

Current Concerns

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Will there be a regime change in Iran?

by *Matin Baraki**



Matin Baraki
(picture Bremer
Friedensforum)

If the United States were to wage war against Iran, it would cause chaos and destruction in this strategically important country on the Gulf, as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. In addition, a war against Iran would not only destabilise the entire region, but possibly suffocate it in flames.

US imperial strategy for Eurasia

The region around Iran is probably one of the most important trouble spots of the 21st century. The cold war that the United States of America is waging against Iran can primarily be explained by this country's geostrategic importance. The main focus in this region is on the raw materials oil and natural gas. In addition, the entire region – Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Near East, the Middle East and Russia – can be reached from Iran.

The USA has been following developments in the natural resources sector in and around Iran, the Caucasus and Central Asia with great interest, in particular since the end of the Soviet Union. In 1997, *Stuart Eizenstat*, State Secretary in the US State Department, stressed to the US Congress that “the Caspian Sea is potentially one of the most important new energy-producing regions in the world”.¹ Global strategist *Zbigniew Brzezinski* has clearly formulated the US economic interest in this region: We want to have “unhindered access to this region that has so far been closed to the West”.² He described the region as a “chessboard on which the struggle for global supremacy will continue in the future”.³ *Brzezinski* unscrupulously refers to *Hitler* and his view that “Eurasia is the centre of the world and that therefore the ruler who dominates Eurasia dominates the world”.⁴ In his estima-

tion, “dominance on the entire Euro-Asian continent is still the prerequisite for global supremacy today”⁵ of the US. *Brzezinski* comes to the conclusion that the first objective of US foreign policy must be “that no state or group of states acquire the ability to expel the United States from Eurasia or even to decisively impair its role as arbitrator”.⁶ In order to enforce this claim, US Secretary of State *Madeleine Albright* declared the entire region around Central Asia and the South Caucasus “the geostrategic zone of interest of the USA” as early as 1997.⁷ Iran was always part of this strategy, which was developed under US Democrat *Bill Clinton* and implemented by the neo-conservatives around *Cheney* and *Bush*.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 then became the cause of the war first against Afghanistan, although this had already been planned 18 months earlier under US President *Clinton*. At the end of September 2006 he admitted to having planned a war, first against Afghanistan.⁸ The Bush administration informed its regional ally Pakistan of such plans as late as in June 2001, as the then Foreign Minister of Pakistan *Naiz Naik* confirmed.⁹

The war against Afghanistan was the prelude to a US course of military conquest in a new dimension. Both this war and the war against Iraq were part of the strategy of the neo-conservatives in the USA and known as the Greater Middle East Initiative [GME]. If the US had been half as successful in Iraq as it was at the beginning in Afghanistan, it would have attacked Iran, Syria, Yemen and other countries in the region long ago.

Nuclear dispute between the US and Iran

It has almost fallen into oblivion that the foundation stone of Iran's nuclear programme was laid with US American help. In 1959, a research reactor was donated to the University of Tehran by US President *Dwight D. Eisenhower* as part of the *Atoms for Peace programme*. In 1967, a further research reactor (light water reactor) with a capacity of 5 megawatt was supplied from the US and put into operation at the *Tehran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC)*. Former US Secretary of

State *Henry Kissinger* said in 1973, that it would be good if Iran used nuclear energy to supply the US with cheap oil.

On 1 July 1968, the Iranian Government signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which entered into force for Iran on 5 March 1970 after the deposition of the instrument of ratification with the signatory states.¹⁰ According to the Treaty, signatory states have the right to use nuclear energy exclusively for civilian purposes. Iran has strictly adhered to these rules. In 1975 the US Secretary of State *Henry Kissinger* signed the *National Security Decision Memorandum 292* on American-Iranian cooperation in the field of nuclear technology. It provided for the sale of nuclear technology worth over 6 billion US dollars to Iran. Until the 1970s several agreements were concluded between the USA and Iran in this regard. In 1976 Iran was offered to buy a plutonium extraction plant from the US and to operate it. The agreement covered a complete nuclear cycle.

In October 1976 this offer was withdrawn by President *Gerald Ford*. Since the negotiations with the USA could not be brought to a conclusion, it was West German companies, namely *Kraftwerk-Union AG*, which in 1974 concluded a contract for the construction of the first Iranian nuclear power plant, near the city of *Buschehr*.¹¹

Even at the time of US President *Bill Clinton*, North Korea, Iran and Iraq were regarded as “rogue states”. In January 2002, his successor *George W. Bush* called them the “axis of evil”, which was threatening “world peace”.¹² It was only after this “classification” that Iran began research into the military use of nuclear energy. When the then Prime Minister of India *Atal Bihari Vajpayee* was asked in an interview with the German magazine “*Spiegel*” why India had built the atomic bomb, he asked the journalist: “Would Yugoslavia have been attacked by NATO if the country had had the atomic bomb?”

Iran concluded from the war against Yugoslavia that nuclear armament of its armed forces was necessary for its own protection.

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Experts assume that Iran would need at least 13 years to be able to build nuclear bombs, even if it were to be left to continue its research in peace.

International nuclear negotiations with Iran

In July 2016, a comprehensive agreement was announced in Vienna, bringing to an end the nuclear dispute with Iran, which had been smouldering for 13 years. The EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner *Federica Mogherini* and the Iranian Foreign Minister *Dschawad Zarif* announced this at a press conference in the UN City in Vienna. This was a sign of hope for the whole world, Mogherini said immediately before the formal adoption of the agreement by the participating states. "We are starting a new chapter of hope", stressed Zarif. He spoke of a historic moment. The negotiations had been conducted for 13 years by an international group of six, the United States, Russia, the People's Republic of China, Great Britain, France and Germany, with Iran. The agreement was intended to restrict Iran's nuclear programme to such an extent that the country would not be able to secretly or quickly obtain the material to build nuclear weapons. In return, the economic sanctions against the country would be lifted.¹³ As is well known that the opposite has happened. The sanctions were even tightened further by the US, although Iran has strictly adhered to all agreements. The *International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)* confirmed this for "a total of eleven times since mid-2015, when the nuclear agreement was signed".¹⁴ The IAEA was able to inspect Iran's nuclear facilities at any time and unannounced. Even the US se-

cret services have repeatedly attested that Iran fulfilled all conditions.

Not only Iran and Europe but the whole world is affected by the sanctions. "With sheer power the US has established the rule of injustice over Europe [and the world]. The sanctions are" flagrantly illegal"¹⁵, because international and European companies are not subject to US jurisdiction. German Minister of the Economy *Peter Altmaier*, however, is "notoriously known for his tendency to buckling".¹⁶ He should have protected German companies. Even the politicians in Brussels, "otherwise notoriously gossipy", are silent on this topic. "They have knuckled under"¹⁷, comments the editor-in-chief of the German magazine "Stern", *Hans-Ulrich Jörges*.

Regime change in Iran?

The international nuclear treaty is a thorn in the side of the Israeli and Saudi Arabian governments. If former US President *Barack Obama* had given the green light, the Israeli Air Force would have destroyed Iran's nuclear research facilities long ago. The young, inexperienced Saudi crown prince *Mohammad bin Salman*, who also tends to act out of his emotions, openly called on the US to cut off "the head of the snake", meaning Iran. Now US President *Donald Trump* has found further supporters of a regime change with Israeli Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu* and Saudi Crown Prince *Salman*. In the persons of *John Bolton* as National Security Advisor and *Mike Pompeo* as Foreign Minister, radical supporters of an Iranian regime change have moved into key positions in the White House. The Trump administration's assumption that economic sanctions would increase the pressure on the Iranian population and thus bring about a regime change from within is not only naive but also dangerous. The war that *Saddam Hussein* started against Iran

in the 1980s with US support stabilised a mullah regime in deep crisis at the time. In the event of external intervention, the Iranian peoples would unite. The Iranians also know full well that the wars of the United States against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria brought chaos and destruction to these countries. In addition, a war against Iran would not only destabilise the entire region, but possibly suffocate it in flames.

The imminent and final smashing in Syria of Islamists allied with the US, Saudi Arabia and other Arab sheikdoms is the greatest defeat of US imperialism since the Vietnam War. The Trump administration has not forgiven Iran for this, as Iran has also played an important role in the smashing of the Islamist-oriented opponents of the Syrian government, next to the key player Russia.

US expert *Josef Braml* of the *German Society for Foreign Policy (DGPA)* said that, since irrationality prevails in the White House, US President *Donald Trump* may have Iran bombed to win the forthcoming congressional elections.¹⁸

A solution is possible, is it also wanted?

The Iranian government and the supreme spiritual leader of Iran, *Ayatollah Khatami*, have repeatedly put forward proposals to make peace with the US and Israel, which both sides have so far categorically rejected.

The international community must force the warmongers to accept Iran's offers of peace and to appear at the negotiating table in order to resolve the conflicts. ●

¹ Eizenstat, Stuart. Statement before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Economic Development of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 23 October 1997, cited after: Garnett, Sherman W. et al. *The Cas-*

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ICJ ruling over Iran sanctions by the USA

cc. Since August 2018 new US sanctions apply against Iran. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the supreme court of the United Nations, judged in a preliminary injunction on 3 October, that the sanctions are partially inadmissible, and called for immediate repeal. Under the title:

"Risk of irreparable prejudice and urgency"

the Court has ruled „in its opinion [of the Court] the measures adopted by the United States have the potential to endanger civil aviation safety in Iran and the lives of its users [...] The Court further considers that restrictions on the importation and purchase of goods required for humanitarian needs, such as foodstuffs and medicines, including life-

saving medicines, treatment for chronic disease or preventive care, and medical equipment, may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran."

