

# Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## Can the great war be prevented ... Russia and China are preparing for war – right in front of America's doorstep

by Niki Vogt



Chukotka, northern province of Russia – directly opposite Alaska.  
(picture: Wikimedia Commons, TUBS)

From 5 to 10 September, the Russian Federation set up one of the largest military exercises ever conducted, “Caucasus 2016”. 120,000 soldiers and civilian officials were involved in this military training exercise. According to the Russian news agency *Tass*, this took place in the immediate vicinity of the Crimean peninsula. Head of the Russian General Staff *Valery Gerasimov* said on 9 September, that more than 12,500 people had never been involved in the exercise at the same time. Ministerial officials and members of the Russian central bank were also involved. Gerasimov described the exercises as “an intensive military training”. It had been a tough test for commanders of all ranks, and had also subjected the military control organisations to a hard test as well as testing their capabilities of coordinating operations among the United Forces.

### A clear warning to the West

The sheer size of the exercise and the chosen region might already be interpreted as a clear warning to the West not to lay undue strain on the question of the “annexation of the Crimea” and not to test the patience of Russia in the Donbass area unduly. At the same time, we are informed that a coastal defence is to be constructed on the outermost eastern tip of Russia

by 2018. One week before the start of the “Caucasus 2016” exercise, the Russian defence minister *Shoigu* confirmed the plans for the establishment of a special troop unit in the Chukotka region. The decision to do so was made in 2015 and is “part of a plan for the establishment of a unified system of coastal defence from the Arctic in the north to the Premorja territory in the south”. This is intended to secure the Kuriles and the Bering Sea as well as cover the routes of the fleets in the Pacific, and thus also to increase the combat power of Russia’s nuclear-strategic naval forces. The new divisions are to ensure the defence of the extremely sparsely populated regions of the Russian Federation’s eastern coast.

### Russian divisions on Russia’s eastern border

More is not said about this in the statement. What is really interesting in connection with these two reports is that the Russian Federation is sending a very clear message to Washington. So far, Russia has had not a single coastal defence division. Russia’s western borders are on the European continent, and in its almost uninhabited East there was no need to defend its

## Editorial

*Kishore Mahbubani* has amongst others, for example with his book “New Asian Hemisphere”, pointed out that the supremacy of the West is coming to a close. A unipolar world order cannot be sustained in the long run – since, as *Martin Kriele* has noted in his book “Die demokratische Weltrevolution” (the democratic world revolution), the idea of the basic equality of men and its effect on human consciousness can no longer be stopped. It simply corresponds to human nature.

More urgent than ever is the question whether the transition to a universally accepted multipolar world order can take place halfway peacefully, or whether a nuclear catastrophe threatens us – in other words, whether in the West and specifically in the USA the forces of reason prevail, who also consider the well-being of their own people, or whether this are the exponents of the sole predominance of the Indispensable Nation by any means, which includes nuclear war.

We know at least since the Cuban crisis in 1962 that such a war cannot be waged. In the face of strong demands by American neoconservatives for absolute superiority and nuclear first-strike capability, the former US defense minister *Robert McNamara* warned against such ideas a few years ago (see *Current Concerns* No 7, 7 Feb 2005) in remembrance of this crisis, and said: “We just lucked out”. At that time the government wanted to know from the army leadership whether it could guarantee that no bombs would hit America in a nuclear strike against Russia. They could not – and no atom bombs fell on Russia.

The article on the military defense strategies of Russia and China also points precisely in this direction because it shows that both are not prepared to tolerate a nuclear attack on their territory. The intention is clear: Whoever wants to attack us – even nuclear – will pay dearly for it, and such an attack would inevitably lead to the most serious casualties in the USA. Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we know what nuclear pollution means. Otherwise, the “cities for peace”,

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coasts against the equally deserted Alaska on the opposite shore. So we do not have even a clue as to what a coastal defence in the East might look like, nor to its extent and the armament that will be provided. Until now, naval forces in the Baltic Sea, the Arctic Sea, the Black Sea and the Pacific have maintained the defence of Russian shores, as they did in the Soviet era. Why should entire divisions be established on the mainland along the coasts?

A division is a large body of land forces, and it is capable of conducting a "connected weapons" campaign. This means: infantry, pioneers, ABC defence, tanks, medical supplies, rocket artillery and tube artillery ... in short, everything you need to create a complete pandemonium. So now several divisions are to be set up along the east coast.

**Not even 90 kilometres from Alaska**

A look at the map shows that Russia's extreme north-east is separated from the US only by the Bering Strait. At its narrowest point, the two superpowers are not even 90 kilometres apart. Alaska is only a stone's throw away. But what is there in Alaska, except moose, wolves, bears, reindeer and a few settlements?

There are indeed a few not quite unimportant US military bases like the *Elmendorf Air Force Base* at Anchorage. Not only are the latest F-22 Raptor fighters stationed there, which are able to start from there to intercept Russian strategic bombers, but also the *Norad* for the Alaska area and the *Command of the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Army*. Fort Richardson with the *4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team* (paratroopers) of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division also has its seat in the region.

**In case of war US fighters would hardly have time to take off**

As mentioned above, the (Russian) divisions could also be equipped with rocket artillery of various kinds. Military analyst *Sergei Ischenko* notes in an analysis that the American F-22 Raptors would not have the time to ascend and intercept Russian bombers, if the Russians were to install mobile launching ramps for the *Iskander* ballistic short-range missile system on the east coast of their country. As we know from the incident with the "Donald Cook" and from other Russian demonstrations, they can completely shut down US military electronics, and therefore the observation and warning posts in Alaska would probably simply go dark. "The crews in the military bases Elmendorf and Fort Richardson will go to bed with a bad feeling in the evening, just as in the days of the cold war," sums up Ischenko.

**"Russia is dealing with the US in exactly the same way that it has had to tolerate itself"**

Russia is obviously dealing with the US in exactly the same way that it has had to accept itself in recent years: the military bases and troops of the opposing power block are moving to the borders of the US. And then also Chinese President *Xi Jinping* said at the G-20 summit in Hangzhou that China would pursue its interests in the South China Sea masterfully and confidently. The South China Sea is linked to the east coast of Russia in the South. All this does not look too good for the US.

But things are not left at the coastal defence divisions in Chukotka and on the coast down to China. The Russian Air Force has built ten air bases in the Arctic. The Russian Organisation for Special Constructions (*Spetsstroy*) is currently developing facilities for the infrastructure of these air bases for 20,000 military personnel, their families and civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence in the Far North, the Far East and Siberia.

According to a report on the website "The National Interest", fighter jets on these 10 air defence bases will be equipped with the feared *Vympel R-37* (air-to-air missile), which has a very high range and is capable of accurately targeting and shooting down US AWACS and C4-ISTAR planes. And in doing so, they can keep such a great distance that the American fighters supposed to protect the AWACS and C4 ISTARs cannot reach them. The Russian fighter jets can also shoot down American refuelling aircraft very accurately, and because of their load highly explosive kerosene the escape of the crews by means of ejection seats would become obsolete, as a hit would instantly transform the flying store of kerosene into a fireball.

In addition there are the *Nivator KS-17* air-to-air missiles already called AWACS killer by the Americans, which are able to home in accurately over a distance of 400 kilometres. They are the heaviest and most destructive air-to-air missiles ever built. The Indian Air Force owns them and arms its Russian SU-30MKI fighter jets with them.

**1,500 Russian elite soldiers in Bolivia**

But things do not rest with the military buildup confronting America's north-western border. The Russian news agency *Tass* reported on 6 September that the Russian Federation had sent 1,500 elite soldiers, the so-called *Spetsnaz*, with immediate effect to Bolivia. This was stipulated in an agreement on military cooperation between the Russian Federation

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which were created in 1982 at the initiative of the mayor of Hiroshima, can be recalled.

Power politics, however, sometimes pursues its own, in itself perhaps rationally calculated, but not long-reaching rational patterns of thought. Elitist power arrogance sometimes comes very close to insanity, in which action, by misjudging essential aspects of reality, can assume extraneous and self-destructive forms. The US may lack the historical experience: they have never had the war in their own country. This is quite different in Russia, as travelers in this country repeatedly point to: here the Second World War is still very present to the people. The 26 million dead are not forgotten in Russia; the victims, who demanded the defence of the then invasion, are remembered with respect and seriousness. And Russia makes it clear that it will not tolerate another destructive war on its territory.

Neither will China. Instead of practicing in pseudo-moral hypocrisy, the West would do better to take note of the fact how many millions of people in this country – it is said 400 million – have been able to work their way out of poverty. It is regrettable that China has also spent large sums of money on the development of its armaments and army, but this does not diminish the accomplishment and is comprehensible given the geopolitical disputes about a new, multipolar world order. China also makes no secret of the fact that it will not allow any interference with its internal affairs.

However, it would have something else to offer. For example, the offer of the president of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, *Fu Ying*, which she published in "Foreign Affairs": Partnership and Cooperation instead of Major Conflicts and War. As she writes, a win-win situation for all stakeholders. A voice of reason.

