

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

“For an economy to the benefit of all!” Why I am committed to this federal popular initiative

by Rev. Ursula Richner, Zurich

I grew up in a family of teachers, and we often discussed social issues. My grandmother, who lived with us, was a deeply religious woman – an influential personality for me as a child. I loved going to Sunday school classes, and in my first years at grammar school I already knew that I would once become a pastor. As an adolescent girl I wanted to help the people. I knew that faith gives us the strength to stand up for our fellows. It has always been and still is my goal to help people gain this strength and this certainty. Then welfare, justice and peace can grow and prosper in our communes and form the basis coming generations can build their future on.

How I work

I am now retired, but I still have plenty of power to be actively engaged for my fellows. Again and again I happen to meet people and tasks that claim my help. In our apartment, we can accommodate people who are in need. I can assist people in various emergencies and tutor migrant children. Above all, I also like to write short articles, and I am dedicated to social issues that are of greatest concern to me! I have a rich and active life that fulfils me!

My passion is to help in case of emergency or to alleviate suffering. The course of our globalized economy results in more pressure, layoffs, unemployment and uncertainty. Resorting to drinking or other drugs is not far in that case. I cannot – as I mentioned – become active one-sidedly for the individual only without concerning myself at the same time with the aim that this person will face just and good working conditions and sound economic structures. To me political thinking belongs to any consultancy. Therefore, I decided to collect signatures for the initiative “For an economy to the benefit of all!”.

Today our economy does not serve all

The fact that not all people find work and that the pay for their work is often not sufficient to cover their livelihood shows these deficits clearly. In addition to that, the gap between rich and poor in Swit-



“Just as the ‘vine tendril’ enables the wine plant to hold on to a wall or a wire, ‘la vrill’ hooks firmly to its concerns and is resisting.”

www.lavrille.ch

zerland continues to widen. I also know that local companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, are increasingly affected by the price pressure foreign producers are exerting and lose their basis of existence. Important to me is security, especially with respect to quality, health and care.

The initiative has indeed a strong link to agriculture. In Switzerland, the farmers produce high-quality food and have to comply with much stricter rules [than elsewhere]. Whether in agriculture or the dairy and meat industries, Swiss farmers are not allowed to use a variety of means to increase production, which are used abroad. This results in lower yields. Added to this are higher wages and other costs, so that farmers in Switzerland have

higher costs for the production of milk, meat, vegetables, potatoes and fruit than farmers abroad. This is also the reason why the food in Switzerland is more expensive than abroad. Through cheap imports from abroad, more and more farmers in our country come under such pressure that they have to abandon their farms. Only by means of a massive increase in protection at the border (customs duties or import restrictions) the local businesses – mostly family businesses – could survive. Domestic food production is a very complex and important issue. It grants us security of supply with healthy foodstuffs, promotes independence of foreign countries, and also

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"For an economy to the benefit ..."

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protects nature and contributes to a beautiful landscape.

What is the initiative's goal?

First of all, it wants to achieve a fundamental debate among the population about the current economy. The problems are obvious. It is harmful to the people, to nature and ultimately to our country to produce ever more and ever faster. The belief that the free market will bring more prosperity to the people has become untenable in the light of the economic and financial crisis and the enormous debt of the states.

We need a new direction, an economy that is again more oriented to the welfare of the people and stops the exploitation of nature. And it seems to me that reorientation must concern various sectors of society besides the economy. It starts with the family education, continues through primary school and vocational training. Our children need to be encouraged in family and school to feel capable of fulfilling their tasks as future citizens, in the family and at the workplace. The workplace Switzerland needs a future, so that our children will also have a future.

The state has to protect the interests of its citizens

The preservation and promotion of Switzerland as a workplace has a high priority. In order for Switzerland to be taken seriously as an equal partner at the international level, the state must protect national interests in all areas. Only those who protect themselves can help others.

What can be expected to improve if the initiative was adopted

I think the focus is on rethinking. The implementation of the initiative will more likely result in people showing

The federal popular initiative "An economy to the benefit of all!" deserves support

This important initiative wants to protect our local industry and agriculture by acting directly on the economic policy and give a clear response to the negative consequences of a one-sided growth and globalization strategy.

The society and the environment is ruined by unrestricted international free trade, not regulated by national law. The consequences are: de-industrialization due to the relocation of production abroad, killing jobs and demolishing a viable agriculture, wage dumping, loss of sovereignty and social decline and unrest.

The initiative is based on three pillars of a responsible economic development: "Protecting, developing and passing on".

1. Protection of our sovereignty by defending the basic values important to us.

2. Development of an economy that takes into account the natural environment and that can also ensure the local social and economic structures and social peace.

3. Passing on to future generations what we have received from our ancestors as an item on loan. This pillar is the

most important one of the popular initiative.

By signing it you secure a healthy economy for future generations. Also our children should have the opportunity to continue family business, trade and agriculture with commitment and enthusiasm, and by this participate actively in shaping village structures and life in the communities and in our country. Your support of this non-party popular initiative is worthwhile; time is running out.

*Termination of the collection period:
1 May 2013.*

The signature forms can be obtained from the principal initiator of the initiative, the wine grower *Willy Cretegny* in Geneva (www.lavrille.ch), or directly from the "committee to support the initiative in the German speaking part of Switzerland", contact: Mrs *Claudia Meier*, 6208 Oberkirch, phone 041 921 96 50, or Email: mecla@bluewin.ch, www.wirtschaft-zum-nutzen-aller.ch.

