

Current Concerns

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and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

UN-Expert: Unilateral coercive measures exacerbate humanitarian crisis in Syria

End of mission statement by Idriss Jazairy, Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights to the Syrian Arab Republic*

cc. Idriss Jazairy, Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures (sanctions) on the enjoyment of human rights, visited Syria from 13 to 17 May at the invitation of the Syrian government. At the end of his visit, he expressed deep concern about how the sanctions would be implemented. One consequence of the implementation of these unilateral sanctions was that the Syrian people were denied urgent humanitarian aid; the sanctions exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Syria and affected above all the most vulnerable people. The following text is his statement after his visit, drafted on 17 May. In September 2018, Idriss Jazairy announced, he will present a comprehensive report on his findings and recommendations.

Preliminary observations and recommendations

I would like to begin this briefing by expressing my gratitude to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the invitation to visit the country and for the openness and readiness with which it facilitated the meetings for my mission. I would also like to thank the office of the Resident Coordinator, the members of the UN country team and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their invaluable support.

I have been entrusted by the Human Rights Council with the task of monitoring, reporting and advising on the negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights of unilateral coercive measures. The United Nations has repeatedly expressed concern that the use of such measures may be contrary to international law, international humanitarian law, the UN Charter and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States¹.

During my visit, I had the honour of being received by Ministers, Deputy Ministers and senior officials of the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Economy and Foreign Trade, Local Administration and Environment, Social Affairs and Labour, Transport, Agricul-



ture and Agrarian Reform, Electricity and Health. I also met with the leadership of the Planning and International Cooperation Commission, the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Chamber of Commerce, and with the Governor of the Central Bank.

The purpose of this mission was to examine to what extent unilateral coercive measures targeting the Syrian Arab Republic impair the full realisation of the rights set forth in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and other international human rights instruments. I

“I am profoundly concerned that unilateral coercive measures are contributing to the ongoing suffering of the Syrian people. Claims that they exist to protect the Syrian population, or to promote a democratic transition, are hard to reconcile with the economic and humanitarian sufferings being caused. “

I was briefed by staff from civil society, humanitarian organizations and by independent experts. Last but not least, I am also grateful to the numerous diplomatic missions that shared their views with me during my visit. I very much appreciate the briefings I received from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Beirut prior to my visit.

will present my full report to the Human Rights Council in September 2018. My present statement contains my preliminary observations on the outcome of my visit.

I have examined the situation of the Syrian Arab Republic as a target of unilateral coercive measures by a number of source

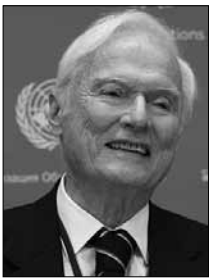
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States. I have examined relevant evidence and endeavoured to assess the actual impact of such measures on the Syrian people. One source country has applied unilateral coercive measures since 1979, and they were strengthened in subsequent years. A larger group of States began applying similar measures in 2011.

The collective measures call for a trade ban on the import and export of multiple goods and services. It also includes international financial transfers. The superimposition of different packages of collective sectoral measures, together with the across-the-board implementation of financial restrictions, are tantamount in their global impact to the imposition of comprehensive restrictions on Syria. Additional measures targeting individuals by virtue of their alleged relationship with the government have also been applied.

Because of their comprehensive nature, these measures have had a devastating impact on the entire economy and the daily lives of ordinary people. This impact has compounded their suffering resulting from the devastating crisis that has unfolded since 2011. Singling out the impact of the unilateral coercive measures from that of the crisis is fraught with difficulty, but this does in no way diminish the necessity to take measures to restore their basic human rights as a whole.



(picture OHCHR)

*Mr Idriss Jazairy was appointed by the Human Rights Council as the first Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. He took office in May 2015. Mr Jazairy

has extensive experience in the fields of international relations and human rights with the Algerian Foreign Ministry, the UN human rights system and international NGOs. He holds a M.A. (Oxford) in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, and an M.P.A. (Harvard). He also graduated from the Ecole nationale d'Administration (France). Mr Jazairy is the author of books and of a large number of articles in the international press on development, human rights and current affairs.

The Special Rapporteurs 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

It is clear that the sufferings imposed by the unilateral coercive measures have reinforced those that were caused by the conflict. Indeed, it seems ironic that these measures applied by source States out of a concern for human rights are actually contributing to the worsening of the humanitarian crisis as an unintended consequence.

The dramatic increase in the suffering of the Syrian people

The Syrian economy continues to decline at an alarming rate. Since the application of coercive measures in 2011, and the beginning of the current crisis, the total annual GDP of Syria has fallen by two thirds. Foreign currency reserves have been depleted, and international financial and other assets remain frozen. In 2010, 45 Syrian liras were exchanged for one dollar; by 2017 the rate fell to 510 liras per dollar. Inflation has dramatically increased since 2010, reaching a peak of 82.4% in 2013; the cost of food items rose eight-fold during this time. This combination of factors visited further devastation on the living conditions of the population that were already degraded by the conflict. This has hit the half of working Syrians living on fixed salaries particularly hard.

The unintended consequences of unilateral coercive measures

This damage to the economy has had predictable effects on the ability of Syrians to realize their economic, social and cul-

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 organisation and serve in their individual capacity.

This year is the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN on 10 December 1948. The Universal Declaration – translated into a world record 500 languages – is rooted in the principle that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." It remains relevant to everyone, every day. In honour of the 70th anniversary of this extraordinarily influential document, and to prevent its vital principles from being eroded, we are urging people everywhere to Stand Up for Human Rights: www.standup4humanrights.org

www.ohchr.org/EN/News-Events/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23096&LangID=E

tural rights. Syria's human development indicators have all tumbled. There has been a staggering increase in the rate of poverty among ordinary Syrians. While there was no food insecurity prior to the outbreak of violence, by 2015 32% of Syrians were affected. At the same time unemployment rose went from 8.5% in 2010 to over 48% in 2015.

Banking restrictions

The most pervasive concerns I have heard during my mission relate to the negative effect that comprehensive financial restrictions have had on all aspects of Syrian life. Restrictions on the Central bank, state-owned and even private banks, and transactions in the main international currencies have comprehensively damaged the ability of anyone seeking to operate internationally.

Despite nominally including "humanitarian exemptions" they have proven to be costly, or extremely slow, to access in practice.

The uncertainty around what transactions do, or do not violate the unilateral coercive measures, have created a "chilling effect" on international banks and companies, which as a result are unwilling or unable to do business with Syria. This has prevented Syrian and international companies, non-governmental actors (including those operating in purely humanitarian fields), and Syrian citizens from engaging in international financial transactions (including for goods which are legal to import), obtaining credit, or for international actors to pay salaries or contractors in Syria.

This has forced Syrians to find alternatives, such as hawala, which result in millions of dollars flowing through high cost financial intermediaries, who are alleged at times to be owned by terrorist organisations. These channels which are not transparent, cannot be audited, and increase transaction costs remain the only avenue for smaller companies and Syrian civil society actors to operate internationally.

Medical care

Syria practices universal, free health care for all its citizens. Prior to the current crisis, Syria enjoyed some of the highest levels of care in the region. The demands created by the crisis have overwhelmed the system, and created extraordinarily high levels of need. Despite this, restrictive measures, particularly those related to the banking system, have harmed the ability of Syria to purchase and pay for medicines, equipment, spare parts and software. While theoretical exemptions exist, in practice international private

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companies are unwilling to jump the hurdles necessary to ensure they can transact with Syria without being accused of inadvertently violating the restrictive measures.

Migration and "brain drain"

While the security situation was a central factor which led to migration flows from Syria, it should be emphasised that the dramatic increase in unemployment, the lack of job opportunities, the closure of factories unable to obtain raw materials or machinery or to export their goods have all contributed to increasing the emigration of Syrians. Some receiving States have selected skilled migrants, while pressuring the less fortunate to return to Syria. This "brain drain" has harmed the medical and pharmaceutical industries in particular, at the worst possible time for Syria.

The anticipated end of the current conflict will not put an end to the flows of migrants, especially to Europe, in view of the saturation of neighbouring countries. These flows are likely to continue so long as the Syrian authorities are prevented by unilateral coercive measures from addressing the pressing problems related to their social and economic infrastructure, in particular the restoration of energy and water supplies.

Ban on equipment and spare parts

The ban on the trade in equipment, machinery and spare parts has devastated Syrian industry. Vehicles, including ambulances and fire trucks, as well as agricultural machinery suffer from a lack of spare parts. Failing water pumps gravely affect the water supply and reduce agricultural production. Power generation plants are failing, and new plants cannot be purchased or maintained, leading to power outages. Complex machinery requiring international technicians for maintenance are failing, damaging medical devices and factory machinery. Civilian aircraft are no longer able to fly safely, and public transit buses are in woeful condition. Whatever rationale source countries may have for restricting so-called dual use goods, greater effort is needed to ensure that goods that are clearly intended for civilian use are permitted, and that they can be paid for.

Syrian government seeks to improve food situation

Damascus, SANA, 15 May 2018 – 100 billion Syrian pounds have been allocated for purchasing the expected wheat crop for this year.

It is initially estimated at nearly one million tons in a planted area of 1.97 million hectares.

A special work meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Imad Khamis, was held on Tuesday [15 May] to discuss the means of receiving and marketing the whole wheat crop from the farmers for this season. The MP's decided to spend an initial payment of SYD 10 billion to the Agricultural Bank to pay the sums owed to farmers.

