

# Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## Required – an uprising of the sheep against the death sentence of the dominant financial and trade policy!

Food security must be raised to the level of a human right

by Professor Dr Heinrich Wohlmeyer

Why does an “old man” (82 years old) like me write this call for resistance?

The reason is that I am surrounded by the decision makers’ blindness to the future, or respectively, their future-orientated criminality, and by the “silence of the sheep”.<sup>1</sup> Those who are not sheep farmers can hardly understand this metaphor taken from the Bible<sup>2</sup>. Unlike all other livestock species, sheep yield without bleating or crying desperately, when they are led to the slaughterhouse.

The smallholder farmers with their multi-faceted economy are being ruthlessly sacrificed to the largely-capitalised global market rulers, who maximise their profits in the short term and invest their growing financial assets in buying ever more land. And always an inviolable, immutable and wealth-increasing “world market” is spoken of as if it were a naturally given form of economic commerce.

### Regional allocation or fatal competition

The most recent of these actions which are criminal against our future is the EU Commission’s waving through the CETA agreement with Canada and its toothless treatment by the European Parliament and national governments and parliaments. In the case of the latter, I deliberately do not

use the word “representation of the people” because the mainstream major interests are catered for, clearly against the will of the majority of the population.

At present, on average six small farmers give up in Austria every day. This is presented as a natural “structural adjustment”. But in fact, the food security of our children and grandchildren is being sold.

Why I dare say this: All high cultures with a scarcity of cultivation areas have developed horticultural-diverse production patterns, and we also made sure in this way that the nutrition supply would remain intact even in a situation of disturbed supplies and deliveries. I experienced the Second World War and the time of need firsthand and consciously as a child. Our self-sufficient farmers with their diverse methods and results of producing food were able to ensure an emergency supply. We were then still able to send our children to the countryside to gain weight, and “hoarders” might come and ask for a bit of bread, some eggs or some meat and vegetables.

At that time, small farmers were able to intensify their gardening. The “housefields” of my host parents were large labour-intensive gardens with the highest level of productivity. Now most of the peasants with their “streamlined” farms

will find themselves distressed in times of crisis.<sup>3</sup>

### Short-sighted productivity maximisation instead of long-term production safety

If we dare to use looking back from the future as a method for the setting of goals, then we will see a storm brewing in the overall policy and in the agricultural policy embedded in it. We will soon be sinking below 2,000 square metres of arable land per inhabitant of the earth. The fossil resources and phosphate reserves which made possible the current hyped-up “modern” production systems are coming to an end, and the craftsmanship of managing difficult terrains and barren soils is being lost because of the “elimination” of small farmers. The loss of that ecological diversity (biodiversity) which is the prerequisite for system stability, of site-adapted management and intensification in an emergency goes hand in hand with the economic world events that have been imposed on us. Currently, about 75% of the food comes from 12 plant and 5 animal species. Only about 200 of around 10,000 edible plant species are used.

All this is said to be justified by the need to maximise labour productivity and consumer benefits. Thereby it is factored out that this short-term thinking is at the expense of future food security. The central economic-ecological question (How can I sustainably achieve an optimal net harvest of solar energy in human-usable form?) is not asked.

### When a generation pampered by consumerism make politics ...

In addition, the state and supranational (EU) budgets are suffering in the current fiscal policy situation, so that the over-economic benefits of farmers and the safeguarding of their livelihood by means of a counter-current base amount can no longer be funded.<sup>4</sup>

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*Heinrich Wohlmeyer* was born in St. Pölten, Lower Austria, in 1936. He studied in Vienna, London and the US. He is an Austrian industrial and research manager as well as a regional developer and was active in industrial and regional development

for over 20 years. He was one of the first to initiate sustainable concepts and created the Austrian Union of Agricultural and Nutritional Scientific Research and the Austrian Society for Biotechnology. Heinrich Wohlmeyer taught at the Technical Uni-

versity in Vienna and at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna. He initiated the Austrian legislation for balancing expenditure and is the author of countless trade articles, among which focus on CETA-, TISA-, and TTIP- agreements. Today Wohlmeyer operates a mountain farm in Lilienfeld (Austria). Wohlmeyer is married, has three daughters and five grandchildren. His books include: *The WTO, Agriculture and Sustainable Development* (2002); *“Globales Schafe Scheren – Gegen die Politik des Niedergangs* (2006) (*Global Sheep Shearing – Against the Politics of Defeat*); *“Empörung in Europa – Wege aus der Krise* (2012) (*Outrage in Europe – Ways out of the Crisis*)”.

(picture ma)

**"Required – an uprising of ..."**

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There is also a trade policy that treats agriculture "like any other industry" - an inadmissible procedure, as was already pointed out by *F. Graham* in 1923.<sup>5</sup>

"Moreover, the accumulation of capital in the hands of only a few, who are aware of the end of the game in the financial markets, leads to the fact that they flee into tangible assets." The international and local buying-up of land by private big-business-owners and by sovereign wealth funds is running at full speed (see especially China, land grabbing). The result is remote agricultural management without contact with soil, crop or animal, as well as short-term profit maximisation goals.

The renaming of the "Ministry of Agriculture" in Austria into a Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism shows how non-knowledgeable is the current policy. For the young Federal Chancellor and the young Minister, food sovereignty is no longer a central issue. The younger generation sees the abundant inflow of food as a matter of course, and can no longer imagine the "case of failure of supplies". The same applies to the collapse of the IT systems.

The current supply systems, however, are highly vulnerable. Trouble may arise through natural events, through sabotage and terrorism as well as through wars. Parallel to the armed attack, every "modern" aggression begins with the elimination of the IT, energy and traffic systems. This means that we are thrown back on the regional emergency supply. Regional food sovereignty should therefore be a top target for overall and agricultural policies. What do we therefore urgently need?

**Tax-free admission – yes, but only for the same performance**

1) Local food security must be raised to the level of an indispensable human right. Compared to this all other interests have to be put aside. This applies in particular to trade policy.

The principle of "national treatment" included in all WTO agreements (GATT, GATS, TRIPS) says that you may not treat a foreigner "worse" than a resident. Conversely, you do not have to treat a foreigner "better" than a resident.

Duty-free access should therefore only be granted if the performance (goods or services) has been created under comparable environmental and social standards as those that apply and are practiced in the country of destination (country of destination principle).

Only under this fundamental protection can the detailed measures with which agricultural policy is currently operating be successful. Without the necessary trade

policy protection, the various subsidies are nothing more than delaying "euthanasia assistance".

**Budget consolidation in financial policy**

2) In financial policy, the revenue-side recovery of budgets is a precondition for countermeasures, as long as trade policy is not flanked accordingly, as well as a condition for compensation of agricultural over-achievement (in particular cultural landscapes which create well-being, water conservation, conservation of ecological diversity). In my Manifesto, which has already been translated into eight languages (available on the Internet under "Wiener Wende"), I have outlined the ways of doing so (in particular capital sales tax and an internet duty).

**Paying attention to what nature dictates**

3) The overall policy must be based on the system principles of the biosphere prescribed by nature. This means:

- Solar orientation of the energy supply (then there will be no such thing as unusable agricultural surpluses),
- closed cycle orientation of the material flows (the farmer functioning as the manager of a recycling station),
- cascading use of energy and materials (avoidance of unnecessary entropy),
- optimal ecological diversity (biodiversity, buffering and adaptive supply systems),
- Decentralisation and intelligent networking as basic enabling strategies that also lead to the creation of meaningful jobs and living spaces.

**Alliance for the future**

4) The peasantry as a minority must form credible and trusting alliances with all other social groups - especially the workers, the consumers in general and the conservationists and environmentalists.

If we fail to achieve the widespread "insurrection of the sheep" in favour of these reversals, then the slow dying of small-scale and location-oriented peasants is certain, and this will "rationalise away" our food security in the event of crisis and even our children's food security, which I call future-orientated criminality.

Finally, let me add a note on securing the management of land yielding only a marginal return, which we will need for future local food security. This can be achieved through compensation paid in inverse proportion to the soil's creditworthiness and proportionally to the climatic and relief-related complications. This handicap-compensation for the disadvantaged would also have a double advantage:

a) In times of scarcity (and these will unfortunately come), the market price would

not depend on the higher costs in the marginal revenue regions (marginal costs). This is a long-term cost advantage for consumers.

b) The landowners in the favourable positions would not gain a socially undesirable differential rent – that is, more social justice as a precondition for peaceful development. •

<sup>1</sup> In 2006, I wrote the bestseller "Globales Schafscheren (Global Sheep Shearing)" and called for rising up, but the "sheep" continue to let themselves be led silently to the slaughterhouse by the "establishment".

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 53: 7: "He was mistreated, and he bowed down; he did not open his mouth like the lamb being led to the slaughter, and like a sheep silenced by his jacks, he did not open his mouth."

<sup>3</sup> *Josef Heringer* therefore coined the phrase: "Either the world becomes a garden or it becomes a battlefield."