"Operative Clause"

"At the end of its Order, the Court indicates

1. unanimously, that the United States of America, in accordance with its obligations under the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights, must remove, by means of its choosing, any impediments arising from the measures announced on 8 May 2018 to the free exportation to the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran of (i) medicines and medical devices; (ii) foodstuffs and agricultur-

al commodities; and (iii) spare parts, equipment and associated services (including warranty, maintenance, repair services and inspections) necessary for the safety of civil aviation;

2. unanimously, that the United States of America must ensure that licences and necessary authorizations are granted and that payments and other transfers of funds are not subject to any restriction in so far as they relate to the goods and services referred to in point (1);
3. unanimously, that both Parties must refrain from any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the Court or make it more difficult to resolve."

Source: Press release of the International Court of Justice from 3 October 2018

Macedonia: Failed referendum will be ignored by the “Euro-American leaders”

Statement by the editors of the French EU-critical monthly magazine “Ruptures”, Paris

Angela Merkel, her Foreign Minister and several other members of the Federal Government, Sebastian Kurz, Austrian Federal Chancellor, James Mattis, US Secretary of Defense, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, as well as numerous prominent personalities from Brussels, including Federica Mogherini, EU Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, and Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations: They have all travelled to Skopje in recent weeks. Others have made long-distance calls as the French President, with a single aim, to call on Macedonian citizens to vote on 30 September.

Skopje, that has never seen so many heads of state, is the capital of Macedonia, more precisely the *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the official name of this small Balkan state (2 million inhabitants), created after the disintegration of Yugoslavia – a provisional name for 27 years. Out of national pride and fear of irredentism, Greece has always

opposed the idea that its northern neighbour has the same name as its northern province.

But after the Macedonian elections in December 2016, a social democratic government came to power, led by Zoran Zaev. The latter is very close to the Atlantic circles and has set himself the task of resolving the name conflict with Athens in order to make it possible for his country first to join NATO and then the *European Union* – a double membership against which Athens had vetoed as long as the conflict lasted. On 17 June this year, Zaev and his Greek colleague Alexis Tsipras reached a compromise. The country could be called North Macedonia and thus open the door to a Euro-Atlantic paradise.

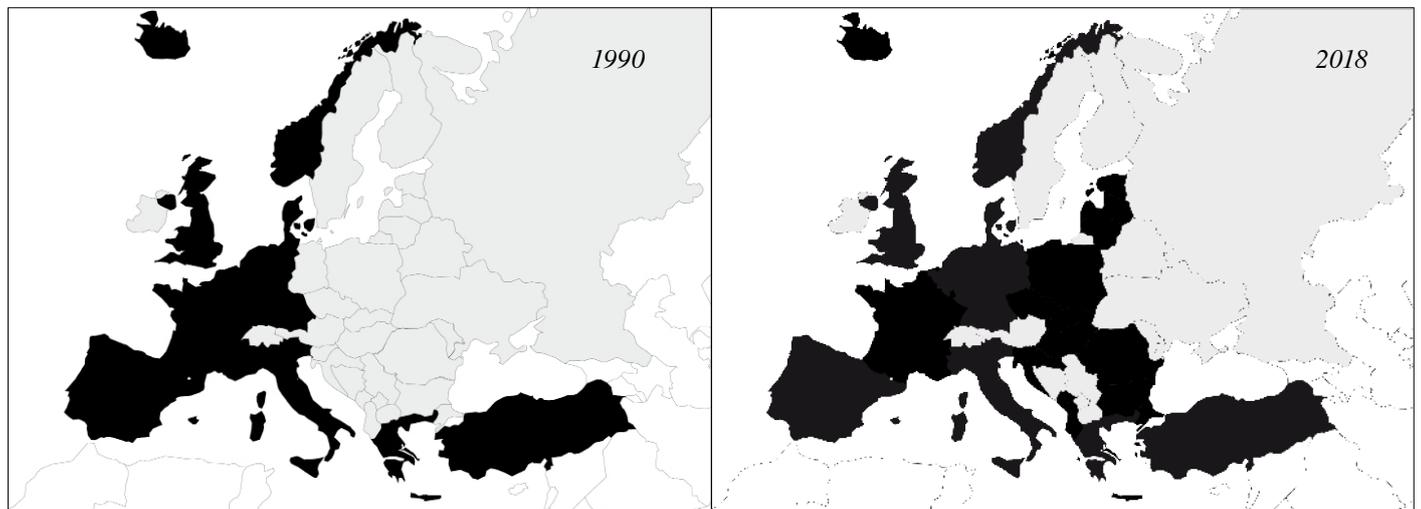
Ignore the vote

However, this requires both parties to ratify this agreement. That was the reason for the referendum on 30 September. Zaev's friends naturally demanded a Yes, supported by the party that claims to belong

to the Albanian minority. The right-wing national party *VRMO-DPMNE*, which held a contrary opinion, did not – due to Western pressure – say No. But their leaders urged the citizens to ignore the vote. This was also the position of the President of the Republic, Gjorje Ivanov, who himself comes from the national movement.

However, the Macedonian constitution requires that a referendum must mobilise at least half of the registered voters in order to be valid. Hence, the call for a boycott by the opponents of the agreement and also the excitement and pressure from American and European leaders. According to them, Macedonia runs the risk of falling into a false sphere of influence if it is not soon integrated into the EU and NATO area. The Russians (the majority of the population is of Slavic descent), but also the Chinese (who make large investments in the Balkans) are accused of lurking for such an opportunity or even trying to create it.

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The expansion of NATO from 1990 to 2018. (graphics cc)

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pian region facing the challenges of globalisation. Opladen 2001, p. 54

² Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *The Grand Chessboard* (German version – Die einzige Weltmacht) Weinheim 1997, p. 203

³ ibidem, p. 16

⁴ ibidem, p. 16

⁵ ibidem, p. 64

⁶ ibidem, p. 283

⁷ Barth, Peter. *Der Kaspische Raum zwischen Machtpolitik und Ölinteressen* (The Caspian region between power politics and oil interests), Munich 1998, p. 5

⁸ cf. Leyendecker, Hans. “Ich habe es versucht” (I have tried), in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 25 September

ber 2006, p. 2; Schmitt, Uwe. Bush publishes parts of the secret report on terror in: “Die Welt” of 28 August 2006, p. 7.

⁹ cf. Hahn, Dorothea. “Vergebliche Suche nach der “goldenen Brücke” (Fruitless search for the “golden bridge””, in: TAZ, 3/4 November 2001. After 11 September Richard Armitage, the deputy of the then US Secretary of State Colin Powell, threatened the head of the Pakistani secret service to “bomb his country back into the Stone Age” if the government in Islamabad did not cooperate with the USA. Matthias Rüb, Karzai and Musharraf continue to argue. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 28 September 2006, p. 9

¹⁰ cf. PT (Iran (Islamic Republic of)) un.org: Iran (Memento of 8 July 2012 in the web archive.is).

¹¹ cf. Gholam Reza Afkhami. *The life and times of the Shah*. University of California Press, 2009, p. 354

¹² Von “Schurkenstaaten” zur “Achse des Bösen” – From “Rogue States” to the “Axis of Evil”, in:

Stern, 30 January 2002. <https://www.stern.de/politik/ausland/george-w--bush-von--schurkenstaaten-zur--achse-des-boesen--3376168.html>.

¹³ cf. Löwenstein, Stephan. “Ein Zeichen der Hoffnung für die ganze Welt” (A sign of hope for the whole world), in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 July 2016. www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/atomverhandlungen-im-iran-historisches-abkommen-13701607.html.

¹⁴ Lüders, Michael. “USA wollen den Iran wirtschaftlich in die Kapitulation zwingen” (The US wants to economically force Iran into surrender), *Deutschlandfunk*, 1 August 2018, (Interview)

¹⁵ Jörges, Hans-Ulrich. “Die Unterwerfung” (Submission), in: *Stern*, 23 August 2018, p. 16

¹⁶ ibidem

¹⁷ ibidem

¹⁸ cf. Braml, Josef. “Politikum” (A political issue) *WDR 5*, 17 September 2018 (Interview)

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In any case, the question put to the voters was clear: "Do you agree with EU and NATO membership by accepting the agreement between the two countries?" With the implicit promise that European money will flow into this particularly poor state, the voters should be seduced. One EU diplomat even dared to say: "You have the choice between North Macedonia and North Korea", stigmatising the latter as a symbol of international isolation ...

Cold shower

The result of the vote was a cold shower for the supporters of the process: It is true that 91% of the voters voted Yes – this was also expected as no political force postulated the No. However, what was eagerly awaited by both, supporters and opponents was, of course, the turnout. With a voter turnout of around 36%, however, this vote has reached an even lower level than feared by the European Heads of State and Government.

While less than a third of Macedonians said Yes, the Euro-American leadership elite reacted with the method of "alternative truth", for which *Donald Trump* has recently been criticised in particular. Zoran Zaev said he was pleased that "the vast majority of citizens have opted for a European Macedonia". The EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy has

welcomed the "broad support" for the agreement. And even the Portuguese UN Secretary General *Antonio Guterres* did not hesitate to claim: "The fact that an overwhelming majority of voters supported the agreement is important".

The NATO Secretary General signed a joint declaration with his EU colleague in which he called on Skopje's political leaders to "take the decisions that will determine the fate of their country and their people for many generations". It is difficult to imagine how one could exert even more explicit pressure.

Only the president of neighbouring Montenegro has somewhat nuanced the bureaucratic language: "I have the impression that the pro-European enthusiasm which prevailed after the fall of the Berlin Wall is currently being called into question." If there were a euphemism competition, *Milo Djukanovic* would definitely win the World Cup.

