which I am in the process to evaluate and compare with other sources of information.

Civil society organizations also provided very useful documentation, and I met with NGOs, indigenous persons, individuals and families of persons in detention and persons whose relatives died

in connection with the scarcity of medicines.

But also polemic against the Independent Expert

Regrettably, it appears that a campaign was launched against my mission weeks before my arrival in Caracas and some even called the mission a “fake investigation”. Similarly, in the social media the credibility of my person was put into question and I was subjected to ad hominem attacks, including insults and all sorts of accusations, even before I had spoken to a single journalist or given a press conference. This reflects a high level of polarization and refusal to accept that an independent expert is independent, and that he comes to listen and evaluate, not to grandstand and condemn.

There is a worrying media campaign to force observers into a preconceived view, e.g. that there is a “humanitarian crisis” in Venezuela. We should be wary of hyperbole and exaggeration, bearing in mind that “humanitarian crisis” is a *terminus technicus* and could be misused as a pretext for military intervention and regime change.

No “humanitarian crisis”

Of course, there should be free flow of food and medicines into Venezuela in order to alleviate the current scarcity of food and medicines. But such help should be truly humanitarian and should not have ulterior political purposes. The *International Committee of the Red Cross, Caritas* and other organizations could surely help in coordinating the importation and distributions of aid.

The situation in Venezuela definitely does not reach the threshold of humanitarian crisis, even though there is suffering caused by internal and external reasons. Any observer will recognize that there is scarcity in some sectors, malnutrition, insecurity, anguish. When in Venezuela, I inquired from many stakeholders about the reasons and I also learned of the measures taken by the government to address these problems, making relevant recommendations to the government how to improve on those measures. I have also recommended that the government intensify its cooperation and seek additional assistance from international and regional organizations, and that it welcome the advisory services of international economists and other experts who could provide advice on how to solve persistent economic problems, including inflation. It is unhelpful simply to repeat that there is an unacceptable level of suffering in some sectors. What is crucial is to make constructive proposals. In order to formulate such proposals, it is important to study the many causes of the problems. It is important to know the impact of sabotage, hoarding, black market activities, in-

duced inflation, and contraband in food and medicines.

International solidarity is required, no isolation and no boycott

Countries must not be isolated and boycotted. What is crucial is to demonstrate a level of international solidarity through measures of inclusion and a concerted effort through international organizations like *UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, UNAIDS*, etc. to help. I specifically requested Venezuela to seek advisory services and technical assistance from the United Nations, and it appears that this call has been listened to². I also recommended that seven other rapporteurs be invited.

UN Rapporteurs can highlight good initiatives and recognize lessons learned. In the case of Venezuela, I think that the Venezuelan program of building low-cost housing has proven a good thing and have saved millions of persons from poverty and homelessness. In Ecuador I admire the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2017–2021* and the initiatives to adopt a United Nations Treaty on the Social Responsibility of Transnational Corporations, and the creation of a United Nations Tax body that would coordinate tax policies with a view to phase out tax competition, tax havens and tax evasion. The initiative for a financial transactions tax deserves universal support.

I also recognize that both countries are making a considerable effort to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ahead of the 2030 deadline, and both devote a considerable percentage of national budgets to social services.

Most important is to ensure that social peace is maintained

Most important is to ensure that social peace is maintained. To promote dialogue among all sectors of the population, to reach out to the private sector and listen to their proposals. In both Venezuela and Ecuador, there is a great aspiration for peace and justice, what the Ecuadorians call *buen vivir*. This was reflected in the *Interparliamentary Union’s* 2014 Quito Declaration, which I wish to fully endorse, as I also endorse the CELAC 2014 resolution declaring *Latin America and the Caribbean* a “zone of peace”. These are good practices to follow. *Pax optima rerum*³. •

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/News-Events/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22457&LangID=E> from 11 December 2017

² <http://www.redpres.com/t26946-venezuela-ampliar-cooperacion-con-la-onu-para-fortalecer-abastecimiento-de-medicamentos#sthash.DYAKh5wI.dpbs>

³ Peace is the highest good. Motto of the Peace of Westphalia, 1648.

"Make 2018 a year of ..."

continued from page 1

"Since wars are created in the minds of people, also peace has to be rooted in the minds of people." There are good reasons for this.

... but also a global desire for peace

The world has changed since 1918 (or since the years preceding 1914). The United Nations have banned war. The wording at the beginning of the Charter of the United Nations of 26 June 1945 cannot be cited too often: "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind..." The world could take up Bertha von Suttner's works and those of the many personalities who have taken a stand for peace, without success in their times but giving orientation for later generations. The global protest against the United States' Vietnam War was not without consequences. The protests against the Iraq War and the political ignorance of the US and their "coalition of the willing" have documented for the world that injustice is under way. The former "Western leading power" has lost its reputation. Word is around that the US and the other NATO states are leading illegal wars. The ugly face of war has become obvious.

Sure, the education for peace in our schools has lost substance. In the past years, peace in our own country has become natural. The many wars elsewhere seemed to be far away. To take a stand for peace seemed to be a job for hardened idealists, for unworldly dreamers. There were more important things to do. But still: The majority of citizens did not and still does not want war. It was never possible to cover up the misery of war.

**Politicians always say:
We do not want war!**

This is why politicians and media never say: We want war! Instead they say: We need to deter, we have to show strength, we must be prepared.

German politicians prefer the phrase: We need to take more global responsibility.

But the problem should always be the others.

Or they twist logic: We have to wage war for peace. We need to protect human rights with mass murder. We introduce democracy with a coup d'état. US President *Woodrow Wilson* justified his country's entry into World War I with the logi-

cal nonsense "the war to end all wars". We know what became out of it.

**The myth of the wrong
"appeasement policy"**

Again and again we are served up with a very big lie: The myth of the wrong "appeasement policy" by France and Great Britain before World War II. This is why we hear now: If the other has "evil" plans, we may not concede anything. And surely we should all believe that *Putin* is a "new *Hitler*" (*Hillary Clinton*). "*Trump* is kicking in *Putin's* shin" we can read on page 1 of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 27 December 2017. The US government has decided to deliver anti-tank missiles to the Ukrainian government. The newspaper stated that for Ukraine "the restitution of its sovereignty and territorial integrity" were at stake – and the forcible suppression of the other in Eastern Ukraine ... and the advance of NATO towards the Russian border. But of course this is not stated. Just like it is not stated that the British policy before World War II had no real interest in peace but instead was aiming towards a mutual destructive war of National-Socialist Hitler-Germany versus the Communist Soviet Union, thus going any length to pull off the "Hitler project".

**Personalities looking for means
to relieve the increasing tension**

Personalities like *Matthias Platzeck* or *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz* are among the people looking for means to stop the increasing tension and the imminent escalation. This is why they try to put themselves into the shoes of the "others" in order to understand their positions (cf. *Current Concerns* No 32, 31 December 2017). And they arrive at interesting conclusions: indeed, *Hitler* did have "evil" designs – which could be used. But *Vladimir Putin* and Russia (and also China) do not have "evil" plans. On the contrary! In spite of all weaknesses and flaws: Russia and also China are seeking a global order based on equality and international law. They are open-minded, looking for agreements which could be advantageous for all parties. And: *Putin* for example is representing a people which wants to live in peace ... but in its own style: respected in its dignity and self-determination.

Moreover: If there are aggressive, "evil" designs to expose, then in our own camp. This has been proven again and again, for example by *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz*. Indeed: The greatest contribution for peace would be a democratic change in our own countries.

This insight is also a chance: There is no longer a need to brood about what to do with the "evil" others. The crucial step is to keep your own country in order.

**International understanding –
a delightful matter**

How can we succeed? The direct path is currently closed. The NATO states' parliamentary system does not provide sufficient means for direct influence. But there is also an indirect way: to support and to strengthen all those who want peace – and to thwart enemy stereotypes. International understanding has many devices: reading good books about our and other countries and peoples, personal encounters in travel, visits and invitations, building up equal partnerships, between persons, clubs, institutions, communes, cities and so on.

In the beginning we have the will: Yes, I will make 2018 the year of international understanding. It should be a matter of course. Today it is a big matter, a matter that has a meaning – and also a delightful matter. •

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Editor: Erika Vögeli

Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box, CH-8044 Zurich

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

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Switzerland – EU: A relation of equals?

Legal certainty in good faith looks somewhat different

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

A contract is usually concluded when both parties are convinced that it will benefit them and longer-term contracts are maintained as long as the partners want to continue. In principle, this applies to agreements between sovereign states, and it also applied to relations between Switzerland and the European Community for a long time. In 1972, for example, Switzerland, together with the other EFTA states, concluded a free trade agreement with the EEC (excluding agricultural products¹), an agreement of equals, which is still in force today.