*Ludwig Lussi, organic farmer,
Tägerwilen*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

more initiative, commitment to others, personal responsibility and a higher performance and willingness to work.

The state will not relieve us of our workload, but it can protect our existence and future through meaningful protective measures and affirmative action. I also expect a national dialogue among the people about our future and thus a revival of direct democracy. The small structures, villages and neighborhoods, the region in which we live are likely

to gain more quality of life and security of supply. Ultimately, the affected people will determine by their action or inaction what is to become better. It can be expected that we say goodbye to the throwaway mentality by producing products with better durability and also repair them. We will keep up many jobs and small and medium enterprises in the industrial and agricultural sector and generally attach a greater meaning to our work. ●

“It must start small to shine in the wide world”*

To the federal popular initiative “For an economy to the benefit of all!”

by Verena Tobler Linder, ethnologist and sociologist

This initiative has a true title: The goals that it seeks, and the means by which it seeks to achieve these apply globally: they are to the benefit of all!

I want to justify this as someone who has dealt with poverty issues and with people living in the periphery of the world economy for a lifetime – in the 80s for the first time on site in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cameroon, Liberia and Sudan, later here: in the rich and beautiful Switzerland. Only for short assignments, I returned to Cameroon and Mozambique. My stays in the third world granted me insights mainly in the refugee camps and in the slums, as well as in the situation of farmers, peasants and nomads in the hinterland. In Switzerland I worked with asylum-seekers, refugees and immigrants, and I am still active, when it comes to integration problems.

The former colonial countries have long been independent, but often merely on paper

A long time ago Ruedi Strahm has taught me the most important thing about unbalanced development and the structural problems of the third world. At that time he stood together with *Senghaas* and many others for an “auto-centred development”. To put it plainly: Without customs protection, which ensures the production of goods for the domestic market, a poor country can neither develop economically, nor reach a social and national-territorial integration. This insight has never been put into practice, although it is still true today. My work has allowed me to look both at the light and the dark sides of a limitless economic growth in North and South and to study the concrete details. Although the former colonial countries have long since been independent, but often merely on paper. For what is now perceived from the outside as “failed states” was structural reality within the poor countries. For the first post-colonial development was considered:

1. In the golden age of still primarily national territorial rooted capital the West could leave everything to the market: those who had above-average productivity and better skilled workers, outdo all the others. Also Switzerland was able to accumulate enormous amounts of added value or capital, and therefore rapidly growing wages could be paid

and the welfare state could be expanded.

2. The poor countries were indeed now formally decolonized. But the economies of most countries have been more exhausted, because they were less versed in technology, infrastructure and education than the West. In short, under the banner of global free competition, the traditional community economies were destroyed more insidiously “on site”. Despite of that a narrow urban upper and middle class evolved, often in the form of civil servants and political elites. On this basis, there was no national territorial integration with comprehensive protection and social institutions.

3. Due to the globalized markets, the majority of the population in poor countries was never integrated into a formal gainful employment – *which is the main reason that nowadays solidarity-based institutions for all are missing – and that means ultimately: monetised!*

For example in 2012 Mali, Africa’s largest cotton producer, processed only 3% of its crop. There is hardly any gainful employment in industrial production and in the manufacturing sector. Therefore, high unemployment is common in Mali as everywhere in the periphery of the world economy! This is also the main reason that the migration from the South has increased dramatically since the 1980s.

After my return from the poor world, I first experienced a minor culture shock: Rich Switzerland in the midst of the rich Europe! Everywhere on the continent welfare states had been established, abundance was common, over-consumption the rule. But it was clear to me, that this party is soon over, and the club will dissolve itself – *all just a matter of time!*

Today it is about oil and other raw materials, state power and Western consumer privileges

The club of the welfare states dissolves once the capital can circulate globally without limits: meanwhile this has been ensured by the IMF, WTO, World Bank and the currency reforms. At the same time in the era of globalisation the clever and hardworking ones are losing their dominance more and more, however, now larger and financially stronger companies are gaining enormous advantages. In the second phase of the global wrangling to unlimited competition and market the

smaller states and economies are the first under pressure – *initially not necessarily under economic pressure, but primarily under political pressure*. The ambition to become a great power takes over the crude regime even more up to new wars: as you know, today Germany is being defended in Afghanistan, France once again in Mali – *business as usual*. But today it is about oil and other raw materials, state power, and Western consumer privileges. As another difficulty is added, that productivity, consumption and profits in Europe are growing less rapidly than for example in the emerging BRICS countries: Large corporations shift their production facilities or move their investment activities to Brazil, India, China. This is the logic of globalised capital: while the number of jobs in Europe decreases, for example in Brazil dozens of car brands are produced by global players; immense areas of land are degenerated into the playground of *Monsanto* and *Cargill* and are abused for an extremely intensified and monopolistic agriculture – *because in Brazil there are markets with high potential, land and workers can be had en masse and cheaper*.

US and EU behave martially and dictate the rules to all the others

The party is probably over also for the Western population majority!

Firstly, because our welfare states were built on the basis of above-average capital accumulation, unequal development, and non-ecological consumption. Even the Swiss lifestyle *can not* be globalised, although the increasing immigration shows that its adherents are constantly increasing.