The ministries and concerned authorities have been asked to provide the necessary logistic requirements to facilitate the process of receiving and marketing the current season smoothly.

The Prime Minister pointed out that state subsidies given to the strategic crops should be in the farmers' interest and aim at promoting them to continue their agricultural activities.

He added that it is important to take all necessary measures to promote food development process for the upcoming years and to encourage all visions and plans that enhance food security.

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=137765>

Ban on technology

As a result of unilateral coercive measures, Syrians are unable to purchase many technologies, including mobile phones and computers. The global dominance of American software companies, technology companies, and banking and financial software, all of which are banned, has made it difficult to find alternatives. This has paralysed or disrupted large parts of Syrian institutions.

Education

Shortages of inputs, energy and water supply as well as of teaching material causing delays in the rebuilding of schools have kept 1.8 million children without access to their classrooms.

The ability of Syrians to participate in the international community has been sharply affected. Syrians have been excluded from international educational exchange programmes, and the tremendous difficulties involved in obtaining a visa have prevented many from studying or travelling abroad, upgrading their training and skills, or participating in international conferences. By removing consular services from Syria, countries have forced people including the poorest, to travel to neighbouring countries for such applications, which are also placing onerous restrictions on entry for Syrians.

Conclusion

I am profoundly concerned that unilateral coercive measures are contributing to the ongoing suffering of the Syrian people. Claims that they exist to protect the Syrian population, or to promote a democratic transition, are hard to reconcile with the economic and humanitarian sufferings

being caused. The time has come to ask whether these unintended consequences are now more severe than can be reasonably accepted by democratic States. Whatever their political objectives, there must be more humane means by which these can be achieved in full compliance with international law.

In view of the complexity of the system of unilateral coercive measures in place, there needs to be a multi-stage approach to addressing the dire human rights situation prevailing in Syria. This would imply a sequenced approach involving addressing the crucial humanitarian needs of the population throughout the whole of Syria, without preconditions, when these touch on issues of life and death. A first stage could include addressing the urgent needs of the food insecure, which represent nearly one third of the population. The second stage is to translate at the ground level effective measures to fulfil the commitment of source States to meet their obligation to allow humanitarian exemptions, particularly for financial transactions. Finally, there must be a serious dialogue on reducing unilateral coercive measures, starting with those that have the most egregious effect on the population, along with those that will promote confidence building between the parties, with the ultimate aim of lifting the unilateral coercive measures. I hope that my report and my future work can contribute in this end.

Thank you. •

¹ More information on this prohibition can be found in the reports and resolutions on the website of the Special Rapporteur.

Source: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23094&LangID=E>

It can only work on equal terms

Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un: prior to the meeting on June 12 in Singapore

by Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer
(picture ma)

Already in the build-up to the 12 June 2018 meeting between US President *Donald Trump* and North Korea's ruler *Kim Jong Un* one has the impression that all high-noon Hollywood fantasies are surpassed. On one hand, there is an

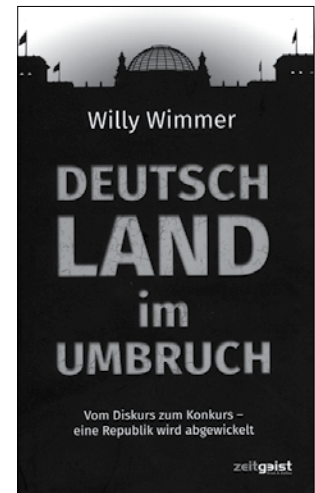
American president who, as if in a revolutionary upsurge of the American people, was heaved into the presidential saddle to stop the visible decline of the United States. From north east Asia joins a youthful nobody in one of the most interesting hubs of the world, the efficient and glittering Singapore. The best thing you can say about the young leader, who is as youthful as he is powerful over a worn-out people, is the unbelievable astonishment that he had received his schooling in Switzerland. He is familiar with the Swiss Confederation and the mentality there, and if we are all lucky, also other Europeans are less unfamiliar to him than his compatriots are to us.

Everything seems to indicate that the outcome of the meeting is clear from the outset. Unless we are mistaken. Apart from prejudice against this closed country, there is a lack of substantial information here regarding North Korea. It is different in North Korea. Hermetically sealed and self-isolated, it could not be worse. And yet, with its North Korean branch, the Korean nation has a millennia-old ability to process the news of the world out of isolation, using information reels, so that policy can be shaped out of it. Such a nation has yet to be found on the globe, whose leadership, as in the North Korean part of

the common Korean people, is able to deal so absolutely logical with the problems of the world. Cut off and isolated? Physically undoubtedly, but in no way mentally. And the people? The pictures shown here in the media are intended to portray the fairy-tale of the uniformed robots. Those who, like my companions and myself, managed to meet with groups of North Koreans without any official escort after a picnic trip in the alpine part of North Korea, were surprised by the amiable curiosity and a friendly openness. The images transmitted in the German-speaking and international media have just left their mark. And on the official level? North Korea has a clear approach, when they feel and prove that they are not being treated fairly in contracts. There is plenty of prove of this from the negotiations with the US. Finally, broken promises gave the impression that North Korea could slowly be brought into the status of a nation to be defeated with war. The highest authorities said that one should not be fooled in such a case. The North Korean mountain world would have such a multitude of caves that one should not be surprised by North Korean ingenuity when fraud is involved.

That is what President Trump is facing now, and the feeling will not attune as if an American super cop would meet a north-east Asian rice farmer. From a sporting point of view, it is not at all clear where to stop the chutzpah and its admiration on the part of Kim Jong Un. President Trump seems to feel similarly. He simply accepted that his Vice President *Pence* was put in his place by a North Korean official. But maybe that is exactly what Mike Pence emphasised. In the US, as a member of the Washington war party, you cannot think otherwise than in the Libyan categories, as Mike Pence tried to do. Immediately, he was most effectively rebuked, and President Trump knew what was important to Kim Jong Un. This one crucial question is important for the entire world. Will Singapore be about what the globe has known since the Spanish-American war or the US war against Austria-Hungary and imperial Germany, preparation for World War II and the *Obama* march against Russia? Or is Trump anchoring his country on the globe so that the US can distance itself from the "business model war"? The young man from Pyongyang is more than a sparring partner.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)



(Germany in upheaval. From discourse to bankruptcy – a republic is being processed)

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* Willy Wimmer was a CDU (Christian Democrats) member of the "Bundestag" from 1976–2009, Secretary of State in the German Ministry of Defense from 1988–1992 and Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly from 1994–2000. He is co-author of the book "Die Wiederkehr der Hasardeure. Schattenstrategen, Kriegstreiber, stille Profiteure 1914 und heute" ("The Gamblers' Return. Shadow strategists, warmongers, silent profiteers, 1914 and today") together with Wolfgang Effenberger, 2014 and author of the books "Die Akte Moskau" ("The Moscow File"), 2016 and "Deutschland im Umbruch. Vom Diskurs zum Konkurs – eine Republik wird abgewickelt" (Germany in transition. From discourse to bankruptcy – a republic is being processed), 2018.

History of a media campaign: The Geneva affair around the Syrian white helmets

by Guy Mettan*, Managing Director of the Swiss Press Club in Geneva and President of the International Association of Press Clubs



Guy Mettan
(picture ma)

The recent bloody conflicts all over the world, from Donbass to Syria, from Afghanistan to Libya, have made the term “hybrid war” popular. In today’s world, wars are no longer limited to a “banal” military conflict, but take place at all levels,

at the military, the civilian, the media, the economic, the social and the religious one. The classic war with its helicopters, remote-controlled drones and Kalashnikovs is always accompanied by an information war, which is about informing the public of the countries that operate the conflicts from a safe distance, far away from the front, and this especially in our Western democracies.

The war in Syria, which has been going on for seven years now, is taking place at all hybrid war levels, so it can serve as its model. Last December, this war also suddenly struck Switzerland, on occasion of an incident which at first appeared to be banal, a press conference on the organisation of the so-called “white helmets” in Syria. The NGO (non-governmental organisation) was founded in 2013 by a former British officer and generally is regarded as an aid organisation providing first aid to wounded and victims of bombings in the rebel areas. It was a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, was awarded an Oscar in Hollywood and is presented in the Western media as a model of humanitarian virtue.

The organization is based in London and has financial resources of tens of millions of dollars per year, the majority of which come from the US and UK governments and from other NATO members. Thanks to the cooperation of professional communication consultants, it has a strong media presence in the West as well as on the Qatar-based *al-Jazeera* television channel.

It is quite clear that the rebels, whether Islamists or not, have the right and even the duty to assist the wounded and victims of the combat operations amongst the civilians, and that an organization such as the “White Helmets” is therefore justified. In this case, however, its neutrality is strongly questioned by local observers, by analysts of the Syrian conflict in the USA

and of course also by the official Syrian and Russian media, who accuse it of sending its aid solely to the rebel organisations and of acting as a propaganda tool to promote rebel concerns in Western countries. In addition to that they are to serve as a cloak for armed groups who have no inhibition at all to exchange their Kalashnikovs and grenades with their white helmets whenever this is useful and when the cameras are directed at them.

Other arguments such as the lack of any women in their troops and the practical impossibility for recognised aid organisations, such as *MSF* and *ICRC*, to intervene in their areas of operations also feed doubts about their impartiality, neutrality and independence, qualities being requested of all humanitarian NGOs in the West.