However, on 7 February 1992, with the treaty on the European Union (Treaty of Maastricht), the EC took a course towards the “ever closer union”, which was intended from the outset, and subsequently developed its legal structure and its administration towards a monstrous centralised bureaucracy. Accordingly, the two-pronged EU Commission and the European Court of Justice increasingly behaved as absolute rulers. Also Switzerland has felt the same effect since the sovereign said ‘no’ to its accession to the EEA, over 25 years ago, on 6 December 1992. In any case, what the EU sometimes expects us to accept is more like a power relation than a contractual relationship. And, I am sorry to add, our Federal Councillors involved don’t seem to mind this, as long as they are all smiling in front of the cameras jointly with the masteries.

But if, as is currently the case, there are harsher sounds coming out of Brussels, they are indignant – even though every experienced Swiss politician or negotiator knows very well how the EU head office works. And also knows that the Swiss people, with their strong desire for independence and their commitment to direct democracy, especially in matters of foreign policy, cannot be integrated into the EU structure.

At present, we are talking about new cohesion billions and the institutional framework agreement – and again and again about massive pressure attempts on the part of the EU, sanctions in breach of contract and breach of promises, as it is not the custom among reliable contractual partners. The more compliant Switzerland is, the more arbitrary the “measures” of the hegemon in Brussels. Not any sign of legal certainty.

Juncker’s visit to Berne: How Switzerland can curry Brussels’ sympathy ...

On 23 November 2017, EU Commission President *Jean-Claude Juncker* vis-

ited Switzerland. In the publicly accessible fragments of the media conference², the President of the Swiss Confederation *Doris Leuthard* and the President of the European Commission *Jean-Claude Juncker* made brief statements focusing on two main areas: the omnipresent institutional framework agreement and the payment of 1.3 billion Swiss francs into the European Cohesion Fund, which the Federal Council has generously pledged, even though it is not the ultimate authority (see below). No wonder, Mr Juncker was in the best of moods when he stated in front of the media: “I am glad that we have succeeded in finding on the side of Switzerland a solution to the issue of the free movement of persons, which is such that we find it sympathetic [...]”.

A masterful formulation: We – that is to say, the EU leaders – have succeeded in getting the Federal Council and the majority of the parliament to vote for the EU-compatible “priority for nationals light”. And if the Swiss continue to adhere to the Brussels guidelines in the future – but only then – Juncker & Co will continue to find them sympathetic.

... and how quickly the “friendship” can be over

Jean-Claude Juncker at the press conference on 23 November 2017: “We talked about the framework agreement – actually a terrible non-word, *de facto* it’s rather a kind of friendship treaty – between Switzerland and the European Union” [emphasis mw]. As long as the negotiations continue, he could not provide any further information on the progress made, but “all this is moving in the right direction”. (*SRF News* from 23.11.2017)

Well, the newly evoked friendship lasted only a few weeks: Since mid-December 2017, all the sudden the EU’s leaders – after years of negotiations – do not see sufficiently fast progress in the negotiations on the framework agreement. Do Brussels’ troubles with the Brexit play a role? *Doris Leuthard*, who wanted to crown her presidential year with the Juncker visit, had certainly not expected such a rapid change “from thaw to ice age” (“*Blick*” from 23.12.2017).

This time, Brussels took a means of pressure out of the drawer to hurt the Swiss financial centre. Although, in his media statement of 23 November, *Jean-Claude Juncker* made a verbatim promise in return for Switzerland’s good conduct and the cohesion billions promised by the Federal Council as an advance, so to

speak: “We also intend to discuss the recognition of the equivalence of the Swiss stock market regulation in the Commission in December. Switzerland needs this declaration in order to be able to do securities trading throughout Europe. That’s what we do during the month of December.” (*SRF News* from 23.11.2017)

These words were probably rather hasty: on 20 December it became known that the EU Commission and the European Council only wish to grant the Swiss stock exchange access to EU securities trading on a provisional basis, until the end of 2018. This is in contrast to other countries, such as the USA, whose access to EU securities trading is not subject to any conditions. (see daily press from 20/21 December) A pure harassment, creating also additional cost, because Swiss securities traders would have to involve an intermediary, such as a bank in an EU country. However, as has already been publicised, the lack of recognition of the Swiss stock exchange rules would also harm traders in the EU – they also want uncomplicated stock exchange transactions with Switzerland.

In order to increase pressure, the EU also put the Swiss financial centre on a grey list since 5 December, as a late reaction to the Swiss voters ‘no’ on 12 February 2017 on corporate tax reform III. At that time, they said ‘no’ to the levelling of cantonal tax rates, whose federalist diversity had branded Brussels as a distortion of competition. Also here: No sign of legal certainty. The EU power structure and Switzerland, with its direct democratic and federalist structure, are as different as fire and water.

The Federal Council pledges 1.3 billion to the cohesion fund to the EU without anything in return – not really!

At the media conference from 23.11.2017, the Federal Council announced that Switzerland was to pay another 1.3 billion Swiss francs in cohesion money to the EU, 200 million Swiss francs for migration and the “rest” (after all, 1.1 billion Swiss francs of our taxpayers’ money) for vocational training and against youth unemployment in the Eastern European EU states. *Doris Leuthard*: “Not in the light of political interests but in the light of all the good relations and because the situation has now effectively stabilised and developed positively this year, the Federal Council acts this way.” (*SRF News* from 23.11.2017)

"Switzerland – EU: A relation of ..."

continued from page 5

That can't be true: giving billions of euros of tax money to a tough opponent of the treaty without claiming anything in return? For a patronising – and not very sustainable – pat on the back by Mr Juncker, "in the light of all the good relations"? Are our Federal Councillors that naive?

Now that the EU has moved away from its velvety course in lightning speed and has shown its claws, various Federal Councillors are hurrying to put their promise into perspective. On a positive note, the new Head of the FDFA, *Ignazio Cassis*, on his inaugural visit to Paris, rejected the combination of the framework agreement and the recognition of the Swiss stock exchange regulation, as well as Switzerland's placement on a grey EU list and questioned the cohesion payment. Members of parliament from various political groups, including the SP, also expressed their views in the same spirit.³

It is not that we are opposed to helping the young people in Eastern Europe so that they can do an apprenticeship. But we are resolutely resisting the fact that we are being driven further and further into the EU's centralist and undemocratic colossus – and on top of that, we should hand over our good money?

Direct democracy needs time, and the final outcome is open

The executives have little power in the Swiss state model at all three levels of government, a constant nuisance for the EU proponents in the federal administration. In fact, the Federal Council is not formally entitled to commit to either a cohesion bill or a framework agreement. This is probably difficult to understand for the EU-bodies, unfamiliar with Swiss democratic rules. The Federal Council's task would be to make the direct democratic Swiss model clear in Brussels and to appoint negotiators who are fully supporting it.

- Whether and how much Switzerland wants to pay into the EU Cohesion Fund is up to the National Council and the Council of States. According to Article 10 of the Law on Assistance to Eastern Europe, the parliament may decide to finance support measures for Eastern European states without the possibility of a referendum.⁴
- The parliament also decides on the conclusion of bilateral agreements with the European Union. Voters, on the other hand, can vote on it in an optional referendum, which will certainly be the case with the framework agreement. This is also the reason why the negotiating teams from Berne and Brussels do not get on for years, more or less. Although the con-

tent of this ominous agreement has not been disclosed to date, some of the most important cornerstones have long been known (see box below). It is considered certain that the agreement, which would reduce the direct democratic rights of the Swiss to a small percentage, would be rejected by the people at the ballot box. That's why our federal councillors are rather walking on egg shells, like Doris Leuthard during the visit of Junckers on 23 November: "In two or three areas there are still differences [without revealing in which areas, mw], but today's discussion has shown" that both sides do want this framework agreement [...]" (*SRF News* from 23.11.2017) - well knowing that one side, namely the Swiss voters, most likely just do not want it...

Once the framework agreement has been signed by the Federal Council, it would take several years to reach a final decision: starting with the Federal Council's message to the parliament, through the parliamentary commissions to the parliamentary debates, alternately in the National Council and Council of States, and finally through the 100-day referendum period to the plebiscite.

Freedom or prosperity – a contrast?

We Swiss people would have to decide whether we wanted freedom or prosperity, according to a newspaper commentary these days. Either we keep our independence and pay the price of limited market access to the European Union. Or we are fully involved in the EU's internal market, accepting the dictates of the EU's legal system and the supervision by the European Court of Justice. A difficult choice for us who want to have both, freedom and prosperity.

There are several objections to this argumentation.