<sup>4</sup> In connection with this, see R. Keller and N. Backhaus, "Zentrale Landschaftsleistungen erkennen und in Politik und Praxis stärken – Erkenntnisse eines transdisziplinären Forschungsprojekts in der Schweiz. (Recognising Central Landscape Achievements and Strengthening Them in Politics and Practice – Findings from a transdisciplinary research project in Switzerland)". In: *Naturschutz und Landschaftsplanung* (Protection of Nature and Landscape Planning) 50 (3), 2018, 084 – 089, ISSN 0940 – 6808

<sup>5</sup> See also my book "The WTO, Agriculture and Sustainable Development", Greenleaf Publishing 2002

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Swiss national referendum of 23 September 2018

## Yes to productional agriculture without agricultural free trade – no to further weakening of federalism

On 23 September we will vote at federal level on three constitutional amendments:

- Popular Initiative “For healthy, eco-friendly and fairly produced food (Fair-Food-Initiative)”
- Popular Initiative “For Food Sovereignty. Agriculture concerns us all”
- Federal decree on cycle paths, foot and hiking paths

The voting booklet of the Federal Council comes out in a new layout and is – as the Federal Council mentions – really somewhat more informative. That means that objections against the initiatives are less often repeated and the initiators have more

space available for their arguments. An item which has been criticised for long remains unchanged: The recommendations for the election by Federal Council and parliament are printed in big types at the beginning and the end of the booklet and are emphasised by a graphics of the voting results of National Council and Council of States. From a democratic point of view it is and stays questionable to spoon-feed the citizens in such a way.

Here the three drafts shall be presented in their essentials. About the food-initiatives Current Concerns has informed several times in detail.<sup>1</sup>

### Fair-Food-Initiative and Popular Initiative “For Food-Sovereignty”

mw. The Fair-Food-Initiative (short: Fair-Food) was brought in by the Swiss Green Party, the Popular Initiative “For Food Sovereignty” (cited Food-Sovereignty) by Uniterre, a peasant organisation which advocates sustainable agriculture. Both initiatives pursue similar aims. They show the wish of broad parts of the population for eco-friendly produced food of high quality, but although their will to maintain and strengthen the small-scale and sustainable Swiss agriculture. Therefore both [initiatives] are against an opening of the borders for the agrarian economy which the Federal Council is striving for for quite some time now.

*With a Yes to one – or better to both – initiatives the sovereign can prevent agricultural agreements with the EU or other free trade agreements including agriculture.*

The voting texts (see box 1 and 2) mention the demanded changes in agriculture clearly understandable but partly all too much in detail. But let us not be led on side tracks: essential is the fundamental alignment. As help for a political classification we recite some crucial arguments of the initiative committee out of the voting booklet and comment it in the context of the objections of the Federal Council.

• *The small-scale Swiss agriculture with its products of high quality and its high environmental and animal protection standards shall be preserved and further developed.*

*Fair-Food:* “Food shall be produced in accordance with animal welfare and environment under fair working conditions. This is the will of the consumers. The Fair-Food-Initiative promotes sustainable agriculture in Switzerland. [...]. Farmers shall reach a fair price with their products. The initiative promotes merchandising of regionally produced food. This doesn't

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“With a Yes to one – or better to both – initiatives the sovereign can prevent agricultural agreements with the EU or other free trade agreements including agriculture.”

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make them more expensive but more fresh and healthy.[...]”<sup>3</sup>

*Food Sovereignty:* “Our initiative promotes a domestic peasant agriculture which is profitable and diverse, which produces healthy food for the population and at the same time meets the social and ecological requirements.”<sup>4</sup>

*Federal Council to Fair-Food:* “The initiative was unnecessary because according to Swiss law already today high requirements to domestic food production are in place.”<sup>5</sup>

*Federal Council to Food Sovereignty:* “The popular initiative aims at a politics as it was pursued until the beginning of the 90s. It would annihilate the achievements of the agricultural politics of the last 25 years – in this time agriculture was increasingly focused on the market.”<sup>6</sup>

*Comment:* The aims of both initiatives correspond with the claims of the report Agriculture at a Crossroads: The regional, small-scale agriculture shall be strengthened all over the world. Because Swiss agricultural politics doesn't comply with these aims up to now both initiatives want to oblige the federal authorities to them. Instead parts of the Federal Council, of the federal authorities and of the parliament pursue since the beginning of the 90s the direction of an increasing EU-integration. “Stronger alignment to the market” therefore means in the first line preparation for an agreement with the EU on agriculture (and other agreements of free trade). The initiatives counteract.

• *Control of agricultural import-products instead of limitless free trade*

*Fair-Food:* “Nearly half of the food and animal food in Switzerland today is imported. Instead of limitless free trade also for imports a quality strategy is needed. [...] The Fair-Food-Initiative improves the declaration so that consumers have a free choice. Products from a fair trade and of peasant family businesses shall be advantaged. [...]”<sup>3</sup>

*Food Sovereignty:* “In order to promote a production under social and ecological conditions which comply with Swiss norms, the federal government charges tariffs to the import of agricultural products and food which don't conform with these norms; they can forbid the import of these.” (FC Art. 104c para. 8 new see box 2)

*Federal Council to Fair-Food (similar to Food-Sovereignty):* “The initiative claims that as a matter of principle Swiss standards are valid for imported food, too. [...] These standards could interfere with trade agreements. If Switzerland creates unilateral trade barriers it endangers the advantages of this agreements for example the simplified access to international markets.”<sup>5</sup>

*Comment:* “Simplified access to international markets” would be an advantage above all for large pharmaceutical and engineering groups – as most of them are already present all over the world. In its synopsis for a medium term further devel-

**"Yes to productional ..."**

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opment of agricultural politics of 1 November 2017, the Federal Council reveals that it intends to sacrifice agriculture in favour of the export industry: "Border barriers for agricultural goods are to be dismantled through mutual market opening within the framework of free trade agreements in order to create new export potential for agricultural products, food and industrial products."<sup>8</sup>

Both initiatives oppose such understanding of free trade agreements – which in reality lead away from freedom and threaten the existence of Swiss farms.

• **Definitive ban on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture**

**Food sovereignty:** The new Art. 104c para 4 aims to definitively ban the use of GMOs in agriculture. (see box 2)<sup>7</sup>

**Federal Council:** Apart from for research activities, Switzerland has a moratorium on genetic engineering, which has already been extended three times by the parliament. "The extension of the moratorium until 2021 should allow a thorough and objective discussion on the possible use of GMOs in Swiss agriculture."<sup>5</sup>

**Comment:** The Federal Council is ignoring the referendum of 27 November 2005, in which 55.7% of the votes and all cantons had banned the use of GMOs in agriculture for five years. The threefold extension by the parliament corresponded to the clear

"Nearly half of the food and animal food in Switzerland today is imported. Instead of limitless free trade also for imports a quality strategy is needed." (*Fair-Food-Initiative*)

will of the people – otherwise the referendum would certainly have been taken. The ongoing debate in parliament is expected to lead to a further extension until 2021. (*SRF Tagesschau*, Swiss Radio and Television daily news of 1.3.2017) On the other hand, the Federal Council has always campaigned against an extension of the moratorium in disregard of the will of the people. Today it does it again. Whose interest does the Federal Council work for?

**Dirty trick with the counter proposal**

Let us not get ripped off again on 23 September!

As a reminder: Due to an unprecedented voting campaign, on 24 September 2017 the sovereign approved a counter proposal to the "For food security" initiative of the Swiss Farmers' Union (SFU). At every corner hung posters, make the voters believe that it was about strengthening local agricultural production and peasantry. Some top representatives of the SFU were persuaded by false promises to withdraw their initiative and make propaganda for the counter proposal.<sup>9</sup>

Even before the referendum in July 2017, Federal Councillor *Johann Schneider-Ammann*, head of the EAER (Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Ed-

ucation and Research), had clearly stated that the counter proposal had completely different objectives than the withdrawn popular initiative: "New is [in the counter proposal, *mw*] that cross-border trade becomes a matter of course. The initiative would have been a step backwards; it would have increasingly sealed off the country. [...] This closure had to be prevented. We must be able making our trade relations successful, and in each case, agriculture must also make concessions and face increasing competition." To put it in a nutshell: "An interpretation according to which the counter proposal would make the border guard permanent and additionally protect the internal market, is certainly not right."<sup>10</sup>

As in the voting booklet such captious statements of course were not written, the people agreed to the sham (today's Article 104a of the Federal Constitution).

**The counter proposal ought to subjugate both initiatives**

The counter proposal of 24 September 2017 was designed to subjugate the Fair-Food-Initiative and the Initiative for Food Sovereignty in advance, as its author the

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## Voting text for the initiative "For Food Sovereignty"

The Federal Constitution shall be amended as follows:

**Art. 104c Food Sovereignty**

- 1 For the implementation of food sovereignty, the Swiss Confederation shall promote a domestic peasant agriculture that is profitable and diverse, producing healthy food, and that meets the social and environmental expectations of the people.
- 2 It shall ensure a supply of mainly domestic food and foodstuff and the preservation of natural resources in their production.
- 3 It shall take effective measures with the aim of:
  - a promoting an increase in the number of people working in agriculture as well as in structural diversity;
  - b preserving cultivated areas, especially crop rotation areas, both in terms of scope and quality;
  - c ensuring farmers' rights to use, reproduce, exchange and market seeds.

- 4 It shall prohibit agricultural use of genetically modified organisms and of plants and animals that have come about with the help of new technologies by means of which the genome is altered or recomposed in a way that is not natural.
- 5 It shall undertake the following tasks, namely:
  - a It supports the creation of farmers' organisations that are geared to ensure that the supply offered by farmers and the needs of the population are coordinated.
  - b It ensures transparency in the market and works towards fair prices being set in all branches and chains of production.
  - c It reinforces direct trade between the farmers and the consumers as well as the regional processing, storage and marketing structures.
- 6 It shall pay special attention to the working conditions of agricultural workers and shall ensure that these conditions are kept uniformly throughout Switzerland.