Secondly, because ultimately similar negative effects can be found in all Western welfare states. For this second phase of the capital development applies: The financial capital has become volatile and the relocation of large corporations as well as its production sites reduce the tax base in Europe and therefore the economic growth and the welfare states are at risk. We are increasingly concerned about two respects: The economically depressed environment and the pressure that the established mega-powers exert so suddenly to the small states, which are more resourceful and more agile. First the US and EU behave martially and dictate the rules to all the others. But also Switzerland gets itself into a predicament because of the shadow of their own successes: the mas-

* freely adapted from “Im Hause muss beginnen, was leuchten soll im Vaterland” by Jeremias Gotthelf

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sive immigration and the aging population. Admittedly, these developments are contradictory. But obviously our national territorial integration comes under pressure due to a number of factors:

- The unproductive and only indirectly productive segments of the population are growing constantly.
- Through immigration, the problems are not solved but only postponed.
- On the one hand, the pressure on soil and landscape rises rapidly with immigration;
- on the other hand, the world market dictates maximum intensified production to our agriculture.
- The local small and medium businesses collapse, often under the pressure of rising rents!
- The solidary networks are coming under pressure more and more and from all sides.
- The gap between rich and poor in this country is widening, too;
- but advanced social polarization, hierarchy and fragmentation have grown.

At the same time also in Switzerland, those at the social and global top organize and integrate themselves increasingly internationally, while our society is disintegrating: some municipalities become impoverished; the numbers of welfare recipients are increasing; other municipalities, where the global players deign to stay or settle, stay rich or get richer.

Democracies are undermined when governments and parliaments become puppets of the capital interests

Last but not least our most important cultural heritage will be undermined: direct democracy. Everywhere in the world democracies are undermined from above: where nation states have remained poor as church mice or where oil wealth was rife, modern democracies could never ever arise for structural reasons. In the old European countries comparable processes commence: Democracies are always undermined when governments and parliaments become puppets of the capital interests. Or when it is imminent, as in Switzerland, that bureaucratic EU decisions are only waved through or that without questioning the anti-democratic legislation, dictated by foreclosed EU commissioners, is incorporated in its legislation. In short – in this second phase of the capital development the Western democracies are also structurally undermined: National populations can less and

less control and manage the central economic factors. The Social Democrats want to solve these problems by a Europe-wide centralized and hierarchical state – *the wrong strategy, because this supports the coming to power of mostly technocrats, bureaucrats, “people conceited about their status”!*

But if you look closer you can recognize what a functioning democracy of modern style depends on among other things: firstly, that the vast majority of the population has a formal gainful employment; secondly, that this majority can pay out of their own pockets and contribute actively, what either they or their elected representatives decide. *Otherwise the demands of populations become limitless!* Thirdly, direct democracy requires that the electorate has a reasonably adequate idea of the socio-economic conditions.

But if the people no longer understand the complexity associated with the global economy, they are not alone. At the latest, the current crisis has revealed that even the illustrious economists had long arrived in the country “*Kan nit verstaan*”.

Seeking practical answers “For an economy to the benefit of all!”

The initiative “For an economy to the benefit of all!” seeks practical answers to these problems. The initiators’ intention is not at all to abolish the market and the money! The intention is to contain them both socially and environmentally. Neither is there a reason to abolish the welfare state: The point is to rebuild it in an ecologically and socially compatible way! For continuing as we did will lead to climatic disaster and national debt. In the long term both will bring about economic bankruptcy and the collapse of the nation states. In contrast the selective uncoupling is a practicable way for most national economies. Selective uncoupling means that all products and services that can be produced locally will be taken back into the sovereignty of the workers and consumers. This is what we call ownership in our aid to developing countries. But we are also already busy working on ways out: by the cooperative movement as well as by those who are launching the communal economy. Nobel laureate *Elinor Ostrom* has also made an important contribution by her research. And allow me to take a look at the endangered institutions of solidarity: The majority of the solidary networks in Switzerland has been financed by direct acquisition taxes so far; consumption taxes also flow into the AHV; social assistance is financed by means of traditional taxes – *no won-*

der that our institutions of solidarity are under pressure. They were financed by the global economic growth, they are based on the idea of unlimited growth and the illusion of an eternal privilege. Elinor Ostrom has explored the conditions under which common goods such as forests, soil, water are provided and used sustainably.

Institutions of solidarity such as health insurances, disability benefits, etc. can also be applied to as common goods. They ran out of control in the delusion of endless growth. Therefore we have to rebuild them. For this, the following principles are useful: Firstly, it is necessary that the boundaries of the common goods are clearly defined and their rules for feeding and use are known to everyone. Secondly, compliance with the rules must be monitored, breaches of the rules must be sanctioned, fallible and unauthorized ones must be excluded – *that hurts, but is absolutely necessary!*

Direct democracy works under optimal conditions of the small area and conveys dignity

Let us not forget: on the one hand the capital once misused nationalism for its colonial and military interests, at a time when it was still primarily national territorially rooted. Meanwhile, the specific binding to the local home has fallen into disrepute: Those who operate the capital and financial policy at the global top or see themselves as soilless culture elite today preach absolute boundlessness. Secondly, many parrot – too many! – such stupidity. Stupidity, namely, because it is rooted in infantile desires for omnipotence: in illusions of limitless growth, limitless consumption, eternal life. Third, our direct democracy offers huge advantages here: it works best under conditions of the small area conveying dignity to its citizens; it makes most of us happy, even if often lose; it challenges us to think, to discuss and debate. Finally, politics and politicians are tied to rational arguments by direct democracy, arguments that can be verified by us.