First of all, it is not true that the economies of the member states that are fully surrendering themselves to the EU are doing better. On the contrary, many countries are getting worse today, after they formerly used to have their own currency and the freedom to trade and make agreements with whomever they wanted. And the more prosperous states will be milked, because the whole bureaucratic structure and the high wages and salaries of civil servants, judges and parliamentarians and so on must be paid. Not to mention feeding the bottomless funding programmes, the interest rates on the huge debts and many other programmes costing billions of dollars.

We Swiss, on the other hand, in spite of many adversities, have still retained some freedom to shape our country and our economy as we like. This is mainly due to our federalism and the direct democratic rights of citizens. Not only our freedom, but also our prosperity are closely linked to these indispensable foundations of Switzerland. EU supporters like to state that our prosperity is above all the result of the bilateral treaties. Answering to this, it must be said that Switzerland, as a landlocked country with few natural resources, naturally needs trade and cultural exchange with the other countries of Europe and the world. Switzerland has always been a cosmopolitan country. But as a sovereign state, we expect our contractual partners to treat us with integrity and to abide by good faith.⁵

The fact is that we are doing so well in economic terms, above all because the people of the Confederation, the cantons and the communes determine their own fate. Switzerland is one of the few European countries that complies with the

continued on page 7

To the content of the institutional framework agreement

mw. According to the homepage of the *Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)*, what is known today:¹ Firstly, the framework agreement includes Switzerland's obligation to take over the entire EU legal development in all areas governed by more than 100 bilateral treaties. If we consider the two momentous electrical power agreements and agricultural agreements (agriculture, food safety, product safety, public health) pre-tracked by the Federal Council, as well as the already existing integration of neutral Switzerland into the European Security and Defense Policy, almost all important legal areas would be affected. Second point is the monitoring of application of the agreements by EU bodies (especially the Commission). If they believe that Switzerland would not

comply with EU law on one point, they would appeal to the *European Court of Justice (ECJ)*, whose interpretation of EU law is thirdly, binding and fourthly, would ultimately decide. This means that EU law would be above Swiss law. The so-called EFTA Court, the "little brother of the ECJ" set up by the EU, is also sometimes discussed to ensure the parallel application of the EU-Acquis to the EEA countries Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. It does not really matter whether a Swiss judge is sitting there: Judges judging Switzerland on the basis of foreign law, remain foreign judges.

To be continued as soon as the contract contents are on the table.

¹FDFA, *Switzerland's European policy, negotiations and open issues (as of May 2016)*

Syrian city of Raqqa on brink of epidemic

“We cannot fail to mention that the city actually is destroyed and on the brink of an epidemic. I am sure you have been informed of this”, Russian Defense Minister *Sergey Shoigu* said on 21 December at a trilateral meeting with Russian Foreign Minister *Sergey Lavrov* and United Nations Special Envoy for Syria *Staffan de Mistura*. “We would like to discuss with you vigorous steps to improve this situation”.

The reason for the upcoming epidemic was the numerous bodies lying under the rubble of the buildings in Raqqa. According to the Minister of Defense, the city is also almost completely mined. In addition to the mines that were “laid when the bandits withdrew, there are also unexploded ordnance”, which is why people could not enter their homes.

“This requires a very vigorous effort on the part of the international community. In any case, what Russia is doing today, by demining and preparing Syrian pioneers, requires serious support, and we also expect it from the UN structures”, *Shoigu* continued. •

Source: *Sputniknews* from 21.12.2017

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

US government does not allow Serbian experts de-mining in Syria

Recently, Serbian media reported that the US government did not allow Serbian de-mining experts to be used in Syria. Serbia wanted to make the relief forces trained after the Kosovo war available to maltreated Syria, so that the population there could return to everyday life more or less without further sacrifices. But the cruel war power USA forbids it. Finally, the training of the Serbian de-mining experts was paid for, so that Serbia/Kosovo etc. would be free of explosive devices, and not Syria.

Repentance, insight, feeling of guilt, mercy, mourning, compassion – this is not known to the US war machine. Only killing, tormenting and destroying – we are waiting for the implementation of a Christian commitment of the “new” president. Probably the world is waiting in vain ...

Dr Barbara Hug

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Switzerland – EU: A relation of ...”
continued from page 6

Maastricht rules (without having to). Like our political system, our currency is one of the most stable and secure, which is why smaller or larger savings from abroad continue to flow into Swiss banks, despite the fact that we have been forced to abolish our bank secrecy. Despite the strong Swiss franc, Swiss companies are doing even better today than they did a few years ago, and despite the high level of immigration from the EU member states, youth unemployment is still record low, primarily because of the deep anchoring of dual vocational training in companies and among citizens.

Finally, many citizens in EU member states also have urgent questions that need to be taken seriously: How can it be that such an important project as the European Union – which, as we all know, aims at peaceful coexistence of peoples – incapacitates its own members to such an extent that they can no longer regulate their own affairs themselves? How can it be that the parliaments of the member states have little more to do, because more and more law is being set in Brussels? What kind of group of nations is it that takes such a grasp on a state that is willing to leave, so that no one else has the idea of doing the same? Freedom or prosperity? Do the EU member states have a choice? •

Catalonia –now only a genuine dialogue remains!

by *Dr phil René Roca*, “*Forschungsinstitut direkte Demokratie*” (Research Institute Direct Democracy)

After the regional elections on 21 December 2017, the political situation in Catalonia has virtually not changed. The separatist parties have again achieved the absolute majority of seats in the regional parliament. They should also provide the next regional government.

Whoever becomes head of government, the central government in Madrid under Prime Minister *Rajoy* urgently needs to jump over its own shadow and offer hand for talks. *Rajoy*’s strategy did not work out, but that was foreseeable. Police violence and criminalisation are no adequate democratic means. Such a procedure reminded many Catalans of gloomy *Franco* times. Despite all prophecies of doom, the Catalan people kept exemplary calm, even though separatist politicians went to prison under the charge of “rebellion.”

Both sides must now approach each other. First, the autonomy of Catalonia must be restored; preferably with the option of recovering the 2006 democratically ratified Statute of Autonomy, which was badly ripped up by the Spanish Con-

stitutional Court. In addition, the current Spanish Constitution would require a revision; it breathes the spirit of transition from dictatorship to democracy. The constitution can be changed by the national parliament and the population; this usually gives a country the necessary legal basis and legal certainty in a positivist manner. The Spanish constitution should reflect more closely the culture and history of the diverse country and thus come closer to an understanding based on natural law. In this way, one could also win the young generation to overcome regionalist trenches in the future and to develop the state democratically in a federalist sense.

Another stubborn refusing of Madrid to talk would only exacerbate the political and economic situation. Now is the time to pick up the line of conversation, if not in Madrid or Barcelona, then in Geneva; certainly not in Brussels, whose EU-apparatus has already switched the operation to Christmas holidays the day after the elections in Catalonia, in order not to have to answer unpleasant questions. •

¹ *Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Swiss Confederation* of 22 July 1972, entered into force on 1 January 1973.

² Swiss-EU relations. Live ticker on the Juncker and Federal Councils meeting. *SRF News* from 23.11.2017

³ “Cassis speaks plain text in Paris”, *sda-message* from 20.12.2017

⁴ *Federal Law on Assistance with the States of Eastern Europe* of 24 March 2006, adopted by the peoples vote on 26.11.2006 as a basis for the payment of the first cohesion billion over a period of ten years. On 30.9.2016 it was extended by the parliament without the referendum being taken.

⁵ Incidentally, our positive external trade balance is mainly based on trade with non-EU countries, because we import far more goods and services from EU countries than we export to them.

Basque Country makes proposal for mediation

gl. The development in Catalonia is being watched very closely in the Basque Country. The Basque Head of Government *Iñigo Urkullu* of the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV) is rooted in the Catholic base communities of the Basque Country and had already tried to mediate in recent months through the Archbishop of Barcelona and the abbots of the Catalan monasteries of Montserrat and Poblet. On 27 September, before the vote on 1 October, a declaration on Catalonia was adopted by the *Standing Committee of the Spanish Bishops Conference*, in favour of an honest dialogue and the rights of the peoples of Spain, to the annoyance of the Madrid government and almost the entire Spanish press.

Urkullu also repeatedly advised Catalan President *Puigdemont* not to create a hopeless situation. He spoke with the

Spanish government and sent messages to Brussels. His main aim was definitely to avoid the unprecedented intervention of the central government in the autonomy of the regions.

In an interview with *Radio Euskadi*, Urkullu argued that Madrid should recognise the election results of 21 December and offer political solutions instead of criminal law measures. He was in favour of restoring the situation before last 6 September. On 6 September, the Catalan Parliament approved the law on the implementation of the plebiscite of 1 October.