- 7 To maintain and promote domestic production it shall raise tariffs on imports of agricultural and food products and regulate the volume of imports.
- 8 To promote production under social and environmental conditions that meet Swiss standards, it shall raise tariffs on imports of agricultural and food products that do not meet those standards; it may ban their import.
- 9 It shall pay no subsidies for the export of agricultural products and foodstuffs.
- 10 It shall ensure information on the conditions for the production and processing of domestic and imported foods and the awareness thereof. It may set its own quality standards regardless of international norms.

**Art. 197 para 12**

**Transitional provision for Art. 104c (Food sovereignty)**

The Federal Council will submit the statutory provisions necessary for the implementation of Article 104c to the Federal Assembly within two years after its adoption by the people and the states.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

**“Yes to productional ...”**

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Council of States Commission for Economic Affairs and Taxation (EATC) has stated in November 2016. With the counter proposal, the commission “wants to accomplish a better starting position for combating these two initiatives”.<sup>9</sup>

Even more clearly becomes Johann Schneider-Ammann in the debate of the Council of States on 29 November 2016: “The Commission’s concept is [...] not only based on the one initiative that we need to handle, but also on the three that are approaching us and need clarification [...]”. In the current voting booklet, the Federal Council “manages” the matter by writing twice that the two initiatives should be rejected because the orientation of agricultural policy towards the market was confirmed by the voters on 24 September 2017.

A strange kind of logic, as the sovereign has the freedom to correct this agricultural policy orientation on 23 September 2018.

## “Definitive ban on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture”. (*Initiative for Food Sovereignty*)

**Use the opportunity to correct course!**  
Conclusion: When weighing up the different points of view, it becomes clear that the Fair-Food-Initiative and the initiative “For Food Sovereignty” pursue completely different goals than the Federal Council’s agricultural policy, as described here. Those who care about healthy and environmentally friendly food production, who do not want to expose our family farms to open borders for agricultural imports and thus to ruin, have the opportunity to vote twice yes on 23 September. •

<sup>1</sup> *Current Concerns* No 7, 3 April 2018: Preservation of Swiss agriculture – neither nostalgic nor unworldly, but a requirement of time; *Current Concerns* No 22/23, 23 September 2017: Produce regionally what can be produced in the region, Press Conference on food security and food sovereignty in Berne; *Current Concerns* No 19, 15 August 2017: Food security must be ensured!; *Current Concerns* No 28, 13 December 2016: Popular initiative “For Food Security”, No “walls up policy”, but a commandment

of the hour – not only for Switzerland; *Current Concerns* No 14, 30 Juni 2016: Where will Swiss agriculture go from here? by Dr rer publ. Werner Wüthrich

<sup>2</sup> Voting text Fair-Food-Initiative: *Voting booklet* p. 28/29: voting text Initiative “For Food Sovereignty”: *Voting booklet* p. 38/39

<sup>3</sup> *Voting booklet*, p. 24/25

<sup>4</sup> *Voting booklet*, p. 34/35

<sup>5</sup> *Voting booklet*, p. 26/27

<sup>6</sup> *Voting booklet*, p. 36/37

<sup>7</sup> *Voting booklet*, p. 39

<sup>8</sup> “Gesamtschau zur mittelfristigen Weiterentwicklung der Agrarpolitik (Synopsis for a medium term further development of agricultural politics)” Swiss Federal Council 1. November 2017, p. 49

<sup>9</sup> cf. *Current Concerns* No. 19, 15 August 2017: “No to the counter-proposal on ‘Food security’”

<sup>10</sup> “Bauern stehen unter Heimatschutz”, interview with Federal Councillor Johann Schneider Amman in “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” from 8.7.2017

<sup>11</sup> Report of the Council of States Commission for Economic Affairs and Taxation (EATC) from 3. November 2016, cited in *Current Concerns* No. 28, 13 December 2016: “Popular initiative “For Food Security. No “walls up policy”, but a commandment of the hour – not only for Switzerland.”

<sup>12</sup> [www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=38675](http://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=38675)

### Voting text for the “Fair-Food-Initiative”

The Federal Constitution shall be amended as follows:

#### Art. 104a Foodstuffs

- 1 The Confederation shall strengthen the availability of secure high quality foodstuffs produced in a resource-saving and environmentally and animal-friendly manner and under fair working conditions. It shall specify production and processing requirements.
- 2 It shall ensure that imported agricultural products to be used for human consumption satisfy at least and in principle the requirements under para. 1; with respect to more processed and composite foodstuffs and animal feeds it shall be working towards this goal. It shall promote fair trade products and products from farms that cultivate the land.

- 3 It shall ensure that the adverse effects of the transportation and storage of foodstuffs and animal feed on the environment and the climate will be reduced.
- 4 The Confederation has in particular the following powers and duties:
  - a It shall legislate on the authorisation of foodstuffs and animal feeds and on declarations of production methods and processing procedures.
  - b It may regulate the awarding of tariff quotas and adjust import duties.
  - c It may draw up compulsory target agreements with the food industry, and in particular with importers and retailers.
  - d It shall encourage the processing and marketing of regionally and seasonally produced foodstuffs.

e It shall take measures to curb food waste.

- 5 The Federal Council shall define medium and long-term goals and report regularly on the degree to which targets are achieved. If targets are not met, it shall take additional measures or strengthen the existing ones.

#### Art. 197 para. 11

Transitional provision to Art. 104a (foodstuffs)

If the implementing legislation for Article 104a does not come into force within three years of its adoption by the People and the Cantons, the Federal Council shall issue temporary implementing provisions in the form of an ordinance.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## Federal competence for bicycle paths? How do we stick to federalism?

*mw.* It is being voted on the direct counter-proposal of the parliament on the popular initiative “To promote the bicycle, foot and hiking trails [Velo Initiative]”. The initiators have withdrawn the initiative because the content of the counter proposal is not significantly different.

Article 88 of the Federal Constitution shall now also contain, in addition to the federal competence for the regulation of footpath and hiking path networks, the competence regulating bicycle path networks. The Confederation should lay down principles and be given the opportunity to support, coordinate and report on measures for cantonal and other cycle paths.

What should you have against it? In Switzerland, many people cycle, on the work or school route, during leisure time and on vacation. Cycling is healthy and environmentally friendly. As an enthusiastic cyclist, I am happy about every good bike route in the country.

However, the question arises: Why a federal competence? The bicycle network is very well developed and signposted also without help from the Confederation in Berne throughout the country, there are long-since area-covering bicycle-maps.

The most important objection to new federal competences is the principle of the sovereignty of the cantons, which is enshrined in Article 3 of the Federal Constitution: “The cantons are sovereign, insofar as their sovereignty is not limited by the Federal Constitution; they exercise all rights that are not assigned to the Confederation.”

### Federalism as an essential pillar of Switzerland

Strong federalism is an essential, historical pillar of the Swiss federal state. As hitherto sovereign states, the cantons had joined forces in 1848 to form a federal state. Any responsibility the Confederation wanted to claim from then on, starting with the national currency, the post and the army, had to be incorporated into the Federal Constitution by the sovereign, that is to say, the majority of people and cantons. As complementary rule has been since the beginning the principle of sub-



*Small scale agriculture in the bicycle country Switzerland (picture mt)*

sidarity: The federal government should only become active where the cantons do not or not sufficiently fulfill a task. The same applies to the canton in relation to the communes. This proven unwritten rule was introduced into the Constitution by the sovereign in November 2004 as Article 5a: “The principle of subsidiarity must be observed when assigning and fulfilling state tasks.”

Unfortunately, these principles have been poorly respected for a long time. In the federal administration and in the conferences of cantonal government councils, which are not legitimated by the people, there are many advocates of “harmonisation”, i.e. centralisation, influenced by the OECD or the EU. These try with pressure and cunning to push from above driven nature parks or unspeakable concoctions as the Curriculum 21 through by the sovereign – often by lure with financial federal contributions. Under the motto of “harmonisation”, more and more areas are assigned to the federal government, which have so far fulfilled the cantons in their own way – just like the installation and maintenance of cycle paths. It is of little use if paragraph 2 of Article 88 F C is to add the following: “In doing so, it preserves the responsibilities of the cantons.”

How do we want to stick with federalism? Maybe as a minority in the National Council and the Council of States has proposed? “A minority of parliament believes that cycling should remain the sole responsibility of the cantons and communes. That has been proven.”<sup>1</sup>

### Voting text

*Federal decree on the cycle paths as well as the footpaths and hiking trails*

*The Federal Constitution is amended as follows:*

*Art. 88 Foot, hiking and bicycle paths*  
*1 The Confederation establishes principles for walking, hiking and cycling networks.*

*2 It can support and coordinate measures of the cantons and third parties for the installation and maintenance of such networks as well as for information about them. In doing so, it preserves the responsibilities of the cantons.*

*3 It takes into account such networks in the performance of its duties. It replaces ways it has to remove.*

<sup>1</sup> *Federal Council voting booklet on the referendum of 23 September 2018, p. 5 (Translation of the voting text Current Concerns)*

# Politics still ignoring the people

## From secret diplomacy to media manipulation

by Karl Müller

As of 22 August 2018, five months after the alleged crime, the US government set strict economic sanctions against Russia into force. These new sanctions are being justified with the claim that Russia used the neurotoxin (the “chemical weapon”) Novichok, in order to kill the former Russian double agent *Skripal* (who also acted for the Russian military secret service GRU), thus crossing the “red line” drawn by the US legislative against the usage of chemical weapons.