Press conference with critics of the Syrian White Helmet Organization

Against this background, a polemic developed at the end of November 2017 that has put the “Swiss Press Club”, which I head in Geneva, in dire straits and which deserves to be presented/outlined in this article. Despite their anecdotal nature and limited significance, this affair is symptomatic of the functioning of the media, especially when they position themselves on the dividing line between different powerful international forces.

In mid-November 2017, the Permanent Representation of Russia in Geneva contacts the “Swiss Press Club” to organise a press conference with three critical speakers on the question of the real role of “White Helmets” in the Syrian conflict. After this had been discussed, it was agreed to hold this press meeting on Tuesday afternoon, 28 November. This was the day of the resumption of the UN negotiations on Syria. Three people should have their say: *Richard Labévière*, former SRG journalist, former editor-in-chief of French radio station RFI (*Radio France Internationale*) and Arabic-speaking recognised Middle East specialist; *Vanessa Beeley*, English research journalist, daughter of a former English ambassador in the Middle East and Syria reporter for Russian television *Russia Today* (RT); and the president of a small Swedish non-governmental organisation of doctors of humanitarian ethics.

Intimidation campaign by the umbrella organisation of White Helmets

As early as the 21 November, before the public media invitation to the conference had been issued, a tweet from *Syria Civil Defence* (SCD or *Syrian Campaign*), the

White Helmets

jp.v. In early 2013, this so-called private civil defence organisation was founded by a former British officer and private security consultant. Remarkably, it only operates in jihadist-occupied parts of Syria. According to various sources, the White Helmets are a creation of Western governments. A PR agency developed them into “heroes”. They advocate US military intervention and regime change in Syria. The largest donors are the American USAID, the British government as well as Japan and various European countries, which have donated about 50-80 million US dollars since 2013.

umbrella organisation of the White Helmets based in London, asked me to explain about this event and to indicate who organises it and with what aim. After the exchange of various mails, our refusal to respond to these demands (we have no reason to justify ourselves, as our platform is open to everyone, including White Helmets if they so wish), and the proposal to come to Geneva and represent their views here, the SCD extends its campaign of intimidation to all members of the board of the Swiss Press Club. For several days, the Twitter accounts of the board members, are being served with dozens of tweets by members of the SCD and related parties, with the demand to cancel the conference. How Syrian Campaign came to know about this conference at a time when no information about it had been made public remains its secret.

Pressure by Reporters Without Borders

Finally, as the pressure continues to rise, the Press Club spreads its invitation on Thursday, November 23, afternoon. Two hours later, *Reporters sans Frontières Suisse* (RSF) [*Reporters without Borders*] publishes a communiqué in which it declares its dissociation from this event (RSF is a member of the Swiss Press Club) because it considers it inappropriate and simply demands its cancellation. RSF addresses this letter to all board members of the Press Council and to the local press.

In the early evening, the announcement appears on the homepage of the daily newspaper “Tribune de Genève” and is distributed in several other media. In the course

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of the evening I send an answer in which I express my astonishment at this action by an association of journalists who are committed to ensuring that people "all over the world have the right to have free access to information and to pass it on". I also point out that such demands are usually made by dictatorial governments and not by organisations working for freedom of expression and that the cancellation of this meeting is a censorship that is incompatible with our mission of providing a neutral and open platform for international actors.

International support campaign for freedom of expression

The "Tribune de Genève" publishes this answer. This makes the controversy public and increases in intensity. Fire-fighting initiatives are developing in the form of an international support campaign to organise the conference. Solidarity mails and tweets are piling up at the Swiss press club with the admonition not to give in to the pressure and to maintain the meeting. They come from university professors, researchers and defenders of freedom of expression from the United States, Sweden, the UK, Canada, even Australia and New Zealand, and of course from Switzerland, too. Even a prominent member of the funding committee of *Reporters Without Borders* Switzerland sends me a message of solidarity to condemn the pressure of his own association!

Press conference takes place within the planned framework

On November 28, the press conference takes place within the planned framework, bringing together around 60 people. After reading a statement in response to the censorship attempts and the support campaign, the three speakers present their arguments and answer the questions of the journalists present, mainly concerning the credibility and legitimacy of the speakers.

Certain media launch new attacks on the press club and its director

The next day, French-speaking Switzerland radio reports on the affair with the title: "Guy Mettan is again confronted with the charge of supporting Russian propaganda." And "Le Temps" overwrites its five-column report, titled "Swiss press club in Syrian witch's chaldron. His director is increasingly criticised for lack of transparency." The White Helmets are mentioned only marginally or not at all. The Geneva authorities are being called upon to justify their support of the press club, as its director is playing a "double game" by giving a platform to "extremely questionable" speakers without disclosing the clients of

Geneva Press Club

jpv. The Geneva Press Club headed by *Guy Mettan* enjoys an excellent reputation: since 1997 he has organised over 2000 events with speakers from *Fidel Castro* to *Henry Kissinger* and from *Jean Ziegler* to *Klaus Schwab*. In November 2017, a lecture was planned to critically examine the Syrian White Helmets, which are popular in Western media. After that, a political witch hunt began.

The British organisation *The Syria Campaign* immediately demanded the cancellation of the event. This was followed by interventions by the director of the *Syria Institute* in Washington, a well-known senior fellow of the *Atlantic Council*, the Syrian envoy of the German *Heinrich Böll Foundation*, a British Middle East diplomat and other actors on both sides of the Atlantic.

Finally, the Swiss section of *Reporters Without Borders* was activated. As a member of the press club, she dissociated herself from the planned event and demanded its cancellation, especially since some of the press club's speakers had also appeared in Russian state media and were thus "tools of Russian propaganda".

Guy Mettan, as the director of the "Club Suisse de la Presse", maintained

the event – especially as the press club had already invited prominent Kremlin critics.

The fact that *Reporters Without Borders* of all people demanded the cancellation of a journalistic event has caused many people to be astonished. But *Reporters Without Borders* is co-financed by the US government via *National Endowment for Democracy* (NED) and has already used its alleged influence in the past to attack geopolitical opponents and dissenters at crucial moments.

Above all, however, this incident once again shows the narrow boundaries journalists in NATO countries and even in neutral Switzerland have to deal with geopolitical issues. In the annual reports of *Reporters Without Borders*, however, one hardly learns anything about it.

Guy Mettan's fortitude and his commitment to constitutionally protected rights such as freedom of assembly and freedom of the press in the current context of contemporary history are reason enough to thank this fellow Swiss and contemporary.

The text is the revised version of a lecture given by Guy Mettan at the invitation of the *Cooperative Zeit-Fragen*.

his press conferences. After all, it can be noted that the Geneva media: the "Tribune de Genève", the "Courier" and "Léman bleu", stick to the facts and refrain from commenting.

Attempted cancellation of State subsidy for the press club

Later in the afternoon, a member of the Cantonal Council's Finance Committee refers to this polemic and demands a change in the adoption of the cantonal budget in 2018 in order to cancel subsidies of the Swiss Press Association (100,000 Swiss francs). His request is accepted by a slight majority.

The following day, the polemic continues to be dynamic on Radio Suisse Romande and in "Le Temps" by taking up the cancellation of cantonal subsidies to reinforce criticism of the director of the Press Club and his decision to hold the White Helmets press conference.

The pressure on the board and against me continues to grow, but the majority remains firm. The international support campaign and the defamation campaign continue to make big waves as the new developments are immediately spread on all social networks and translated into English.

Due to the abolition of subsidies, the situation becomes tricky. A friendly specialist in issues of crisis management in media defamation campaigns advises me to pursue the American strategy of "stay-

ing behind" and not to be in the forefront, otherwise I will risk being isolated and serving as a target. From now on, the President and the Vice-President of the Board will answer the journalists' questions. "Le Temps" refuses to publish my statement under the pretext that everything has already been said ...

The following week, the Board writes to the President of the Geneva Government Council, *François Longchamp*, requesting that he submits a motion to withdraw from the subsidy at the Cantonal Council meeting. After confirming that the Press Club has performed its duties under the terms of reference with the Canton of Geneva without undermining it, he agreed to submit an amendment to the budget.

Joint discussions between media representatives and press club

Two days later, a meeting with the representatives of "Le Temps" and the publisher *Ringier* takes place, so that everyone can express oneself in peace and not through the media. The conversation helps to reduce tensions and to better understand each other's intents and beliefs. It also makes it possible to re-establish contact, as a few days later, after intensive discussions with the other board members, *Le Temps* decides to remain a

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member of the Press Club and participate in the strategic reflections on its future, which will take place in 2018. This is an important decision, because despite the differences and the intensity of the controversy, it is important to maintain active pluralism and open discussion among the members of the Swiss Press Club.

Cancellation of government subsidies will be reversed

On Friday, December 15, after intensive negotiations and an inevitable series of unfounded attacks because of the director's alleged lack of transparency, nepotism (?) and "Putinophilia", etc., finally the cantonal council voted by 49 votes to 17 with about 30 abstentions in favour of granting the former subsidies. A very clear majority, which makes it possible to calm down a little. The media provide information; however, "Le Temps" takes the opportunity to re-list the allegations made against the Club and its director.