The initiative “For an economy to the benefit of all” wants to rebuild the world – in unison and concretely, but from the bottom! It is not a constricted nationalistic project. It is the first initiative of global community and corporate economy: proposing what has to be applied everywhere in the future, if life of the human being is to become socially and environmentally sustainable, and our social coexistence is to remain democratic. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“The sham machinations within the army”: Treason in installments 1870 – and 2013?

**A look into the past as a lesson and a reminder for the present – on the book
“Konfrontation. Die Wahrheit über die Bourbaki Legende” (Confrontation.
The truth about the Bourbaki Legend) by Bernhard von Arx**

by Tobias Salander, historian

Switzerland in 2013 – surrounded by friends? By the Nobel Peace Prize laureate EU, which plans to send weapons to civil war zones? By a giant which has delivered the people to a financial oligarchy and which counteracts impoverishment, disintegration and violent unrest, with a rapid reaction force, the Eurogendfor, standing by to crush uprisings.

And worldwide, the new bogeyman of the 16 US intelligence agencies published on 12 March: cyber attacks executed by non-governmental terror networks that can destroy the infrastructure of countries. And “isolated states” constituting a danger for the “free” world.

Right in the middle lies Switzerland. Well positioned and prepared? Capable of meeting international obligations of a neutral state? Namely, the ability to protect its own territory? 95% of the Swiss do not want to give up neutrality – but are they aware that this cannot be done without a strong army?

A look back in history may help to put things into perspective, as history holds up a mirror to us that is not tinted and clouded by contemporary manipulations. Bernhard von Arx’s book entitled “Konfrontation. Die Wahrheit über die Bourbaki-Legende” (Confrontation. The truth about the Bourbaki Legend) shows how quickly a foreign policy position can turn to the worse, how dangerous character deficits of leaders can be, and how dire the consequences may be if no provisions for emergencies have been made during peacetime. The conflict between Federal Councilor Emil Welti and General Hans Herzog in winter 1870/71 may be a lesson for future generations, and may raise the question: How do we compare to others? Are we aware of the seriousness of the situation? Or do we thoughtlessly stagnate, hoping that nothing harmful may happen? Due to his personal conception of man and history, von Arx succeeds in conveying an understanding of that time as if we were actors ourselves. A book that is likely to reinforce a much-needed re-considering, possibly also cause it – and not only in questions of military security policy, but one that includes all areas of life.

The geostrategic position of Switzerland implies certain characteristics: as the guardian of the Alpine passes that

“Aren’t once more executive politicians – craving for recognition and being slaves to foreign masters – on the verge of carelessly putting the existence of our country at risk? Aren’t the admonishers equally denigrated today and dismissed as alarmists? Is this not again treason if the army is provided with so little money and men that they cannot perform their job in the least?”

have been made accessible centuries ago, as operator of the trans-Alpine road and rail networks and an extensive tunnel and reservoir system, which is able to store the energy of the world’s second largest water reservoir, our country lies in the heart of the European continent. For centuries, we have been surrounded by neighbors who speak almost the same language as the Swiss in the respective adjacent parts of the country; some also cultivating the same faith. It is the desire for freedom that separated our country early from surrounding areas. There, in contrast to the Confederation, large nation states developed, mostly with one national language and a center, always accompanied by wars – think of the wars of Louis XIV, of the Jacobins and Napoleon in France, the imperial wars of unification under Bismarck and the Italian unification wars against Austria-Hungary. Large centralized structures emerged which started to act as imperialists once they were forcibly united and tried to divide the world amongst them by force until they fell upon each other in combat.

Preparing for a defensive war during peacetime

While the British Empire dominated the seas with its fleet, their policy on the Continent was characterized by the balance of power. Due to this fact and the Russian support at the Vienna Congress in 1815, the small state of Switzerland survived the turmoil of the Napoleonic war not only territorially, but was also guaranteed the perpetual armed neutrality at its request. After the bitter years of the Napoleonic occupation, with the lootings, forced recruitment and a heteronomous centralization, our forefathers knew that as a small state surrounded by numerical-

ly far superior peoples and large formations we could only survive in freedom if we prepared in times of peace for a defensive war and strictly stayed out from foreign quarrels, as Brother Klaus, the wise father of the nation, had so well formulated centuries before.

You do not need to be a supporter of geo-strategists like Zbigniew Brzezinski or Harald Mackinder with their imperial swagger, in order to realize that the geostrategic situation of a people does not change, even though the circumstances of the time, the political, economic and social conditions change. A small state remains a small state, the center position remains center position, a land-locked country remains a land-locked country. And: there has never been a real friendship between states, only interests. This view should not be confused with pessimism or a Hobbesian or Machiavellian view of man, according to which man is a wolf to other men. The above-cited view just takes into account that people, even though they are social beings, are capable of anything if they are guided by the greed for power, money and influence, depending on the circumstances. The founding fathers of 1291 called this “malice of the time”, for which they braced in a cooperative way, which means organizing from bottom up.

Historiography oriented towards the personal view of man ...

Having gained the protection of the perpetual armed neutrality under international law in 1815, one would be inclined to think that the Swiss people and their elected leaders would have learned their lessons from history and would always have financed a sufficiently strong army in

“The sham machinations ...”