The new sanction decisions were taken in parallel with reports of alleged investigations by the British *Scotland Yard*, according to which two suspects had been identified in the Skripal case. Both are secret agents of the Russian military secret service GRU and were now in Russia. Great Britain’s Prime Minister *Theresa May* was faced with the question of whether she wanted to submit an extradition request to Russia. Failure to comply with this request by Russia would lead to a further deterioration and escalation of British-Russian relations.

According to the alleged investigation results of *Scotland Yard* we read: “According to unconfirmed reports, the alleged criminals were identified following months of investigations. Hundreds of detectives had compared the footage from numerous video cameras with data from passengers who had travelled in and out of Great Britain before and after 4 March, the date of the assaults.” (“*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, 7 August 2018)

### Differing conclusions

Which conclusions are now possible? A number of people will say: Now it turns out that the Russians are behind the assassination attempt. So it makes sense that the US government takes appropriate actions and that this curious Putin supporter *Donald Trump* is forced to do what is needed: to impose even stricter sanctions against Russia.

Another group will ask: What is the US government’s justification to decide on new sanctions while nothing is proven in the Skripal case and all allegations made so far (that Novichok was only available in Russia etc.) was disproven? When even the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” speaks of “unconfirmed reports” and “suspected perpetrators” and then also uses such blurred formulations as “the material of countless video cameras”, “hundreds of detectives” and “passenger data of travellers”, then one can come up with all kinds of stories, but nothing is recognisable as proof at all. The

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“The consequences are grotesque and bitter. Economic warfare and worse measures are threatening the livelihood of millions. PR and media serve to cover up the machiavellism of politics, the permanent breaches of law, the political ignorance of human dignity and human rights. Furthermore, people should also become accustomed to this step by step. And the strategy goes one step further: The PR people are aware that this indifference is obvious for every thinking person. So, another goal is to subject thinking and compassionate people to feelings of helplessness. Come on, thinking man, your thoughts and feelings do not interest us, you are meaningless, our means of maintaining power are stronger, we laugh in your face, mockery is our business, we have the upper hand – the ‘masses’ will follow us! ... For how long will this continue?”

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official Russian reactions, which speak of an “economic war” between the US administration and Russia and call the action of the US government contrary to international law, are not so absurd.

### 1918: US President Wilson against secret diplomacy

Early November 1918, nearly 100 years ago, World War I ended. The states of Europe were spent, the people of the millions of victims of the war suffered... and the people rightly asked: How was it possible to get us involved in such a mass murder?

The American President *Woodrow Wilson* used this mood of the people and formulated his 14 Points, which have gone down in the history books. The first point states that the upcoming peace treaties must be concluded openly and publicly: “Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.” This corresponded to the wishes and will of millions. The causes of the World War are still being researched, the controversies continue to this day, archives are still closed, and the secret agreements of the governments and background circles involved in the war were numerous.

### Wilson’s words were followed by different actions

Unfortunately: US President Wilson did not follow up his words with action. On the contrary, from today’s perspective one has to assume that Wilson’s words were ultimately no more than war propaganda, cleverly used to draw the people of Europe (and

the USA) to his side. Wilson had hired a propaganda expert: *Edward Bernays*. “Edward Louis Bernays (\*22 November 1891 in Vienna, †9 March 1995 in New York) is considered, aside with *Ivy Lee* and others as father of Public Relations and an important spin doctor. He himself coined the term PR consultant (Public Relations Counselor) for his profession.” *Wikipedia* German states. Read below: “Bernays supported the American government under Wilson in the *Committee on Public Information* during World War I in its efforts to obtain public approval for a US war entry. His campaign in 1917, the year of the war, was entitled “Make the world safe for democracy.” – What a mockery!

### “Everything must look democratic, but we must have everything in our hands”

Wilson and Bernays knew that 19<sup>th</sup> century methods had served their time. It was no longer possible to tell the people that politics is still none of their business; it was up to the governments alone to decide on this. Politics needed new forms of “legitimation”, and since the end of absolutism a reference to the “divine grace” of the ruler was no longer opportune. Also *Hegel*’s argument that the (Prussian) state represented the supreme “incarnation” of the world spirit was no longer convincing. The sentence attributed to *Walter Ulbricht* (GDR) many years later became the new principle: “Everything must look democratic, but we must have everything in our hands”. The means of choice were PR and media, which took up PR and disseminated it without criticism. This has not changed to this day.

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# Trump-Juncker deal: The big bluff

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer



Professor Dr  
Eberhard Hamer  
(picture ma)

Trump is still more a merchant than a politician, therefore he sees problems more personally and purposefully than politicians do. He has proved this for the third time now:

He had euphorically whipped up the conflict with North Korea right to the danger of war, so that in a personal conversation with *Kim*, he was able to appear as a bearer of peace.

Following the same pattern, he also sought détente with Russia in conversation with *Putin*.

Trump also solved the economic warfare he had engaged in with the EU in a relaxed conversation with Juncker. Both of them allowed themselves to be celebrated for this in the US and in Europe.

The "agreement" of 26 July between Trump and Juncker was not an agreement but a dictate in favour of the US and at the expense of Europe:

## "Politics still ignoring the people"

continued from page 7

### For how long will this continue?

The consequences are grotesque and bitter. Economic warfare and worse measures are threatening the livelihood of millions. PR and media serve to cover up the machiavellism of politics, the permanent breaches of law, the political ignorance of human dignity and human rights. Furthermore, people should also become accustomed to this step by step. And the strategy goes one step further: The PR people are aware that this indifference is obvious for every thinking person. So, another goal is to subject thinking and compassionate people to feelings of helplessness. Come on, thinking man, your thoughts and feelings do not interest us, you are meaningless, our means of maintaining power are stronger, we laugh in your face, mockery is our business, we have the upper hand – the "masses" will follow us!

For how long will this continue? •

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"The European negotiation party has apparently again acted incompetently and to the detriment of Europe in its negotiations with Trump, as it did in the TTIP negotiations; or Juncker, who had to be supported by the American president, had again enjoyed too much. In any case, Trump has again achieved his goals, proved himself the stronger negotiator."

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Europe is committed to increasing the purchase of liquefied natural gas from the US in future, and to building oil terminals in Europe for this purpose. The partners eliminate all barriers to trade in mutual products and also in standards.

Europe enters a coalition of US economic war against China. The rules of the *World Trade Organisation* WTO are to be reformed against the technology theft of China.

It was apparently of particular importance to Trump that Europe should reduce its gas market with Russia (*Nord Stream 2*), and that the US should export large quantities of US LPG to Europe. Because of this insane agreement, Europe's consumers may in future have to accept 30% higher gas costs. Russian gas is available at 180 dollars per 1000 m<sup>3</sup>, while US liquefied gas costs at least 240 dollars.

Things are similar in relation to the highly acclaimed agreement to remove all trade barriers. It refers mainly to agricultural products, and is especially designed to help the US farmers, who are at the moment landed with unsellable soybeans worth 12.3 billion dollars, due to the Chinese counter-sanctions in their trade dispute with the US. They are accordingly upset, but are to vote for Trump again in the autumn. But nobody knows what we Europeans are to do with the heaps of soya.

Europe would also have to agree to shedloads of cheap US hormone meat and accept the full range of hazardous US chemical poisons and pharmaceuticals that have not been approved in this country for good reason. Here TTIP, against which European citizens have fought to the bitter end, is to be withdrawn through the back door and in favour of the US.

Trump can at any rate claim to have fought and won for American farmers and chemical producers. If, on the other hand,

it were proven that Europe will not accept Washington's dictum, Trump would have every reason to tighten sanctions against the EU after the 4 November midterm elections.

The same applies to the agreement of an EU coalition with the United States in the economic war with China. Just recently, the Europeans allied themselves with China against the American sanctions, now the EU (through Juncker) is again promising a European partnership against China. If the Americans turn back against Europe after the 4 November elections, we will have lost our partner China and would stand alone again.

So the exuberant praise of the Trump-Juncker deal offered in particular by the German US courtiers (*Altmaier*: "The EU has negotiated magnificently, secured millions of jobs," *Maas*: "The united appearance of Europe has brought success," *Merkel*: "Excellent result") was nothing but a political measure of stultification without any expertise behind it. The experts of the German economy see things exactly the other way round, namely the agreement as insubstantial; and they accuse Juncker of having unilaterally complied with the US (*Lange, IHK*: "The car duties are not off the table", "The threat continues," *SME Institute Hannover*: "No problem solved, European consumers betrayed and illusory success granted to the US for the 4 November").

The European negotiation party has apparently again acted incompetently and to the detriment of Europe in its negotiations with Trump, as it did in the TTIP negotiations; or Juncker, who had to be supported by the American president, had again enjoyed too much. In any case, Trump has again achieved his goals, proved himself the stronger negotiator. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)



# How Putin and Trump put an end to the war against Syria

by *Thierry Meyssan*

*voltaire.net. The Western press continues to support the elite transnational financiers and to scorn the actions of President Trump. This attitude makes it difficult to understand the progress made towards peace in Syria. Thierry Meyssan looks at the agreements reached during the last five months and the rapid progress on the ground.*

It is with prudence and determination that the Russian Federation and President *Trump* put a definitive end to the domination of the world by transnational interests.