Resignation from "Reporters Without Borders"

The next stage was Wednesday, December 20, when, after a meeting arranged by *Gérard Tschopp*, President of *Reporters Without Borders* (RWB) and former Director of Radio Suisse Romande (?), *Gérard Tschopp* conveyed a letter to the Press Club, with copies to all board members and the media, declaring RWB's resignation from the Swiss Press Club with immediate effect. In the evening, the programme "Forum" on Radio Swiss Romande is dedicated to the issue Reporters Without Borders-Swiss Press Club (RWB-CSP). The next morning "Le Temps" headlines "First resignations from the Swiss Press Club", suggesting that more will follow... The same newspaper refuses to publish my recitification until today.

The other media ignore this message. It is only published on the website of the newspaper *Edito* in a largely fair manner. The White Helmets' website publishes a 46-page report to denounce the journalists who denounce them, without omitting me, of course.

So much for the course of the story, which can be deepened by published articles and broadcasts on this issue.

Three lessons to remember

At this stage, two questions arise: why has this controversy erupted, although countless other controversial issues have been discussed with much more questionable speakers in the Swiss Press Club without causing no reaction at all from *Reporters Without Borders* or the media? Moreover, what about the accusations against the press

"It is important to know that the media, as in a hunt, hunt in packs, everyone trying to be the first to bring about the deadly end. This imitation effect is typical for how media work. Each medium copies the other, for fear of reporting too positively about the target object and therefore being attacked or because a competitor takes the trophy."

club? Are they well founded? Was it right to hold the press conference? What lessons can be learned from this experience? I think there are three lessons to be learned.

1) At no time the media have been interested in the actual topic of the press conference, namely the role of the white helmets and the video shown, as well as the facts and arguments that the speakers put forward against them. Radio Suisse Romande, for example, did not say any word about the White Helmets. The main focus here was all about my person and my legitimacy as a suspected "pro-Russian" director of the Press Club, and about the legitimacy and credibility of the speakers who have commented on this issue.

Instead of responding to the possible misconduct of the white helmets as shown by the speakers with concrete examples, the media's attention focused exclusively on the presumed "misconduct" of the Press Club. Only the "Tribune de Genève" summarized what had been said at the press conference (while maintaining a certain restraint, which is not disturbing). As they could not attack facts and arguments, the attacks were directed against individuals in order to undermine their public credibility and thus to nullify their possible impact.

2) The simultaneous bombardement of the media empire achieves a dangerous destructive power when performed in a coordinated manner. In this case, the campaign of intimidation mobilised civil society (*Syrian Campaign* and *Reporters Without Borders*); social networks, saturated by tweets and mails; the press, represented by the daily newspaper "Le Temps", opinion leaders in Radio Suisse Romande, a public service with a large audience in the morning. This concerted attack included a great risk of destabilisation for the Press Club – a modest platform without direct access to the public – and for my position as director of this institution.

- It is important to know that the media, as in a hunt, hunt in packs, everyone trying to be the first to bring about the deadly end. This imitation effect is typical for how media work. Each medium copies the other, for fear of reporting too positively about the target object and

therefore being attacked or because a competitor takes the trophy. In the present case, the risk of losing control was considerable, as witnessed at the same time in the case of the "storm of indignation" over National Councillor *Yannick Buttet*, which swept him away because he was suspected of harassing colleagues. Once the hype is created, it is impossible to stop it.

3) In our case, certain media have tried several times to light the wick and stoke the fire. For three reasons the fire did not spread:

- The cause was justified, because the Press Club played its attributed role by combating censorship and defending freedom of expression against those who were supposed to defend it. Noting that the White Helmets enjoyed both state support and very broad media support, *Reporters Without Borders* should have taken the side of the critical voices and should have defended the right of minorities to freedom of expression, as they do when defending journalists threatened by authoritarian regimes. By calling for the cancellation of a press conference reserved for journalists to provide their information activities, they have contradicted their own values, weakening the impact of their arguments.
- The extent of external (international support) and internal support (majority of the committee, local Geneva media, support by the Government Council and neutrality of the FDFA [Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Foreign Affairs]) because of the Press Club has fulfilled its mandate, to serve the actors of international Geneva) as well as the psychological very important support of my friends and my family. To be isolated in the face of a bullying campaign by the media will be a guarantee to be lynched.
- Holding this press conference the Swiss Press Club carried out its mission, in particularly being available for the actors of international Geneva – embassies, NGOs, international organisations – before the media

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"History of a media campaign: ..."

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without distinction from race, religion, social status, nationality or political party. From this point of view the Club was unassailable, regardless of the opinion, the discussed topic, or to the possible speakers.

Finally, it is to be mentioned that it is practically impossible to change the position of the media or the journalists if they put a moralizing attitude over their duty of information. One of the main problems of journalists who talk about international politics is their lack of diversity, lack of funds, the missing personal presence and especially the fact that they maintain moralizing attitudes, instead of making an effort to check information, and provide opposing facts and opinions. The culture of doubt has given way to the culture of certainty based on the division of the world into a camp of the good and a camp of the evil. In this case the vast majority of the media has made very early a black and white presentation of the Syrian conflict on the pattern «*Bashar*, the butcher of his people and the war criminal" against "heroic, freedom-defending rebels".

That's why every fact, every argument, any report that contradicts this thesis, is pushed aside and every critical voice is immediately discredited as «agent of Putin», «supporters of the regime», «enemy of Human Rights and the Syrian people».

How does disinformation work?

The scheme of governmental lies or disinformation follows exact rules and works always in the same way. Based on the basic principles of propaganda defined by the Belgian researcher *Anne Morelli*, those

“One of the main problems of journalists who talk about international politics is their lack of diversity, lack of funds, the missing personal presence and especially the fact that they maintain moralizing attitudes, instead of making an effort to check information, and provide opposing facts and opinions. The culture of doubt has given way to the culture of certainty based on the division of the world into a camp of the good and a camp of the evil.”

rules can be summarised in seven points as follows:

1. We did not want the war, and we did not start it either: Alone our opponent/enemy is responsible for the conflict. That's what I call the prosecution phase.
2. The leaders or supporters of the enemy are inhumane and have the face the devil, that is the slander. See Serbia 1999, *Saddam Hussein* 2003, Syria and Libya 2011, Venezuela since 2013.
3. We are defending a noble purpose while the opponent only defends his own interests or, worse, his national interests. The cause of the opponent is abominable, unworthy, selfish, while we defend an ideal, human rights, democracy, freedom, free enterprise. We embody the good, they embody the evil. This is the moralization phase.
4. The enemy systematically commits cruelties. If we fail or make mistakes, it is involuntary and because the enemy deceives or provokes. In his fight the enemy is ready for anything, including the use of unlawful weapons (Gas attacks or attack on a civilian airplane in the case of the MH 17 in the Ukraine). He is also the only one who uses false news ("fake news"), troll attacks and election hacking while we respect the

5. We do not suffer from any or only from little losses, the losses of the opponent however are very high (minimisation phase).
6. Artists, scientists, academics, experts, intellectuals and philosophers, NGOs and the civil society are supporting us while the enemy is isolated in his ivory tower and cut off from society (expansion phase of the domain of the gentle war).
7. Our cause is sacred, and those who question it are bought by the enemy (sacrifice phase).

Thus a totalitarian idea of the world is created, an idea which forbids any divergent view as a betrayal of the noble and holy task given to oneself: psychiatric institution, social ostracism and work ban are not far away... If she is no longer pluralistic, democracy is no less free-killing than autocracy: last not least there were the Athenians "democrats", who condemned *Socrates* to death because he corrupted the youth with his philosophical "propaganda". •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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In Italy and elsewhere

Against the arrogation of power by the “markets” Freedom, the rule of law and democracy are the responsibility of the citizens

by Karl Müller

The troubles of government formation in Italy are currently making daily headlines. This is also an occasion for some fundamental reflecting, especially after the European Commissioner for the EU budget commented on the factors influencing new elections.

“Quietly wait and see” is the title of a longer article published in “Zeit online” on 30 January 2017, and also published a few days earlier in the printed edition of the German weekly. The occasion for the article was the anniversary of the appointment of *Adolf Hitler* as German Chancellor on 30 January 1933. The article states:

“In an editorial in the “Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung”, a German newspaper close to heavy industry, editor-in-chief *Fritz Klein* said that cooperation with the National Socialists would probably be ‘difficult and exhausting’, but at some time ‘the leap into the dark’ had to be ventured, as the Hitler movement had become the strongest political factor in Germany. The leader of the NSDAP now had to prove ‘whether he has the makings of a statesman’. “The next sentence reads:

“The stock exchanges were showing no agitation; everyone was sitting tight for the moment.”

1932 – Call for Hitler as a “moral obligation”

Given the knowledge of today this is not surprising. In many history books we can read a letter written in November 1932 by “leading personalities from economy and agriculture” to President of the Reich *von Hindenburg* – he was responsible for the appointment of the Reich Chancellor. This letter says: “... We therefore consider it our moral obligation to ask your Excellency most deferentially that, in order to achieve Your Excellency’s objective, which is supported by us all, the reorganisation of the Reich Cabinet should be carried out in such a way that the greatest possible popular power be brought to back up the Cabinet [...]. The transfer of the responsible leadership of a presidential cabinet equipped with the best practical and personal resources to the leader of the largest national group will eradicate the slugs and mistakes that inevitably attach to any mass movement and will thrill millions of people still standing aside today to affirmative energy.” In other words, the authors of this letter demand the appointment of *Adolf Hitler* as Reich Chancellor – above all, because he promised to disempower a parliament elected

by the people and compounded of deputies from various parties, which was entirely in the interest of the Reich President as well as of the letter writers.