Zoran Zaev hurried to point out that the 50% participation rule was not applicable in this case, as the referendum only had a consultative meaning. "And anyway", he said in the tough Brussels *Thatcher*-style, "there is no alternative".

Institutionally, the final decision is now up to the MEPs. They have to ratify the agreement with a two-thirds majority – and this time the vote is not "consultative". However, the Social Democrats and their allies lack ten seats to overcome this hurdle. And their opponents of the VRMO-DPMNE will, of course, feel en-

couraged through the result determined by the population to reject the request.

Zaev threatened to call early elections by the end of the year in the event of failure, which is currently quite likely.

**Subject to approval
by the Greek Parliament**

It should be borne in mind, however, that the enactment of the agreement also requires the consent of the Greek Parliament. There are many forces in this country – from the right wing, but also from many citizens of the left wing – who believe that the agreement negotiated by Tsipras is a betrayal of Greek interests. *Syriza*'s government partner, the Party of Independent Greeks, is also opposed to the compromise. All these opponents feel strengthened by the Macedonian vote.

As soon as the results were known, the Greek head of government called his counterpart and neighbour to tell him that he "should continue to implement the agreement".

In July 2015, Alexis Tsipras himself had called for an anti-poverty referendum, which he clearly won. Only a few weeks later, however, he capitulated in a memorable way when he accepted all the austerity conditions imposed by the EU. •

Source: <https://ruptures-presse.fr/actu/macedoine-referendum-zaev-tsipras-otan> from 3 October 2018

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Safeguarding the Swiss state model

Popular initiative “Swiss law instead of foreign judges” (Self-Determination Initiative)

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

“The Constitution is the primary source of law of the Swiss Confederation.” [...] It is above international law and takes precedence over it.” Thus is the core of the initiative. The rest of its content results from this principle. (initiative text see box).

Actually a matter of course in direct democratic Switzerland, where the people are the supreme lawmakers. And yet an outcry goes through politics, business and media: The initiative is an “attack on human rights”, was heard in Parliament; Switzerland would become an unreliable contracting partner.

What is the aim of the initiative and how are these objections to be classified? These two questions will be explained here.

The Self-Determination Initiative demands nothing revolutionary, but only wants to retrieve what is already enshrined in the Constitution.

Aim of the Self-Determination Initiative

Popular initiatives adopted at the polls by the people and the cantons, shall be incorporated into the Federal Constitution as new legal norms, to be transposed by the plenum into corresponding laws and applied by the courts and the administration. This implementation of the will of the people as sovereign, as the supreme state authority, is also being questioned with increasing severity in many media. The Self-Determination Initiative has been taken to commit the Swiss authorities to direct democracy as a cornerstone of the Swiss state structure again.

“International law”, to which the provisions of the Constitution are to be superordinate, refers to international agreements such as the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons with the EU or the European Convention on Human rights (ECHR) and its excessive interpretation by the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR). The Federal Council, Parliament and Federal Supreme Court should no longer be allowed to ignore constitutional articles set by the sovereign, such as the deportation of criminal foreigners or the control of immigration, simply because their application would not suit the judges in Strasbourg or the EU Commission. The initiative is also directed against the planned institutional framework agreement: its intention to make future EU law into Swiss law by bypassing the sovereign contradicts the basic principle of the di-



EEA vote in 1992. – “Because the electorate disturbs the plans of the classe politique and the major international corporations, a constant propaganda carpet has been laid against all attempts to prevent Switzerland from opening up without borders and to preserve its sovereignty and direct democracy, since the EEA No.”

rectdemocratic Constitution. This would paralyse the right of initiative and referendum in many areas.

Why the massive counter campaign? Memories of the EEA No in 1992

It is amazing what terrible consequences the opponents paint on the wall if the

Self-Determination Initiative were adopted. Do you remember the vote in 1992 when the Swiss people rejected accession to the EEA? The Swiss economy would collapse, warned the EU applicants (Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi had praised the

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Federal popular initiative “Swiss law instead of foreign judges (Self-Determination Initiative)”

The Federal Constitution will be changed as follows:

Art. 5, paragraph 1 and 4

- 1 All activities of the state are based on and limited by law. The Federal Constitution is the ultimate source of law for the Swiss Confederation.
- 2 Confederation and the cantons shall respect international law. The Federal Constitution ranks above international law and takes precedence over it, while taking into account the obligatory restrictions placed onto it by international law.

Art. 56a Obligations under international law

- 1 Confederation and the cantons will not enter into any international obligations that will contradict the Federal Constitution.
- 2 In case of contradiction, they agree to amend those obligations to international law to fit the premises of the Federal Constitution, if necessary by means of cancelling the respective treaties.

3 Obligatory rulings of international law are exempt.

Art. 190 Applicable law

Federal law and international law rulings that have been approved by referendum are binding for the Federal Court as well as other authorities that apply law.

Art. 197 subparagraph 124

12 Transitional provision to Art. 5 para. 1 and 4 (Principles of rule of law), Art. 56a (Obligations under international law) and Art. 190 (Applicable Law)

Upon their adoption by the people and the cantons, Articles 5(1) and (4), 56a and 190 shall apply to all existing and future provisions of the Federal Constitution and to all existing and future obligations of the Confederation and the cantons under international law.

(Translation Current Concerns)

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EEA as a "training camp" for EU accession). The gloomy prophesies, however, did not come true. On the contrary, Switzerland is doing better than most European countries, not primarily because of the bilateral treaties, but because it is still much more independent in its sovereignty than others, despite many compromises on the sovereignty. This is due in particular to direct democracy – which does not suit everyone. Because the electorate disturbs the plans of the *classe politique* and the major international corporations, a constant propaganda carpet has been laid against all attempts to prevent Switzerland from opening up without borders and to preserve its sovereignty and direct democracy, since the EEA No.

One must have this history in mind if one is to read the misleading and sometimes monstrous statements of the opponents of the Self-Determination Initiative.

A spokeswoman in the National Council has no hesitation in demonstrating that she wants direct democracy to the Pepperland: The Swiss People's Party (SVP) demands that its initiatives be implemented, even if they violate international and human rights norms. It's like people's dictatorship." (*Martina Munz*, emphasises mw). And *Cédric Wermuth* even makes a comparison with *Robbespierre's* terror, which he justified with the fact that "he is democratically legitimised by the majority of the population [...] That's exactly the spirit the Self-Determination Initiative breathes." (Minutes of the National Council from 6 June 2018)

Let us be glad that such "representatives of the people" are not authorised to invalidate a popular initiative only because they have a different opinion than the initiators!

The Federal Council expresses itself more moderately, but also aims to weaken direct democracy: "What is clear is that the initiative constantly calls into question Switzerland's international obligations. As soon as there is a contradiction between a constitutional provision and an international treaty, Switzerland should negotiate the treaty and, if necessary, terminate it. Furthermore, the Self-Determination Initiative restricts the scope of action of the Federal Council and Parliament in the implementation of constitutional provisions that conflict with international law. Unlike in the past, the Federal Council and Parliament could no longer pragmatically seek broad-based solutions rights' [...]." (Federal Council press release from 6 July 2017)

The Federal Council thus turns the skewer by 180°. Yes, it has a duty to renegotiate treaties that contradict the Con-

stitution (or, to put it less dramatically, to make a reservation, to propose an additional protocol). The initiative specifically turns against so-called "pragmatic solutions" against the will of the people, as the law on the constitutional article "Control of Immigration", the Federal Council and Parliament have written after the dictate of the EU Commission. On the other hand, to accuse the initiators of wanting to question all treaties with foreign countries is downright absurd.

Self-Determination Initiative stops "opening of Switzerland" towards the EU

The initiative was economically hostile, was heard in Parliament (for example in the Council of States according to *sda report* from 13 March). Or more specifically on *swissmem's* "European-political platform": "Over 600 economic agreements would be endangered" – it couldn't be more absurd! As if the initiators wanted to dismantle the economic location – where the voters as entrepreneurs and employees stand in the middle of the economy! Here it becomes crystal clear why the UE turbos are getting so nervous: The vote will be ground breaking for further European polls: Does Switzerland remain on the bilateral path [i.e. the conclusion of the planned anti-democratic framework agreement, addition mw] or is it turning away from Europe?" (*swissmem*)

As if any Swiss wanted to "turn away from Europe"! Our country lies in the middle of Europe and has always been economically and culturally connected with our neighbouring countries and the other peoples of Europe and the world. This is exactly what the Self-Determination Initiative demands: It does not want an "opening of Switzerland" at the expense of the political rights of citizens. It demands that the Federal Council does not forget which side of the table it sits on when negotiating with the EU, that the National Council and the Council of States do not let Brussels guide their legislation, and from the Federal Supreme Court, that it feels committed to the Federal Constitution in the first place and that it speaks law independently of Brussels and Strasbourg.

Legal certainty for whom?

The initiative shows a viable way to preserve not only direct democracy but also stability and legal security. It is astonishing that some people still believe that submission to EU law brings more legal certainty – even though we have already seen several times that Brussels has taken completely arbitrary sanctions against Switzerland, contrary to the bilateral treaties, if we only say out loud that we want to negotiate another regulation.

Or do the managements of the internationally oriented large corporations – which are often little familiar with the direct democratic Swiss Constitution – think of another "legal certainty"? Closer integration into a legal system dictated by the US, OECD and EU? Among equal partners – and Switzerland would do well to act on an equal footing with other states or groups of states – it must be possible to be active in international relations while still preserving one's own legal system. This is what the initiative wants to bring back.

No attack on the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR)...