In the meantime, the Syrian war threatens to become the famous spark in the powder barrel. The demand for a flight ban is, according to the experience in Libya, simply a declaration of war. It is to be hoped that in the background there are many voices of reason which work in the sense of a diplomatic solution. *Willy Wimmer's* warnings are part of the efforts to support such a solution and bring the warring sentiment down to earth. It would take many of them.

Erika Vögeli

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and Bolivia. And implemented immediately. Here, too, a vanguard – as it will not rest with 1,500 men – is coming closer to the borders of the USA. The Bolivian defense minister let it be known that Bolivia sees a fraternised country in Russia, with whom it maintains excellent relations. Russian Defense Minister Shoigu returned the compliment, saying that Russia, on the other hand, had a promising partner in Bolivia.

**Not another Brazil**

Background for the willingness of Bolivia to cooperate with Russia is also its concern that Bolivia could be the next country after Venezuela and Brazil in which the USA will trigger unrest and upheavals. In Brazil, where Washington was behind the disempowerment of President *Dilma Rousseff*, her successor to the presidency, *Michel Temer*, had, according to *Wikileaks*, been working as an informer to the US secret services against his own country for many years. The article also states that Temer will now appoint *Goldman Sachs* and the IMF to administer and manage the Brazilian economy.

In his overthrow of President *Rousseff*, Temer was supported by Senator *Aloysio Nunes*, who pursued her deposition. After the successful coup, Nunes traveled to the US for three days to meet US government representatives. Among them were members of the *US Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, the *Albright Stonebridge Group* (Chairwoman *Madeleine Albright*) and former US Ambassador to Brazil, *Thomas Shannon*. Also the current US ambassador to Brazil, *Liliana Ayalde*, is a woman who, according to *Wikileaks*, was already involved in the fall of the Paraguayan government.

**US espionage aircraft over the Black Sea**

As a reason for the massive strengthening of their military efforts, which are evidently directed against the US, Russia said that this was due to the fact that the

week before, the US had had one of their espionage aircraft P8-Poseidon fly over the Black Sea, and that this had switched off its transponder and made an attempt to penetrate the airspace of the Russian Federation. It was intercepted by a Russian SU-27. Yet the Pentagon had actually complained that the Russian fighter jet had flown dangerous manoeuvres and approached the American machine up to 10 feet. The attempt to penetrate Russian airspace was against all international rules and, moreover, a continuation of the unprovoked US aggression of 1 August, when the US had had several strategic bombers flying along the Russian northern frontier.

Calculating the fact that, as already mentioned, China has openly expressed its willingness to take on the Americans, and taking into account the armament that China has developed, a new picture of the world situation is emerging.

**A new picture of the world situation**

With its PL-15 missile, China has baffled the US military's leadership. The US fighter jets' decades old AIM-120 AMRAAM can no longer keep up. "What can we deploy against this, and how can we counter this threat?" asked Air Combat Command, Commander General *Herbert Carlisle*. And he said, "The PL-15 and the range of this rocket ... we just need to be able to surpass this missile." In addition, the Chinese have developed a highly modern, powerful fighter jet in the form of the Chengdu J-20, which also has camouflage features. To be sure, the Chinese are holding the data back, but the US military is aware of the fact that they are dealing with an optimised high-speed, large-range aircraft. If these fighters are armed with the PL-15 missiles, they will enable the Chinese to destroy both American refueling aircraft and war ships. But to allow air operations of the American F-22 fighter jets over the sea, after an RAND briefing three to four refueling aircraft have to rise every hour to deliver 2.6 million gallons of kerosene to the fighter jets. This is also known to Beijing. The Chengdu J-20 jets only need to shoot the heavy and clumsy refueling aircraft down like clay

pigeons from a safe distance with their far-reaching PL-15 in order to paralyse the US air force in the waters around China's and Russia's eastern coasts.

**Americans must be prepared to have the war in their own country**

If Russia were yet to add its ability to simply eliminate the US forces' highly developed electronic AEGIS system, the US can not afford a showdown with China and Russia in this region for the foreseeable future. A penetration of bombers deep into China and Russia in order to destroy large cities and important centres by bombing will not be possible for the Americans, neither even skirmishes in the coastal waters off China and Russia.

America is just losing its air supremacy over the enormously important South China Sea with its world trade routes and its influence on the neighbouring countries, which are watch as the former top dog is being stopped and challenged.

Conversely, the chances for Russia and China to hit the US extremely painfully with air attacks on its own soil along their west coast are very good. Without their electronic warning systems, which Russia is able to shut down, the Americans' options of air defense are limited the Russian and Chinese long range missiles are superior to the American ones in the air. This time, the Americans must be prepared for a war in their own country. The entire west coast, far into the hinterland, would be affected. If the US were to bet on their nuclear power, the direct response would follow in the form of at least one atomic bomb on an American city on the west coast. The development delineated here shows that this is precisely what China and Russia want to clearly demonstrate to the Americans and that they are also determined to carry it out. The American population, however, is not psychologically adjusted to such horrendous scenarios at all. Panic would break out and a storm would be set off against the government. The US would not be in a position to wage such a war for more than two weeks.

Source: [quer-denken.tv/russland-und-china-bereiten-sich-auf-einen-krieg-vor-und-diesmal-direkt-vor-amerikas-haustuer/](http://quer-denken.tv/russland-und-china-bereiten-sich-auf-einen-krieg-vor-und-diesmal-direkt-vor-amerikas-haustuer/) of 13.9.2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# Alert Memorandum for Obama warned to defuse tensions with Russia

by Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity VIPS\*

*cn. A group of ex-U.S. intelligence officials is warning President Obama to defuse growing tensions with Russia over Syria by reining in the demonization of President Putin and asserting White House civilian control over the Pentagon.*

Our concern this time regards Syria. We are hoping that your *President's Daily Briefing* tomorrow will give appropriate attention to Saturday's warning by Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson *Maria Zakharova*: "If the US launches a direct aggression against Damascus and the Syrian Army, it would cause a terrible, tectonic shift not only in the country, but in the entire region" on 1 October 2016.

Speaking on Russian TV, she warned of those whose "logic is 'why do we need diplomacy' ... when there is power ... and methods of resolving a problem by power. We already know this logic; there is nothing new about it. It usually ends with one thing – full-scale war." [...]

It should not be attributed to paranoia on the Russians' part that they suspect the Sept. 17 U.S. and Australian air attacks on Syrian army troops that killed 62 and wounded 100 was no "mistake," but rather a deliberate attempt to scuttle the partial cease-fire *Kerry* and *Lavrov* had agreed on – with your approval and that of President *Putin* – that took effect just five days earlier.

In public remarks bordering on the in-subordinate, senior Pentagon officials showed unusually open skepticism regarding key aspects of the *Kerry-Lavrov* deal. We can assume that what *Lavrov* has told his boss in private is close to his uncharacteristically blunt words on Russian NTV on Sept. 26:

"My good friend John Kerry ... is under fierce criticism from the US military machine. Despite the fact that, as always, [they] made assurances that the US Commander in Chief, President *Barack Obama*, supported him in his contacts with Russia (he confirmed that during his meeting with President Vladimir Putin),

apparently the military does not really listen to the Commander in Chief."

*Lavrov's* words are not mere rhetoric. He also criticized *JCS Chairman Joseph Dunford* for telling Congress that he opposed sharing intelligence with Russia, "after the agreements concluded on direct orders of Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Barack Obama stipulated that they would share intelligence. ... It is difficult to work with such partners. ..." [...]

The door to further negotiations remains ajar. In recent days, officials of the Russian foreign and defense ministries, as well as President *Putin's* spokesman, have carefully avoided shutting that door, and we find it a good sign that Secretary *Kerry* has been on the phone with Foreign Minister *Lavrov*. And the Russians have also emphasized Moscow's continued willingness to honor previous agreements on Syria.

In the Kremlin's view, Russia has far more skin in the game than the U.S. does. Thousands of Russian dissident terrorists have found their way to Syria, where they obtain weapons, funding, and practical experience in waging violent insurgency. There is understandable worry on Moscow's part over the threat they will pose when they come back home. In addition, President *Putin* can be assumed to be under the same kind of pressure you face from the military to order it to try to clean out the mess in Syria "once and for all," regardless how dim the prospects for a military solution are for either side in Syria.

We are aware that many in Congress and the "mainstream" media are now calling on you to up the ante and respond – overtly or covertly or both – with more violence in Syria. [...]

Incidentally, it would be helpful [...] toward that end if you had one of your staffers tell the "mainstream" media to tone down its puerile, nasty – and for the most part unjustified and certainly unhelpful – personal vilification of President *Putin*. This is certainly not helpful.

Renewing direct dialogue with President *Putin* might well offer the best chance to ensure an end, finally, to unwanted "jamming." We believe John *Kerry* is correct in emphasizing how frightfully complicated the disarray in Syria is amid the various vying interests and factions. At the same time, he has already done much of the necessary spadework and has found *Lavrov* for the most part, a helpful partner.