Not only German business leaders pleaded for Hitler. Even from abroad, Hitler and his party received much support for their intended seizure of power in Germany. For Hitler had not only promised to turn the German democracy into a dictatorial regime, but also to fight Bolshevism by any means possible.

2018 – EU Commissioner Oettinger and the “markets”

85 years later, the German EU Commissioner *Günther Oettinger*, who is responsible for the EU’s budget within the Commission, commented on government formation in Italy: “My concern – and my expectation – is, that the next few weeks will show that the markets, that the government bonds, that the economic development of Italy could be so incisive that this might be a possible signal for the voters not to elect populists from the left and the right.”

Spiegel online added its comment on 30 May:

“None of this is wrong. Neither that markets might react unhappily to an irresponsible financial and economic policy, nor that this would be a reason for worry or for hope that the voters will come to an insight.”

In fact, “markets” repeatedly influence political events. However, the key question is who actually are the persons behind these “markets”, what makes them “happy” and “unhappy”, and whether it is really about “reactions” to an “irresponsible financial and economic policy”.

What do “the markets” want?

The “markets” support for *Adolf Hitler* and his party 85 years ago was indeed irresponsible. Have the “markets” changed so radically from then to today, 85 years later? Have they become friends and supporters of freedom, the rule of law and democracy? Or is it all about something else – for example, about tangible material and political interests? And how do these interests fit together with human dignity and freedom, with the rule of law and democracy today? 85 years ago, these interests did not match. Is the case really different today?

The majority of the national constitutions of the European states do not comment on the question of the economic and financial order. But their guarantees of private property are not unconditional. So, for

“In the last two weeks, the financial markets have clearly shown that they are extremely suspicious of such a populist government.”

„*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*“, 2 June 2018

example, the second paragraph of Article 14 in the German Basic Law reads: “Property entails obligations. Its use shall also serve the public good.”

Globalisation and shareholder value

This commitment to the common good has been undermined within a globalised world with its so-called “fundamental freedoms” (the euphemistic term used in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)), especially the free movement of capital. The former German CDU politician *Willy Wimmer* points to this fact. In his latest book, “Deutschland im Umbruch. Vom Diskurs zum Konkurs – eine Republik wird abgewickelt” (Germany in upheaval. From discourse to bankruptcy – a republic is being processed), the chapter “Shareholder value rolls across the Atlantic” is worth reading, especially the passages following the subheading “Slim state, fat booty”.

Human dignity, freedom, the rule of law and democracy include the right of the citizens of a state to together determine their own living conditions. The question of the economic and financial order obviously belongs to these. Well-known economic ethicists such as the Swiss *Peter Ulrich* have repeatedly explained this in detail.¹

Free movement of capital does not fit in with human dignity

It is not compatible with these facts that just about any “markets” determine who is elected in a country. Free movement of capital and shareholder value are an attack on human dignity, freedom, the rule of law and democracy. If the stock market can decide in a matter of seconds where billions are going to flow, what person or what country in the world will cash in those billions and who they will be taken away from – if, in fact, money rules the world – then this is the end of respect for human dignity, the end of freedom, the rule of law and democracy.

The citizens of Italy are currently experiencing the way in which massive stock market slumps are trying to dictate politics. To speak of “reactions” is

From the currency union to a debt union – via a union based on joint liabilities

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer



Prof. Dr Eberhard Hamer (picture ma)

From the beginning, for most of the member states the purpose of the EU was to be a redistributive union, to withdraw funds from the economically strong member states in order to redistribute them. Almost 400 billion euros in total have in

fact been redistributed by the EU over the last 40 years. The main payers were Germany with 33.4%, France with 16.7%, as well as Great Britain with 13.8% and the Netherlands with 10.4% of the total sum. The main net beneficiaries were Greece (24.4%), Spain (23.9%), Poland (15.5%), and Portugal (12.7%). However, 30 years of redistribution have not really improved the economic power of the recipient countries.

* Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer is the founder of the Mittelstandsinstitut Hannover as well as author and editor of several books like among others “Was tun, wenn der Crash kommt? Wie sichere ich mein Vermögen oder Unternehmen?” (What should we do when the crash comes? How do I secure my assets?) 10th edition 2008, and “Visionen 2050. Wohin steuern wir? Trends und Prognosen für Deutschland und Europa” (Visions 2050. Where are we heading? Trends and forecasts for Germany and Europe) 2016.

They have run into even greater debt than the donor countries (Greece 150%, Italy 130%, most countries over 100% of their gross domestic product GDP).

Worldwide, the debt tower stands at over 200 trillion dollars. That is more than 386% of the world’s annual economic output. Thus, the traditional way of debt reduction through savings is no longer possible. Even the leading countries in the world such as the US, China, and Japan, are so heavily indebted that, according to private principles, they would be teetering on the brink of bankruptcy.

However, this debt explosion has so far been financed by a monetary explosion; which means that the leading central banks have “printed” more and more money without value and distributed this in the form of loans (that is debt). Thus, constant over-indebtedness became possible by extension, i.e. devaluation of the currencies. In other words, money is becoming less valuable everywhere, but through skillful propaganda confidence in this money is still being maintained, while the billionaire investors have long been running out of money into the world’s assets.

The fact that the European debtor states such as Greece, Italy, France, Spain or Portugal have been able to pile up such high debts is connected with the euro as the common currency and with the “bailout packages”, first in the form of assumption

of liability and then of debt assumption – last 700 billion euros by the ESM (So ESM might be taken for the abbreviation of “Europäisches Schuldenmonster” – European debt monster).

By rights, all European treaties exclude liability and debt union, and financial institutions and countries are to be held alone accountable for their own debts. In fact, however, the euro-fiscal politicians have broken not only the EU treaty, but also national sovereignty rights, pushing Europe ever further towards a financial and debt union. Now France and Italy are at the end of their solvency and pushing for redistribution, for what *Macron* calls a “euro reform”.

Ultimately, the liability, debt and fiscal union only serves to uphold the diabolical game of the banks’ fleecing everyone with bad loans, rotten financial products, depleted currencies and the European member countries’ conscience-free running into debt.

The main culprits of this financial and currency fraud are *Goldman Sachs* bankers in the US and the ECB (*Draghi*), who first pushed the banks to grant unrestrained accreditation in the form of unrestrained ECB loans to over-indebted countries, then bought the bad loans from these banks, so creating depleted money and currency devaluation; and at last, for good measure, they created a “Target” account, to which the debtor coun-

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to use the wrong term. This is where action takes place, even before one single parliamentary decision has been passed.

Three years ago, it was Greece ... and today Italy?

Three years ago, the Greeks were forced to submit – although the citizens had voted differently. Today, the “markets” in chorus with the EU are calling for Italy to do the same. Three years ago, the main actors were the political players in the “markets”, in the guise of EU and Euro-politicians. The Eurogroup dictation, which suspended Greek democracy three years ago, remains a document of shame to this day. How far are things to go with Italy?

But it does not end with the “markets” not respecting human dignity, with their overriding freedom, the rule of law and democracy. The “markets” were also at the root of World War II, 85 years ago. So what about today?

The question of the economic and financial order belongs in the hands of the citizens

The question of the “markets” is a question of the fate of states and their citizens. That is what past and present history teaches us. Should this state of affairs really continue into the future? Peter Ulrich proposes that decisions concerning the economic and financial system of a state be submitted to the citizens. This includes the sovereignty of the states concerning their economic and monetary order. A construction like the European Economic and Monetary Union violates this sovereignty. The euro is an enemy of freedom, of the rule of law and democracy.

As yet, the power of the “markets” is still enormous. For many years now, a lot of people have been tracking the stock market reports like rabbits before a snake. This way of seeing things is almost forced on people. Is it meant to artificially produce feelings of powerlessness?

Things are different in a social market economy. There it is about the real companies. Citizens want safe jobs for all those who can and want to work, they want good

products and services which they need, constructive competition, economically successful entrepreneurs who have a connection with their country and are oriented towards the common good, for example in medium-sized family businesses, but also in cooperatives that live up even more to their own responsibility.

The “markets” and their political actors aim at depriving citizens of their sovereignty and at undermining the political unity of historically grown and subsidiarily structured (national) states. There are manifold means at hand to achieve this. We are currently experiencing this process in all areas. Only sovereign citizens conscious of their dignity are the natural friends of freedom, the rule of law and democracy. They can also be a bulwark against the power of the “markets”.

¹ see Ulrich, Peter. *Integrative Wirtschaftsethik. Grundlagen einer lebensdienlichen Ökonomie* (Integrative business ethics. Foundations of a life-serving economy), 4th edition, Berne 2008; and

Ulrich, Peter. *Zivilisierte Marktwirtschaft. Eine wirtschaftsethische Orientierung* (Civilized market economy. An economic ethical orientation), Berne 2010

A framework agreement some time ago

The USA intervenes - Switzerland comes under pressure

by Dr rer. publ. Werner Wüthrich

There is a group of students at the University of Freiburg who got to work on an enormous task under the lead of two professors. They became aware that the Swiss Federal Archive contains hundreds of thousands of documents on Swiss history which are difficult to locate and are used rarely. Twenty years ago, a team began sifting through the documents, especially on Switzerland's foreign relations, arranging them in folders and then digitising them. This was a laborious and time-consuming detailed work. The students started with documents from 1848 - the year the federal state was founded. Until today they have come until 1975. They have gathered and digitised tens of thousands of documents and made them available to the public. Anyone can call them up and study them on the screen sitting at home and print them out as a original. Today historians like me live in a land of milk and honey and can do their research from home - at www.dodis.ch.