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peace – as insurance in the case of cases, always hoping it would never occur.

But this is unfortunately not the case: Just like today as Switzerland would be totally unprepared in the case of unfriendly attacks or even a war – after the clear-cutting of the army reforms in recent years, carried out coup-like and with a lot of disinformation and propaganda by spin doctors – so poorly equipped was our country in the 1930s. The same image in the First World War, and even during the Franco-German War of 1870/71.

The view on the Second World War has been clouded in recent years ideologically by the *Bergier* Commission and that of the First World War has been reduced to the general strike and the use of troops by certain circles, so that an unprejudiced presentation can only be made after removing mountains of ideological rubble first.

Quite different so with the events in 1870/71. The operations around the border occupation, the taking in of almost 90,000 French soldiers in Switzerland and the exemplary attitude of the then General, *Hans Herzog*, as well as the hospitality of the Swiss people, their openness and solidarity, but also the dubious attitude of the politicians, especially the head of the Military Department, Federal Council *Emil Welti*, are subject of an excellently researched,



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enthralingly written book by the historian *Bernhard von Arx*, oriented towards the personal view of man. Its title in the English translation is “Confrontation. The truth about the Bourbaki Legend”.

... provides illuminating comparisons with the current situation

Though now over 140 years have passed by since Switzerland – with more luck than judgment – could save itself from the deadly threat of occupation by fleeing French and German soldiers following them, hence about a quarter of a million men in arms, so the reader hearkens repeatedly: Does this not resemble our current situation? Aren't we on the road again - towards a potential disaster? Aren't once more executive politicians – craving for recognition and being slaves to foreign masters – on the verge of carelessly putting the existence of our country at risk? Aren't the admonishers equally denigrated today and dismissed as alarmists? Is this not again treason if the army is provided with so little money and men that they cannot perform their job in the least? To look into the history always means to hold a mirror up to one's own time – and freely adapted from *Lichtenberg's* aphorism, if the image is not rosy, the mirror is not the one to blame ...

Today the Group Giardino...

The actors today? Here, the majority of the population and the *Group Giardino*, who point to the disastrous shortcomings in our army and take the constitutional mandate seriously, including the duty of a neutral country, to be able to defend its own territory adequately – there, the representatives of the political class and the mainstream media, who toy with major structures such as NATO and have already led Switzerland in its limbo, the *Partnership for Peace* (PfP), and who speak of the “build-up capability” to obfuscate the NATO-compliant reduction of the army to “modules”.

... then General Hans Herzog

The actors then? Here, the Swiss people, the majority of the media and a courageous General Hans Herzog, who clearly realized the dangers and did everything in their power to put

together a strong border protection, but almost despaired due to the sheer problems of build-up capacity – there, the representatives of the political class with the Minister of Finance *Céresole* as one of their mouthpieces, the other one being the former Federal Councilor *Emil Welti*. The latter served the ‘railway king’ *Escher*, neglected everything else, especially his core business national defense, and showed character deficits: von Arx traces vanity, imperiousness and intrigue, which led Switzerland to the brink of disaster. In the historical distance it also becomes clear, what a privatization of the public services and a lack of organization of the army can mean in times of crisis: The protection of the country becomes a haggling; politicians must act as petitioners to private railway companies and ask them to graciously make wagons and locomotives available so that the troops, but also the wounded French soldiers, not least the general, may be transported. Merchants make money by exploiting others' plight and demanding sharply increased food prices for the soldiers who have no field kitchen, no sufficient footwear, etc. Processes that in 2013 must give us cause for concern, after our arsenals flog their high quality products at auctions, privatization celebrates revival and the greed of “rip-off-artists” who are not associated with their homeland are combated by the people only with great efforts.

The Dogma of (neo) liberalism: “The people must be deceived!”

Like the political class today who always express their difficulties with the sovereignty of the people, the initiative and referendum and from time to time probably would prefer to change the people, the same way the liberals of the 19th century had difficulties in getting rid of their arrogant stance and regarding the people as something other than a manipulable mass. One of these elitist gentlemen was Federal Councilor *Emil Welti*: The people are to be deceived, at best in a soft-soaped manner to quiet it; the people's wishes proved to be rather a hindrance for government, von Arx says about this magistrate in the opening pages of his book. Whoever feels reminded of the US neo-conservatives with their dubious reference figure *Leo Strauss*, who, based on a Hobbesian to Kabbalistic view of man did not consider people on a personal level, and advocated lies and exploitation without any dignity, is probably not so far off – this could also explain the current problems some liberals have with direct democracy and their subservience to the wishes of today's *Eschers* who are probably to be found in the circles of high finance.

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“The sham machinations ...”

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The fairy tale of the “build-up capability” today and then

Anyone, who thinks the year 2013 is per se a year of peace and Switzerland is far from being seriously threatened, may be put in a thoughtful mood by looking back into history: From 1933 to 1939, from the abolition of democracy until the war, it took Germany only six years. Conditions can change so quickly. Switzerland needed much, too much time until the truce was worked out, the collaboration between left, center and right, until it seriously took up the defense. Not to speak about the national economic supply. If in the early 1930s you had talked about the army’s “build-up capability” in a 10-year-period, you would have been caught unawares in 1939. The term “build-up capability” was not known to the army at that time – so we were caught unawares – we just were not sufficiently prepared and were lucky that *Hitler* did not execute the *Operation Tannenbaum* against Switzerland planned for 1940. Hundreds of thousands of deaths would probably have been the result. Later on, according to reports by German generals, they took the Swiss Army quite seriously not least because of the genius of General *Guisan* and his *Reduit* position developed from necessity.