Still, in view of lingering Russian – and not only Russian – skepticism regarding

the strength of your support for your secretary of state, we believe that discussions at the highest level would be the best way to prevent hotheads on either side from risking the kind of armed confrontation that nobody should want.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you invite President *Putin* to meet with you in a mutually convenient place, in order to try to sort things out and prevent still worse for the people of Syria.

In the wake of the carnage of World War II, *Winston Churchill* made an observation that is equally applicable to our 21<sup>st</sup> Century: "To jaw, jaw, jaw, is better than to war, war, war." [...]

For the Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

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Source: [www.consortiumnews.com](http://www.consortiumnews.com)  
from 2 October 2016 (Excerpt)

\* *Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)* is a group of current and former officials of the United States Intelligence Community, including some from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the U.S. State Department's Intelligence Bureau (INR), and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). It was formed in January 2003 as a coast-to-coast enterprise to protest the use of faulty intelligence upon which the US/UK invasion of Iraq was based. The group issued a letter before the 2003 invasion of Iraq stating that intelligence analysts were not being listened to by policy makers. In August 2010 it issued a memorandum to the White House warning of an imminent Israeli attack on Iran.

## US-Mayors warn against increasing danger of war

cc. The US-Conference of Mayors (USCM) is the official non-partisan organisation for cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,407 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. The conference constitutes a representation of the cities' interests. Among others it helps develop and promote effective national urban/suburban policy; build stronger and more effective federal-city relationships and makes sure that Washington's policy takes into account the cities' needs. The Conference holds its Winter Meeting each January in Washington, D.C. and an annual meeting each June in a different U.S. city.

This year's annual meeting took place from 24 to 27 June 2016 in Indianapolis. At the close of the conference – for the eleventh time in a row – a resolution was launched in support of “Mayors for Peace” (cf. box). They also demand to redirect the state funds away from nuclear armament and to address instead the urgent needs of cities and rebuild thenation's crumbling infrastructure for the benefit of the citizens of their cities. 2016 adopted resolution ...

Calling on the next U.S. President to pursue diplomacy with other nuclear-armed states; participate in negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons; cut nuclear weapons spending and redirection funds to meet the needs of cities

- whereas the August 1945 U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki indiscriminately incinerated tens of thousands of ordinary people, and by the end of 1945 more than 210,000 people – mainly civilians, were dead, and the surviving hibakusha, their children and grandchildren continue to suffer from physical, psychological and sociological effects; and
- whereas, the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) commends President Obama for visiting Hiroshima on May 27, 2016 and meeting with hibakusha as we called upon him to do in 2015, and for declaring there: “Among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear, and pursue a world without them. We're not bound by genetic code to repeat the mistakes of the past”; and
- whereas, the USCM commends President Obama for the successful conclusion of diplomatic negotiations with Iran on a comprehensive nuclear deal as we called upon him to do in 2015; and

- whereas, at the same time, the Obama Administration has reduced the U.S. nuclear stockpile less than any post-Cold War presidency and has laid the groundwork for the United States to spend one trillion dollars over the next three decades to maintain and modernize its nuclear bombs and warheads, production facilities, delivery systems, and command and control, and the

other nuclear-armed states are following suit; and

- whereas, the nuclear-armed countries are edging ever closer to direct military confrontation in conflict zones around the world, and the largest NATO war games in decades, involving 14,000 U.S. troops, and activation of U.S. mis-

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### What is the “Mayors for Peace”?

In August 1945, atomic bombs instantaneously reduced the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to rubble, taking hundreds of thousands of precious lives. Today, more than seventy years after the war, thousands of citizens still suffer the devastating aftereffects of radiation and unfathomable emotional pain. To prevent any repetition of the A-bomb tragedy, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have continually sought to tell the world about the inhumane cruelty of nuclear weapons and have consistently urged that nuclear weapons be abolished.

On June 24, 1982, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> UN Special Session on Disarmament held at UN Headquarters in New York, then Mayor Takeshi Araki of Hiroshima proposed a new Program to Promote the Solidarity

of Cities toward the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. This proposal offered cities a way to transcend national borders and work together to press for nuclear abolition. Subsequently, the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki called on mayors around the world to support this program.

The “Mayors for Peace” is composed of cities around the world that have formally expressed support for the program Mayor Araki announced in 1982. As of October 1, 2016, membership stood at 7,146 cities in 162 countries and regions. We were registered as a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] in May 1991.

Source: <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/english/outlines/index.html>



“Mayors for Peace” (picture [www.mayorsforpeace.org](http://www.mayorsforpeace.org))

## “We are beaten to war”

Interview with Willy Wimmer by “Sputniknews”

What has changed during a year of Russian engagement in Syria, and is there a real chance for peace? Sputnik correspondent Ilona Pfeffer asked Willy Wimmer, former State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defense and former Vice-President of the OSCE, to assess the situation in Syria.

*Sputniknews:* Mr Wimmer, the fighting in Syria does not stop and agreed on cease-fires are repeatedly violated. The interference of the US and Russia is partly misleadingly documented in the media. How do you assess the situation in Syria?

*Willy Wimmer:* We are dealing with a protracted development that five years ago tragically culminated in the civil war and the conflict, when in reality the conflict between Syria and Israel over the Golan Heights seemed to be eliminated. They were on the verge of an agreement which could have meant peace for the entire Middle East if there had not been certain forces that had shown no interest in this peace settlement. As we know, at the beginning of the Syrian tragedy,

British, French and American special forces have been traveling in this country to bring about this civil-war-like and then international dimension. So we have antecedents that would have been very hopeful if it had not been reversed. Since then, we have experienced a tragedy, the Syrian people seems to bleed to death. Now it is important that we find an end to this misery and do everything we can to ensure that the Syrian conflict is not sparked off in other countries and in our region, because that would mean the great war.

In this context, I would also like to deliberately make a connection to the investigation’s report about the downing of the Malaysian airplane, which has been presented in the Netherlands. You have to ask yourself: Are they interested in the elucidation of a tragedy, or are they looking for a *casus belli*? That is the dimension we are dealing with, and that is why Syria is not far away. We must do everything to contribute to a peaceful solution, and that for us it does not mean to enter the region with weapons, finance and armies.

Russia has been in attendance for a year, what successes are achieved? And what about the Americans and their partners? The American and Western European engagement in Syria is a clear violation of international law. It is a military operation in the territory of another state which is not legitimised by the United Nations or international law. All the misery that is evident in Syria is, of course, we owe to these forces. If there is any chance that the bloodshed will end in Syria it is thanks to the effort of the Russian Federation, which is working on the side of international law to ensure that it is not unhinged. This is what the United States have been demonstrating since the war against Yugoslavia, which was a violation of international law. This is an on-site struggle in Syria, but also a controversy about whether the United States can actually accomplish the global clean sweep that they have been doing since 1999, or whether the world still has a chance to return to peaceful cooperation between peoples. Without the Russian involvement in Syria

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sile defenses in Eastern Europe are fueling growing tensions between nuclear-armed giants, and according to former Defense Secretary *William Perry*: “The probability of a nuclear calamity is higher today, I believe, that it was during the cold war.”; and

- whereas, more than 15,000 nuclear weapons, most orders of magnitude more powerful than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, 94% held by the United States and Russia, continue to pose an intolerable threat to cities and humanity; and
- whereas, the United States and the other nuclear-armed states are refusing to participate in the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations, meeting this year in Geneva; and
- whereas, deteriorating infrastructure is endangering public safety and quality of life, and the growing disparity in wealth is forcing people to leave America’s cities, and federal funds are desperately needed in our communities to build affordable housing, create jobs with livable wages, improve public transit, and develop sustainable energy sources; and
- whereas, the USCM commends Mayor *Denise Simmons* and the Cambridge City Council for demonstrating bold

leadership at the municipal level by unanimously deciding on April 2, 2016, to divest their one-billion-dollar city pension fund from all companies involved in production of nuclear weapons systems and in entities investing in such companies; and

- whereas, “Mayors for Peace” continues to aim for the global elimination of nuclear weapons by 2020, and its membership has grown to 7,063 cities in 161 countries, with 207 U.S. members; and
- whereas, the USCM congratulates Des Moines and its Mayor T.M. *Franklin Cownie* on Des Moines’ appointment as Lead City for the U.S. section “Mayors for Peace”,
- now therefore be it resolved that the USCM calls on the next President of the United States, as an urgent matter, to pursue new diplomatic initiatives to lower tensions with Russia and China and to dramatically reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles; and
- be it further resolved that the USCM calls on the next President of the United States, in good faith, to participate in or initiate, for example by convening a Nuclear Disarmament Summit, multilateral negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons as required by the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty; and
- be it further resolved, that the USCM calls on the next President and Congress of the United States to reduce nuclear

- weapons spending to the minimum necessary to assure the safety and security of the existing weapons as they await disablement and dismantlement, and to redirect those funds to address the urgent needs of cities and rebuild our nation’s crumbling infrastructure; and
- be it further resolved, that the USCM calls on member cities to take action at the municipal level to raise public awareness of the humanitarian impacts and financial costs of nuclear weapons, the growing dangers of wars among nuclear-armed states, and the urgent need for good faith U.S. participation in negotiating the global elimination of nuclear weapons by, for example, planting seedlings of A-bombed trees, hosting A-bomb poster exhibitions and film screenings, sharing hibakusha testimonies via Skype, promoting Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace Study Courses; and having their mayors speak at local Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemorations; and
- be it further resolved, that the USCM reaffirms its support for “Mayors for Peace” and urges additional U.S. cities to join in its campaign to reach 10,000 member cities by 2020.