What does all this have to do with today's framework treaty?

Let's go back fifty years: as today it is not the first framework treaty that Switzerland wanted to conclude or better said, should be concluding with Brussels. In the 1960s, the Federal Council held talks with Brussels - on a framework agreement that was designed very similarly to the current one. In the history books, however, it is usually only briefly mentioned as an episode - perhaps with three or four sentences. We want to know more about it today and consult the original documents from that time. To this end, we will join on a small digital trip to the Federal Archive.

In the early 1960s we come across two well-known names: *Friedrich Traugott Wahlen* and *Hans Schaffner*. Wahlen was probably the most popular person during Second World War, beside General *Guisan*. As professor for crop farming at the Swiss Federal Institute of Tech-

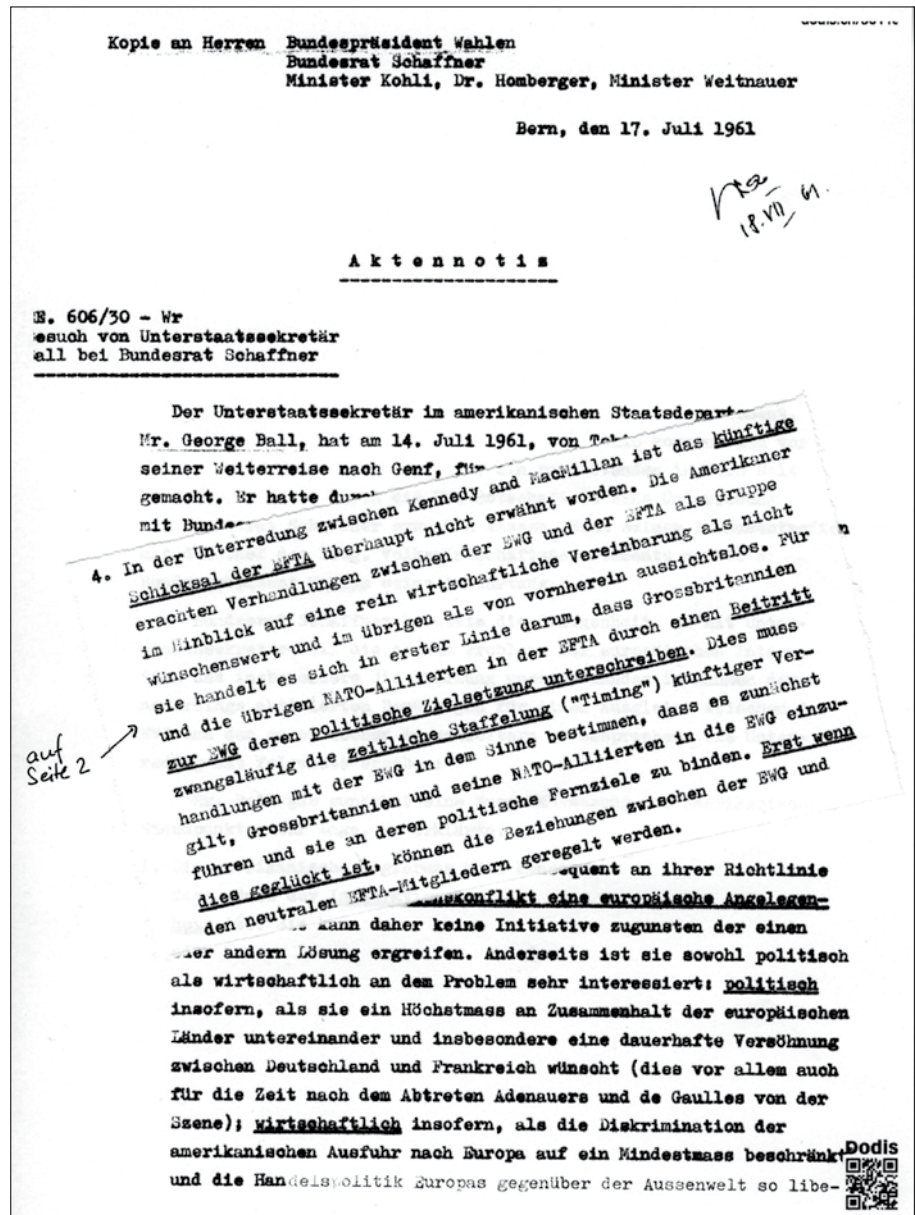
"Against the arrogation of ..."

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tries could charge their ever higher debts to the detriment of solid countries.

So the debt disease is passed on and on, the virus is transferred to all, everyone becomes ill, and instead of the bankruptcy of single states there will be a total bankruptcy of all - does this show up a desire for the common nemesis?

(Translation *Current Concerns*)



nology Zurich, he and his students and many other helpers organised the nutrition of the population in a difficult time. Keywords are the "Plan Wahlen (Project Wahlen)" or the "Anbauschlacht (Battle for Farming)". After the war, Wahlen worked for several years at the FAO - the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. In 1959 he was elected to the Federal Council and initially headed the Department of Economic Affairs and then the FDFA - the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, which was then called the Political Department. Almost at the same time, a second prominent figure during the Second World War was elected to the Federal Council: Hans Schaffner. During the war he was director of the wartime economy department and had made sure that some coal, oil and other urgently

needed raw materials came into the country during this time. This also included fertilizers and seeds for the farmers in order to achieve the required yields.

Foundation of EEC (EWG) 1957

In 1957, six countries founded the European Economic Community EEC in Rome - the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. This economic union had a political content right from the start. The preamble to the founding treaty stated that it was to become an "ever closer union". An economic area with common external borders was planned and a common customs union should be established. The cross-border freedom of settlement for all

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"A framework agreement ..."

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residents was a major aim. They wanted to mix the people of Europe and thus create a consciousness of being in a European state instead of a national feeling, as it was said at that time. *Jean Monnet* was considered the intellectual father of this union. As an American he spoke repeatedly of the "United States of Europe" and propagated it as a path to peace.

EFTA as an alternative project

Hans Schaffner, who later became Federal Councillor, was still delegate for trade contracts in 1957. He immediately realised that Switzerland wasn't able to join in. And he became active and invited administrative officials from various countries to Geneva, who were also sceptical about the project. Great Britain participation was very notable. Representatives from Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland were present. In Geneva, the concept for the foundation of EFTA – the *European Free Trade Association* – was developed, which was then founded in Stockholm in 1960. Hans Schaffner was considered the "father" of EFTA. Its concept was based on free economic cooperation which respects the sovereignty of the countries and has no political objectives.

In Western Europe there were now two different economic organizations. Immediately after its establishment, the EFTA countries therefore decided to make contact with Brussels and to agree and implement the planned tariff degradation in Europe jointly. The common approach should be laid down in a contract. There were actually no reasons at all against it.

The following took place behind the scenes and was not in the newspaper. We consult the documents from the Federal

Archives: Immediately after EFTA was established, the UK informed EFTA that it wanted to join the EEC. The EFTA colleagues were bowled over. How could that happen? Now we founded EFTA a few months ago, and already our most important member wants to leave. What was the reason?

The superpower USA intervenes

The American ambassador announced a visit of a high-ranking representative from Washington in the Federal Parliament. On 14 July 1961 Federal Councillor Schaffner and Wahlen received a State Secretary of the US government. An employee of Schaffner made a memo (*dodis.ch/30116*). [see picture above] The American informed the two Federal Councillors that the presidents of the USA and Great Britain had met and decided the following. The US would not tolerate an economic agreement between the EEC and EFTA, but demanded the following from EFTA: The NATO countries within EFTA should join the EEC as soon as possible – first and foremost Great Britain, then Denmark, Norway and Portugal. Afterwards, the three neutral countries Switzerland, Austria and Sweden should start negotiations with Brussels and conclude a framework agreement or an association agreement, as he called it, which supports the political objectives of the EEC. The wording in the memo was as follows: "The Americans consider negotiations between the EEC and EFTA as a group to be undesirable and foredoomed to fail in view of a purely economic agreement."

1961/62 – The Integration Office is established

Now the alarm bells were ringing in the Federal Administration, and the Council acted quickly because such a message from the superpower to a small state could

hardly be rejected: It formed 14 working groups with people from the administration and experts. The quickly formed "Integration Office" was to coordinate everything. The working groups covered the following areas: 1. neutrality policy, 2. problems under state law, 3. questions of agriculture, 4. freedom of settlement (free movement of persons), 5. questions of social insurance, 6. capital movements, 7. transport issues and more.

The association agreement as required by the US government should become a framework agreement that only sets out the direction in the individual areas (details to be specified later) and which creates the necessary institutions for this purpose, such as a council and an arbitration court.