In an interview with the Catalan newspaper “*La Vanguardia*”, former Basque Finance Minister *Pedro Luis Uriarte*, who is considered the father of Basque tax law, suggested granting Catalonia the same taxing authority as the Basque country already has today. Unlike the other auto-

nous communities of Spain, the Basque tax authorities collect all taxes themselves and manage their own budget independently. The Basque country pays the Madrid government an annual amount equal to its share of Spanish GDP (6.24%) to finance the central government’s tasks. The Catalan Government had refrained from such a regulation of extensive taxing authority in 1980 when negotiating the first Statute of Autonomy. Today, Uriarte sees this as a big mistake, because although the Basque country has gone a hard and risky way with the introduction of tax autonomy in an extremely difficult economic situation, but is in good shape today. On the other hand, the Catalan government is in debt today. •

Sources: *La Vanguardia* from 26.11.2017 and 28.12.2017; *Noticias de Gipúzkoa* from 30.12.2017

German government should set new course

km. *Peter Gauweiler*, former Bavarian Minister of the Environment and Deputy CSU Chairman, spoke in an interview with the Russian news portal *Sputnik* (23 December 2017) regarding current issues in German and international politics as well as on the tasks of a new German government: “We have four decisive points. One of them is the question of open borders and how to deal with those who have already come to us in the last year and a half, in the context of the so-called wave of refugees. The other issues are include the saving of the Euro, the participation in military missions abroad for – I put it in quotation marks – ‘our values’ and the matter of sanctions against Russia. In all of these four points, the new government must set new course.”

Gauweiler, who sued the German Federal Constitutional Court against the Euro rescue policy, referred to a recent judgment of the highest German court: “I may remind you that the Federal Constitutional Court in August this year judged in a sensational decision the so-called ‘Quantitative Easing Program’ of the *European Central Bank*, as not compatible with the separation of powers and the principle of democracy of the Basic Law. According to this program, bond purchases for 60 billion Euros and larger were made monthly – meanwhile the total amount exceeds 2 trillion Euros.”

Asked whether direct democracy and referendums are just for “populists”, he replied clearly: “Referendums are not a populist question. [...] In the end, the sovereign must always decide. And the Federal Constitutional Court has explic-

itly stated in its judgment on the Lisbon Treaty: When it comes to fundamental issues of sovereignty, the people must be called to vote.”

Gauweiler showed disappointment at the policy of the new US president: “In fact, despite all the controversy, I credited *Trump* for his election campaign promise, that the Americans would step back from their role as the policeman of the world. Accordingly, I am a bit disappointed that he is doing the opposite of many of his campaign promises.”

As in previous years, Gauweiler rates Russia’s role in world politics and development in that country differently than the mainstream policy has up to now. He considers the constant attacks on the country counterproductive: “I believe that Russia plays an important role. And we must not psychologically treat the Russians any worse now than in the days of *Brezhnev*. Russia has experienced quite a boom. Anyone traveling to Moscow today sees a great, prosperous, fantastic city.” In view of the sometimes very sharp verbal attacks, he added: “I think this verbal escalation, although I am myself a friend of clear language,

is not good. I also think that the threads of military intervention is not good. [...] Everyone is showing off, without realizing where this could end. One enters a state of disaster in a trance and to this one can only say: wake up! Of course, Russia has to be integrated into European structures. Of course, the sanctions imposed against Russia were stupid and urgently need to be removed. And of course, there must be a close cooperation between the US and Russia.”

He also defined Germany’s role in this conflict differently from the current German policy: “Germany has a mediator function because of our position. The centre between the Atlantic and the Urals lies between Berlin and Warsaw. We always have to be careful that the boat does not tip over to the wrong side. We can not relax here. Someone like me, born in 1949, never dared to hope that the Iron Curtain would fall, that the Red Army would withdraw so peacefully from Germany, would never have thought that the German economy had such great opportunities in Russia – and vice versa – and that we in Bavaria would enjoy seeing Russian guests shopping over here.” •

“I think this verbal escalation, although I am myself a friend of clear language, is not good. I also think that the threads of military intervention is not good. [...] Everyone is showing off, without realizing where this could end. One enters a state of disaster in a trance and to this one can only say: wake up!” (*Peter Gauweiler*)

How can democracy in Germany become more direct?

by Christian Fischer

After the general election, we have a more colourful parliament in Germany and are experiencing great difficulties in forming a government. However, many citizens do not see this as the expression of an increased diversity of opinion and of irreconcilable contradictions – too much do most parties argue about points which are not really fundamental, and too much are their differences recognisable rather as tactical games in the party poker than as sound arguments. In the citizenry, therefore, voices against a facade democracy and for more direct democracy are becoming louder. That is why the relationship between direct and representative democracy shall for once be examined in more detail here.

First, the term “representative”, by which our democracy in Germany is often characterised, must itself be examined critically. It does not appear in German Basic Law. *Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider* points out¹ that the term was introduced by *Carl Schmitt* in 1928, in order to politically legitimise an ostensibly democratic system – or better said: to deprive the people of their right of decision. In the teaching of the Schmitt student *Gerhard Leibholz*, who unfortunately determined the jurisprudence of the Federal Constitutional Court over 20 years, the concept of representation served to establish the dominion by “representative” parties over a no longer sovereign citizenship. The political system of Germany would, on the contrary, be correctly described by the concept of (parliamentary) “substitution”. In this term, the constitutionally desired sovereignty of citizens is not lost.

Direct or via substitution – a contrast?

Even in Switzerland in which direct democracy is further developed, and which must be mentioned as a point of reference on this subject, there are parliamentary representatives who draft laws, laws of which not less than 90% are not “presented to the people”. Of course here every law can be put to a nationwide vote if 50,000 signatures demand this. The people can also initiate constitutional changes themselves, if they collect 100,000 signatures calling for this. At the federal level, laws passed by parliament and having constitutional status must be brought “before the people”. But all of this is no substitute for an at least semi-professional legislature. And certainly not for other genuine representation tasks of the state. Every court verdict is pronounced “in the name of the people”. Every “minister” and every policeman acts on behalf of the sov-



“Vote today!” Why not also in Germany? (picture ma)

ereignty of the people. And that is as it should be.

If you think of a democracy as a political cooperative (Switzerland is a “confederation”) in which the associates (“citizens”) have equal voting rights, then you see that there must also be membership meetings (“elections”) in which committees capable of acting are chosen. In the big “democracy cooperative”, these are a parliament as a legislative and a government as an executive branch, and a number of other sovereign institutions. In each cooperative, the committees are left alone with their work for a while; they can and must act independently. With a complex cooperative like a state, day-to-day business is far more extensive than, say, with a cooperative of winegrowers.

Unfortunately, in our state the parties have become more powerful and ensure that there is less and less contact between

parliament and the sovereign, and that the people as sovereign can make themselves known politically almost exclusively via party activity – as if just being a citizen were not enough for “maturity”. In Germany this is also a consequence of the jurisprudence of the Federal Constitutional Court, which was shaped by Carl Schmitt’s doctrine,² whereby to all intents and purposes, the parties were established as representatives of the people.

Fair and just elections

In Germany, unlike in many other democracies, a double electoral system has been set up for national elections, where one citizen per constituency is directly elected with a first vote and one party with a second vote. In this way the personality of a representative is to the fore on the one

“How can democracy in Germany ...”

continued from page 9

hand, and on the other hand, the proportionality of the second vote prevents a majority of the votes (for all defeated candidates) from being virtually ignored – as is the case with the majority voting system. That is a good idea. However, the candidates for direct election are almost always party representatives at the same time, and many of them are placed on the party list for the second vote in such a way that they are secure of their mandate even as runner-up or third place finisher. So this in turn almost reduces the idea to absurdity.

There are exceptions. In the last federal election in 2017, there were 28 non-party direct candidates, of which one reached 9% of the votes in his constituency; the others remained more or less clearly in the per mille region.³ Concerning party proportionality, a 5% clause has also been introduced – without any constitutional obligation – so that only fairly stable (and always sponsored!) parties make the final leap into parliament. Parties with fewer than about 2.8 million votes do not achieve a seat in the “Bundestag”. Even this arbitrary rule might be questioned some time!

Nevertheless, with the two votes, the elections of our representatives are clearly “fairer” than would be the case with an exclusive majority vote. But regardless of which direct candidates are elected, parliament will always reflect the second vote of the parties by means of the overhang seats. German Basic Law did not want that: “Political parties shall participate in the formation of the political will of the people.” (Article 21) That and nothing else is the function which the German Basic Law assigns to the political parties, and it does not say that the representation of the parties in proportion to each other should be practically the only possible form of expression for the will of the electorate – which would then really be only representative. Or that the parliamentarians would then even be under the obligation to vote in accordance with party policy, contrary to Art. 38 of the Basic Law (“Members of the German ‘Bundestag’ [...] shall be representatives of the whole people, not bound by orders or instructions, and responsible only to their conscience”). So this pressure to vote in accordance with party policy is illegal.