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**“We are beaten to war”**

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alongside the legitimate government, the world would have no chance at all.

*What objectives do the US pursuit in Syria in your opinion?*

The US obviously want to draw a new map south of Western Europe and the Russian Federation. That is why we have a belt of conflicts and wars between Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, extending to the southern edge of the Mediterranean up to Mali. These are all regions where the United States are involved, waging wars, contributing to mass misery and destruction of civilisation. And they are far from stopping with it.

The Russian Federation entered into the conflict in Syria due to a legitimate liaison with the Syrian Republic and President Assad, and is on the level of international law. This makes the big difference between the United States and the Russian Federation. The United States stand for murder and terror in our surroundings and are also the cause of the migratory flows that hit us. The Russian Federation stands for the return to negotiations and reason and to a peaceful coexistence between the peoples.

The tragedy for Syria is that everything is carried out on the back of the Syrian people and that is why there is no way around to get to peace. Perhaps it will be possible to keep up the leftover of reason in Washington beyond the intrusions.

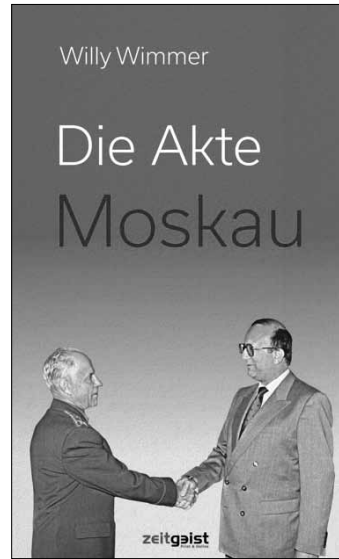
Now, on the brink of the presidential election the problem with the United States is that it takes place in the most dangerous time the world can ever be in. The forces that virtually determine the United States want to commit the future American government to everything they do. That means a war is as probable as anything else, but a war that goes beyond Syria.

*With the cooperation between the two superpowers it does not really work well up to now, but Russia time and again is showing willingness to cooperate. What do you think: What are the factors for the failure so far, and what chances do you give the cooperation?*

Considering all the uncertainty how it ill procede, I think it is possible for both sides to come to a reapproachment, because there is much more at stake than the Syrian images reveal. Tomorrow, it may hit us in a much larger region, and the Russian Federation’s effort to prevent this and curb the conflict is adverse America’s in-

**“Purely defensive intentions”**

“In early summer 1988, the Working Group Defense of the CDU/CSU faction of the German Bundestag flew to Washington. Since my election as a chairman, we met there every year with representatives of the Congress and the American government to discuss foreign and security policy issues. The talks were always intense and open. We coordinated important issues of Alliance policy there. This year, however, was a surprise. The bus, which we had taken at the airport, did not go to Downtown, but instead turned westwards towards the Potomac River. The trip went directly to the headquarters of the CIA at Langley. We were astonished to hear remarks of a completely new American policy against the Soviet Union: We should free ourselves – so the message at the big round table – from



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what we had been hearing over the past decades about military potentials and strategies in the conflict between East and West in Europe. The results of a study on this topic were said to be clear: the Soviet Union was said to pursue purely defensive intentions. It was all about defense to protect ‘Mother Russia’. It was said that the past strategy of the Warsaw Pact was ultimately only a consistent response to the murderous attacks of Napoleon and Hitler, and this had nothing to do with aggression

at all. This new view of things was maintained for a long time by the White House.”

Willy Wimmer. *Die Akte Moskau*, 2016, pp. 11

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

terests. That means, that not Obama’s government determines this, but the forces that hope that Hillary Clinton wins the presidential election. This is a well-known pattern. I only hope that the dimension of the conflict is that dramatic for Washington that agreements will be obtained. If this fails, we will experience a disaster that goes beyond Syria.

*Western media coverage may suggest an impression that Russia is responsible for destroying and killing civilians in Syria. How do you judge this coverage?*

You have to keep two things apart. By addressing Russia it is in a position to reply itself. And that is what it does. What affects me as a consumer of Western media and what really enrages you, is the falsification of all the facts that we have experienced for years. Pluralism has once been an important part of our media landscape, but it has been abolished. We are only beaten to war anymore. This has been seen in a perverted way this year. The press officer *Jamie Shea*, who has beaten us to the Yugoslavian war in 1999, was even officially honored this year in Berlin for his merits. There you see what’s going on with our media landscape! The Western European democracy is going to the dogs.

*Whose interests are being pursued here, and what message shall be transported?*

The message here is: we are beating the war drums, even in terms of the Russian Federation. Two years ago, during the Maidan coup in Kiev, we only came within a whisker of a conflict with the Russian Federation. This is the goal that we have been able to see in American politics since 1999, and that is what kills us all.

*You spoke of the American interests. But what role does Germany play?*

With *Helmut Kohl* and *Gerhard Schröder*, we have seen that they still had enough backbone to represent German interests within NATO and not participate in armed conflicts. Have a look at the situation today, where our defense minister goes to Iraq and announces further German military engagement. To my disappointment, I must say that Berlin is not on the level of Bonn, as far as the perception of German interests is concerned. •

Source: [https://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20160930/312765719/willy-wimmer-wir-werden-in-krieg-gepruegelt.html?utm\\_source=short\\_direct&utm\\_medium=short\\_url&utm\\_content=csyV&utm\\_campaign=URL\\_shortening\\_of\\_30\\_September\\_002016](https://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20160930/312765719/willy-wimmer-wir-werden-in-krieg-gepruegelt.html?utm_source=short_direct&utm_medium=short_url&utm_content=csyV&utm_campaign=URL_shortening_of_30_September_002016)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## “Let us say with conviction: No to war!”

*The World Day of Prayer for Peace participants' appeal “Thirst for Peace: Faiths and Cultures in Dialogue”,  
20 September in Assisi*

“Men and women of various religions, we gather as pilgrims in the city of Saint Francis. Thirty years ago in 1986, religious representatives from all over the world met here at the invitation of Pope John Paul II. It was the first such solemn gathering that brought so many together, in order to affirm the indissoluble bond between the great good of peace and an authentic religious attitude. From that historic event, a long pilgrimage was begun which has touched many cities of the world, involving many believers in dialogue and in praying for peace. It has brought people together without denying their differences, giving life to real interreligious friendships and contributing to the resolution of more than a few conflicts. This is the spirit that animates us: to bring about encounters through dialogue, and to oppose every form of violence and abuse of religion which seeks to justify war and terrorism. And yet, in the years that have followed, numerous populations have nonetheless been pain-

fully wounded by war. People do not always understand that war harms the world, leaving in its wake a legacy of sorrows and hate. In war, everyone loses, including the victors.

We have prayed to God, asking him to grant peace to the world. We recognize the need to pray constantly for peace, because prayer protects the world and enlightens it. God's name is peace. The one who calls upon God's name to justify terrorism, violence and war does not follow God's path. War in the name of religion becomes a war against religion itself. With firm resolve, therefore, we reiterate that violence and terrorism are opposed to an authentic religious spirit.

We have heard the voice of the poor, of children and the younger generations, of women and so many brothers and sisters who are suffering due to war. With them let us say with conviction: No to war! May the anguished cry of the many innocents not go unheeded. Let us urge leaders of nations to defuse the causes of war:

the lust for power and money, the greed of arms' dealers, personal interests and vendettas for past wrongs. May there be a greater commitment to eradicating the underlying causes of conflicts: poverty, injustice and inequality, the exploitation of and contempt for human life.

May a new season finally begin, in which the globalized world can become a family of peoples. May we carry out our responsibility of building an authentic peace, attentive to the real needs of individuals and peoples, capable of preventing conflicts through a cooperation that triumphs over hate and overcomes barriers through encounter and dialogue. Nothing is lost when we effectively enter into dialogue. Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace. Through this gathering in Assisi, we resolutely renew our commitment to be such artisans, by the help of God, together will all men and women of good will.”