One of the working groups was something very special: the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Historische Standortbestimmung" (Working group for Historical Assessment)". It was composed of highly respected historians and professors such as *Jean Rudolph von Salis*, *Edgar Bonjour*, *Herbert Lüthy* and others, and it was chaired by Minister *Albert Weitnauer*, a close colleague of Federal Councillor Schaffner. The historians were soon regarded as the "Council of Wise Men" and were heard in the Federal Council and in the administration. They held conferences in which Federal Councillors, Ambassadors and senior officers participated. These seminars and their topics were not public. But we find documents in the Federal Archives:

On February 24, 1962 von Salis gave a keynote address entitled: "Swiss neutrality in the light of the European and world situation" (*dodis.ch/34186*). This was followed by presentations such as "Switzerland's good services as a neutral state" (*Ambassador Rüeegg*) (cf. *dodis.ch/34188*). Issues of economy, freedom of movement and agriculture were other topics (see *dodis.ch/34185*).

The Council of Wise Men

The Working group of historians was listened to – and its assessments had weight, and it soon had the reputation of a council of wise men (commission de sage) (*dodis.ch/R22548*). The historians noted that many politicians and administrative officials in Brussels were prejudiced and did not even know Switzerland. It was therefore necessary to inform about Switzerland and its direct-democratic structures and to emphasise that Switzerland was making a constructive contribution to European integration and world peace through its policy of neutrality and good services. Switzerland can only remain politically stable and fulfil this task if it ad-

The end of the Council of Wise Men

ww. The President of the „Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Historische Standortbestimmung“ (Working group for historical Assessment), Minister *Albert Weitnauer* (number 2 in the FDFA, then Political Department) was for many years a close staff member of the Federal Councillors *Wahlen* and *Schaffner*. He played a key role in the discussions and negotiations with EEC and later EC and also with GATT. He organized and chaired around forty meetings and seminars for historians, federal councillors, ambassadors, administrative officials, senior officers, etc. (*dodis.ch/R22548*). In 1980, a new head of the FDFA (the Political Department) was elected: He ordered him to his office and told to dismiss him six months before his regular retirement – quite the

American way. *Weitnauer* was seriously offended and wrote a book entitled "Rechenschaft - vierzig Jahre im Dienst des Schweizerischen Staates (Accountability – forty years in service of the Swiss state)". He writes: "As far as foreign relations in particular are concerned, my boss once told me with great frankness that he was in no way able to share my convictions on the essence of foreign policy." (*Weitnauer* 1981, p. 242) - This was the end of the „Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Historische Standortbestimmung“ (Working group for historical Assessment) - the Council of Wise Men. The working group was dissolved after a short attempt to continue. The era of EEA, of application for membership and of bilateral treaties had started.

"A framework agreement ..."

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heres to federalist and direct-democratic structures. There is a danger that these could collapse under the pressure of economic concessions.

The message of the historians was incorporated into the official papers, politics and speeches of the Federal Council. Here are two examples:

On 17 November 1961, President Friedrich Traugott Wahlen visited President *Charles de Gaulle* in the Elysée. We know today what the two statesmen discussed because Wahlen had drawn up a protocol of the talks. (*dodis.ch/30270*) A small excerpt: De Gaulle thanked Switzerland for the good work it had done to solve the Algerian problem. Wahlen, for his part, raised the problem of the Association Treaty: "[...] Another reason why we are not allowed to join the European Community [...] are the constitutional problems. In our referendum democracy, we cannot cede powers to another community which are reserved for the people, who are sovereign in the full sense of the word." De Gaulle replied: "[...] France understands your desire for a form of understanding with the European Community that will not be easy to find. You can rest assured, however, that you will not encounter any difficulties from France."

A few months later – in autumn 1962 – Wahlen as President of the Confederation was given the opportunity to present Switzerland to the Council of Ministers in Brussels and to report on the preparatory work for the framework agreement. The text of his speech is available today (see *dodis.ch/30371*). In the first part, he provided detailed information about Switzerland, its economy and its political structures. But his remarks also included the following impressive passage: "[...] However, in the agreement to be concluded with the Community, Switzerland must maintain its neutrality, which protects its independence, and its domestic structure of federalism and direct democracy. Direct democracy, federalism and neutrality have shaped the political face of Switzerland. They have grown out of its diversity and have given it political stability which, we believe, has had a positive effect on relations with third countries".

Drumbeat 1963

A few weeks later – in January 1963 – it came to a drumbeat. De Gaulle's veto prevented Great Britain from joining the EEC. Why? In March 1963 at the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft" (the working group of the historians), Jean Rudolph von Salis gave two impressive lectures on "De Gaulle" and "Charles de Gaulle and the future of the nation state in the western world" (*dodis.ch/34190*). Von Salis said that de Gaulle was opposed to the USA becoming more and more involved in European politics and its dominance growing. By trying to merge the EEC to a large extent with NATO and also politically linking the neutral EFTA countries, they would not do justice to the character of the European countries. If Great Britain now joined, Charles de Gaulle feared that Anglo-American domination would become even stronger, and France would fall to become a secondary member. He wanted to prevent this by vetoing Britain's accession to the EEC. Federal Councillor Schaffner explained it this way at a later ambassador's meeting: De Gaulle also advocated a partnership between Europe and the United States. The Americans should be faced not only in form but also in substance with an equal Europe – not "une Europe intégrée, donc diminuée" (*dodis.ch/30358*).

Stop the association treaty – a breathing space and the Free Trade Treaty of 1972

De Gaulle's veto gave Switzerland a breathing space and saved EFTA. Discussions on the framework agreement were broken off and most of the working groups dissolved – with the exception of the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Historische Standortbestimmung" (Working Group for Historical Assessment). EFTA was able to recover and strengthen after the turbulent years, which had almost brought its downfall. And at the beginning of the 1970s, from a stronger position, it was able to negotiate the large free trade agreement with the countries of the EC. This treaty brought economic cooperation with the EC countries on a liberal basis and without the political involvement demanded by the framework or association treaty demanded by the USA. Sovereignty was maintained and the contractors were

on an equal footing. In the referendum of 1972, the free trade agreement was accepted by more than 70 per cent and by all cantons. In the years that followed, this contract was continually expanded and refined, so that today it consists of more than 100 contracts. – It is a worthy treaty based on equality which respects sovereignty and which is still in force today. It is the real foundation of Switzerland's economic relations with the EU. Without de Gaulle, this contract would not have been possible. Without de Gaulle, EFTA would not exist for a long time, and the influence of the US in Europe would be even more dominant than it is today.

In the seventies followed tension-free "golden" years in the relationship between Switzerland and the European Community. In the eighties, however, the question of political connection arose again: EEA – application for membership – Bilateral Agreements I and II – combined with several referenda are keywords – and today again a framework agreement. (see *Current Concerns* No 10 of 8 May) •

"No ban on thinking"

Only the diehards are able to plead today for rapprochement with the EU or even accession to the EU. After 26 years of EU mismanagement, the enlightened cosmopolitan citizen, who does not live with blinders, has long understood that the 30,000 – or depending on the source, even 80,000 – civil servants in Brussels do not provide any impetus for "more contests and economic efficiency". He understands that the talk of "reform backlog" and "structural change" means putting profit before human welfare and laying off 80, 500 or even 1000 workers and transferring branches of industry or entire companies abroad, because the group is not supposed to make 15% but 18% profit and wages abroad are lower. He has long understood that the demand to "drop the illiberal bans on thinking and taboos" requires him to give up independent thinking and that "foreign policy opening" means isolation in the EU internal market and the abandonment of direct democracy. He just can't be fooled by an X for a U anymore. •

A visit to our twin town of Gatchina

Doris and Gerhard Feigenbutz

A newly-retired person gives thought to ways in which he will want to fill his new time of leisure. Our small town of Ettlingen now has five twin towns in France, Belgium, England, Saxony (Löbau), Russia and Italy. At the market festival of Ettlingen, these twin towns have stalls with products and information. Except for having occasionally bought a jar of lemon jam from Menfi, we had so far had no points of contact to these partner communities. Strange – why hadn't we? At the end of 2017, another trip to Gatchina, Ettlingen's twin towns in Russia, was advertised. Gatchina is located 45 kilometres south of St Petersburg and has about 90,000 inhabitants. Interested parties were invited to attend a preliminary meeting in January. So why should we not attend to town twinning for once?

The German-Russian Society Ettlingen was organising the tour. After three preliminary meetings and clarification of all our questions, we registered for it. This trip to Russia took place from 5 to 13 May under experienced guidance. Not that we did not have any concerns: Will we get shortchanged as tourists in Russia? Might there be any inconveniences if we moved about alone in the evening?

In the first four days, a rich cultural programme in Moscow and St Petersburg awaited the 17-person group. Local guides led us to the various sights and gave us an insight into the magnificent history of art, the work of craftsmen and architects of Tsarist Russia. What attracted our attention: The tour guides, who spoke German very well, were able to provide detailed information on all questions.

In the middle of our trip, it was the 9 May, a holiday on which "Victory Day" is celebrated in Russia. Under the motto "The Immortal Regiment", people – including young people – gather in over 500 cities for a commemorative march and carry pictures of family members who fought in the "Great Patriotic War". Billboards and large monitors in public places remind people of scenes from the Second World War.

The true destination of our trip, however, was the encounter with good "old" acquaintances in Gatchina. Memories and news were exchanged at a joint dinner. This conversation was possible because some people in our twin town speak German very well, and some people from Ettlingen speak some Russian. Three participants had even booked a Russian course at the "Volkshochschule" (the adult education) especially for this trip.