Convinced that the balance of powers does not depend on their economics but rather on their military capacities, President *Putin* has certainly reinvigorated the quality of life for his compatriots, but he developed the Red Army before making the Russians rich. On 1 March, he revealed to the world the principal weapons in his arsenal and the beginning of his programme for economic development.

In the days that followed, the war was concentrated in the Eastern Ghouta. Russian Chief of Staff General *Valeri Guerassimov* telephoned his US counterpart, General *Joseph Dunford*, and told him that in the case of US military intervention, Russian forces would target the 53 US ships in the Mediterranean and the Gulf, including their nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. Above all, he requested that President *Trump* be made aware of his country's new military capacities.

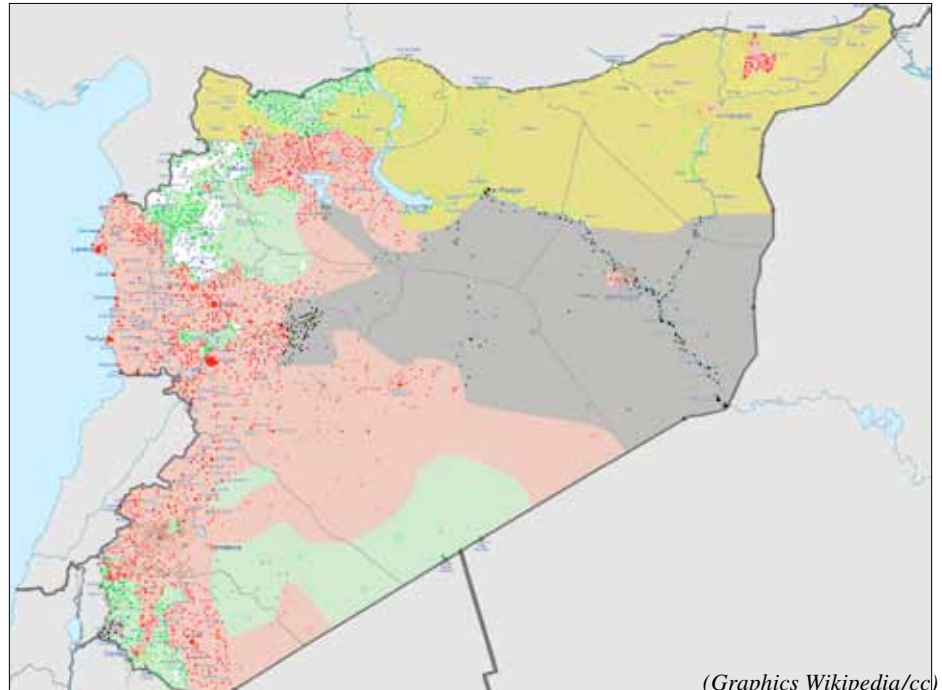
Finally, the United States allowed the Syrian Arab Army and a few Russian infantry-men to free the Ghouta of the jihadists who occupied it.

Only the United Kingdom attempted to anticipate events by organising the "Skripal affair" – if the current world order were to collapse, we would once again have to employ the rhetoric of the Cold War, which set the kindly cowboys against the big bad Russian bears.

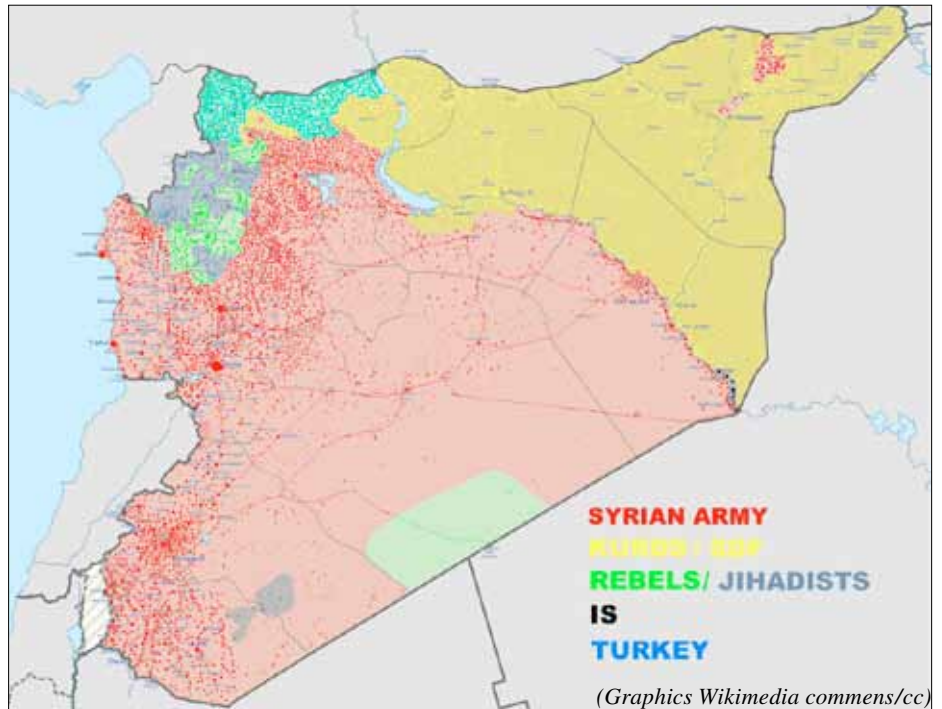
In June, when the Syrian Arab Army, supported by the Russian Air Force, moved into the South of the country, the US embassy in Jordan warned the jihadists that as from now, they would have to defend themselves alone, without the aid or the support of the Pentagon and the CIA.

### Success of summit in Helsinki exceeds all expectations

On 16 July in Helsinki, Presidents *Putin* and *Trump* went a lot further. They broached the subject of reconstruction, in other words, war damage. Donald *Trump*, as we have been writing here for the last



(Graphics Wikipedia/cc)



(Graphics Wikimedia commons/cc)

The two maps show the changes in Syrian territorial dominions from 2015 (map above, 4 years after the war began ) to August 2018 (map below).

two years, is opposed to the Puritan ideology, financial capitalism and the imperialism which is a direct result. He rightly assumes that his country is in no way obliged to bear the consequences of the crimes of his predecessors, of which his people had also been victims. He affirms that these crimes had been committed at the instigation, and for the profit, of the elite transnational financiers. He there-

fore considers that it is for them to pay, even though no-one knows precisely how to make them do so.

The two presidents also agreed to facilitate the return of the refugees. By doing so, Donald *Trump* overthrew the rhetoric of his predecessor, according to which they were escaping "dictatorial repres-

**"How Putin and Trump ..."**

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sion" and not the invasion by the jihadists".

While in the South of the country, the jihadists were themselves fleeing before the Syrian and Russian forces, and a few desperate units of Daesh were committing unimaginable atrocities, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, *Sergey Lavrov*, and the Russian Chief of Staff, Valeri Guerassimov, undertook a tour of Europe and the Middle East.

They were welcomed as discreetly as possible in the European Union. Indeed, according to the Western narrative, General Guerassimov is a conquistador who invaded and annexed Crimea. He is therefore forbidden access to the Union, a self-proclaimed defender of the "rule of law". Unfortunately, since it was too late to remove his name from the list of sanctions, the Union decided to close its eyes to the grand principles and make an exception, allowing a visit by the hero of the reunification of Crimea and Russia. The shame which swamped the West-European leaders when faced with their own hypocrisy may explain the absence of official photographs of the hearings for the Russian delegation.

**Russia is constructing a new peace arrangement for Syria – Merkel and Macron are disturbing**

The Russian delegation resumed for each of its interlocutors a few of the decisions taken at the Helsinki Summit. Acting wisely, it abstained from asking for accounts concerning the role of each state during the war, calling on them only to help end it – withdrawal of the special forces, cessation of the secret war, suppression of the aid to the jihadists, return of the refugees, reopening of the embassies. In particular, it confirmed that everyone could participate in the reconstruction, all inclusive.

As soon as the delegation left, Chancellor *Angela Merkel* and President *Emmanuel Macron* craftily interrogated the Pentagon in order to find out if it was true that President Donald Trump intended to make certain transnational companies pay

(KKR, Lafarge, etc.) – just to destabilise the folks on the other side of the Atlantic. The attitude of President Macron, ex-bank executive, is all the more deplorable in that he tried to symbolise his good faith by offering 44 tonnes of humanitarian aid to the Syrian population, transmitted by the Russian army.

**Preparations for returning of refugees to the Middle East**

In the Middle East, the visit by the Russian delegation was more widely covered by the media. Lavrov and Guerassimov were able to announce the creation of five committees for the return of the refugees. Each committee, in Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, includes representatives of the host state, together with Russian and Syrian delegates. Yet no one dared to ask the hard question – why would a committee like this not include the European Union?

Concerning the reopening of the embassies, the United Arab Emirates stole a march on the Westerners and their allies by negotiating the reopening of their own.

What was left was the Israeli preoccupation with obtaining Syria's departure from the Iranian military advisors and the pro-Iranian militias, including Hezbollah. Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu* multiplied his return trips to and from Moscow and Sochi in order to defend his cause. We may remember that Guerassimov had ironised about the nerve of the beaten Israelis demanding the removal of the Iranian victors. As for Lavrov, he diplomatically ducked behind a fundamental view point concerning interference in Syria's sovereignty.

**Even Israel comes around**

Russia solved the problem – Russian military police re-installed UNO forces along the line of demarcation between Syria and Israel, from which they had been ejected four years ago. During this whole period, they were replaced by Al-Qaida, supported by Tsahal. Behind the line of demarcation, in Syrian territory, Russia has also installed eight military observation posts. In this way, Moscow can guarantee both to the UNO and Syria that the jihadists will not come back, and to Israel that Iran will not attack from Syria.