Source: © Copyright – Libreria Editrice Vaticana

## Popular initiative for nuclear phase-out in Switzerland

*by Dr-Ing. Ernst Pauli*

*Three days after the Fukushima incident Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard announced that all planning permissions for new nuclear power plants have been adjourned<sup>1</sup>. The National Council and the Council of States agreed to the ban on the construction of new nuclear power plants already in the following autumn session in 2011. However, a plebiscite on this important issue is still missing. The opinions of the political parties differ. One didn't want a ban on developments of new technologies, and would like to revisit the issue in the context of a new Energy Act. In the Swiss Energy Strategy 2050, updated subsequently to the Fukushima accident, it is intended that nuclear power plants are decommissioned and not replaced “if safe operation is not anymore ensured”. It is anticipated that this will be the case after 50 years. Shut down would happen in Beznau I in 2019; Beznau II and Mühleberg in 2022; Gösgen in 2029 and Leibstadt in 2034. Now, by means of the nuclear phase-out initiative the Swiss people can vote on the issue. The initiative requires to take the existing nuclear power plants out of service after a fixed period of 45 years, so 5 years earlier as (preliminary) assumed in the energy strategy 2050, namely Beznau I one year after the approval of the initiative, Mühleberg, Beznau II, Gösgen and Leibstadt 45 years after its commissioning. The vote is planned on 27 November. The Fed-*

*eral Council rejects the initiative, but issues an indirect counter proposal with reference to its Energy Strategy 2050.*

The Federal Council has made a key statement within its comments to the first package of measures in the Energy Strategy 2050 and to the popular initiative “For an orderly phase-out of nuclear energy (nuclear phase-out initiative)”. Nuclear power plants shall not be shut down, as required in the initiative after a fixed operation time, but shall continue to run “as long as they are safe”.

### What is safe?

The layman wonders what “safe” means and how the proofing of security is done. Actually a clear decision criterion can be found in the shut-down regulation of the DETEC (Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications), namely, that a reactor is not sure anymore and must be decommissioned, if among other things, the so-called adjusted brittle fracture reference temperature of the material of the reactor pressure vessel (RPV) reaches the value of 93° C. This value increases with increasing operation time due to embrittlement of reactor pressure vessel under the constant neutron radiation from the reactor inside. With increasing brittleness the risk of spontaneous fractures or cracking of the reactor wall at the start of the reactor (cold) or in the case

of an emergency cooling with cold water increases, which can lead to the uncontrolled release of radioactivity. Because the reactor pressure vessel is not interchangeable, the end of operation of the NPP is determined unambiguously and clearly.

Concerning the statement of the Federal Council “as long as operation is safe” and how close the nuclear power plant is to a “precarious” state, there is almost no public discussion, although many people and large areas in Switzerland would be affected in the event of an accident. The evidence of safe operation should be provided in a transparent manner. Swiss environmental organisations request hearings on the subject with public discussion. The few public documents available are not sufficient to be able to assess the arguments of proponents and opponents of nuclear energy.

### Changing assessment methods

In order to assess the growing embrittlement of the reactor pressure vessel, specimens made of the same material are hooked into the RPV in front of the wall of the pressure vessel. They are to a higher degree exposed to the radiation, experience and indicate in an accelerated way the embrittlement of the RPV. Roughly every 10 years, some samples are taken out and tested. The tests allow predictions on when the



**"Popular initiative for nuclear ..."**

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end point of operation as given by the legislator will be achieved. The current method, proven over decades, after which the crucial reference temperature is determined, is seen as conservative, but shows already a close vicinity to the final shut down criterion at the oldest nuclear power plant in the world. Just in this situation it does not increase confidence in the "safety assessments" if you must realise that now a new, less conservative detection method is applied, which again shows a large distance to the end-point condition and allows continued operation for a longer time. Since it doesn't help that this new method is already applied in other countries based on a "master curve" for typical RPV materials. Other countries switch off their reactors rather after 25 years than 30 years, so that the problems are not virulent there.

This way evidence is limited of the progress of aging of the material and of the results of investigations conducted so far. Within the few published data consistencies in terms of a direct and detailed comparison of old to new measurement methods is not provided. Also it appears that today's extended operation times of the NPP were not originally planned and one is running out of ordinary test specimen. Now new types of material samples and material data are used, which are not directly related to the original material and thus do not reflect a true picture of the situation in a particular reactor. Only the new "master curve" approach allows such dubious procedure.

**Are the proofs of safety really evident?**

As matters stand, in particular with the newly detected foreign material inclusions in the RPV after "safe" operation over decades, Beznau was consequently shut down in March 2015. New tests concerning the strength of the RPV material as well new calculations of the RPV integrity are needed. The power plant operator examines the issue with great efforts to provide evidence of further safe operation. Even a "replica"

**Older and younger reactor generations**

Impressively, comparisons of younger and older generations of nuclear power plants show that "age driven" events happen in older types, which are naturally even longer in operation, 4 to 10 times more often.<sup>2</sup> The level of knowledge in the design of the first generations of reactors was rather small compared to those built later. Lessons are learned also from accidents. The development of science and technology, as

well as the awareness of the risk of nuclear installations was developed over time and meant that more extensive, multiply redundant and independent safety systems have been introduced. But the shortcomings of old reactors cannot be fully overcome through retrofits. An old Citroen 2CV as built in the sixties still doesn't comply to the current safety level by just installing safety belts and head restraints.

of part of the RPV was produced newly this year according to the old specification out of the sixties. It is more than doubtful whether exactly the same material properties can be reached as 60 years ago in another foundry with other equipment and with other employees and whether the tests will be meaningful. Not to mention, that the embrittlement due to the long term operation can be only theoretically extrapolated. In those years the nuclear power technology has been in a pioneering phase, many things were still in progress. The manufacturing processes as well as their documentation were in these years far behind current standards in industry. Due to this ambiguities, the SES (Swiss Energy Foundation) requires well-reasoned that second opinions from independent experts must be obtained on the subject. To act hasty under constraints neglecting important engineering principles, to finally get the "right" data for the installed components gives rise to doubts as to the seriousness of all security proofs, carried out so far.

**What is the operation time of nuclear power plants?**

In most countries nuclear power plants are for good reasons shut down on average after 25 or 30 years of operation. In the technical world, the so-called "bathtub curve" is a well-known phenomenon. The failure rate of a technical system is high in a condition as new, also known as teething troubles. It remains low over a longer period of operation. With increasing age of a technical facility the failure rate starts to rise again.

This proves also for nuclear power plants, where the risk of a major accident increases with the runtime. You may experience this in a similar way with your private vehicle. Why should in Switzerland an operation time of NPPs of 50 to 60 years aimed at in contrary to all technical experience, an age where there is clear evidence of increasing failure rates? It is a pioneering generation of NPP's, in which today's improvements in security are still not incorporated and which cannot be retrofitted to that level. Most nuclear power plants are shut down "for economic reasons" as it is glossed over. Hidden behind such statement is, that significant investments are to be done to continue to operate reasonably safe. But the risk of occurrence of further defects remains high.

**The counter proposal of the Federal Council**

The Federal Council replied to the nuclear phase-out initiative with an indirect counter proposal, essentially based on the "Energy Strategy 2050" as revised after the accident in Fukushima 2050. There is a strange discrepancy in the arguments. The initiative of the nuclear phase-out focusses clearly to avoid the increased risk of aging nuclear power plants. – The Federal Councils counter proposal aims as well on a nuclear phase-out, but not in the same clarity. Its plans for the nuclear phase-out are conditional. It wants to leave sufficient time for a wider deployment of renewable energy and the potential use of transitional so-

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	Date of operation start	Duration of operation	Shut down of the nuclear phase-out initiative after 45 years operation	Shut down counter proposal of the Federal Council after 50 years operation*
Beznau I	1969	47	2017	2019/?
Beznau II	1972	44	2017	2022/?
Mühleberg**	1972	44	2017	2022/?
Gösgen	1979	37	2024	2024/?
Leibstadt	1984	32	2029	2034/?

Table: intended or not intended shut down dates for nuclear power plants

\*Rather: "... as long as they are safe". \*\*The operator intends to shut down Mühleberg in 2019.

## A nuclear power plant in Bolivia using lithium instead of uranium?

*npa/bha.* In March this year, the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” informed its readers that the Bolivian Government has issued an agreement with the Russian state corporation Rosatom, after which Rosatom will build a nuclear research center in El Alto. There was talk among others of a nuclear research reactor supporting Bolivia in using nuclear energy. Bolivia would be the third country in South America using nuclear energy besides Brazil and Argentina. But was the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” really uninformed of what the type this reactor will be? Nothing has been specified in more detail, the reader has to speculate, if he wanted to.

Meanwhile, several news agencies report about the groundbreaking ceremony and the signing of the treaties that regulate the nuclear research center and nail down its financing. Xinhuanet reports: Bolivian Vice President *Alvaro Garcia Linera* stated on July 8, 2016 at the signing ceremony “that as an exporter of lithium used in nuclear fusion, Bolivia should learn how to make the most of the natural resource. We can’t have the world using lithium over the next 20, 30 or 50 years, while we Bolivians remain incapable of using lithium for our own benefit. We have lived like this for 500 years. For 500 years we have used Bolivia’s raw materials so that other countries around the world would develop science, technology and industry, and we don’t want to repeat that history. That’s why we have made

a decision: to plant today so we can harvest in 2025, 2030, 2040”

A Belarusian news Agency reported that it was remarkable that Rosatom dares such a research reactor project that requires cutting edge technology. The project was connected with very ambitious tasks.