Perhaps it would be more correct if the parties’ participation were limited to the second vote in each constituency: the first vote is for a direct candidate who, of course, belongs to a party but should not be allowed to be on a party list at the same time. The first vote would therefore be true majority voting. The constitutionally intended “participation of the political parties” is sufficiently given by the second

vote. This provides for a broader representation of the different popular wills (plural) than can be obtained by an exclusively majority voting. The current criticism of the many overhang mandates would be pointless. The faction formation could, for example, be restricted to the party representatives of the second vote. Half of the deputies (first vote) would remain non-attached; of course they would be allowed to vote with a political group if they so wanted. Perhaps many party politicians would not get involved in the first-vote experiment, and the chance for non-party or party-politically non-career-minded, matter-of-fact citizens to be elected into the “Bundestag” would be greater. The vote cast for a candidate rather than a party which is actually intended by the two-vote system would be largely freed from the parties’ grip, and by its party proportionality, the second vote would even have largely mitigated the injustices of pure majority voting.

This is meant only as a contribution to a discussion about how party power might be limited. Measured against the mere “participation in the formation of wills” stipulated by German Basic Law, the parties would be very well served, because they would still have a higher degree of political decision-making power than can be read out of this sentence in the constitution.

Plebiscites in the federation, the states and the municipalities

This also states: “All state authority [...] shall be exercised by the people through elections and other votes and through specific legislative, executive, and judicial bodies.” (Article 20, emphasis cf.). However, there are still no plebiscites as the exercise of popular power at the federal level today.

Once in 2002, there was an attempt supported by 348 of 549 delegates in the German “Bundestag”, i.e. by 63.3%. 66.7% would have been needed. It was to introduce a constitutional amendment that would allow the people to introduce legislative popular initiatives into the legislature by means of a three-stage voting procedure. (This requires the amendment of Art. 76 of the Basic Law, because this does not yet provide for the plebiscite as a source of legislation.)

Also in 2006, 2010, and 2013, there were attempts at parliamentary level and in coalition negotiations, but these failed mainly because of the CDU/CSU, and partly because of other parties.⁴ The association “Mehr Demokratie (more democracy) e.V.” has for many years been campaigning for the implementation of this Basic Law instruction,⁵ and also did so currently after the last “Bundestag” election, and parallel to the coalition negotiations.

But on which topics might there be plebiscites at federal level? Article 73 of the Basic Law provides information: Foreign and foreign trade policy, nationwide infrastructure tasks, defense and monetary policy, some other topics. Yes, these are important issues, but many important political issues are matters of the states or the subject of “concurrent” legislation of the federation and the states (Article 74 of the Basic Law), i.e. between the “Bundestag” and the “Bundesrat”. That is also good, because the more decentralised and federal the organisation of the state, the more democratic it is.

Speaking of federalism, our “Bundesrat” (federal council) can also be taken into consideration when considering direct democracy. The citizens are not very conscious of it as the council representing the states. There is a reason for this: It is not elected by the citizens. It is an assembly of the state governments, i.e. their executives, which have 3–6 votes depending on the federal state. Why not elect the “Bundesrat” (federal council) by direct vote after an according constitutional amendment of Art. 51? And let it have its own personnel? One could still go with several representatives per federal state and fashion this election according to a system in which a vote is cast for a candidate rather than a party, with one vote per citizen. Of course, the candidates can be party members. But then not only first place finishers, but also second, third and so on placers could join the state representation.

But let us return to the plebiscite. Referendum regulations were already included in the state constitutions of some federal states between 1946 and 1950, in the other states between 1974 and 1996. There are also such regulations at municipal level. The rules are very different, and not infrequently the necessary quorums are so high, that they discourage interested citizens from the outset from taking on such hardships with so little hope of success. For example, this led to more than 1,500 referendums having been held in Bavaria by 2013, but not a single one in Saarland after this joined the Federal Republic. Nationwide, more than 7,000 referendums were counted.⁶ An example of a plebiscite which failed because of the quorum was an initiative in Rielasingen, Baden-Wuerttemberg, which demanded that a well-run secondary school be continued. Even though a large majority of the voters were in favour, the necessary quorum was not achieved.

Plebiscites led to the reestablishment of the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg in 1952, and to the admission of the Saarland into the Federal Republic in 1955–1957. In 1996, the merger of Berlin and

Cold War and transatlantic networks – yesterday and today

On the exhibition “Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and Cold war”

by Urs Knoblauch, Cultural Publicist, Fruthwilen

Only until 8 January 2018 the Berlin Museum “Haus der Kulturen der Welt” (House of Cultures of the World, HKW) attends to the reappraisal of propagandistic cultural policy during the Cold War from the 1950s onwards in a large exhibition and events. But also beyond this date, the topic remains relevant.

A thorough clarification of this important historical period is needed. For sure not incidentally the Berlin “Haus der Kulturen der Welt” was chosen for the exhibition, as this house was at the centre of the cultural-political activities outlined here. It was built on the initiative of *Eleanor Dulles*, the wife of the political hardliner and Secretary of State *John Forster Dulles*.

She worked for the American State Department in Berlin, as *Paul Jandl* states in his article “Der Geheimdienst fördert die Kunst (The Secret Service promotes art)” in the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” from 30 November 2017. Jandl continues writing that there were many members of the Dulles family who “made their career in the ideological shade of America, namely inside the CIA”⁸.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom

After the Second World War, the battle of political systems was fought in Europe and especially in Germany and France, but also in Austria and Italy on a large scale

continued on page 12



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“How can democracy in Germany ...”

continued from page 10

Brandenburg was rejected by referendum of the population. Other random examples are the non-smokers’ protection in Bavaria or the school reform in Hamburg (both 2010), the partial privatisation of the Berlin water works or the project “*Stuttgart 21*” (both 2011), the rejection of a huge outlet center on the former freight yard (and Loveparade-) area in Duisburg, or the approval for the continued operation of Tegel Airport in Berlin (both 2017).

So despite the lack of coordination at the federal level, direct democracy is by no means a foreign body in the political life of our country. Voting must be possible on all issues of public concern, and, incidentally, also on questions of tax collection!

Werner Wüthrich gives a detailed account of Switzerland’s positive experience of tax settlements by the sovereign⁷ and summarises this as follows: “The objection that such a thing works only on a small scale, like in municipalities or in small cantons, has proved to be a mistake. The referendums have repeatedly led to amazing results that stand the test – perhaps precisely because the voters are not financial and economic experts.” In Switzerland, this works above all through the interplay between parliamentary work and direct initiatives from the people. This successful interplay can also be followed over decades using the example of agriculture.⁸ It is indeed easier to reconcile individual initiatives with an overall popular will with the help of parliamentary mediation and proposals, which perhaps also take into account more, and more far-reaching

criteria. *Marianne Wüthrich* demonstrates how this process can in the meantime also start to unravel in Switzerland.⁹

What should be done in Germany?

Plebiscites on factual issues must be anchored institutionally, not only at the state and community levels, but also at the federal level. This is what German Basic Law has been aiming at since 1949. For this purpose, Art. 76 (1) must be amended so that bills can also be introduced into the “Bundestag” directly by referenda or, depending on the outcome, can gain legal force immediately.

At the same time, plebiscites at the state and local level must be further developed and put to practical use; democracy thrives on decentralised federalism, and many important topics are constitutionally no federal topics. The quorums must be made low-threshold or even completely abolished everywhere. What is the democratic meaning of these quorums if approved ballots are sufficiently officially published?

Voting must be possible on all issues, unless they pursue goals that violate the “eternal” Articles 1 and 20 of the Basic Law. This is especially true for topics of tax collection. On this point, the previous regulations at the state and local level have to be corrected. There is no constitutional justification for this restriction.

Finally the direct right of the sovereign to vote on matters in the legislative process requires the awareness among politicians that this is part of the self-evident political practice in a democracy. The people have at least a certain influence on the cooperation of their chosen politicians, in

the selection of their representatives. Yes, lobbying, party power and the peculiar laws of the profession of politicians are posing major obstacles precisely at this point. Therefore, in addition to the plea for better voting rules, let me introduce the proposal into the debate here that candidates for the first, the direct vote should not be allowed to protect themselves via second vote on the party lists at the same time. This question might be the subject of a direct legislative initiative at the federal level, too – if that were finally possible. Lastly, federalism can be strengthened by transforming the Federal Council from a body of state governments into a body of directly elected representatives of the states, thereby enhancing its value.