Israel, which until now had been betting on the defeat of the Syrian Arab Republic, and qualified its President as a "butcher", suddenly admitted by the voice of its Minister for Defence, *Avigdor Liberman*, that Syria was the victor of the conflict, and that President *al-Assad* was its legitimate head. In order to demonstrate his good will, Liberman ordered the bombing of a group of Daesh jihadists that until now he had kept in reserve.

**Little by little to peace**

Little by little, the Russian Federation and the White House are putting some order into international relations, and convincing various protagonists to withdraw from the war, and even to offer bids for the reconstruction. From its side, the Syrian Arab Army continues the liberation of its territory. It remains for President Trump to manage to withdraw his troops from the South (Al-Tanf) and the North of the country (East of the Euphrates), and for President *Erdogan* to abandon the jihadist refugees in the North-West (Idleb) to their destiny. •

(Translation Pete Kimberley)

**Damages resulting from war against Syria total 388 billion dollars. Who must pay?**

The *UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA)* considers that the damages, the aftermath of the war against Syria, reach at least 388,000 million dollars. This figure was the figure announced during a conference that took place in Beirut on 7 and 8 August 2018.

The ESCWA will shortly present its report entitled *Syria, 7 years at war*.

The US President, *Donald Trump*, considers that the conflict that took place in Syria is a war of aggression organised by transnational financial interests – such as the investment fund *KKR*, *Toyota*, the global leader of Cement *Lafarge*, etc. Therefore it must be the transnationals involved and the states that worked with them that have to pay the damages. •

Translation *Anoosha Boralessa*

Source: *Voltaire network* from 9.8.2018

# The Nicaragua coup

## Western politics and media switch to attack mode against Nicaraguan government

by Jens Bernert

It is no secret that there is social unrest currently in Nicaragua. Involvement of the USA and other Western states in the background has been reported by several critical articles about the situation in Nicaragua already.<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8</sup> Western politics and media have switched to attack mode against the Nicaraguan government and report fake news as if there had never been an Iran-Contra-affair.<sup>9</sup> This pattern is only too familiar from other conflicts worldwide. Regime change, by now interpreted as a normal event in the media and as usual associated with profound disinformation.

One geopolitical aspect, however, seems to escape the focus of most critics: the project of the Nicaragua Canal which would connect the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean or the Caribbean as its neighbouring sea. Once completed this channel would obviously challenge the monopole position of the Panama Canal which is now more or less controlled by the USA and the latest extension of which had been ceremoniously opened as recently as 26 June 2016. Apparently there had been concrete preparations to start the construction work. Until the fighting broke out, that is.

Connecting the dots and thinking “Nicaragua Canal” occurred to me only today, certainly due to the scarce media coverage of the project. Although I had read various articles about the Panama Canal and its possible competitor project, the Nicaragua Canal, already one year ago for historical interest. A brief *Google News*<sup>10</sup> search for “Nicaragua Canal” confirms that my suspicion is perhaps not too outlandish and that this tremendously important geopolitical project might really be associated, at least partially, with the current conflict.

The German newspaper “Südwestpresse” published an article on 18 July 2018 which states:

“The students movement accused [Nicaraguan President] Ortega to have delayed putting out fires in a national park in order to transfer pieces of land to landowners who are his supporters. Opponents of the 50 billion dollar ‘Nicaragua Canal’ project fight against huge expropriations by the state.”

I urge you to abstain from reading this “Südwestpresse” article should you stumble upon it in the internet before you have carefully studied the sources I have listed below. It contains so many false tracks that it is basically poisonous. Nevertheless, it mentions the Nicaragua Canal project.



One article in the journal *Spektrum* connects the geopolitical dots with China.<sup>11</sup> This corresponds with my information and the “published opinion” about the Nicaragua Canal.

*Spektrum*: “Presumably, China is interested to have this route opened for geopolitical reasons. [...] China belongs to the biggest buyers of Venezuelan petrol and both states are close allies. Therefore the Peoples’ Republic looking for secure transport alternatives would be only logical, even if the Panama Canal officially belongs to Panama today and is no longer directly controlled by the US.”

And also the daily newspaper “Mannheimer Morgen” “knows” something about the Nicaragua Canal today: “We have to make public what happens in Nicaragua right now’ is Cardenal’s opening statement in his essay and he fumes that President Ortega had whipped the act to build an interoceanic channel through national congress ‘within a single day’ and had given the concession to a Chinese investor and company called *Wang Jing* with ‘nauseating speed’ on the very next day.”

There may be many other reasons why both the opposition and the USA as well their allies want to topple the current Nicaraguan government but, in any case, the Nicaragua Canal project should not be overlooked in this regard. Especially since the topic has been raised in the Western media and our propagandists themselves brought the association between the unrest, which the West is yet again “totally

innocent” about, and the channel, to our attention.

Such a cheap solution to this geopolitically crucial problem will not be offered again to the USA in the foreseeable future. The Nicaraguan government might survive all low-intensity warfare and media smear campaigns but at least the channel projects will probably be stopped. Even if started, the project might have failed for technical reasons, but do you really believe the USA would have taken that risk and watch the project proceed, just hoping for bad luck of the engineers? With or without the Chinese: This channel would deal a severe blow to the USA, at least from the US hardliners’ point of view.

The pension cuts discussed by “Südwestpresse” and Co. were implemented in Nicaragua after the *IMF* (*International Monetary Fund*), which is well-known for being heavily influenced by the US and forcing states world-wide to adopt neoliberal strategies, pressured the government to do so.

Nicaraguan president defied the IMF orders by cutting the pensions to a smaller extent than decreed by the USA. The fact that our propagandists and “activists” are still outraged about the pension cuts by the Nicaraguan government and blame those for the social unrest exemplifies the breath-taking chutzpah of our propagandists. They just take us for fools. •

## More than 100 years ago in Panama ...

by J.R. von Salis

cc. *The renowned Swiss historian J. R. von Salis described the usurpation of the Panama Canal by the then US government in his very own way of writing.*

“Roosevelt has pursued two foreign policy objectives during his presidency: 1. To build the Panama Canal as an undertaking to be carried out exclusively by the United States and under the control of the United States; 2. To exclude foreign interference or land seizure in any part of the Western Hemisphere. Both led to the US interference in Central America itself, taking land on the Isthmus of Panama and establishing its political and economic supremacy in the Caribbean.

Three obstacles had to be overcome before the work on the canal could begin. One was the 1850 *Bulwer-Clayton Treaty* between the United States and England, stipulating equal rights of both partners and the non-fortification of the future canal; the second was the ‘New Panama Canal Society’, who had a priority right to construct the canal; the third and largest of these was that the South American Republic of Colombia owned sovereignty over the area intended for canal construction, as the province of Panama was belonged to this state.

In 1902, the British government renounced its rights under the *Clayton-Bulwer Treaty* in an agreement signed between Ambassador *Pauncefote* and Secretary of State *Hay* and ratified by the US Senate. England recognised the right of the USA to build and fortify the canal under its exclusive control, subject to the right of passage for ships of all nations on equal terms. British politics thus confirmed its partial withdrawal from Central America (where, howev-

er, Jamaica, British Honduras and some smaller Antilles islands, along with British Guiana and the Bahama Islands, still belonged to the British Empire) and the recognition of the special rights and interests of the United States in the Caribbean. It was the time when, after his victory over the Boers, England consolidated its supremacy in Egypt, East and South Africa, concluded a neutrality agreement with Italy, allied itself with Japan and began to settle amicably the many colonial disputes with France and to acknowledge French establishment in Morocco. The British renunciation of well-acquired rights in the Caribbean region did not weigh too heavy in comparison to the prospect of becoming able to withstand the expanding German fleet by rectifying relations with America, Japan, Italy (and in 1904 also with France) and to build up an effective defence of the countries surrounding the North Sea by withdrawing naval units from the Caribbean (later also from the Mediterranean).

The ‘New Panama Canal Company’ – the legal successor of the French *de Lesseps Company* – held the building concession granted by the Republic of Colombia; its owners favoured the possibility of assigning their rights to the USA and made an appropriate offer to the Washington government. Also in the province of Panama itself, the leading groups wanted the Americans to take the construction of the canal into their own hands. However, the plan failed in summer 1903 due to opposition from the Colombian parliament, rejecting a concession agreement between Secretary of State *Hay* and Colombian negotia-

tor *Herran*. An uprising against Colombian supremacy in Panama on 3 November had been instigated by interested parties of the ‘New Panama Canal Society’; the presence of American warships prevented Colombian troops from going ashore to suppress the insurgency movement. Roosevelt was sharply criticised for the offence, wherein he undoubtedly had a hand, ‘and he later admitted that he simply ‘took’ Panama to put an end to the endless chatter and get the work going’ (Beard). Anyway, he recognised the government of the new Republic of Panama just three days after the outbreak of the uprising, and on 18 November, in a treaty between Secretary of State *John Hay* and Panama’s representative, *Philipp Bunau-Varrilla*, the conditions were agreed where under the USA could begin the canal connection. The small republic left the canal zone to the United States for loyal hands and the right to fortify and defend it; the property of the ‘New Panama Canal Society’ was transferred to the United States, paying Panama the same compensation they had offered to the Republic of Colombia.