The propaganda in the two councils was downright grotesque, the initiative would question the guarantee of human rights. In the National Council it was even renamed the "Anti-Human Rights Initiative" (*sda report* from 30 May). Already a year ago, the Federal Council had claimed that the adoption of the initiative could lead to a situation where Switzerland could "permanently and systematically no longer apply" the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and that it could therefore be excluded from the Council of Europe (media release from 6 July 2017).

One might think that before the ratification of the EMRK by Switzerland in 1974, human rights would have been unknown here. The initiators oppose this: Switzerland has long guaranteed human and fundamental rights in its Constitution. The initiative has nothing to do with an attack on them, on the contrary. The aim of the Self-Determination Initiative is to protect them by Swiss judges who, in contrast to the judges from Strasbourg and Luxembourg, are familiar with Swiss conditions and know the value of our democratic order. It is easy to forget that all human rights enshrined in international law are enshrined in the Swiss Federal Constitution under the designation 'fundamental rights' [...]." (*Argumentarium popular initiative Swiss law instead of foreign judges, "Self-Determination Initiative"* from 10 March 2015).

After the horrors of the Second World War, the ECHR was issued as a link between the former war states and to guarantee each other the most basic human rights, which had been so terribly disregarded. For Switzerland, guaranteeing the fundamental rights mentioned in the ECHR was so self-evident that accession was seen more as an expression of solidarity with the other European states and was therefore not subject to a referendum. Furthermore there were and are no Swiss who object the ECHR. Also the

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"Safeguarding the Swiss ..."

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initiators do not strive for a denunciation of the ECHR, because they have nothing to object about its basic rights catalogue. They only want to discuss a reservation in the form of a further additional protocol (there are already numerous amendments, reservations and additional protocols to the ECHR). Other states would probably gladly follow suit.

...but a lance against the interference of the ECtHR

In 1998 – also without the right to a referendum – the right of appeal of states was extended to each individual person against a member state, and the "European Court of Human Rights ECtHR" was created in Strasbourg as a permanent court. Since then, cases have increased exponentially. Tens of thousands of pending cases are awaiting today, and the interpretation of the individual rights of the ECHR by a chamber of judges from different European states without knowledge of the defendant state and its legal culture, leads time and again to most questionable results. The crucifix decision against Italy is well remembered, according to which it should be prohibited in all Italian schools to hang a crucifix on the wall, in order to allegedly protect freedom of religion (Art. 9 ECHR). After a storm of protest in Catholic Italy and the refusal of the government in Rome to enforce the verdict, the court had to back-out.

There are also a number of decisions against Switzerland that are far removed from reality. The fact that one of the 47

"Switzerland has long guaranteed human and fundamental rights in its constitution. The initiative has nothing to do with an attack on them, on the contrary. The aim of the Self-Determination Initiative is to protect them by Swiss judges who, in contrast to the judges from Strasbourg and Luxembourg, are familiar with Swiss conditions and know the value of our democratic order."

judges is a Swiss, is of little use to us because she often takes the side of the "victim". As a rule, even if a complaint is rejected, Switzerland has to pay the court and lawyer's fees if the complainant is destitute or an asylum seeker. Some judgements concern the expulsion of foreign criminals, whose right to respect for private and family life (Art. 8 ECHR) is protected by the court even if they do not lead a regulated family life in Switzerland and live on social welfare (e.g. judgment from 16 April 2013). When the ECtHR condemned Switzerland for violating the freedom of association, even the Swiss federal judges expressed their incomprehension: The Geneva authorities had dissolved an association with the illegal purpose of occupying houses. This strict measure, with far-reaching financial consequences for the squatters, is supposedly affecting the freedom of association in its substance (verdict from 11 October 2011). In the opinion of the "Human rights" Court in Strasbourg, the following also belongs to the protection of private life, namely the citizen's right to a clear state regulation on

suicide assistance (judgment from 14 May 2013). A particularly dubious decision: A protection of the fundamental rights, which deserves its name, must protect life in the first place, not dying!

Enough of the examples of jurisprudence that have lost touch. The own state courts (not only in Switzerland!) are in a much better position to judge where the protection of the human rights of a citizen vis-à-vis the state is to be guaranteed and where it is not adequate. Finally, it is interesting to note that the EU has been opposing accession to the ECHR for years, because it would violate the autonomy of Union law if the Court of Justice in Strasbourg were to rule over the supreme court of the EU, the ECJ, and review its judgments: (curia.europa.eu/juris/document.jsf?docid=160882&pageIndex=1&dir=&occ=first&part=1&text=&doclang=DE&cid=43606). This is precisely the standpoint of the Self-Determination Initiative: It violates the autonomy of Swiss law if a foreign court judges the federal judgments with binding effect. •

Letter to  the Editor

The "Ohi-Day" – a Greek national holiday

For us Swiss today, who have abolished the war-preventing army required by the Constitution, and especially for all those young people who refuse to do military service, the reason for the "Ohi-Day" ("Anniversary of the No") of the Greeks is probably incomprehensible.

This national day of remembrance, celebrated on 28 October with a strange name, commemorates this date in 1940, when at three o'clock in the morning the Italian ambassador came to the residence of the Greek Prime Minister *Metaxas*. He gave him an ultimatum. It called for the German and Italian armies to be given the right to occupy and march through; if rejected, it would be war. The prime minister of Greece, which was then bitterly poor, replied: "Then there is war". That same morning, the proud Greek people chanted only "Ochi! Ochi! Ochi!", "No! No! no! No!" to submission.

Meanwhile, a large army ready in the Italian occupied Albania had already begun the attack. But the Greeks fought without ifs and buts and drove the Italians far back into Albania. The Italian dictator *Mussolini* did not want to let this disgrace sit on Italy, took the lead of 17 Italian divisions and started another offensive. It was immediately stopped by the Greeks deep in Albania. For months the front froze there.

In the meantime, *Hitler* had completed the deployment of the Wehrmacht against the Soviet Union. He absolutely had to occupy Moscow before the onset of winter, but could not allow a country with a hostile army to lie behind the Germans in which the Allies could also have landed and attack from there. So, he first had to use the German army, which was ready in Bulgaria, against Greece. The Wehrmacht attacked from behind via Thessaloniki, at the same time Italy from Albania. On 23 April

1941, 6 months after the start of the attack, Greece had to surrender. This delayed the German attack on the Soviet Union by 6 weeks; the Germans entered the Russian winter unprepared. The Wehrmacht therefore suffered its first catastrophic defeat against the Red Army. It lost many hundreds of thousands of men off Moscow, including about 100,000 death from exposure or severely injured by frostbites, 2,800 of its original 3,400 tanks and all the other heavy equipment (e.g. 35,000 trucks).

Thanks to the long Greek resistance, Germany's defeat had begun before Moscow. No wonder the British Prime Minister *Winston Churchill* said in 1941: "From now on we will no longer say that the Greeks fight like heroes, but that heroes fight like Greeks". What would he have said about us Swiss today?

Gotthard Frick, Bottmingen

“The EU is behaving like an agency for the enforcement of global financial and power interests.”

by Dieter Sprock

The EU likes its role as an advocate of freedom. It never tires of praising its four “fundamental freedoms” as the basis of its “community of values” and of democracy in general. The free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is the best way to achieve prosperity, freedom and democracy everywhere, no state should protect “free trade” from foreign competition by laws and measures to protect its own economy, and there is no alternative to this, that is their credo. But who really benefits from these freedoms? And what is the reality today?

Electricity agreement Switzerland-EU – an example

To illustrate the reality, an example from the field of electricity trading is suitable: electricity could be traded freely in Europe until 2009. In 1951, responsible personalities from the ranks of power plant operators and delegates from the ministries of seven European countries joined forces to form the *Union for the Coordination of Generation and Transport of Electricity (UCPTE)*. “Long before it was believed that Europe had to be managed centrally from Brussels, the UCPTE had sought and achieved the integration of the European electricity grids into an interconnected grid in free and voluntary cooperation under the aspects of reliability, security and economic efficiency of electricity supply,” writes *Ernst Pauli* in *Current Concerns* No 16 of 6 May 2013. The work was based on a feeling of great responsibility, mutual trust and cooperation and not on the pursuit of profit, and it was free of political demands.

After Brussels had taken control, the electricity market in the EU was “liberalised”; it was “freed” from state regulations and opened up to the international financial markets. “The expanding electricity trade does not lag behind (is in no way inferior to) the financial markets, which have meanwhile fallen into disrepute”, writes Pauli. The “traded” electricity volume is 10 times higher than the physically available electricity. “Depending on the progress of the market opening, one kilowatt hour goes from production via transport to the end consumer through up to ten hands. Banks, hedge funds and other competitors from outside the industry are in-

creasingly pushing their way into the electricity business”.

“After Brussels had taken control, the electricity market in the EU was ‘liberalised’; it was ‘freed’ from state regulations and opened up to the international financial markets. ‘The expanding electricity trade does not lag behind (is in no way inferior to) the financial markets, which have meanwhile fallen into disrepute’”

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At present, the EU is making an electricity agreement with Switzerland dependent on the signing of an institutional framework agreement in which Switzerland would have to commit itself to automatically adopting existing and future EU law. Such a requirement is not only undemocratic but also incompatible with the Swiss Federal Constitution.

The electricity agreement itself serves exclusively to open up the Swiss electricity market to international suppliers and not to secure electricity supplies. On the contrary: under EU law, investors of all kinds could also buy up and close regional small power plants in Switzerland that had been co-financed by cantons and municipalities, which would massively increase the dependence on foreign countries. Securing the electricity supply requires experts - technicians and engineers - and not politically motivated adhesion contracts.

Promise and reality

The EU is behaving like an agency to enforce global financial and power interests. Critics are defamed as opponents of freedom and democracy and as a rule marginalised as right-wing. Countries that deviate from the tightly neoliberal course are sanctioned. Freedom ends where the freedom of the financial markets could be restricted.