*Current Concerns* wants to bring up some background information.

In March 2012, *Current Concerns* published excerpts from a brochure of the German author Dipl. Ing. *Heinz Werner Gabriel*. Title: “Nuclear power without radioactivity - no dream: From uranium to lithium fuel”<sup>\*</sup>.

It concerns the principle concept of a nuclear reactor which operates on the basis of splitting of lithium by means of hydrogen isotope “Deuterium”. This produces two inactive helium nuclei and per gram lithium-6 an energy equivalent of up to 10,000 kg oil (this is three times more than energy out of one gram of uranium). The worldwide available lithium reserves exceed those of oil many times over. *Heinz Werner Gabriel* took up again attempts in England and Germany from the time before *Otto Hahn* (1938). He looked back and reappraised them, updated them technically and made them available to an interested audience.

Only a few media, such as for example, *ADN*, *Klagemauer TV* and *PravdaTV* took the theme up. Although Switzerland and

the EU probably have technologically a leading position and have sufficient financial resources, professionals and knowledge, there were no adequate responses. But the Bolivian Embassy in Berne had invited the expert *Gabriel* to a detailed conversation.

The energy debates run high in the aftermath of Fukushima (2011), the “phase-out of nuclear energy” and the “energy revolution” have been discussed again and again ... but there was surprisingly no understanding for a nuclear technology that has no uranium and harmful radioactivity. Well, as a renewed “exit from exit” would make the professional incompetence of the political decision makers too evident. Comments were limited to subtle defamation.

Meanwhile, Bolivia’s Government has adopted the approach. In October 2014, Bolivia’s President *Evo Morales* announced the construction of the first nuclear power plant for 2025. Bolivia is extraordinarily rich in lithium, in particular from the Salar de Uyuni. The “golden” natural resources should according to the will of *Evo Morales* not mined and taken out of the country, like the silver at times of Potosi. It was agreed that the lithium resources should be processed in the country, to bring an advantage to the entire population. Rosatom took up the concept, it probably underwent a feasibility study and it was concluded, that this constituted a very energy-efficient technology. One can assume that Rosatom wouldn’t do a blind bargain...

Dipl-Ing. *Gabriel* mentions 3 points concerning the further development of nuclear lithium technology:

1. the Bolivian initiative is welcomed. There is hope that results secretly achieved since years in dominant countries, can be reproduced in Latin America under democratic principles. It is useful to back up the project by BRICS countries.
2. Some comments on the lithium fission showed that depth and breadth of nuclear knowledge greatly decreased in the last few decades in Germany. Economy and science should not accept, to be competed out of a major technological and economic activity.
3. it is satisfying, to be able to fantasize detached from constraints about the unusual perspectives of this light metal. To name are space engines, energy for secluded areas of life (how much lithium would be needed for a human to survive?) and defence systems. •

\* After 20 November 2016 an extended edition of the brochure can be ordered at *Current Concerns*.

### “Peoples initiative for nuclear ...”

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lutions, for example gas power plants. Also the variety of specified and planned subprogrammes, which are as such correct, take a step forward. Planned efficiency gains when using electric power, also the programmes on buildings aim at saving energy, oil and gas, but are in relation to the main issue dilutive. Among insiders, you can hear even the opinion that the rather hesitant way in the introduction of the new renewable energies in Switzerland could end in a situation where “nuclear energy is further on needed”. It should be noted that Switzerland with regard to the use of energy out of photovoltaics, wind and biomass comes in last in a ranking of European countries. The influence of lobbyists prevents from making progress in using new renewable energy. The risks of nuclear energy, in particular if the technical equipment is old and outdated and can’t even with extensive retrofit measures not be brought on the latest technology level, are not addressed in the proposal of the Federal Council at all.

A clear vote of the people for an up-front specified limitation in operation of the nuclear power plant will avoid unnecessary risks stemming from operating old and outdated nuclear power plants. It will bring a more dynamic introduction of new renewables in Switzerland. This includes that building further Swiss pumped storage plants, some already planned, but suspended, shall continue with priority and the plans shall be followed. Storage facilities, Switzerland is predestined to build them, are a natural complement to the volatile generation of wind and sun, domestic and abroad. Switzerland as a high-tech country should also contribute to the trend-setting technologies “Power to Gas”. A clear endorsement to the planned shut-down dates of nuclear power plants would be a signal to promote the research activities and the construction of demonstration plants in all areas of power generation and storage. •

<sup>1</sup> “Tagesgespräch” mit Bundesrätin *Doris Leuthard*, SREF, 28.8.2015, “Der Atomausstieg war kein Bauchentscheid”

<sup>2</sup> Studie im Auftrag der Bundestagsfraktion von Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, *Wolfgang Renneberg*, 22.06.2010

# Prima i nostri! Ticino population tackles ruling of immigration themselves

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

On 25 September 2016, the Ticino population clearly adopted the cantonal referendum "Prima i nostri" (first our own people) with 58.02 per cent yes votes. The counter proposal of the Gran Consiglio (Parliament) was also clearly rejected. So the voters give a clear signal to Berne: If the Federal Parliament does not implement the Mass Immigration initiative, then we just do it ourselves.

62,179 cross-border commuters worked in Ticino in June 2016, equivalent to almost one-third of the approximately 200,000 jobs<sup>1</sup>. The foreigners' rate resident in the canton of Ticino is 27.6%, therefore higher than the Swiss average (24.6%, end of 2015). With its 350,000 inhabitants, the Italian-speaking southern canton faces huge Lombardy with 10 million inhabitants who speak the same language, but suffer from a much higher unemployment than the Ticino neighbours and understandably are attracted by the high Swiss wages too.

Knowing what will be ahead of them, the Ticino population have rejected the Bilateral I with the corresponding free movement of persons almost as the only canton in the year 2000 with 57% no. In February 2014 they said most clearly yes to the Mass Immigration initiative with 68.2%.

## "Bottom up protection clause" instead of uniform threshold value prescribed from above

As the Federal Council draft for the regulation of immigration was published in spring 2016, the Ticino Government informed the media: Setting a threshold beyond which quotas were introduced, will not help the Ticino at all, so State Council President *Norman Gobbi* on 6 March 2016, because it does not take account

of frontier workers. There are the frontier workers who contribute in Ticino to significantly higher unemployment, wage dumping and congestion on the roads.

As alternative to the Federal Council's proposal the Ticinese Government therefore presented a "bottom up protection clause", worked out by *Michael Ambühl*, former Secretary of State and Swiss chief negotiator on their behalf. Regional labour markets indicators such as unemployment rates, wage levels or cost of living should serve as criteria for restricting immigration. The situation in heavily affected regions should turn the balance for a restriction of immigration, not a number prescribed from above and valid for whole Switzerland. (cf. "Berner Zeitung" 7 March)

The fact that in the autumn session the National Council didn't take this sensible proposal into consideration certainly contributed to the fact that the Ticino population said so clearly yes to the initiative "Prima i nostri" on 25 September.

## A priority for nationals that deserves this name

The central point of the new Ticino regulation: The principle of the priority of nationals according to Article 121a of the Federal Constitution (control of immigration) is anchored in the Constitution of the Canton:

Article 14 paragraph 1: "the Canton ensures that [...] "b. on the labour market its inhabitants are preferred to foreigners, if they have same qualifications (implementation of the principle of the priority of national workers)".

This means for the employers who are looking for an employee that they must first prove that no suitable workers are available

## Higher unemployment and lower wages close to the border

"The latest wage data for 2014 again yield information that border workers in the Canton Ticino and the Jurassic Arc achieve lower wages on average than local workers with identical features: The wage difference is around 6%." – "For the border regions, it should be noted that, despite the difficult economic environment, cross-border employment continued to grow during the last year, with the exception of the canton of Ticino, where the number of cross-border workers remained at a high level.

Particularly in the Lake Geneva region, in Ticino, and in the Jurassic Arc, cross-border workers make up a high proportion of local employment; at the same time, the unemployment rate in these regions is clearly above the Swiss average."

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs  
SECO Media release on the Free Movement of Persons from 5.7.2016; extract  
(Translation Current Concerns)

in Ticino before they employ a cross-border worker or an immigrant from Italy.

If we compare the regulation established by the people of Ticino with the powerless "National priority light" which the majority of the National Council has approved on 21 September as first Council, we can well understand our compatriots from beyond the Gotthard. A job reporting obligation of the employer in case of excess of a hitherto unknown threshold value does not help the Ticino workers and job seekers. They need immediate remedy to the previously unrestricted influx of cross-border workers and immigrants which depresses the wages of the workforce and force up the unemployment and hence social assistance costs (see box).