In addition, the United States were granted similar privileges in the Republic of Panama as in Cuba, guaranteeing independence and preservation of peace and order on the territory and exercising supervision over public financial management. Panama became in fact an American protectorate.”

Source: von Salis, J. R. *Weltgeschichte der neuesten Zeit, Volume III/1, America-Asien-Europa*; Orell Füssli Verlag Zürich, new edition 1980, pp. 57.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

### “The Nicaragua coup”

continued from page 11

<sup>1</sup> [www.rubikon.news/artikel/die-gekaufte-revolution](http://www.rubikon.news/artikel/die-gekaufte-revolution)

<sup>2</sup> [www.rubikon.news/artikel/contras-2-0](http://www.rubikon.news/artikel/contras-2-0)

<sup>3</sup> [blauerbote.com/2018/07/26/bundesregierung-plant-angriff-auf-nicaragua-staatssekretarinnen-reagiert-aggressiv-auf-kritik/](http://blauerbote.com/2018/07/26/bundesregierung-plant-angriff-auf-nicaragua-staatssekretarinnen-reagiert-aggressiv-auf-kritik/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.jungewelt.de/artikel/337135.blaupausen-des-regime-change.html](http://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/337135.blaupausen-des-regime-change.html)

<sup>5</sup> [www.barth-engelbart.de/?p=204056](http://www.barth-engelbart.de/?p=204056)

<sup>6</sup> [amerika21.de/blog/2018/07/207732/nicaragua-definitionssache](http://amerika21.de/blog/2018/07/207732/nicaragua-definitionssache)

<sup>7</sup> [www.jungewelt.de/artikel/336430.nach-drehbuch.html](http://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/336430.nach-drehbuch.html)

<sup>8</sup> [amerika21.de/analyse/206829/nicaragua-solidaritaet-konflikt](http://amerika21.de/analyse/206829/nicaragua-solidaritaet-konflikt)

<sup>9</sup> [www.heise.de/tp/news/Akten-zur-Iran-Contra-Affaere-veroeffentlicht-2032783.html](http://www.heise.de/tp/news/Akten-zur-Iran-Contra-Affaere-veroeffentlicht-2032783.html)

<sup>10</sup> [www.google.de/search?q=Nicaragua+Kanal&tbm=nws](http://www.google.de/search?q=Nicaragua+Kanal&tbm=nws)

<sup>11</sup> [www.spektrum.de/news/nicaraguakanal-jahrhundertwerk-oder-desaster/1240739](http://www.spektrum.de/news/nicaraguakanal-jahrhundertwerk-oder-desaster/1240739)

<sup>12</sup> [www.morgenweb.de/mannheimer-morgen\\_artikel,-welt-und-wissen-toedliche-traeume-von-freiheit-und-demokratie-\\_arid,1293022.html](http://www.morgenweb.de/mannheimer-morgen_artikel,-welt-und-wissen-toedliche-traeume-von-freiheit-und-demokratie-_arid,1293022.html)

<sup>13</sup> [www.taz.de/15432544/+++](http://www.taz.de/15432544/+++)

Source: *Rubikon – Magazin für die kritische Masse* vom 4.8.2018

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Remark: This text was first published in the Internetmagazin “Rubikon – Magazin für die kritische Masse”. Because the publishing was made under Creative Commons, *Current Concerns* takes the text as second user and remarks that *Rubikon* needs donations.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## We empower parents to say yes to waiting for the smartphone

cc. The US-American parents' initiative "Wait Until 8th" from Texas, founded in 2017, went to public with the following text.

The "Wait Until 8th" pledge empowers parents to rally together to delay giving children a smartphone until at least 8th grade. By banding together, this will decrease the pressure felt by kids and parents alike over the kids having a smartphone.

Smartphones are distracting and potentially dangerous for children yet are widespread in elementary and middle school because of unrealistic social pressure and expectations to have one.

These devices are quickly changing childhood for children. Playing outdoors, spending time with friends, reading books and hanging out with family is happening

### Spread the word

Tell your friends and family about this movement. There's no better way to make an impact than to become an active advocate yourself. Share the pledge with family and friends and make an impact today! Check out our Wait Until 8th Resource page for a comprehensive support center to help guide you in championing the pledge. Your voice can make a difference. Rally your circles. There is strength in numbers.

### Mobile phone ban in French schools

At the end of July, the French parliament imposed a mobile phone ban at pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools. This affects pupils between the ages of three and fifteen. The law tightens an existing regulation from 2010.

The ban applies to all school premises for breaks and also for school activities outside the school campus, for example on school trips.

Exceptions are made when the mobile phone is required for school purposes or for children with disabilities.

Underlying this ban is the conviction that children can concentrate better without a smartphone. It also aims to curb bullying in the schoolyard, which is often filmed and posted on the internet.

Source: [www.srf.ch](http://www.srf.ch); "News" International from 31 July 2018

(Translation Current Concerns)

### Take the pledge

By signing the pledge, you promise not to give your child a smartphone until at least 8th grade as long as at least 10 families total from your child's grade and school pledge. If you would like your child to have a basic phone that just calls and texts, you still can sign the pledge! The basic phone avoids many of the distractions and dangers of the smartphone.

Once 10 families have pledged, you will be notified that the pledge is in effect! Wait Until 8th will email you and the other parents who have signed from your grade to let you

know the families on board the active pledge for your child's grade. This helps you to support one another. There is strength in numbers!

We will not share your information with any third party outside of our organization. Your information will not be made public on this site.

### Privacy policy

This privacy notice discloses the privacy practices for [waituntil8th.org](http://waituntil8th.org). We are the sole owners of the information collected on this site. We will not sell or rent this information to anyone.

a lot less to make room for hours of snap chatting, instagramming, and catching up on *You Tube*.

Parents feel powerless in this uphill battle and need community support to help delay the ever-evolving presence of the smartphone in the classroom, social arena and family dinner table. Let's band together to wait until at least eighth grade before children are allowed to have a smartphone.

Every major carrier makes a basic phone that just calls and texts without a data plan if you believe your child will need to get in touch with you before 8th grade. The Wait Until 8th pledge is encouraging parents to delay the smartphone. If you would like your child to have a basic phone that just calls and texts or a two-way calling watch, you still can sign the pledge! The basic phone and two-way calling watch avoid many of the distractions and dangers of the smartphone.

Childhood is too short to waste on a smartphone. Take the pledge today!

### Why wait?

There is a reason why top Silicon Valley executives are saying no to the smartphone until at least 14 for their children. In fact, there is a long list of reasons and parents need to know them.

### Smartphones are changing childhood

Childhood is changing for children. Playing outdoors, spending time with friends, reading books and hanging out with family is happening a lot less to make room for hours of snap chatting, instagramming, and catching up on *You Tube*. With children spending anywhere between 3 to 7 hours daily in front of a screen, many childhood essentials are pushed aside for online amusement.

### Smartphones are addictive

New research shows dependence on your smartphone may produce some of the same addictive brain responses similar to alcohol, drug and gambling addictions. Smartphones are like slot machines in your children's pocket constantly persuading them to crave more. The tech industry intentionally designs smartphone apps and social media for people to use for long periods of time because this is how they make their money.

### Smartphones are an academic distraction

Elementary and middle school years establish the foundation for your child's academic success. Children learn how to productively manage time, projects and homework. Introducing a constant distraction with a smartphone is paving a path for academic mediocrity. Studies show that after a child receives a smartphone the child's grades are likely to suffer. Another study found that children who attend schools with smartphone bans did better on tests.

### Smartphones impair sleep

Studies show that the use of smartphones and other portable devices with screens affects the quantity and quality of sleep in children and teens. Adolescents are likely restless because they anticipate receiving texts and social media messages from friends, which affects their nighttime routine. Some children even wake up in the middle of the night to check texts or social media. Sleep disturbance in childhood is known to have adverse effects on health, including poor diet, obesity, weak-

**“We empower parents ...”**

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ened immune system, stunted growth, and mental health issues.

**Smartphones interfere with relationships**

Many parents regret allowing their child to have a smartphone because they have experienced the way the smartphone is destructive to relationships. The parent-child relationship suffers. Children are often inattentive with the constant distraction the phone brings. Face to face relationships dwindle as children shift their time and energy to investing in their online “friendships.”

**Smartphones increase the risk for anxiety and depression**

Children are not emotionally equipped to navigate tricky social media waters at such an early age. Viewing someone else’s highlight reel on social media often leads youth to think they are missing out or are not enough compared with their peers. Research shows that the more time someone uses social media the more likely they are to be depressed.

In addition, when children overuse technology, the constant stimulation of the brain causes the hormone cortisol to rise. Too much cortisol can inhibit a child from feeling calm. The loss of tranquility can lead to serious anxiety disorders.

**Smartphones put your child at risk for cyber bullying**

Bullying is no longer limited to the playground or locker room. Bullies seek to harm children through social media and texts often making retreat for the victim impossible. The most common medium used for cyber bullying is the phone. Nearly 43% of children have been bullied online. Only one in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse.

**Smartphones expose children to sexual content**

Smartphones have enabled children to view pornography anywhere. Pornography marketers intentionally target youth online to lure them to dangerous images and videos. One study showed that 42% of online youth users have been exposed to online pornography. Of those, 66% reported unwanted exposure to pornography often through online ads.

Not only are children viewing sexual content with their phones but they are creating it as well. More and more children are “sexting” (sending sexual text messages and or explicit images). Also, various apps open the doors to sexual predators seeking to track, groom and harm our children.