The promised prosperity is limited to rich countries, and even in these countries the gap between rich and poor is widening.

And democracy suffers from the intolerance of neoliberally colored administrative bureaucrats who are strongly support-

ed in their intolerance by the media of the financial markets.

The good news

The neoliberal world order was made by human persons and can therefore also be changed by human persons. It is not without any alternative. •

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What is needed in Germany – constitutional law instead of political propaganda

by Karl Müller

Many Germans think they know what has to be top priority on the political agenda: the “Fight against the Right”. They think they know perfectly that it is now necessary to “stand up” against right-wing – in order to prevent a new seizure of power through the “Nazis”,

in order to make Germany stay a “liberal”, an “open-minded” country. Today’s “Right”, they think - and it is also what they read in the media and what they heard from politicians – are the direct descendants of the National Socialists of the past century.

Hence almost all is permitted in the “Fight against the Right”: defamation, social isolation, damage to property and also personal injury.

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German episodes

#WirSindmehr?

km. At the beginning of September 2018, several tens of thousands, mostly young people, gathered under the signet of #WirSindmehr (We are more than that) in Chemnitz to listen to speeches and music performances that pretended to set a sign against right-wing extremism in Germany, but in many respects were rather tasteless to violent. The Federal President of the Federal Republic of Germany *Frank Walter Steinmeier* himself had recommended this event, and some may have thought that this must have been an error. This is obviously not the case.

Under the signet #WirSindmehr, events take place in various German cities whose political quality is questionable, but which are broadly supported by many organisations and even state institutions – is that lawful? So for example on 5 October 2018 in the German city of Konstanz. Patron of this event was the Lord Mayor of the city, the CDU member *Uli Burchardt*. The “alliance” includes, among others, the local CDU, FDP, SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Die Linke, Free Voters, the DGB, IG Metall and Verdi, Amnesty International and the Protestant Church District, the Uni-

versity of Konstanz and last not least “Pulse of Europe”, an organisation that promotes the EU throughout EU-Europe.

Commitment to “democracy and rule of law, humanity and solidarity”, as it is called in the Konstanz event appeal, may be certainly good. At the same time, however, painting the acute danger of a right-wing extremist takeover on the wall (“it’s five after twelve”) and at the same time admixing the AfD with it is rather political propaganda – and one wonders who the whole thing should serve.

Now we know what populism is

Bertolt Brecht, initially a friend of the GDR, wrote a famous poem after 17 June 1953:

*The Solution
After the uprising of the 17th June
The Secretary of the Writer’s Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
Stating that the people
Had forfeited the confidence of the government
And could win it back only
By redoubled efforts.
Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
And elect another?*

65 years later, the *Bertelsmann Foundation* and the *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin* (Social Science Research Center) published an almost 100-page study entitled “Populism Barometer 2018: Populist at-

titudes among voters and non-voters in Germany 2018”.

The media were alarmed that more than 30 percent of the Germans surveyed were said to be inclined toward populism – and the positive trend is continuing.

Page 18 of the study provides the compact answer to the question of when a person is said to have populist attitudes. And that is if he or she unanimously agrees with the following statements:

- Citizens often in agreement, but politicians pursue completely different goals.
- I would rather be represented politically by a simple citizen than by a politician.
- The parties only want the voters’ votes, they are not interested in their views.

- The political differences between the citizens and politicians are greater than the differences between citizens.
- Important questions should not be decided by parliaments, but in referendums.
- The Politicians in the Bundestag should always follow the will of the citizens.
- The citizens in Germany agree in principle on what has to happen politically.
- What is called a “compromise” in politics is in reality nothing more than a betrayal of one’s own principles.

Everyone can now check for himself or herself whether he or she is a populist. But perhaps, now some people may also think that the official “fight against populism” might have something to do with Bertolt Brecht’s poem.

“The ‘Fight against the Right’ is aimed at the middle class”

Kristina Schröder (CDU), German Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth from 2009-2013, has critically examined the “Fight against the Right” in a lengthy article for the newspaper “Die Welt” from 24 August 2018. The article is entitled: “The ‘Fight against the Right’ is aimed at the middle class”. Here she writes among other things:

“The left-wing has expanded the fight against right-wing extremism. Sup-

ported by the state, everything that is not left is combated - left-wing extremism trivialises. The anti-totalitarian consensus has been destroyed, and the CDU must decide. [...]

The fight against right-wing extremism became the ‘Fight against the Right’. Anyone who believes that only linguistic laziness is at work here is naive. Many of those who romp about in this field with state support are actually concerned with fighting everything that is not on

the Left. The old thesis of 1968 that capitalist society is at least a pre-fascist society still reverberates here. [...]

The ‘Fight against the Right’ must therefore be taken literally: The point is to denounce political convictions as illegitimate in democratic discourse, some of which would probably even be approved by supporters of the Center Union. The spectrum of what can still be said, is now to be shifted far to the left.” (Translation *Current Concerns*)

"What is needed in Germany ..."

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"Right-wing" – a political combat term

But obviously they are not aware that the term "right-wing" has become a political combat term, especially in Germany. Hardly anyone wants to be "right-wing"; there is an immediate association to the German National Socialism. But the origin of the term has nothing to do with this. It goes back to the seating arrangements in the French national assembly in 1814. On the right side of parliament, seen from the front, there sat the political forces "who stood up for the preservation of the current political and social conditions". This is what the *German Federal Agency for Civic Education* wrote in 2011.

World War II was not a national war

One does not have to like these political forces, the conservatives, but they are different from the National Socialists in Germany or the Fascists in Italy. This includes those who advocate the conservation of the European nation states and the return to national sovereignty. They are very different from Fascists and National Socialists.

The Italian Fascists were dreaming of a re-establishment of the Imperium Romanum. They were imperialists. The National Socialists were no friends of independent nation states, too. Many of them adhered to all-German ideas which also were served by *Hitler* in the first years. But *Hitler's* National Socialists were racists and imperialists.

Hitler was dreaming of a Europe unified under his rule. Aryan members of the master race did not only exist in Germany and he was striving for "Lebensraum" in the East and the enslavement of the hitherto sovereign European peoples and nations, particularly those in the East. In 1943 a handbill from the resistance group "Weisse Rose" stated: "What can we learn from the outcome of the war, which never was a national war? The imperialist idea of power, from which side it may come, needs to be disposed of for all times."

What does the German Grundgesetz (constitution) stipulate?

The German constitution does not know about the political terms left-wing and right-wing. But it does know the terms "loyalty to the constitution" (article 5 III),

"constitutional order" (article 9 II), "free democratic order" (article 18 and article 21 II). The Grundgesetz (GG) itself does not explicitly define the term free democratic order. But the Federal Constitutional Court has done so, in the early 50s when it was negotiating the question of declaring two parties as unconstitutional and hence illegal. Its definition was:

"A free democratic constitutional order within the meaning of Article 21 II of the Basic Law is an order which, to the exclusion of any rule of violence or arbitrariness, constitutes a rule of law on the basis of the self-determination of the people according to the will of the respective majority and of freedom and equality. The fundamental principles of this order shall include, as a minimum, respect for the human rights as specified in the Basic Law, in particular the right of the personality to life and free development, the sovereignty of the people, the separation of powers, the accountability of the government, the lawfulness of the administration, the independence of the courts, the principle of multi-party rule and equal opportunities for all political parties with the right to constitutional formation and exercise of opposition". (BVerfGE 2, 1 (Ls. 2, pp. 12)) [Translation *Current Concerns*]

These are, in essence, the basic principles which can be derived from articles 1 and 20 of the Grundgesetz, that is, basic principles which are provided with an "eternity clause". Only the requirement of equality of chances for all political parties and the right to form an opposition is exceeding these two articles.

Well-fortified democracy against all unconstitutional attempts

Also the court's statement above is not speaking of right-wing and left-wing, nor of right-wing or left-wing extremism. It has formulated a benchmark for all political forces, within or without the parliament. The German constitution is the constitution of a well-fortified democracy. Unconstitutional political goals and even more unconstitutional politics may not be without consequences, no matter if they originate from right-wing or left-wing extremists or from other political forces. They need to be kept at bay. But what has this to do with today's "Fight against the Right"?

It has nothing to do with "Antifa"

It is known that the German "Antifa" has taken up the cause of the "Fight against

the Right". It has been doing it for many years. Today it has little to do with a true prevention of Fascist attempts. It includes many left-wing extremists; also some tragically neglected young people. But the "Antifa" is enjoying an updraft, also financially, since the "Fight against the Right" has become German governmental politics and is even supported by people like *Madeleine Albright* in the US, who is also warning from a return of Fascism.

Today innocent citizens are harassed in the name of the "Fight against the Right": because they do not agree with the mainstream in media and politics and not endorse internationalism but support a free, democratic and sovereign state of law. The parastatal *Deutschlandfunk* gave an example for this: in a commentary on the afternoon of 27 September, *Paul Craig Roberts*, the former US Assistant Secretary of the Treasury and committed critic of the imperialist US politics was labelled "the Republicans' most stalwart right-wing radical".

Who brought the Nazis to power?

Who still remembers who were the decisive forces behind the fascists and National Socialists in the 20th century? Then it was clandestine political circles, financial powers and racists, many of them from Great Britain and the US, the precursors of the market-radical globalisation capitalists of today and their ideologues. At that time they found that Bolshevism was to be fought with all means, in the Soviet Union and also elsewhere in the world. Thus the fascists and National Socialists were brought to power and into position. And where do we stand today? Which side is really threatening freedom, rule of law and democracy?