## Not feasible?

### The concerns of the cantons are to be respected by the federal authorities

In the Italian media, loud howls of protest arose after the Ticino referendum. Thereby, in a people-friendly economy it would be actually clear that the companies first employ those job seekers who already live in the country.

In Switzerland, some say that the initiative is not feasible, because the canton shouldn't penetrate into areas which are in the competence of the Federal Government or are regulated by treaties with foreign countries. In particular, it was unclear

**Prima i nostri!**

**Sì**

all'originale  
il prossimo  
25 settembre

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## “Defending the identity of France means saving our dairy farmers”

by Natacha Polony, publicist, France

The most important challenge in the upcoming presidential elections is to ensure France’s survival by convincing the French people that each of their purchases is also a political choice. In France the campaign for the presidential elections (23 April and 7 May 2017) has been opened, and we are already assured that it will revolve around a specific topic: the identity of the country. In the run-up to this debate, we should recall that France is a country where women are not blamed for the desire they cause; a country where individuals live and not “communities”; a country where, out of reference to dissenters and for the purpose of preserving inner peace, one does not carry one’s faith as a banner in front of oneself. All this gives the framework for an “identity”: a complex structure forged over centuries in the course of history.

Well, let us speak on the identity of France. But let’s do a real discussion. For it is noticeable, that all presidential can-

didates [there are up to 20] suffer from a strange hemiplegia [paralysis of one half of the body] concerning this question. Let’s say it frankly: The splendid statements about France, it’s past, it’s cultural heritage ... are of no value if one neglects to revive the industrial, agricultural and commercial structures. Claiming that one wants to preserve the nation and adhering at the same time to a model of economic development which is dictated by the false views of free trade ideology, this can at best be called culpable incoherence. In this way internationalisation [“mondialisation”], which is a reality, is being confused with globalisation, which is a legal and cultural imperialism whose weapon is free trade.

This is probably the reason why the candidates would rather demand a new law on religious symbols than to find answers for the doomed milk producers. They have not yet understood that a France that will let deteriorate the family farms with their

pastures characterising the landscape will be a France covered with factory-like large agricultural enterprises, commercial zones with large shopping centres, *McDonald* and other fast food chains, and no longer a country being able to offer to the world personalities like *Chambord*, *Voltaire*, *Victor Hugo* or *Claude Monet*.

### The illusion of competitiveness

The milk crisis shows us how France has begun to self-destruct. On the one hand there is a company – *Groupe Lactalis*, number one in the world – which is so strongly conceited by its status as multinational company, that its boss, *Emmanuel Besnier*, considers himself too good for taking over his responsibility, and instead sends his communication commander *Michel Nalet* to the media. Lactalis finds it perfectly normal to gain advantages from its quasi-monopoly. He pays 25 cents for

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### “Prima i nostri! ...”

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whether the amendment of the purpose article of the Cantonal Constitution associated with the initiative “Prima i nostri” was allowed:

*“Article 4 purpose article  
“Paragraph 1 The Canton [...] wakes that international treaties concluded by the Confederation and the Foreign Nationals Act thus affected are applied without violating the personal and social rights of the persons living on the cantonal territory and in full respect of the reciprocity between states.” [Translation Current Concerns]*

What should be not allowed there? The new Ticino Constitution norm corresponds to the strong position of the cantons in the federalist political system: “The cantons are sovereign insofar as their sovereignty is not limited by the Federal Constitution; they exercise all rights which are not transferred to the Federal Government.” It says so in Article 3 of the Federal Constitution. It is almost the right

and obligation of the cantonal authorities to protest and intervene actively, if federal authorities do not follow the Constitution! One could speak of an actual cantons’ right to resist.

After the cantonal referendum of the initiative “Prima i nostri” the Federal Assembly will decide whether it wants to ensure the changes of the Ticino Constitution (as not contradicting a federal law). (Article 51 paragraph 2 of the Federal Constitution) This won’t be a legal, but a political decision first and foremost. If the Parliament in Bern prefers to have cooperative cantons at its side, it won’t refuse ensuring Ticino. It would be wiser to consider the concerns and problems of the individual cantons and to include them into the federal decisions. This includes no doubt immigration and in particular the question of the priority of the residents so that the border cantons and particularly the Ticino aren’t left alone with their urgent concerns. Otherwise the authorities in Berne may not be surprised, if one or the other Canton takes its affairs into their own hands. •

<sup>1</sup> Federal Statistical Office (FSO), Employment and workweek, Cross-border Commuters

## Current Concerns

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### “Defending the identity of ...”

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the litre of milk, despite the production costs of 39 cents, thereby realising a profit margin of 10.5% (while his competitors pay 28 or 30 cents, the *Bobin* cheese factory in Coulommiers even 40 cents). Let's also note that Lactalis refuses to publish its statements of accounts. With the acquisition of the Italian company *Parmalat*, he had to announce at least an annual profit of 1.78 billion euro with a turnover of 17 billion. Obviously, there are economic areas that are quite successful. For example, those with factories producing tens of thousands of Camemberts every day with ... two employees.

Why are we in such a devastating situation? Because FNSEA<sup>1</sup>, the most important national umbrella trade union organisation, which has been managing the whole agricultural sector together with the ministry for more than 60 years, has thought it good in all the years to advise farmers in selling their products more and more cheaply and at the same time reducing the quality in order to “remain competitive”; because the major distributors have been calling for always cheaper prices, on the grounds that they opted for more “purchasing power” of households; because some of the politicians support this generalised competition through which our farmers – due to social constraints and special geographic requirements, which evoke better milk quality but also higher production costs – are driven into great distress.

However, there are also happy dairy farmers. *Bernard Gaborit*, at home in the Mayenne department, produces organic milk of excellent quality, for which consumers are also willing to pay a reasonable price. Fortunately, he is not alone. They are such people who maintain the vital identity of France. However, it is crucial that the country is committed to

### Lactalis, a very taciturn family business

The company Lactalis was founded by *André Besnier* in Laval (Department Mayenne) as a little cheese dairy in 1933. Today, this third generation family business is the largest milk processor worldwide, with 75,000 employees in 85 countries and 230 production facilities. Intermediate stations along this growth path were the creation of cheese brands (Camembert Président 1968) as well as structuring acquisitions (Lactel 1984, Bridel 1990, Roquefort Société 1991, Galbani 2006). In doing so, Besnier International became a central player within Europe's milk dairy industry.

In 1999, while still under the leadership of the founder's son *Michel Besnier*, the company was renamed Lactalis. In 2011, the family business expands to new dimensions with the takeover of its Italian competitor Parmalat. With this acquisition, the Lactalis Group catapulted itself to the top of the world largest milk processors. Its annual turnover is around

17 billion Euro, of which 58% are realised in Europe.

After the sudden death of his father in 2000, *Emmanuel Besnier*, not even 30 years old, took over the management of the company. Today, he is the main shareholder and shares the ownership of Lactalis with his older brother and his sister. Still, no detailed annual financial reports for the company have been published – instead, it prefers paying fines to publishing its profit margins. According to a media spokesperson of a major French distributor, “the reality is, that Lactalis is making a packet on its margins in France that would be unattainable in China or anywhere else ... and that it is the French farmers that consequently must soak.”

Source: Summary of the article “Lactalis, un groupe secret sous les feux de l'actualité”, published in *Le Figaro*, 29 August 2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

them. It is also crucial that the political programmes are not filled with considerations of “competitiveness” forcing us to more and more reduce the production costs and thus also the quality in order to be able to compete with other countries, even though these countries changed their agriculture into a factory, just as they transform many industrial enterprises into purely profitable hors-sol constructions, which do not take into account any borders. Unfortunately, in the publications they present to us, we are looking in vain for any reflection on the devastating effects of the major distributors or the importance of the reorientation of consumption for the domestically employed workforce.

The most important challenge of the presidential election is to secure France's survival by convincing the French peo-

ple that each of their purchases is also a political choice – that is to say to save or not to save jobs, know-how and a way of life. What is crucial is to say clearly that France is proud of its past, its values, but also its SMEs, its craftsmen and its farmers, because they are the vivid examples of this art of living, which still opposes the enforced conformity by the consumption-orientated mediocrity. •

Source: © Natacha Polony *Le Figaro* from 27.8.16

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

<sup>1</sup> FNSEA (Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles) brings together about 60% of all French farmers through the merger of 15,000 local farmers' associations and around 100 umbrella organisations from the departments and regions.

# The absurdity of today's credit system

by Myret Zaki, chief editor of the economic magazine "Bilan", Western Switzerland

When it comes to getting a loan, the discrepancy between big and small companies is worrying. The former get easy access to the capital market. The latter have greatest difficulty in obtaining credit as they lack the critical size in order to be able to borrow from the banks on favourable terms. If one realises that these small businesses are the largest part of the Swiss economy – and this is the case in all European countries – this development is very regrettable. In addition, one can wonder whether, under these circumstances, it is still surprising that OECD countries' lack of growth has become chronic.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are not listed on the stock exchanges, have difficulties obtaining loans from the banks across Europe. The reason for this is the demanding requirements of the banks, which require in-depth debt and profitability analyzes, irrespective of the desired loan amount and the size of the company.