We may not give up our democracy; we must make it more direct – also in the sense of our Basic Law. ●

¹ Schachtschneider, Karl Albrecht. *Die nationale Option* (the national option). Rottenburg 2017, p. 72f.

² ibid

³ <http://buergerkandidaten.de/> and <http://buergerkandidaten.de/bewerbungen/472>

⁴ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volksentscheid>

⁵ <https://www.mehr-demokratie.de/> and <https://www.volksentscheid.de/>

⁶ <https://www.mehr-demokratie.de/> and <https://www.volksentscheid.de/>

⁷ Wüthrich, Werner. <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/numbers/2017/no-27-14-november-2017/taxes-and-finances-in-switzerland-determined-by-the-people.html>

⁸ Wüthrich, Werner. <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/numbers/2017/no-2223-23-september-2017/agriculture-and-direct-democracy-part-4.html>

⁹ Wüthrich, Marianne. <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/numbers/2017/no-27-14-november-2017/direct-democracy-is-based-on-honesty-mutual-respect-and-mutual-trust.html>

"Cold War and transatlantic ..."

continued from page 11

funding art, culture, media and education with millions of dollars. "This is exemplified by the *Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF)*" according to the HKW's lead-in to the exhibition. In the "Cold Cultural War", so the informative article about the exhibition in the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" (18/19 November 2017), cultural hegemony and "modernity" were promoted in all cultural areas of the West. From 1950 onwards, the CCF organised numerous conferences, cultural events with famous personalities to spread American values and political concerns in Europe against the influence of communism and socialism, which had many followers among the intellectuals. "Starting from its headquarters in Paris, the CCF supported numerous cultural programmes in Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia and supported a network of journals, conferences and exhibitions to promote the 'universal' language of modernity in literature, art and music."

The CCF intervened more and more in the intellectual debate by supporting artists and media. Not only "Heinrich Böll and Sigfried Lenz are said to have benefited from the activities of the CIA treasurer", but also "journals were founded which developed into important instruments of exchange. In Germany it was the 'Monat' (Month) created by the American journalist *Melvin Lasky*, with articles of *André Gide* and *Arthur Koestler*, but also *Theodor W. Adorno* and *Hannah Arendt*".

"1967 it turned out that the CCF had been secretly financed by the CIA to promote the anti-communist consensus and thus the hegemonic interests of the USA in a Cold War of Cultures. The unveiling of the CIA scandal ruined the CCF's reputation. The ideological contradictions and the morally dubious defence of freedom and transparency by means which, in turn, evaded democratic accountability were too obvious" (HKW). 44 West German newspapers, including the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" and important newspapers from neighbouring countries, such as for example, the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", were "subsidised" with large amounts of money.

The road to postmodernity

More than two dozen American foundations supported the "Cold Cultural War"

with huge funding with millions of dollars besides the official and semi-official institutions. In music the avant-garde was promoted, in fine arts the modern, abstract painters were promoted above all. "Jackson Pollock's pictures and the abstract Expressionism favoured by the Congress for Cultural Freedom were the epitome of formal freedom in absence of direct political messages", according to the informative article in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". This was not about the historical "modernity" in art and architecture of the early 20th century, but about an abstraction without fundamental values, about an arbitrariness in terms of content and, in particular, about a devaluation of the valuable European tradition of realistic and value-oriented art and culture, which was since then hardly promoted any more.

In the Berlin exhibition, modern paintings by numerous well-known artists can be seen. The spectrum is shown from the propagated radical abstraction (un-representationalism) to the devalued figurative art (realism). The large-format Guernica painting by *Picasso* can be seen, refashioned by the *Art&Language* group of artists in Jackson Pollock's "action painting style" in the 1980s. The pictures were compiled by the curators under the open term "Parapolitics", which characterises the global dimension of cultural policy in the Cold War, the instrumentalisation, its influences and the "changing meanings and goals" of modernism and post-modernism.

A book by Volker Berghahn

The basic work "Transatlantic Cultural Wars – Shepard Stone, the Ford Foundation and European Anti-Americanism" (Stuttgart 2004) by the German historian *Volker Berghahn*, who taught at Columbia University in New York, is worth reading and particularly informative on the complex problems that the exhibition deals with. Using the example of a key person such as *Shepard Stone* (1908-1990), staff member of the "Ford Foundation", special advisor to the US in the "Cold Cultural War", and head of the influential Berlin Aspen Institute from 1974 to 1988, the reader gets a detailed insight into the historical source-material documenting how, from 1945 onwards, at various cultural fronts a battle for "the

hegemonic power within the Western alliance" took place.

The literary scientist, film producer and cultural publicist *Frances Stonor Saunders* had already opened many artist's eyes with her book "Wer die Zeche zahlt (Who finally pays) – the CIA and the culture in the Cold War" (New York 2000; Berlin 2001). The book's reviewer at the time, *Norbert Seitz*, described how "prominent Western intellectuals intendedly or unintentionally became tools of the American secret service". (Süddeutsche Zeitung 18.4.2001)

Effects to date

The cultural strategy of the Cold War has a major impact to this day. Paul Jandl rightly writes in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung": "One should not be fooled. When it matters, it [the art, uk] is still degraded to become a servant of politics. When it became clear in 2003 that the USA would declare war on Iraq, the United Nations in New York's headquarters quickly covered the tapestry showing Picasso's 'Guernica'. President *Bush*'s so-called campaign of the good and foreign minister *Colin Powell* in front of Picasso's anti-war picture: That won't look good."

The topic of the Cultural Wars, which is briefly presented here, deserves further deepening, especially with regard to the behavioural research and educational policy that America "promoted" centrally in connection with the "Cold Cultural War". Similarly, today's elaborate political propaganda and manipulation methods based on *Edward Bernays*, as well as the effects of theories and practice of "cultural hegemony" by *Trotsky* and *Gramsci* should be included.

Studying the programmes and activities for education at the "Haus der Kulturen der Welt" in Berlin, one can realise the actuality of the exhibition. It highlights the need not to misuse concepts such as "culture" and "freedom" and to define them more precisely. In this way, exhibitions and books can open our eyes and encourage us to reflect, including on the need for cultural ethics, to contribute in an honest, humane way and to take more care of the great wealth of European cultural tradition. •

A publication on the exhibition will be published in English in spring 2018 at: www.hkw.de

* Translation of all quotes *Current Concerns*

The Sonderbund War – the last armed conflict on Swiss soil

by Dr phil. René Roca, Research Institute for Direct Democracy (www.fidd.ch)

Exactly 170 years ago, the last armed conflict on Swiss territory occurred. Switzerland experienced turbulent times with the French occupation in 1798, the subsequent mediation and restoration (as of 1815). Roughly spoken, as of 1830, the Liberals and the Conservatives blew up various conflicts to a dangerous degree. In 1847, civil war could no longer be avoided, but thanks to far-sighted personalities it was merely a “fraternal conflict”. In 1848, the Sonderbund (separate alliance) War resulted in the modern Swiss federal state.

As of 1830, regeneration marked an important phase of renewal for Switzerland. In eleven cantons (at that time half of all cantons!) fundamental transformations took place. In these cantons these resulted in the adoption of a liberal-representative constitution and that they thus were ready to give an answer to the evolving industrialisation. The cantons of Switzerland at that time were basically divided into liberal and conservative ones. Both wanted to protect their achievements or traditions and therefore forged alliances. This stirred up mutual distrust. When subsequently, in the canton of Aargau in the wake of the monastery dispute (1841–1843), the monasteries were closed, the Catholic Conservatives had enough, and they decided countermeasures. In the canton of Lucerne, the new Conservative government engaged the Jesuits for the secondary schools, which led to two unsuccessful liberal-radical volunteer wars against Lucerne. These developments further fuelled the conflict.

With the foundation of the “Schutzvereinigung” (Protection Alliance) on 11 December 1845 by seven Catholic-conservative cantons, namely Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden and Nidwalden, Lucerne, Zug, Freiburg and Valais, the crisis of regeneration reached its peak. Above all, the supporters of this alliance wanted to “protect” the Catholic religion and the cantonal sovereignty against encroachment. The liberal opponents only spoke of the illegal Sonderbund.

Although the *Sonderbund* had a defensive character, it, however, impinged on the then applicable Federal Treaty of 1815 by the extraordinary powers of its war council. For “safeguarding the Catholic-conservative interests”, the Sonderbund even began negotiations with foreign countries.