This time, the "School of the Third Age" was selected as a local visiting destination, a senior citizens' facility, which was built



(picture ma)

on the model of the Ettlinger Senior Citizens' Meeting Centre. At the gate, our group was welcomed warmly by two highly decorated war veterans. At the entrance to the building, some older women dressed in colourful costumes formed a guard of honour and welcomed their guests with bread, salt and lusty singing. In the hallway, they presented a selection of their lovingly hand-crafted handiworks: paintings, embroidery, jewelery and caskets in fretwork, the lace patterns of which were as precise as if they had been cut with lasers. These older women rewrite Russian fairy tales and perform them with beautiful and original handmade hand puppets in front of children. Singing and dancing enjoy particular popularity, and the seniors have already received prizes for their performances. It promotes, they told us, health and happiness in life. From their, they gave some samples of their high level of singing and dancing to accordion music and asked us, their guests, to dance with them. A lovingly and richly set coffee table rounded off their hospitality. In a short speech, the veterans expressed their desire that the people would never again go to war against each other, and that friendship ("Druzhiba") might arise instead. The Group from Ettlingen left the "School of the Third Age" deeply impressed and with small home-made gifts.

Another intended destination was Gatchina Palace. The head of the castle museum, a teacher of German, led the group through the premises with linguistically precise explanations, at least through those rooms which have been restored. Gatchina had been occupied by German troops since the summer of 1941 and been renamed Lindemannstadt after the Ger-

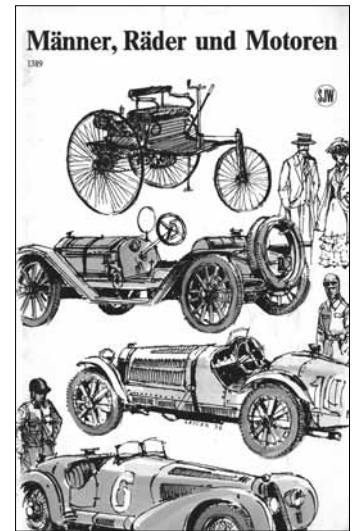
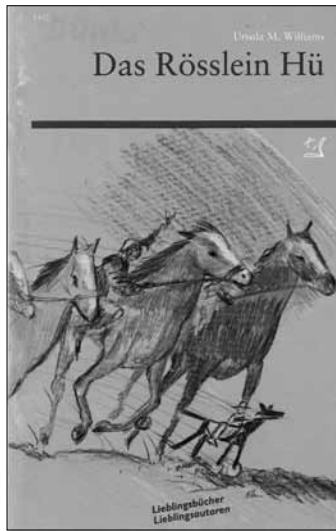
man Colonel-General *Georg Lindemann*. During the withdrawal of the Wehrmacht in 1944, the castle was laid waste and set on fire. A plaque with an inscription of a German soldier still commemorates the looting: "Here we have been, we are going now. When Ivan comes, everything will be empty." Up to today, restoration has only partly been possible.

The plan for the last day was a stroll around the market in Gatchina. At a stand for nuts and dried fruits we stocked up on a lot of products. The saleswoman of course noticed that we were tourists, and gave us a small packet of mixed nuts for the return trip.

And the key-take-away of this trip? Contrary to our fears, we were neither ripped off nor threatened. During our evening rambles in Moscow and St Petersburg, we never felt insecure. We found the people to be very friendly. Twice young people offered us a seat in the Moscow metro. By the way, the public space in Moscow is kept very clean. Tourist tour guides fulfil their task very competently. We learned that they have to take an exam and only get a certificate after passing this successfully. This means that the Russians want to put the communication of their country's history, art and culture only in knowledgeable hands. The memories of the Second World War victims are still upheld today. We felt grateful that no resentment was shown towards us.

At the end of August, some Gatschina citizens will visit the market festival in Ettlingen. We are looking forward to a reunion. We will be happy to participate in events with them and to provide accommodation for someone amongst them. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)



Reading pleasure, cultural and knowledge transfer On the importance of the Swiss Youth Literature, SJW

by Renate Dünki

Reading is much more than a technique. While reading, the reader immerses in someone else's mind and imagination and links them with his own. The impartation of this demanding ability is primarily the task of the school. The best way to do that is reading together. From a classroom reading matter that corresponds to the world of children and conveys values, usually vivid conversations develop. Reading together allows the children to focus on the content, to express themselves freely on the topic and to involve the thoughts of the classmates. This active reading, thinking, empathizing and participating leads to independent thinking and promotes in dialogue the personality of each individual. Therefore, as teacher it is very important to me to awaken and anchor the interest in reading with students. The result of a dedicated classroom reading was, for example, that two ten-year-old boys spontaneously expressed their desire to become a "writer". Reading pleasure arises from such experiences, in lively exchange with an adult and with peers. I myself was always accompanied by the enjoyment of reading. It led to my first profession as a bookseller and later on to the decision to give weight to teaching as a teacher.

Reading experience in this sense requires texts that are linguistically and substantively stimulating. Reading material that provides access to reading which takes children into the larger community of the class and gives them guidance, is not easy to find today. In search of suitable classroom reading, I soon came across the well-known series of Swiss "SJW magazines". Especially older issues of the series convinced me by the quality of their human concerns. It is not for nothing that they have long enjoyed

"Fascinating even the most vulnerable for reading and learning has been the hallmark of the Swiss elementary school since Pestalozzi; all pupils should be supported on the basis of mental and social education and solid knowledge should be taught to all. With this concern, the SJW was founded. It developed good reading offers appropriate for the lower, middle and upper grades."

great appreciation among the Swiss population. Its cause has tradition:

The *Swiss Youth Literature*, SJW was founded in 1931 by various institutions, including the Swiss Teachers Association, supporting with a loan. Reform educational and culture-promoting concerns found their expression in the founding. Educationally valuable content should be taught from the very beginning.¹ Since 1957, the SJW has been a non-profit charitable foundation. The SJW booklets were developed as a low-cost, high-quality offer for children and adolescents in the four national languages German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic. Many famous Swiss authors are represented with one or several contributions: *Gottfried Keller*, *Meinrad Inglin*, *Friedrich Dürrenmatt*, *Franz Hohler* and many more. The booklets are also a forum for Swiss illustrators.

In my search, I came across excellent child-friendly booklets, narrated by *Olga Meyer*, *Elisabeth Lenhardt* and others – teachers who wrote sensitive stories for their primary school students in order to give them something for life. The author of a story for the lower grades writes: "As a teacher, I try to make the pupils enjoy reading. There are enough children's books. Why did I start writing myself? At the moment I am dealing with children who have difficulties at school.

They, too, are enthusiastic about reading, if the language is simple and the narrative exciting. Unfortunately, in many children's books both do not apply. That's how I started to write stories for my own students – and sometimes about my pupils as well."² Fascinating even the most vulnerable for reading and learning has been the hallmark of the Swiss elementary school since *Pestalozzi*; all pupils should be supported on the basis of mental and social education and solid knowledge should be taught to all. With this concern, the SJW was founded. It developed good reading offers appropriate for the lower, middle and upper grades.

In the series of these booklets, there were in addition to the first reading offer many years of the literary area in which finely drawn representations of the of children's experiences can be found. Such descriptions are incorporated in the booklets of *Max Zulliger*³, *Elisabeth Heck*⁴ and others. The topic of mutual help was addressed at all levels. An example of the lower level is "Claudia" by *Max Bolliger* (issue 1154). This story describes the inner development of a boy who is ashamed of his mentally handicapped sister, but, with the help of a friend and the understanding of his mother he finds a new relationship with the Sister. Time and again, exempla-

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"Reading pleasure, cultural ..."

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ry biographies of people in the service of humanity (*Florence Nightingale, Henry Dunant, Albert Schweitzer ...*) were drawn up for the middle and high school, showing how people could decide to support each other, thus effectuating a lot.

Other topics of the SJW issues were history; play and entertainment; sports; travel and adventure; technology and traffic; from nature; and science ... In these journals the respect for the performance of people was also expressed. Some of the notebooks seem a bit strange in language today, not all would be un-

derstood by every child today. However, as far as the content is concerned they are constructive.

Reviving such positive content would be valuable in today's time. Such topics give perspectives and convey hope. There are still enough examples of aid and humanitarian activity today. Its worth it to convey them to children and young people (for example: Youth Red Cross – Helping without asking, Youth Fire Brigade ...) If the described valuable booklets of the SJW, which also form a bridge between the national languages, serve as a basis for reading in class, they could limit the impact of some shortcomings in today's lessons. Reading joy de-

velops in common reading through the inner sympathy in dialogue with the others. As in previous years, teachers today could start writing down stories from everyday school life that promote friendship, mutual helping and cohesion. •

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- ¹ See the detailed classification and appreciation of the SJW in the article by *Urs Knoblauch*, "Teaching valuable content". In *Current Concern* No. 1/2 of January 3, 2008; see also the current exhibition in the cantonal library of Grisons: «SJW - Reading pleasure since 1932»
- ² Heck, Elisabeth. *The weakest wins, SJW 1305*
- ³ For example: Zulliger, Max. Barri, *No. 1247* or Bolliger, Max. Stummel, the *Hasenkind, No. 2464*
- ⁴ Heck, Elisabeth. *The weakest wins, SJW 1305*
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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"Good girls come to heaven, ..."
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"Unspunnen – Youth Day"
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