A severe offence against our youth

Many of those active in the "Fight against the Right" are young people. It is a severe offence if young people are abused for political ends. Who is benefitting from their "Fight against the Right" today? What is the goal if other people are pilloried, if a paralysing atmosphere of caution is spreading and smothering any open controversy with arguments? Is this fostering human dignity and human rights, peace and justice? Or are young people once again used – as so often in history – for very different, undeclared purposes? •

From censorship to the mainstream

Media and mass manipulation

by Robert Seidel

Today, anyone who wants to get a clear picture of current political events is often annoyed by one-sided reporting. Emotionalising news, the cultivation of enemy stereotypes, or omissions are found more and more frequently. It is becoming increasingly demanding to obtain precise information. Looking back to the past can help to take a more sober view of the situation today. The abolition of censorship is an important achievement of our modern democracy.

Freedom of the press, based on freedom of expression, is one of the foundations of democracy. Political elites have repeatedly tried to suppress dissent in order to maintain their power. State officials censored the press and thus selected the reading material for the population. Today's attempts to influence the Internet seem similar. But what attempts are made today to influence the citizens? A brief review of how ruling elites and the media work together can be revealing.

Since many archives are now open, it is easier to understand the historical attempts of the elites to exert influence by means of the media. One can, for example, observe that from 1917 onwards US citizens were deliberately "lied into" the First World War (cf. Elter, Andreas. "Die Kriegsverkäufer – Hustlers of war"). It was at the same time the beginning of modern "propaganda", today trivially referred to as *Public Relations PR*. Psychological techniques were increasingly used for mass manipulation (cf. Bernays, Edward "Propaganda. Die Kunst der Public Relations – Propaganda. The art of public relations").

The propaganda machinery of the German National Socialists adopted many of these techniques from the USA, systematically expanded them and drove the German population into World War II. After the Second World War and during the Cold War, similar manipulation techniques were used to convince citizens of the need for a certain military and political course of action.

"Lied into war" by politics and the media

Today we still view the role of the media in the war in Yugoslavia (1991-1995) from a relatively short historical distance. Public awareness of this war still lies in the media fog of the 1990s. The "Serbs" and "Milosevic" are still considered as "the guilty". Jörg Becker and Mira Beham have investigated how this war was initiated through paid PR agencies and how it

Freedom of Expression

rl. The hallmark of a democracy and one of its foundations is the freedom of expression. It belongs to the non-negotiable human rights. Everyone is free to express his or her opinion and put it up for discussion. Only through an open exchange of different opinions, ideas, proposed solutions or views does a selection of possibilities emerge that provide the basis for forming one's own point of view. Those who wish to have

a say and participate in decision-making are encouraged to think through different approaches and examine them for themselves in order to be able to make a political decision if necessary. This is why media "battues" are profoundly undemocratic because, instead of strengthening pluralism of opinion, they attack the very foundations of democracy by presuming to determine what is "right" and "wrong".

was specifically influenced by the media (see "Operation Balkan: Werbung für Krieg und Tod - Operation Balkan: Promotion of War and Death").

In 1999, the "information" of Nato spokesman *Jamie Shea* on the Kosovo war was taken over completely unfiltered in our media. Every day he promoted this war, although it was contrary to international law, in a sensational way on public TV. This war was to be sold to the citizens as a human commitment. Here, too, the media use at the time still clouds today's view of the actual events. But there were also critical contributions, such as the WDR programme "Es begann mit einer Lüge" (It began with a lie) (2001).

Later wars – also contrary to international law – against Iraq (2003), Libya (2011) and Syria (2011) were so one-sidedly presented to Western European media consumers that more and more people used the Internet as an additional information channel. It must be assumed that we are still being misinformed about war and peace today.

Even at home

It is only consistent that as media consumers, we are not only misinformed in connection with wars. The targeted use of media also plays an important role in decisive votes or before political decisions. How is the matter reported? How are contents reproduced in order to exert influence? Which contents are omitted?

PR in Switzerland

Even in Switzerland, PR firms work for domestic and foreign clients (corporations, associations, states, political parties, individuals, etc.). The influence of PR agencies on the media plays a not inconsiderable role here (see Barben, Judith. "Spin doctors im Bundeshaus – spin doctors in the houses of parliament"). Just think of the politicians' arguments before votes and how they are either adopted unquestioningly or deliberately cast in

a negative light. Another instrument of mass manipulation is the addressing or not addressing of certain topics. The so-called "agenda setting" over several years or the coordinated use of certain topics, moods and small snippets of information to achieve a goal are part of everyday media life. Attention is focused on certain topics – and thus also distracted from others. This becomes particularly clear in the area of Swiss foreign policy (e.g. UN, EU, neutrality or migration policy), but also domestically, e.g. in education or agricultural policy.

Further techniques of manipulation are the selective selection of statements from public personalities or the conscious linking of content with positive or negative associations. Further keywords of manipulative influence are "shaping the public opinion", "spin" or "cajoling and nudging". Media increasingly use the style of breathless "necessary enlightenment" or "deep indignation", which then allows the use of means that often exceed the limits of decency. Fear and prejudices are addressed.

Pretence of public interest

Recently, the increasing use of manipulative means to present and stigmatise certain (political) opinions as "bad" per se has attracted attention. People who publicly express an opinion that differs from the media mainstream risk being hushed up, ridiculed, or even ruined. A genuinely objective debate is consistently avoided. We can often observe a close interaction between leading media and publicly financed media houses. Unsubstantiated accusations are circulated and dissenting voices are omitted. A press campaign against individual personalities is "orchestrated" by apparently random publications. The interest of a broad public is faked by means of coordinated meetings and so-called "expert" interviews. But the

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"experts", the interviewers and the authors - all too often from friendly media houses - are of the same opinion anyhow.

Aiming at the person

A few months ago, for example, the researcher and author *Daniele Ganser* was conspicuously badmouthed in certain Sunday newspapers. The various articles were based on a publication by a "media entrepreneur" rooted in the mainstream, who also receives public money. He tried to discredit Ganser without any serious discussion of his work or person. In parallel, the accusations were picked up on the radio. A media event without a content-related discussion, but with many accusations, was produced and distributed everywhere. The obvious goal of the media action was to damage Ganser's reputation. What concerns are there about Daniele Ganser? In lectures and publications, Ganser repeatedly points out that wars are illegal and shows up possible backgrounds (see Ganser, Daniele: "Illegale Kriege - Illegal Wars"). His astute and logical reasoning as well as his marked popularity and success, especially with the younger generation, seem to have crossed a secret red line. In addition, Ganser took the liberty of sticking to his argumentation and demanding fairness from the moderator on public TV.

Such "witch hunts" aim at silencing someone and warning possible imitators. They often end in the destruction of professional and private existences. Anyone who dares to stand outside the given spectrum of opinion must reckon with a media "shitstorm".

Media as global steering apparatus

The past few years have shown that US elites also exert a direct influence on politics in Europe via the media. In 2014, the satirical programme "Die Anstalt - the institute", of all programmes, presented studies by media scientist *Uwe Krüger* to a larger audience. Krüger meticulously analyses a transatlantic network in which leading European publishers and journalists (*Spiegel*, "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", *Die Zeit*, etc.) disseminate guidelines from the US without any criticism (see Krüger, Uwe. "Mainstream. Warum wir den Medien nicht mehr trauen. (Mainstream. Why we no longer trust the media). Id. "Meinungsmacht" (Power of opinion). How Switzerland is linked with this can also be read at www.swprs.org.

In the meantime, cooperation between elites and the media at the international level through various organisations such as the *Bilderberger* can be demonstrat-

ed (e.g. Engdahl, F. William, "Die Denkfabriken - The Think Tanks"). Here it becomes clear that influences are not accidental. It becomes obvious that the news is coordinated differently for individual regions or states.

Overstepping the mark - bogeyman Russia

The Western media's coverage of Russia since the Maidan coup in Kiev in the spring of 2014 has been even more one-sided than usual. This one-sided "coverage" has even been criticised by renowned journalists from public broadcasters (*Bräutigam*, 2014). It became obvious that the Western European mainstream media blindly followed the then current US policy towards Russia. An enemy stereotype of Russia was to be rebuilt (cf. Hofbauer, Hannes "Feindbild Russland" (bogeyman Russia).

Mainstream media lost control - election of Donald Trump

Looking into the recent past we find ourselves, so to speak, in the middle of a media revelation. Since the US elite bloc around *Hillary Clinton* lost the US presidential elections in November 2016, there has been an open battle for power raging among the elites, which has spread as far as Europe. The established "mainstream media" ("Washington Post", "New York Times", *CNN*, *ABC* etc.) did not succeed in helping their candidate to secure victory in the election campaign. Now all means are apparently permitted to get rid of the democratically elected president *Donald Trump* - in no matter which way. In their frustration, the mainstream media are now themselves putting on the agenda the issue of "manipulation" in the media. Of course they are thinking of the manipulations of the other side, and less of their own actions - an interesting reversal. Mainstream media are currently experiencing a radical loss of credibility, which we also feel in Europe. One factor is certainly the influence of the internet with its still existing possibilities to get information outside the mainstream.

Fact Check

Now we can assume that many current events do not take place in the way they are presented to us in the media, and that our actions and attitudes are not influenced by chance. Today, there is no longer any open censorship to suppress the contradictions between democratic claims and actual governance. An ingenious influence via the mainstream media is intended to create moods and attitudes. Those who do not adapt are to remain silent. Anyone who expresses a different opinion is silenced.

A critical distance and the knowledge of past lies and distortions show that a cautious judgement of the current situation would seem to make sense. "Perhaps the events have taken place in a completely different way than how they are presented to me" and "Why are these reports being spread now and in this way" are questions that arise. Nowadays many alternative information channels are available.