An interesting meeting to the issue: <http://futur-iii.de/2018/01/27/bildschirmmedien-und-kinder/>.

**IT-topmanagers know about the dangers of their technology**

When Apple’s first tablet just hit the shelves, the journalist *Nick Bilton* told Apple co-founder and longtime CEO, *Steve Jobs*, that his kids would love the iPad. *Steve Jobs’* answer initially left him stunned: “They haven’t used it,” he told him. “We limit how much technology our kids use at home.”

A number of topmanagers in the technology industry gave him similar information. “*Chris Anderson*, the former editor of *Wired* and now chief executive of *3D Robotics*, a drone maker, has instituted

time limits and parental controls on every device in his home. ‘My kids accuse me and my wife of being fascists and overly concerned about tech, and they say that none of their friends have the same rules,’ he said of his five children, 6 to 17. ‘That’s because we have seen the dangers of technology firsthand. I’ve seen it in myself, I don’t want to see that happen to my kids.’”

Source: *Bilton, Nick. Steve Jobs was a Low-Tech Parent. In: “The New York Times” from 10.9.2014*

tors seeking to track, groom and harm our children.

**Technology executives ban smartphones for their children**

According to a *New York Times* piece, many technology executives wait until their child is 14 before they allow them to have a phone. While these teenagers can

make calls and text, they are not given a data plan until 16. If leaders of digital giants like *Google*, *eBay*, *Apple* and *Yahoo* are delaying the smartphone then should this not give us pause? Executives that flourish on the success of technology are protecting their children from the smartphone. Should we not do the same? •

Source: [waituntil8th.org](http://waituntil8th.org)

# Rubber boots instead of kitchen apron

## Cooking apprentices gain know-how in stable and field

by Heini Hofmann

*The modern agglomeration society has a problem: It lacks the dung on its sleeves! While the farmer's seed is shrinking, the consumer base, which is alienated from plaice, is exploding. This leads to a loss of contact between the original producer and the end user. That is why direct bridging with first-hand information is necessary. Because only this has a credible and lasting effect.*

A prime example of this are the taster days of cooking apprentices at the *Allgemeine Berufsschule Zürich (ABZ)* (Public Vocational School) in the *Landwirtschaftliches Berufs- und Bildungszentrum (LBBZ)* (Agricultural Career and Training Centre) Plantahof in Landquart, so to speak a "rubber boot instead of cooking apron" experiment. The future preparer of original products are not only taught basic knowledge, but they acquire a multiplication effect in their future working life.

### Back to the roots

While *Rousseau* has already called for a "Retour à la nature", a "Return to agriculture" is now necessary for broad sections of the population. The modern urban and agglomeration youth knows exotic wild animals better than native farm animals, that most of them encounter as sophisticated consumers only, beyond their own horizon. The fact that nature produces fruit and vegetables on a seasonal basis is totally forgotten by wholesalers due to the permanent offers that have become a matter of course.

No wonder that such alienation leads to a loss of understanding for tangible biological-ecological connections, which encourages unrealistic demands, both with regard to exaggerated consumer demands (white veal) and in the direction of extreme animal welfare demands (meatless society) – both indirectly expressions of an overall socially unpleasant feeling or even a bad conscience about suppressed, i.e. delegated responsibility.

Years ago, this alarming situation gave the unequal school administrations in Zurich and Landquart the impetus to build a 1:1 bridge between agriculture and gastronomy. It has proved so pleasing that it has become a firm tradition and at the same time a highlight in the training of the cook apprentices in the 1<sup>st</sup> apprenticeship year in the so-called interval teaching. It takes place in May annually.

### Key skill

It's always the same: The boys and girls of the future cooking guild compete in a



*The future product refiners learn that premium products only originate from healthy animals when assessing dairy and slaughter cattle. (picture ABZ/LSP)*



*No Martians, but prospective cooks at the fist careful encounter with the smallest of all farm animals, the honeybee. (picture ABZ/LSP)*

cheerful and relaxed school travel atmosphere, not knowing that after these intensive days of experience with extreme early rising and practical hands-on experience in near-natural outdoor lessons in the fields and in the stable, they will return home happy but dead tired and with permanent dung on their sleeves. One thing

is certain: The demand of the economy to increasingly impart key qualifications to apprentices can probably nowhere be fulfilled more sustainably than in such practical lessons on the production front.

**"Rubber boots instead ..."**

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First, the agricultural novices are allowed to put their ideas about the farmers' profession on paper – which is quite romantic. After that they are introduced to the reality of modern agriculture, where hard work is done at the rhythm of nature and by the dictate of the market and structural change. Certain parallels to the current situation in the gastronomy become obvious and one gets closer immediately.

**From bee to beef**

Then they have to put on the boots. Initially, the hefty smell in the pigsty leads to sniffing. But soon the interest in these intelligent, clean by nature and most consumed animals is dominating (the average Swiss eats half a sow per year).

In dairy cattle, the great annual and life achievements are imposing. It is possible only with optimal keeping, feeding and care. One is astonished to note that the handling of free-range and therefore semi-wild suckler cows is quite different from the handling of more trusting dairy cows during day-to-day milking. When taming the young bulls, the only methods à la *Monty Roberts* help: bull whisperers instead of horse whisperers.

But the smaller product suppliers among the farm animals are also of interest. Who would have known that not the white chicken lays white and the brown

chicken lays brown eggs, but that the colour of the eggshells is genetically linked to the colour of the external ear, i.e. that chicken breeds with white earlobes lay white eggs and those with red earlobes lay brown eggs. Or the enormous importance of flower pollination by honeybees in plant and fruit growing, even that there would be neither fruit nor vegetables without bees!

**Ecology and regional products**

Then it's from the stable to the field getting to know the difference between permanent grassland and artificial meadows (which replace the former fallow wasteland) and between open farmland and special crops, including the associated terms such as crop rotation, variety selection, organic areas, weed control and the promotion of beneficial insects, i.e. optimum income generation without damaging the soil.

The fact that organic agriculture means not only reduced income but also increased manual work can be experienced by the prospective cooking apprentices themselves with the tedious weeding (weeds with miserably long roots) by hand instead of chemical mace. Finally, the topic of regional products is on the agenda, impressively demonstrated in the school's own and in the private farm cheese dairy of the *Marugg* family in Klosters, as well as in the *Mark* speciality butcher's shop with its own slaughterhouse in Lunden above Schiers: flourishing family businesses where work

**Pioneering spirit at Plantahof**

*HH*. Where once the stagecoaches got stuck in the swampy Riedland, in the area of today's Plantahof in Landquart the Präzer cattle shepherd *Thomas Lareda*, after he had become rich as a sugar baker in St. Petersburg during the tsar era, bought a small farm in 1811, the *Schnideri Bündt*, which was renamed "for the sake of the Russians" in Russhof.

**Brown cattle instead of cotton**

After Lareda died of influenza in 1848, the now greatly expanded property, which had in the meantime belonged to *Christian Luzi*, an agency operator for emigrants, passed to the 25-year-old *Rudolf Alexander von Planta*, born in 1861 in Egypt as the son of a cotton magnate, whose dream was to become a farmer. Von Planta was one of the modernists at that time of setting the course in the Canton of Graubünden cattle breeding (small Graubünden grey cattle versus large Schwyz Braunvieh, (the brown cattle)), characterised by the successful breeding techniques he had acquired in England. Unfortunately, he died in 1895, almost 35 years old, much too early from an malicious kidney disease.

In his last will – this was the basis of the Plantahof Agricultural School – he used the Canton of Graubünden as universal heir, but attached the condition to keeping a cattle herd of the Braunvieh breed at all times and thus alimentating the national breeding. The Plantahof has adhered to this. And in general, a particularly strong pioneering spirit can still be felt here.

**The cow who cries**

*HH*. How far modern society is from agricultural roots is shown in daily examples: A kindergarten teacher and the peasant woman visited by her do not believe their eyes. Several of the dozen natural orphans brought along from the agglomeration dig themselves into the soil – like small piggies. And another titch runs across the clover mat with his arms outstretched. Obviously the first intensive experience with pastures and earth. If this is not food for thought!

However, such a phenomena is not only limited to the youngest of the alpine farmer- and shepard- nation. "Do potatoes grow on shrubs, where the flowers are?" asks a fourteen-year-old daughter from the city naively showing interest in the farmer with whom she keeps her horse. Or a twelve-year-old

pupil, celebrated as computer champion by his classmates writes unconcerned in an essay: "Milk is produced in a factory; *Migros* and *Coop* have different procedures."

And conversely, advertisers in stylish city offices are worried about how to promote milk consumption, namely by freeing the white juice from its rustic image of origin, i.e. from the cow-owder and thus from the stable and muck surrounding. The result: The "glass of cold milk" is dead, now the "ice milk drink" is in. Such developments will surely cause the good cow Lise to get tears in her eyes!

Therefore, such a direct connection with first-hand information, as in the campaign "Rubber boots instead of kitchen apron" achieves, is more just what needs to be done.

is done by hand and heart, the pleasant opposite of mass production.

**Worth copying!**

In short: From the "rubber boots instead of cooking aprons" experiment, the budding cooks return to school life in Zurich full of impressions. It remains the beautiful prospect for their former guests to know that these chefs of the kitchen brigades have some dung on their sleeves despite their white work clothes, which means that they know where and how the products originated which they prepare for their guests. Therefore: The ABZ Zurich/LBBZ Plantahof Landquart campaign is a meaningful and profitable experiment that deserves to be copied throughout Switzerland! •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)