Analogously, the situation before the First World War: In the summer of 1914, the Europeans had one celebration after the other, went to their recently opened summer resorts and enjoyed life – deliberately overlooking the thunderclouds and the storm coming up. How Switzerland soon lost its economic freedom due to lack of preparation by the political elite and had to obey the dictate by France and the United Kingdom is shown by *Daniele Ganser* in his book “Europa im Erdölrausch”(Europe in the oil rush).

How character deficits of politicians turn into treason

It was no different in 1870. To the great regret of the Swiss population the elites of the two neighbors Germany and France were heading towards war. The prestige of *Napoleon III* and the political calculus of the German elite, wanting to unite the Empire and relying on blood and iron, sacrificed the peace of their peoples in a criminal way. That was why Switzerland declared unconditional neutrality on July 16, 1870 – which meant that it would neither intervene nor tolerate the belligerent parties being allowed to use Swiss soil for their war plans. On the same day, the entire Federal Council decided that five divisions with a total of 37,000 men were to be mustered. On 19 July, the day when France declared war on Prussia, the Unit-



Section from Edouard Castres panorama painting in Lucerne: “The border crossing of the 90’000 men took three days and two nights – and often it was just the action of a single courageous Swiss officer, who could stop the French who were partly without leaders. Edouard Castres, who was on site, drew countless sketches, which he then compiled to the monumental painting – viewing the scenery at the Lucerne Museum is an overwhelming experience even today, in the age of media inundation.”

(picture mt)

ed Federal Assembly elected Colonel Hans Herzog from Aarau their general. In this situation which was so tense for the country, Federal Councilor Welti was guided by a rather selfish motivation: In order not to grant too much power to the General or to prevent him from standing in his light, Welti pushed through the establishment of a General Chief of Staff against the General’s wish; he also reserved to himself the right to decide on the array of troops or the whole army. So in an emergency, it would have taken days until the troops would have been able to be deployed to the corresponding focal points, a procedure that – including Welti’s continuous braking actions – Herzog later called a possible treason in a debate in front of high officers.

The “sham machinations within the army” the authorities’ crime against the entire nation

Despite Welti’s dubious motives for the election of Herzog the choice turned out to be a stroke of luck for Switzerland. General Herzog as head of the army was an upright, honest man, who was close to his people. The final sentence of his first order of the day reveals the difference to the sufficiently known weapon-clanging language of the commanders of foreign armies because Herzog said: “With these few words the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss army welcomes you full-heartedly. Hans Herzog” (quoted according to

von Arx, p. 43). When filling the officers’ posts there were only the professional and personal characteristics that counted for Herzog. Realistically and focused on the main issue, he gained an accurate picture about the recruitment, training and inventory of enlisted troops – and was often near despair because of the selfish, short-sighted and hard-hearted attitude of Federal Councilor Welti, of various cantonal authorities, but also of a number of private entrepreneurs who wanted to draw the highest possible profit from the disaster. Even though they enjoyed the protection of the deployed troops! When the General also wanted to look after the supply of the population, the Federal Council pulled him short. In his report on the “Establishment of troops in July and August 1870” General Herzog referred to the shortcomings of the various actors as “a crime of the respective authorities against their fellow citizens and the whole nation” (quoted after von Arx, p. 55). They should not only demand sacrifices from the citizens; in the first place it was the state’s duty to provide everything the army needed to be capable of striking. Since some things were existent only on paper, he spoke of the “sham machinations within the army” (quoted after von Arx, p. 55).

continued on page 8

“The shame machinations ...”

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**General Bourbaki's Army:
Violence against Switzerland
or internment?**

But Switzerland was lucky: In August 1870, the situation near the Swiss border proved to be so quiet that a substantial part of the troops could be released to go home. The great general staff, which had been stationed in Olten during five weeks could be greatly reduced with regard to personnel.

On 2 September 1870 the Germans won in Sedan, Napoleon was taken prisoner and he abdicated while the French were proclaiming the Third Republic. General Herzog handed in his resignation, a request that was not answered by Welti. He didn't want any other General, who could have become dangerous to him due to his bolder appearance. It took until 31 December 1870, before Herzog actively exercised the duties of a General again. So Switzerland had an army with a leader again at least with regard to the highest command level, when on 18 January 1871 the German Empire (Kaiserreich) was proclaimed in Versailles and the French leadership under *Gambetta* unleashed the people's war against the Germans. Significant to Switzerland and almost fateful was the order of the new French Government to General *Charles Denis Bourbaki*, who was commanded to liberate the besieged Belfort and then proceed to southern Germany. Thus Switzerland was again in danger of becoming involved in the war. After the failure of the plan, *Bourbaki* attempted suicide, and his successor, General *Justin Clinchant* was compelled either to march through Switzerland by force and to unite with the troops in the South or to become interned in Switzerland. And so it came to the situation, which is perpetuated today in Lucerne in the *Bourbaki* Museum as a monumental panorama painting: the border crossing of almost 90,000 French soldiers into Switzerland at various points, including in Les Verrières.