Invasions and wars almost always start with a lie. So why not first check the facts thoroughly and calmly and carry out a "fact check"?

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Journalism can do more

rl. There have always been and still are newspapers with their own point of view or journalists who portray reality and do not allow themselves to be bought. They often play a decisive role in uncovering and remedying shortcomings. They initiate discussions or make people think. Whereas in the past it was the Swiss newspaper "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" with editorials by *Willy Bretscher*

or the Swiss *Nebelspalter* with caricatures of *Bö*, there is now also a large number of media and courageous journalists in Switzerland who do not join the mainstream undisputed. It is not always only internationally reputed journalists such as *Seymour Hersh* or *Robert Fisk* who, with their investigations, burst some fixed images like soap bubbles at reality.

An alternative to nationalisation and globalisation

On the conference about the Principle of Cooperatives of the Research Institute Direct Democracy

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

On 29 September, the 5th scientific conference of the Research Institute Direct Democracy on the “Principle of Cooperatives and Direct Democracy” took place in Escholzmatt, Canton of Entlebuch. The head of the institute, Dr René Roca, historian and local council in the canton Aargau had invited to the conference. The Escholzmatt conference venue has seen traditionally many cooperatives already for a long time, and Entlebuch as a ‘Talgenossenschaft’ (valley cooperative) was of importance for the development of direct democracy.

In spite of the famous autumnal ceremonial alpine cattle drive from mountain pastures into valleys in the neighbouring village of Schüpfheim, which could be visited on the same day, around 100 interested participants from home and abroad gathered in Escholzmatt. The focus of the conference was on research results demonstrating the importance of the cooperative principle for the direct democracy. Following last year’s conference, which was about the significance of “natural law” for direct democracy in Switzerland, the research institute this year dealt with the “cooperative principle” and thus with the theory of direct democracy in more depth.

Fritz Lötscher, Mayor of Escholzmatt-Marbach, was very pleased in his welcoming speech: “It is a great honour that this scientific event is taking place here in our village”. With 4370 inhabitants, his community in the heart of Switzerland was the largest in the region and enjoyed lively activities with over 100 associations and 400 associations in the region.

Historical roots of cooperatives in Switzerland

In his introduction, René Roca examined the roots of cooperatives in Swit-



On the podium from left: Chairman Dr René Roca, Peter Stadelmann, Lukas Balmer, Jean-Paul Vuilleumier, Professor Wolf Linder. (picture ug)

zerland from a historical point of view and with an emphasis on their natural law and anthropological foundations. He illustrated the cooperative movement in the 19th and 20th centuries. Adolf Gasser (1903-1985) has formulated one of the most important principles of cooperatives: “The contrast between power and cooperative is perhaps the most important principle known in social history. The antagonism between the authoritarian state and the socio-societal state is purely and simply about fundamental things: namely the elementary foundations of human communal life.” (Gasser, *Gemeindefreiheit als Rettung Europas* (Communal freedom as salvation of Europe) 1947).

The Entlebuch as a *Talgenossenschaft* (cooperative acting within the limits of a valley) had played a special role in history, because nowhere else in Europe was the balance of power so deeply challenged as by the freedom struggles of the “rebellious” Entlebachers (inhabitants of Entlebuch) against the “Gracious Lords” of Lucerne. The uprising in Entlebuch was the starting point of the Swiss Peasant’s War in 1653.

The Principle of Cooperatives – an important democratic tradition

To this day, the cooperative principle, which has taken many manifestations in the Swiss Confederation since the Middle Ages, is still an important democratic tradition: the three “selves” – self-help, self-responsibility and self-determination – ensure a direct say and a say in matters, some of which are vital to life, such as water supply, construction of roads and bridges, etc. In this context, the cooperative *Landsgemeinde*-Democracy (public assembly, discussions and non-secret voting by all inhabitants entitled; it is one of the oldest forms of direct democracy) should also be mentioned. It was an important model on the way to more participation for numerous rural popular movements of the 19th century. On this basis and with the corresponding experience, personalities at municipal, cantonal and federal level ensured that direct democracy was developed in the 19th century.

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“From censorship to the ...”

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"An alternative to nationalisation ..."

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Cooperatives as a complement to the direct democracy

The political scientist *Wolf Linder*, until 2009 professor at the University of Bern and member of the *Swiss Science Council*, spoke on the topic "Direct democracy and cooperatives – does it need both?" Right at the beginning of his contribution, he gave his answer: "Yes, but why?" Cooperatives and direct democracy were linked by the same principle: "One man, one vote" for important basic decisions. Linder sees cooperatives as a complement to direct democracy and in his lecture, he emphasised the advantages of cooperatives: they are sustainable, they help to control resources effectively. In comparison to incorporated companies, cooperatives were better suited to act with social responsibility because they have a larger scope, said Linder. He raised a warning finger towards the big cooperatives *Migros* and *Coop* (detail chains): They should not forget the basic principles of their founding fathers. Cooperatives offer real opportunities and are an alternative to globalisation. They are (almost) not for sale and provide better protection against external control.

Cooperative elements in Swiss literature

The morning ended with a lecture by Dr. *Pirmin Meier*, former constitutional councillor of the canton of Aargau and one of the best experts on the urban-rural contrast in historical ethnology. He elaborated the cooperative elements found as examples in the works of the important Swiss writers *Heinrich Zschokke* (1771-1848), *Jeremias Gotthelf* (1797-1854), *Gottfried Keller* (1819-1890) and *Heinrich Federer* (1866-1928) and presented them to the participants with an engaging passion: the enlightened conception of man, firmly standing to his conviction, with no illusions about the "hierarchy" in the village and about the *Handmehr* (majority vote by show of hands) of *Heinrich Zschokke*, and the measures of values in *Gottfried Keller's* work. Thus he described the book "Das Goldmachedorf" by *Heinrich Zschokke* as the most important work of literature on cooperatives. With the idea of the self-sufficient village, this novel was the predecessor of *Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen's* ideas. Translated into many languages, it was published nine times until the Russian Revolution. It was the model for three novels by *Jeremias Gotthelf*, whose best novel about

Theses on the importance of the cooperative principle in Switzerland

- *Concept of man*: the cooperative is a form of joint solving of social tasks, which corresponds to the social nature of man (natural law, cf. last year's conference on "Natural law and direct democracy", conference proceedings in preparation).
- *Important foundation of direct democracy*: historically, in many aspects the idea of cooperatives is a central reference point and foundation for the development of direct democracy (everyone has a voice!) and the Swiss federal state.
- *Politics*: in Switzerland, the cooperative principle is the basis for the federal (decentralised) and subsidiary political system (importance of communal freedom!).
- *Economy*: the cooperative is the economic organisational form of self-help: it is always locally anchored and close to the people; the idea of the common good plays a central role
- *Global importance*: since 2016, the idea of cooperatives has been part of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage (Dietmar Berger).

cooperatives was described by *Pirmin Meier* as "Die Käserei in der Vehfreude" (The Cheese Factory in the Hamlet). In contrast to socialist utopias, *Jeremias Gotthelf* had known mankind – and: The basis of cooperatives lies in their ethical, moral content. *Pirmin Meier* summed up: "Through literature one can learn what our people are like. Good literature represents man as he is, not as he should be." With his passionate speech and his expertise, *Pirmin Meier* also brought the love for Switzerland closer to the participants who had travelled from abroad.

Many examples of cooperatives

The afternoon was dedicated to three examples of cooperatives: the *Upper Entlebuch Forest Cooperative* (*Lukas Balmer*, forester and managing director), the *Entlebuch Herb Cultivation Cooperative* (*Peter Stadelmann*, president) and the cooperative newspaper *Zeit-Fragen* (*Current Concerns/Horizons et débats*) (*Jean-Paul Vuilleumier*, president). In

this way, the participants of the conference gained an insight into the diversity of cooperative practice, not least through the personalities representing them: committed to the cause, not profit-oriented, on an equal par.

The mood among participants and speakers was always constructive

The conference was very well organised, starting with the stylishly assembly room in the *Gasthaus Bahnhof*, the smooth arrival process and the good food – the participants were welcomed with coffee and croissants already in the morning – up to the conference leadership by *René Roca*, who led the participants through the day calmly and competently. Accordingly, the mood among participants and speakers during the event was always lively and constructive. All in all, the conference was an outstanding success in raising awareness of the great importance of cooperatives based on ethical, value-oriented principles. •

Research Institute Direct Democracy

cc. Founded in 2012, the Research Institute Direct Democracy has set itself the goal of systematically and scientifically processing the issue of direct democracy. In addition, it is active in the field of consulting and organises events and lectures.

"Direct democracy is a central component of political culture in Switzerland, as in no other country. Therefore, it is astonishing that its origin and development has not yet been a central research topic in science of history. In order to close these research gaps, the scientific 'Research Institute Direct Democracy' was founded." (cf. www.fidd.ch)

Since 2014, the Institute, headed by Dr *René Roca*, has organised a series of conferences on the study of direct democracy. So far, five conferences have taken place. The content of the first three conferences has been published as

conference proceedings by the publisher Schwabe Verlag.

René Roca (ed.). *Katholizismus und moderne Schweiz. Beiträge zur Erforschung der Demokratie 1 (Catholicism and modern Switzerland. Contributions to the study of democracy 1)*. 2016. ISBN 978-3-7965-3498-0

René Roca (ed.). *Liberalismus und moderne Schweiz. Beiträge zur Erforschung der Demokratie 2 (Liberalism and modern Switzerland. Contributions to the study of democracy 2)*. 2017. ISBN 978-3-7965-3639-7

René Roca (ed.). *Frühsozialismus und moderne Schweiz. Beiträge zur Erforschung der Demokratie 3 (Early socialism and modern Switzerland. Contributions to the study of democracy 3)*. 2018. ISBN 978-3-7965-3819-3

“The historical knowledge of the meaning of direct democracy is essential.”