This means high processing fees, which mean high interest rates for SMEs. In western Switzerland, interest rates on bank loans, even for SMEs, are on average at 4.5%. One can already ask what

real risks a bank is to assume in the form of a 200,000 francs loan, if at the same time they put several billion on the capital market at risk.

The high cost of borrowing for small businesses contrasts the incredible ease with which large companies gain access to huge amounts of cash. These loans are not only free (interest rates close to 0%), but recently, corporations such as *Henkel* in Germany or *Sanofi* in France have issued bonds with negative interest rates for the first time. In other words, they are compensated for their debt!

Others will soon follow and put bonds with coupons lower than zero. Welcome to the age of guaranteed losses for investors and helicopter money for large companies! Such corporate bonds are possible because the *European Central Bank* buys corporate bonds. For years, the ECB has been trying to boost growth by purchasing European government bonds at billions. When this policy did not benefit, the ECB started to buy corporate bonds this year, which increased their price and lowered the return to negative territory. More than 700 billion euros of European bonds with investment grade, i.e. 30% of the market,

are already being traded at negative interest rates.

What is the interest of big companies, their markets, their innovations and their efficiency when money is earned through debt? They can be content to lend money without reason, instead of actively generating growth, production and jobs. When there were still positive interest rates, their function was to provide incentives for the debtor company to work this loan productively to later repay principal and interest to their creditors, and also to secure a profit for the work they performed. Currently, this procedure is disabled.

On the one hand, SMEs – the lungs of our economy – pay high interest rates if they are fortunate enough to meet the specific conditions of the banks. On the other hand, large companies that have access to the capital market can make a lot of money through debt. This makes it easier to understand why productivity in Europe is at zero level, although this would be the key factor to improve living conditions.

Source: *Bilan* from 21.9.2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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# In Great Britain, things are moving after the Brexit

by Karl Müller

On 23 June 2016, a majority of the British voters have voted for leaving the EU. The vote had been preceded by numerous warnings of an economic downturn, a secession of Scotland and Northern Ireland from Britain, political isolation etc. etc. And also after the British vote, the perennial theme was: catastrophe.

Now, a quarter of a year after the vote, the atmosphere in Britain seems to have changed. This can also be deduced from what is happening in the two large parties, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party.

## Criticism of the US war policy

On 24 September, the head of the Labour Party, *Jeremy Corbyn*, had been confirmed as party leader, in spite of numerous critics in the parliament group, by a direct vote of the party members. Corbyn is a politician who is not fitting into the continental "standard size". He is an explicit anti-war and anti-NATO activist. The fact that the party members have re-elected him clearly demonstrates that criticism of the war policy of the US and its governments has become an important issue for many British. So far, the country has participated in all US wars since the 90s, even being a driving force under the Labour politician *Tony Blair*. But meanwhile several official investigation reports have publicly documented the severe errors and neglects of the war politics of the past decades. It has been a clear signal that, in summer 2014, the former Prime Minister *David Cameron* did not win a majority for a direct military mission against Syria in parliament.

## Tackling Brexit with energy and resolve

But there are also remarkable developments in the Conservative Party. While before 23 June the party had been split over the issue of an EU exit, the party convention from 2 to 5 October was very much united on the central question: the Brexit will be tackled with energy and resolve. The exit application is planned to be finished by March 2017. Moreover, even former Brexit opponents, among them many young party members – directly after 23 June we were told that their age-mates were mostly pro-EU – were speaking out almost enthusiastically about the chances of a now sovereign United Kingdom in future. The newly won sovereignty of the country was all but celebrated.

## No signs of economic downturn

And indeed, there are no signs of the predicted economic downturn – on the oppo-



site. Yes, the British pound has lost some of its value, but this does not need to be a disadvantage. For a country with an export-oriented economy it can even be beneficial. How many Euro countries would wish to be freed from the chains of a uniform currency in order to be able to devalue and thus become competitive again?

**Conservative Party – scrutinising neoliberalism**

But even more remarkable is the Conservative Party's new political programme for the future. Apparently, the new party leader *Theresa May* has scrutinised the old neoliberal credo of the party leadership and now talks about supporting those in her country "left behind" by globalisation, relying more on the state and its commitment for the common good. We will see which deeds will follow the words. It is a historical fact, however, that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Britain's path towards the leading industry power was not a liberalist poli-

tics but an array of state laws protecting the budding home industry and its logistics from foreign competition.

**Turning away from Thatcherism**

But of course the British way in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century cannot be a compass for the future. Colonialism and imperialism are among the dark sides of the British way. And the profiteers were not the majority of the British citizens but only a few. Great Britain became a class society with heavy social injustice. But it is no longer the goal of the party leadership to exclusively serve the capital owners. The statements on the party convention sounded more like a programme for a kind of social market economy, like a turning away from the Thatcherism of the past decades. It would be good for the country which has suffered from implacable class antagonisms. They were among the reasons

(picture reuters)

# Language teaching: Avoiding unnecessary quarrels

by Pierre-Gabriel Bieri

*The HarmoS model includes the teaching of two foreign languages at primary school level. Some cantons question the model mainly for educational reasons. To see a threat to national cohesion in it is overstated. And the intervention of the Federal legislature – just to end the discussion – is certainly not the appropriate means to foster cohesion.*

## HarmoS: implemented, but controversial

Since the 1970s a second national language has been taught in Swiss primary schools. And it seemed logical that the students from western Switzerland were learning German and the German-Swiss students French. This federal reflex began to totter, when Zurich decided to teach English at primary school as well. Other cantons followed this decision, and the French and English languages competed with each other in German-speaking Switzerland. In 2006, a referendum paved the way for a unified “education area in Switzerland”. The new constitutional decision resulted in an intercantonal con-

### “In Great Britain, things are ...”

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why the country had, especially after the decades after World War II, dropped far behind Germany, the leading continental economic power. Germany’s economic welfare and rise was also due to the social partnership of employers and employees, the social market economy and social peace.

### Impulses for the rest of Europe

So it cannot be excluded that a United Kingdom becoming sovereign again can bring impulses for the rest of Europe – this time for the benefit of the continent and the peoples. It is to be hoped. Also for those who are, in their countries, striving for sovereignty or for keeping their sovereignty. •

cordat of 15 cantons called “HarmoS”, implemented in 2009. In particular, HarmoS regulates the duration and objectives of the education levels as well as the language teaching. It is envisaged to teach the first foreign language “from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade onwards (HarmoS 5) at the latest and the second foreign language from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade onwards (HarmoS 7) at the latest”. The Cantons of Grisons and Ticino may derogate from the provision, if in addition they provide a third obligatory national language.

In practice, the HarmoS model is largely implemented or is well on track. However, refusing voices have come to be heard in those cantons already working with HarmoS. Several Swiss German cantons complain about the pupils’ difficulties learning two foreign languages almost at the same time. And some teachers are of the opinion that teaching for educational reasons the French language leads to better results only from secondary level on.

### Criticism is perceived as attack

It bothered the Federal Council that the model is being criticised, questioned, or even rejected. For this reason, an amendment of the federal law on the national languages and the communication between the linguistic communities was sent into a legislative process by consultation in summer. The Federal Council provides clear guidelines for foreign language teaching during compulsory schooling in three variations. These range from the strict implementation of HarmoS to an “slight” variation (“Lessons in the second national language begin two years before the end of primary school at the latest”).

The Federal Council does not conceal the fact that it would prefer a solution that allows the cantons to agree freely on the

For the cantons the shaping of language teaching is not simply a minor matter, but a politically delicate question.

language teaching. However, the intervention of the federal legislature is necessary as an ultima ratio in order to maintain the understanding between the linguistic communities and national cohesion.

However, the Federal Council’s solution is not convincing. One can be an advocate of the French language and national cohesion – which is not only dependent on language – but still denounce the intervention of the federal legislature in this area.

### No reviving of the language conflict

In the present case, implementing an intercantonal concordat is not simply a lacking of good will. It is rather a question of whether to deviate from the agreement after having had bad experiences. For the cantons the shaping of language teaching is not simply a minor matter, but a politically delicate question. The intervention of the federal legislature to stop the deserters and put an end to discussions does certainly not improve national cohesion in this context – and in any case certainly does not improve the sympathy for the French language!

In addition, it is important to note that questioning HarmoS is not necessarily an attack on the French language. The criticism results rather from the discussion about pedagogical sense and nonsense. Therefore, it seems an exaggeration to derive a threat from criticism to the language-community.

In all circumstances, it is necessary to prevent a reviving of the language conflict. The cantons each should be allowed to implement adapted maybe differing solutions, if necessary. Therefore, the submission of the Federal Council must be rejected. If need be the variant should be chosen, which has the least influence on the cantonal scope – and this can only work subsidiary. •

Source: [www.centrepatrional.ch](http://www.centrepatrional.ch). Press and Information Service No. 2199 of 5 October 2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)