The way to civil war

After the existence of the Sonderbund had become known in June 1846, the Liberal



Memorial on the entry into force of the Swiss Federal Constitution on 12 September 1848. (picture ma)

radicals strove even more intensively for a majority in the “Tagsatzung” (Federal Diet), a kind of “parliament” in the Confederation at that time. In Geneva in October 1846, the Liberal radicals under *James Fazy* took power by force. The elections in St. Gallen in May 1847 were now decisive and became actual “fateful elections”. The result was narrowly in favour of the Liberal radicals, who now gained majority they longed-for at the Federal Diet. The “Tagsatzung” decided to make the expulsion of the Jesuits and the dissolution of the Sonderbund a Federal issue.

The Berne summer meeting of 1847 brought the decision. The prospect of an understanding was low from the start. The liberal-radical ambassadors were able to quickly agree on a motion for dissolving the Sonderbund. A majority of twelve votes in her eyes was sufficient to establish the unlawfulness of the Sonderbund. In doing so, they relied on various articles of the Federal Treaty, which they interpreted in their favour. The Federal Diet finally decided to dissolve the Sonderbund and to prohibit the Jesuit order in Switzerland; if necessary, they wanted to enforce these decisions by force of arms. In a protest note, the Catholic conservative cantons repudiated it. Then the Sonderbund war council mobilised its militias, and also the majority of the Federal Diet now prepared for war.

In the European context, the political situation in Switzerland was analysed in detail. The major European powers felt themselves to be guarantors of the Swiss federal treaty of 1815 and, like the Sonderbund, wanted to permit a revision only

with the unanimity of the cantons. The Sonderbund conducted its search for foreign aid quite openly. But it flinched from the demand for direct military intervention by foreign powers. Most of the leaders of the Sonderbund were aware of the consequence of a foreign occupation with unforeseeable impacts. Many remembered the chaotic Helvetic period. The major European powers such as Prussia, Austria and France were concerned that a victory of the liberal radicals in Switzerland could also have consequences in their countries. They were therefore prepared to provide the Sonderbund with weapons and money.

The Sonderbund War

On 25 October 1847, the Geneva Protestant *Guillaume Henri Dufour*, who was considered a moderate conservative, was appointed general of the troops of the “Tagsatzung” (Swiss confederate legislative assembly). Both parties had now mobilised. Although some envoys of the Sonderbund advised to strike out immediately, the commander-in-chief of the Sonderbund, *Johann Ulrich von Salis-Soglio* hesitated. The General of the Sonderbund, a conservative Protestant from Grisons, was decisively opposed to an offensive.

However, the seven-pronged war council then decided to take action against Ticino and opened hostilities on 3 November. The aim of the offensive was to defeat the radicals in Ticino and to keep the supply lines for food and military equipment from the Austrian Northern Italy open.

continued on page 14

"The Sonderbund War – the last ..."

continued from page 13

The advance to Ticino, which discredited the reputation of the Sonderbund as a defence alliance, brought initial successes, but soon collapsed again.

On 4 November, the majority of the "Tagsatzung" passed a resolution to forcefully dissolve the Sonderbund. Dufour was anxious to prevent feelings of hatred against the Sonderbund wherever they arose. His primary objective was to preserve the cohesion of the cantons. He pursued a strategy characterised by rapidity of action and avoiding victims. The mere presence of a large army should serve to make the enemy unmaneuverable. Dufour first wanted to strike a blow against the isolated city of Freiburg, secondly to force the decision against Lucerne and thirdly, if necessary, to persuade the Valais to surrender.

After the advance to Ticino had not brought the hoped-for success, the Sonderbund planned an attack against Freiamt in Argovia (Aargau). But the offensive failed due to poor coordination. However, Dufour's strategy proved its worth. The first offensive against Freiburg was successful. Freiburg surrendered on 14 November. On 21 November, envoys of the Canton of Zug signed a capitulation document without even having seen an army.

With a second offensive, the troops of the "Tagsatzung" directed their attention to Lucerne. It was planned to enclose the city as quickly as possible in order to persuade it to surrender as Freiburg did. The battles of Meierskappel and Gisikon finally brought the decision in favour of the troops of the "Tagsatzung".

The decisive battle at Gisikon

The bridgehead in Gisikon was militarily significant. As early as 1653, during the Peasants' War and the following Villmerger Wars, Gisikon Bridge was the scene of important battles in Swiss history. One last time this was the case in the Sonderbund War. The Sonderbund troops had fortified the bridge entrances. North of the customs house (today *Hotel Tell*) above the country road there were two artillery entrenchments, south of it there was one. Four divisions of the "Tagsatzungstruppen" (legislative assembly's troops) marched against it under the command of General Dufour.

The *Ziegler Division* attacked in the morning of 23 November. A brigade moved forward on the left side along the river Reuss for a frontal attack on Gisikon, the others moved to the right bank via the pontoon bridge in Sins and a second one, built at night. The Honau area was taken almost without a fight. The gun crews withdrew to Gisikon after a short duel, only the snipers from Obwalden and Nidwalden at the

height of Mount Rooterberg didn't give up until Ziegler with his tambour at the head of his unit marched against them. The brigades attacking in Gisikon had to place their cannons very close to the bridge because of a maximum range of 1000 meters. For the time being, Lucerne was able to repel the attackers. After a two-hour cannonade, during which Salis-Soglio, the general of the Sonderbund, was hit by a shrapnel at the temple, Lucerne's troops had to retreat to Ebikon. Gisikon had to be abandoned by the Sonderbund troops. With the fall of the "key site" of Gisikon and then Meierskappel, the road to Lucerne was clear. The fate of the Sonderbund government in Lucerne was thus sealed.

Already in the early morning of 23 November, when the enemy was already very close to Lucerne, the council of the Sonderbund army and the Lucerne government decided to retreat to the canton of Uri. On 23 November, in his order of the day, Dufour demanded mercy toward the defeated troops, the civilian population and the churches and banned looting. Colonel *Eduard Ziegler*, appointed commander in Lucerne, succeeded in enforcing the order of Dufours. As a token of gratitude, the Zurich resident received the helmet stolen from Kappel and *Ulrich Zwingli's* sword (both objects are now in the *National Museum in Zurich*, but the authenticity is not proven beyond doubt).

Consequences

On 26 November 1847, the Sonderbund's council of war was hastily disbanded without any formal vote in Flüelen (UR). From 25 to 29 November the subjugation of the Waldstätte and the Valais took place without a fight and this was the end of the Sonderbund. On the whole, the Sonderbund troops largely lacked discipline and a serious preparation for war. The people's enthusiasm was about the defense of faith and the cantonal sovereignty and not about offensive warfare. In addition, the armament was insufficient, which could not be compensated by the foreign support. On 18 January 1848, Austria, France, Prussia and Russia were able to agree on a note that threatened with intervention. The European major powers demanded that the "Tagsatzung" should come back to the Sonderbund and Jesuit questions. On 15 February 1848, the victorious "Tagsatzung"'s majority responded with great self-confidence and rose objections against any attack on their sovereignty. Further action against Switzerland was prevented by the outbreak of the February revolution (1848) in France and its consequences, especially for Austria. Fortunately, the short Sonderbund War had cost only a few casualties. The most recent investigations assume that there

were 60 dead and 386 wounded in the troops of the "Tagsatzung", compared to 33 dead and 124 wounded of the Sonderbund, which means a total of 93 fallen and 510 wounded soldiers of 25 days duration of the war. This was the highest human losses that a political-military event in Switzerland had caused in the 19th and 20th century, although there were few casualties as a result of the war.

In February 1848, a Revision Commission of the "Tagsatzung" began to implement the liberal-radical program of a federal revision. A majority of the cantons adopted the new federal constitution by referendums (July/August), being sufficient, in the eyes of the "Tagsatzung"'s majority, to suspend the federal treaty of 1815. Since the federal treaty did not include a revision clause – so an amendment would have required unanimity – this step must be described as revolutionary.



General Dufour strived to prevent hatred against the "Sonderbund" wherever they occurred. His ultimate goal was to preserve the solidarity of the cantons. (picture ma)

However, the new state was a compromise solution. The victorious majority took into consideration the concerns of the losers, especially their desire for sovereignty of the cantons, also being widespread in the moderate liberal camp. The prohibition of the Jesuits must not obscure the fact that the Federal State set clear federalist accents with the determination of cantonal sovereignty of school and church as well as the introduction of the Council of States and the Council of Cantons. In the following decades, the focus was on the losers' equalization and integration and not on winner's dictate and exclusion. •

Source: <http://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/>

On the blog of the *Swiss National Museum* you will find exciting articles about historical events, objects from the past or news in a historical context. In addition to the employees of the museum renowned guests get a chance to speak.