Interview with Dr. René Roca, Director of the Research Institute for Direct Democracy FidD



René Roca
(picture ma)

cc. Following this year's conference in Escholzmatt Current Concerns spoke with René Roca. The historian with a doctorate is the founder and director of the Research Institute Direct Democracy (www.fidd.ch).

Current Concerns: Mr. Roca, the event in Escholzmatt was very well attended. Apparently, the topic does not only appeal to experts. Do you see a relation between the cooperative system and direct democracy?

René Roca: I was very pleased that so many people participated. There are many who come again and again, and also new faces, people who have heard about the conferences. In the meantime, a network of contacts has been established throughout Switzerland, which I like to cultivate and which inspires me to tackle further research projects.

Regarding your question: I see a clear relation between the cooperative system and direct democracy in Switzerland. In Switzerland the idea of cooperatives was yielding fruit as early as the Middle Ages. The people of a certain region – later the political communities – were confronted with specific tasks that they took in hand on their own. For example, they had to pay for building paths and bridges and for organising the water supply as well. From the 13th century onwards, the Swiss Confederation was structured on a small-scale. Usually, people did not wait for instructions from above, but rather dealt with their tasks and completed them together. This led to the emergence of cooperatives everywhere, which laid a democratic foundation with the help of the three selves – self-help, self-responsibility and self-determination – and regular meetings. This foundation at communal level was decisive for the introduction of direct democracy by the cantons and the Confederation in the 19th century.

The conferences of your institute trace the roots of direct democracy in Swiss history. In Schwyz (2014) the focus was on Catholic conservative influence, in Zurich (2015) on liberalism. In Liestal (2016) the influence of early socialism was dis-

cussed, in Neuchâtel (2017) the influence of natural law and now in Escholzmatt (2018) the cooperative system. Why does direct democracy have its roots in Switzerland, and what is so special about this democracy?

The first three conferences are a kind of „trilogy“, now also available in printed form (“Beiträge zur Erforschung der Demokratie”, Volumes 1 to 3). I try to show the influence of political movements in Switzerland on direct democracy. With last year's conference on natural law and now on the cooperative principle, I trace the theoretical foundations of direct democracy in Switzerland. I am glad that I have repeatedly been able to attract renowned experts to the scientific conferences and thus to present the state of research in Switzerland.

The conferences have made it increasingly clear that Switzerland is a case apart concerning direct democracy. From its beginnings in the 13th century, Switzerland was a kind of confederation of states that could develop relatively autonomously. From 1648 the Confederation was a sovereign state, but only 200 years later a federal state. The cooperative principle was very decisive for the founding of the state. As shown, democratic forms developed on this foundation at an early stage, for example the Landsgemeinde (cantonal assembly). Unfortunately, all these early democratic forms have not been researched specifically and therefore are not really appreciated. But now I am trying to provide remedy with my research institute. I will dedicate the following conferences to the individual cantons – I have already published research results on the cantons of Lucerne and Baselland – all of which have fought for and introduced direct democracy in a variety of impressive ways on the basis of their own political culture and in exchange with each other.

Direct democracy is regarded as something Swiss and at the same time as something very generally human, as a state model by citizens for citizens. Unfortunately, it is still neglected in the academic debate in Switzerland. Can we afford that? What could we gain?

Of course, we can't afford it. On the contrary, based on the historical knowledge of the emergence and development of direct democracy, today we must defend and further direct democracy in

Switzerland. We have the good fortune that we were born into this system, so to speak, and that we can now use it. We must not forfeit it under any circumstances. The historical knowledge of the importance of direct democracy is essential. The Swiss could certainly be more proud of their country, pass this on to future generations and increasingly maintain the exchange on democratic issues with other countries. Switzerland is not yet very interested in these questions, I mainly receive inquiries from abroad. I recently visited Salzburg and Bolzano (South Tyrol) and presented and discussed the model of Swiss democracy.

If I have understood you correctly, Switzerland is an important laboratory for direct democracy. There are manifold and different developments in a very small space. Can direct democracy be exported? Can larger political entities such as the EU learn from it?

I think other countries can benefit enormously from the “Swiss model”. Even larger countries can certainly learn from Switzerland. What is important is the elaborate democratic structure from bottom up and the introduction of federal-subsidary structures. We see an incredible democratic deficit everywhere in Europe and in the world. Citizens are not taken seriously and are not involved in decision-making. If a state is regarded as a constitutional democratic state, the elected politicians would have to develop successively a political culture that gives room to people's co-determination. In direct dialogue with the citizens, direct democratic structures can be developed in a country-specific way, taking into account history and tradition.

The EU as a political project has failed. It is politicising without considering the people and cementing its centralist structures. In many EU countries, people no longer want to be patronised and vote out the established parties, and EU-critical voices are becoming more and more popular. A good alternative to the EU is still EFTA, who confines itself to economic issues. At last the citizens have to be taken more seriously in their democratic concerns.

Thank you very much for the interview.

Why Beat Richner didn't get a Nobel Peace Prize

On the death of the active peace maker

Professor Dr med. David Holzmann

Beat Richner, M.D., died on 8 September 2018 after a short and serious illness. Countless Swiss, Cambodians and humanitarian committed mourn the loss of a unique doctor and patron for more peace, justice and human dignity. The University of Zurich awarded him a honorary doctorate, many more awards he received for his magnificent and worldwide unique work. Moreover he had a great number of sponsors who admired him and his work and saw the humanitarian tradition of our country realised through his activities. If you look at his achievements and commitment, you wonder why he was never nominated for a Nobel Prize. This is due to his logical and consistent work. He was not "everybody's darling".

In spring 2017 Beat Richner made the headlines for once because of a completely different matter. A mysterious, quickly progressing disease of the brain forced him to leave Cambodia and to return to Switzerland to seek medical treatment. Before that, Dr Richner was heard whenever he collected money with his cello concertos for the care of children and mothers in his hospitals in Cambodia, or he could be heard on the radio, he was seen in the Swiss National Circus "Knie" and so on. His travels through Switzerland were primarily for the purpose, as he himself emphasised, of finding support for his projects and the care of the children. Richner lived very modestly and unselfishly and drew his power and energy solely from his successes which proved him and his ideals right. A successful treatment of a child affected with tuberculosis could please him just the same as the establishment of a whole treatment centre. His performance only in dealing with finances was almost incredible: With an annual budget of only 42 million Swiss Francs, its hospitals were able to treat and care for four-fifths of all Cambodian children, mostly free of charge!

Beat Richner demonstrated the world how donations can benefit the needy without losses. All the money donated by countless Swiss people, institutions and charitable organisations flowed carefully and without expensive "processing fees" or the like to Cambodia into its three hospitals. In contrast to multinational organisations where donated money often oozed away in the administration he showed the world that help can and has to get along without a lot of bureaucracy.

Doktor Beat Richner alias Beatocello had not been himself if he had not openly and fearlessly expressed his criticism of certain UN-organisations and politically responsible persons. Therefore the assailed punished him with condemnation, slander and defamation. If he hadn't have a strong moral backing and great admiration by the Swiss population, officials had much more severely attacked the engaged paediatrician and had tried to dry up the flow of donations. He didn't shy away from criticising the WHO directly and distinctly. Despite of its authority and power the WHO couldn't effectively run against.

In his criticism published at different places worldwide with the ambiguous headline "WHO is wrong and WHAT is wrong?" he pointed up the proceeding of the world health apparatus with clear words: a meningitis of a child in Europe is treated with the expensive antibiotic *Ceftriaxon*. Why, so his criticism, a Cambodian child shouldn't get exactly the same medication? Why had the WHO for example *Chloramphenicol* on her list of recommended drugs, which was taken off the market in the industrial countries because of proven inefficacy and dangerous side effects? Richner was a strong advocate of his responsible conviction that there must be no "simple medicine for simple people", as the WHO propagated. "An illness is always the same, be it in Europe or in Cambodia", he used to say. And because this was so, the illness had to be treated in Cambodia exactly the same way as in Switzerland. With this medically justified logic, he attacked many aid organisations, which he also accused of letting enormous sums of donor money seep into their expensive administrative apparatus. His argumentation and his sense of justice were effective and reasonable for everybody. To avoid having to elaborate on it Swiss *radio SRF* in the broadcast "Echo der Zeit" of 9 September addressed Richner's motivation to accusations simply as "ideology".



(picture keystone)

Precisely in these days WHO and other health organisations pointed out that tuberculosis is far from being under control. Richner had shown the world with his meticulous program of control and prevention of this serious and dangerous disease that it is very well possible to keep tuberculosis long term at bay. Certainly this was not possible without a great effort of staff and major gratuitous information campaigns for the population. It is the wish of the parents that their infected children become healthy. As physician and helper one has to respect this deepest desire of the parents. This desire is the basis of a reliable relationship with the treating physician and the hospital, which ultimately guarantees that you will be able to go through months of consistent treatment without having to interrupt it.

Richner has not only understood this but he has proved the world that it is possible and thereby declared his struggle against fatalism.

Richner, with his great commitment, embodied much with which we Swiss identify: selfless commitment, humanitarian aid, objective criticism - without concessions to today's mainstream. The fact that Beat Richner did not receive a Nobel Peace Prize speaks for him. The French Enlightenment philosopher *Claude Adrien Hélvétius* described this circumstance with the words: "It is impossible to carry the torch of truth through a crowd without searing the beard of one or the other".