**19,500 against 250,000:
the failure of politics**

From the military point of view the doors to Switzerland were wide open, as General Herzog had feared: because of the failure of politics Herzog had only 19,500 men at his disposal, whilst 250,000 foreign French troops, and chasing after them, the Germans were on the other side. We know today, that it went well this time. But General Herzog, his officers and soldiers faced an uncertain situation in view of each new French unit, namely the question whether the far

stronger French would battle their way by force or accept to be disarmed. In the first case one had to reckon that the Germans would move up from behind, and the Federal Parliament Building in Bern with Welti standing by idly would have been besieged faster than one could have reacted. The independence of the country was on a knife's edge, and it was sheer luck that the guns were silent. The French couldn't imagine at all, that the fortified confederates have been organized so badly. Many of them were bitterly regretting their allowance for disarmament when it became clear that a march through would have been possible without any problems.

**One cannot for ever live
on the ancestors' fame**

It must be definitely questioned whether today in a crisis situation it would be possible to deceive foreign forces so easily; one is inclined, as Herzog was at the time, to speak of the respective authorities' treason if worst comes to worst. It would be treason if the troops were overrun in case of war. Given the current strength of the army, they would easily be overrun or destroyed by air-borne forces.

Just in the area of Ste-Croix only 348 Swiss faced 13,000 French in early February 1871, including 600 heavily armed Cavalry, who could have given the Swiss short shrift. Not forever might the glory of the ancestors serve as a quasi weapon free of charge; the credit is spent one day – and certainly so today'.

The border crossing of the 90,000 men took three days and two nights- and often it was just the action of a single courageous Swiss officer, who could stop the French who were partly without leaders. *Edouard Castres*, who was on site, drew countless sketches, which he then compiled to the monumental painting – viewing the scenery at the Lucerne Museum is an overwhelming experience even today, in the age of media inundation.

**90,000 French grew fond
of the Swiss model and carried it home**

Afterwards the Swiss cantons and communities had to put up 90,000 men. An achievement of the Swiss people, which deserves admiration until this day. From 3 February 1871 onwards, these stranded people lived in the peaceful island of Switzerland until 24 March 1871 when the last internee could start off home. Those six weeks had been intense, newspapers were full of reports, about how one moved closer and after initial caution the strangers were perceived as an enrichment. At the farewell apparently tears were shed, as the young men were very handsome lads with cultivated manners. Swiss communes howev-

er did not only give a sincere farewell. In many places brochures were handed to the travelers returning home, which explained the model of Switzerland in French language. There was an intention that the peace model according to which the federalist state with its extensive communal autonomy built bottom to top might fruitfully influence the forthcoming constitutional debate in France and could act as an antidote against the centralist power state. Similar to the Bavarian refugees, who had been seeking protection in Switzerland, and carried the idea of direct democracy home after World War II. These brochures were a contribution of Switzerland to the promotion of peace, because the French had learned: If all States were built like Switzerland, wars would be obsolete!

**General Hans Herzog –
as popular as later General Guisan**

On 16 February 1871, General Herzog fell in again and served his country further as a Colonel. At the time he was, to Emil Welti's great annoyance the most popular Swiss – not due to his uniform, but due to his exemplary behavior as *protector patriae*, as a guarantor of the country's protection. His picture hung in almost every living room, just as some 70 years later that of General Guisan. When Herzog died in 1894 at the age of 75, an endless escort of men and women of all ranks, military men and officers, government officials and President Emil Frei followed his coffin to the cemetery in Aarau. Federal Council Emil Welti, however, had been conspicuous by his absence. Welti died five years later in 1899. Von Arx finally writes about him, and today's politicians may take this to heart in order to leave a different impression to posterity: Emil Welti “was power-crazed and was therefore often acting on his own authority, and this not only just inside the law's limits, but often beyond, because he knew that no one dared to hinder him to do so.” His stubborn adherence to what he - and only he - considered to be correct, led Switzerland several times to the brink of disaster during the war. He was also unforgiving. Herzog once described him as a potential traitor and he never forgave him.”

**Preserving the peace model
Switzerland – as a source of hope
for other countries**

What can the current young generation learn from the situation in 1870/71? It is that taking precautions is better than complaining afterwards. That people with obvious character deficits must not be elected into responsible positions.

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The end of Swiss neutrality?

by Gotthard Frick, Bottmingen

"1.3 billion Muslims are placing their hopes in us" [...] "they [the western powers and the Jews, the author] will attack and kill us, invade our lands, bring down our governments, whether we are Sunnis or Shias, Alawite or Druze or whatever." (Source: Organization of the Islamic Conference, Mahatir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia at the 10th Islamic Summit, October 16, 2003.)

Even though neither of the sides is interested in war, "[...] a military conflict with the US is unavoidable if China's central interests, i.e. its sovereignty, national security and unity are violated." (Source: "Global Times" web page, Beijing, Major General Luo Yuan, Academy of Military Science of the People's Liberation Army, November 2011)

In face of the missile defense shield bases planned by the US in Poland and Chechnya, the Russian political leadership has explicitly reserved the right to intervene against them with a preemptive military strike. Meanwhile, President Obama has cancelled these plans.

The world consists of many larger or smaller powers. They all pursue their own interests. This has been expressed most clearly by a British Prime Minister who stated that England had neither friends nor enemies, but only interests. There is no such thing as a "buffer zone of friends".