Willy Randin honoured with the Albert-Schweitzer-Prize 2017

Schweitzer's works and ideas have strongly influenced his life

by Fritz von Gunten, president SHV

Willy Randin had been awarded and was honoured with the Albert-Schweitzer-Prize 2017 due to his efforts to promote the continuation of the work of Albert Schweitzer. He is the president of the "Swiss Romande Section" and member of the "Albert Schweitzer Hospital Swiss Fellowship" (SHV).



Willy Randin, speech at the prize award ceremony (picture www.königsfeld.de)

A Life dedicated to the work of Albert Schweitzer

"Schweitzer's works and ideas have actually strongly influenced my life. Not only did I have the privilege of being the director of the Albert-Schweitzer-Hospital in Lambarene and to visit the Albert-Schweitzer-Hospitals in Haiti, Peru and India, as well as bringing to life many organisations which meet the goal and purpose of the same intention" maintained the honoured person with modesty. After words came the briefly named "building blocks" of the life achievements of Willy Randin, which despite – or perhaps because of – his age of 81 years is not yet over.

In the service of the Red Cross

Randin directed two Red Cross hospitals in Yemen (1965) and Vietnam (1966–1968), both countries at this time were affected with war. In Vietnam, he was a head of delegations and assigned to the construction of a children's hospital. Furthermore he was responsible for helping the 250,000 persons needing to evacuate their homes.

The example which Albert Schweitzer has given him, he considers as current as

ever. The main idea of Schweitzer's "Revenue for life" means that "Today's people should be even more aware, because they are provided with technology in such a dimension that the intrinsic values of life are no longer perceived. This maxim contains three parts: the respect for humans, for animals and for nature which means for the environment."

Organisation "Nouvelle Planète"

Willy Randin was guided by these principles when founding the Organisation for Development Cooperation "Nouvelle Planète/New Planet" as well as "Youth without borders", "Women without Borders", of the "Albert-Schweitzer-Environmental Organisation" etc. Also diverse partnerships among professional groups, communes and other entities come from the desire for more solidarity.

The honoured has primarily tried to motivate young people through volunteer work with African, Asian, and Latin American teenagers by mastering projects. The goal was the bridging of the borders and obstacles, the contact with others, just as he is, what he knows, what he can and will do. 32 years after these initiatives, 10,000 young Europeans and just as many people from the Southern part of the earth have enriched their lives with a positive experience which will continue and grow.

Director in Lambarene from 1970–1971

After having led the Albert-Schweitzer-Hospital in Lambarene, he visited countries in the Sahel, where he noted the major damage caused by the drought.

The residents had to leave their villages without knowing where to go. Around the hospital built by Dr Ken Elliott in Djibo (Bukina Faso) in the sense of Albert Schweitzer, Willy Randin found hundreds of people suffering from hunger. Dr Ken Elliott told him that all he could give them was a bowl of millet with some sauce, and that only every two days. This food contains no vitamins and the children were at risk of blindness.

"Centre Ecologique Albert Schweitzer"

He felt compelled to act because of the peasants' requests in the dry Sahel zone and in memory of Schweitzer's words on ethics of responsibility. He found that the lack of rain was a consequence of the reduced tree population because the wood

was used for cooking and therefore the trees were cut down.

But he also found that the tanning in this region is three times stronger than in southern France. Willy Randin therefore thought of using solar energy instead of wood. He asked Maurice Lack, the architect of the new hospital in Lambarene, for advice, and they set themselves the goal

- to set up an environmental protection studio "Centre Ecologique Albert Schweitzer" in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) to use solar sensors, to produce solar ovens, solar water heaters and solar refrigerators;
- to train local craftsmen to make and maintain the solar devices and to produce other utensils necessary for the careful handling of wood (manual pumps, lattice enclosures).

Today, 37 years later, there are already 64 ATESTA workshops (Ateliers d'Énergie Solaire and Technologies Appropriées) in 10 African countries. They all are self-sustaining and provide a safe livelihood for 4,000 local craftspeople who are useful to their country and their people.

Of course, it is not enough only to save wood. You also have to reforest. Thanks to Willy Randin's initiative, villagers have been shown from the beginning how to make compost, grow seedlings and plant trees.

- The women immediately accepted the production of compost and crops.
- The population immediately realised that by winning new cultural soil, the progression of the desert could be stopped. After only five years, a fertile soil is once again created where crops and vegetables thrive.
- The women produced dried fruits and vegetables and were encouraged in their suggestions to pass on their knowledge to apprenticeships, where girls have the same training opportunities as the boys.
- The most gratifying achievements have been in the construction of primary schools in those villages where women have campaigned. Girls' education has increased from 20 to 45 per cent in several countries.
- Finally, family planning programmes have been initiated – also at the request of the women – as only every second child is desired.

"Willy Randin honoured with ..."

continued from page 15

We also feel our responsibility in view of the massive flows of migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean, which mean enormous risks.

Bookpublications and films

In addition to many concrete aid projects, Willy Randin has kept his wealth of experience in numerous books in French since 1981 and left as a stimulus for reflection. There are titles (translated) such as: "Hopeful signs"; "Albert Schweitzer, a model today"; "Effective cooperation"; "Development – future of the woman"; "Mountain dwellers in Vietnam – consecrated lifeline"; "From enthusiasm to action"; "Women, sources of progress"; "Fight for a more humane earth". Together with his wife *Henriette* numerous films were produced, altogether 25 contributions from his diverse work! (If you are interested in books/film documents, please contact: w.randin@nouvelleplanete.ch)

Outlook and thanks

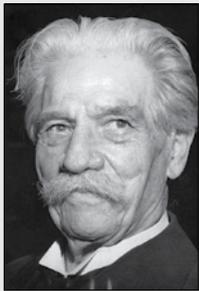
Schweitzer's work today certainly has dimensions that the Alsatian pioneer would not have dreamed of. For example, in addition to the listed organisations, there is also a Philippine *Association for the rescue of street children* and in Burkina Faso an *Association for animal protection and reverence for life*. These are just a few examples of how Willy Randin and his team show the way for a future in the sense of their role model Albert Schweitzer: In a future, which the 81 year-old honore will continue to help shape.

As the president of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital Swiss Fellowship, I can only say: Congratulations on your deserved honor. Great respect, thanks – Willy. Good health for your tireless zest. You are a great role model for us all. •

Source: Berichte aus Lambarene und über das Gedankengut Albert Schweitzers, Nr. 124, Oktober 2017 (Reports from Lambarene and the thoughts of Albert Schweitzer, No 124, October 2017)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Albert Schweitzer
(picture
wikipedia)

"I call mankind to the ethics of the reverence for life. This ethic makes no distinction between more valuable and less valuable, higher and lower life. It rejects such a distinction. Because the assumption of universally valid differences in value between living things basically amounts to judging them according to whether we humans feel them to be closer or less close to us. But this is a very subjective criterion. Who among us knows what significance the other living being has in itself and for the world as a whole? The consequence of this distinction is then the view that there is worthless life the destruction or impairment of which is permitted. Depending on the circumstances, we then understand insects or primitive peoples as worthless life.

Man is directly conscious of the following fact: 'I am life that wants to live,

Reverence for life

in the midst of life that wants to live.' This general affirmation of life is a spiritual act in which man ceases to just simply exist, in which he begins rather to dedicate himself to honouring his life and to according it its true value. At the same time, the man who thinks like this, experiences the necessity of showing the same reverence for life to all will to live as he does to his own. So he experiences the other life in his own. He then considers as good the preserving and promoting of life, the bringing developable life to its highest value – as evil he now sees: to harm or destroy life, to hinder developable life in development. This is the absolute and necessary principle of morality. Through the ethics of reverence for life, we enter into a spiritual relationship with the world.

In my life, I have always tried to remain youthful in my thinking and feeling and have struggled ever anew with the facts and with my experience, for the belief in the good and the true. In this day and age, when violence hides behind lies and rules the world more sinisterly than ever before, I remain convinced that truth, peacefulness and love, gentleness and kindness are the powers

that are beyond all power. The world will belong to them when only enough people think and live pure and steadily enough the thoughts of love and truth, gentleness and peacefulness.

All ordinary violence in this world creates a limit for itself, for it creates a counter-force that sooner or later will be equal or superior to it. But goodness is simple and continuous. It does not create any tension that neutralises itself, but instead relieves the existing tension. It eliminates mistrust and misunderstandings. By awakening kindness, it strengthens itself. That is why it is the most appropriate and most intense power. What kindness a person gives to the world, will work on the hearts of people and their thinking. Our foolish guilt is that we do not dare to be serious about kindness. We always want to pass on the big burden, and we do not use this lever, which can increase our strength a hundredfold."

From: Albert Schweitzer. "Mein Wort an die Menschen (My word to the people)", Lambarene 1964

(Translation *Current Concerns*)