The states outside the western world view peace and security differently than we do. Like NATO they maintain armies and declare that they are committed for peace. Behind the United States' and their Allies' measures on security policy they see the motive of violently enforcing their interests, camouflaged by a décor of "higher values".

"The sham machinations ..."

continued from page 8

Such deficits, should they appear in the course of a term, must be labeled with dignity, courageously and without false respect by the fellow citizens. If they can be not solved, the official must resign. Whistleblowers must not be put in a corner, but one has to listen to them calmly, and their statements shall be publicly discussed. And as we don't like to take note of the malice of the time; every time it veils itself in a new garb and one must be prepared for it. The Hedgehog has spines, to prick them up if necessary. So the

This is the initial situation for decisions on Swiss neutrality!

For centuries, Switzerland has pursued in this environment a clear policy known as neutrality: Never to take part in a war, never to have military allies, but to keep up a strong, credible defence of its territory which makes an aggressor's cost-benefit calculation unattractive and is able to defend the country in case of an attack. This policy of absolute peaceableness in combination with the whole population's readiness to defend freedom, independence and the integrity of the territory has given our country a unique reputation around the world. In addition, the ability of our own military forces to prevent foreign powers from integrating our land into their wars is part of the commitments of a neutral state according to international law.

The intention of the Federal Council – contrary to Swiss neutrality – to obtain a seat in the UN Security Council for Switzerland, which would imply that we would have to participate actively in decisions regarding wars against other countries and where we would be involved into the political maneuvers of the super powers is fortunately challenged by the Parliament because all polls confirm that our people wants to stick to this foreign policy of neutrality.

If the Federal Council and the Army leadership decided to take over all ranks and the organization from the People's Liberation Army of China, the military forces of Russia or of Egypt, entering a military cooperation with any of these countries and even receiving one of their highest ranking officers in our country in order to be informed by the Swiss Army on the development of our army, the people would be enraged – with good reason.

Swiss people shall get prepared, if they want to remain independent – always in the hope of never having to use the weapons, and to be able to live in peace. In addition - the capability to defend is our duty with regard to international law. And: the other countries look on us, on the everlasting peace model, the armed neutrality. Let's not disappoint them nor our descendants!

Literature: Bernhard von Arx. Confrontation. The truth about the Bourbaki legend. Zurich, 2012. ISBN 978-3-03823-744-0.

¹ Build-up capacity is a military term describing the military forces' capacity of timely increase in effective strength under arms

But this is exactly what Switzerland has done with NATO I in recent years. The Swiss Army ranks which have been valid for a long time have been replaced by NATO ranks, leadership regulations like our "FSO" are aligned with those of NATO ("GOP"), the Swiss army organization has been adapted to the organization of NATO member armies, military infrastructure and war material worth many dozens of billion Swiss Francs has been rendered useless or destroyed and the army has been weakened massively. Thus, in case of a war, Switzerland would no longer be able to defend itself against unacceptable military demands of NATO, e.g. to take over and use the strategically extremely important alpine transport routes. How would Switzerland answer, as a "Partner for Peace", the NATO request for permission to fly across Switzerland with fighter jets and troop carriers? We are already tolerating fly-overs by the Alliance!

In addition, years ago Switzerland started a close military cooperation with NATO; the treaty has been renewed early this year. In his talk in January 2013, the NATO Secretary-General has been calling for an even tighter connection of Switzerland with the military alliance, stating that NATO had to be active beyond the European borders.

On February 28, 2013, the Deputy Supreme Commander of NATO responsible for the reorganization of the forces, the Polish General *Mieczyslaw Bieniek*, came to Switzerland to inform the Swiss Army leadership about this reorganization and to learn about the development of the Swiss Army. Are these talks also intending to make sure that the Swiss Army is even better adapted to the needs of NATO?

If the Swiss people were aware of what is going on in this context, it would probably try to stop these developments by a popular initiative. But the federal state is employing numerous spin doctors, communication experts, whose job it is to manipulate the language so that it obscures the facts, creating, as required, a positive or negative impression in the public. So the Federal Council is not talking about a "military alliance" but uses very positive expressions like "partnership" and "for peace" instead. Who would like to oppose a *Partnership for Peace*?

The naked facts are that formerly neutral Switzerland is collaborating with the largest military alliance on earth, "to im-

"The end of Swiss neutrality?"

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prove the ability for military cooperation", "under UN or OSZE mandate in the framework of UN, EU and NATO", as the treaty states. Which country, which military alliance has waged war more often over the past 20 years than the US and

NATO, always using the "common values" also praised in the treaty as a pretext? The contract with NATO contains a long list of events where Switzerland is taking part, e.g. combined staff exercises, exercises to evaluate the abilities of the fighting forces to fight in combination with allied forces and many others. Switzerland states that it is taking part voluntarily and tries to convey the impression that neu-

trality is not challenged – as if the participation in a military alliance is not always voluntary.

What does the Russian government or its military staff think about this sneaking integration of Switzerland into NATO? What does China think about this policy in face of NATO's claim to become active outside of Europe and the growing tensions with the US in the Pacific? We all know that the US are the biggest "Partner for Peace" in NATO. What are the true goals behind this strategy and what does the Swiss people think about it?

Will our country once again reflect on its values: Openness towards the world, absolute refusal to participate in all wars outside our borders or in military alliances, the will and the ability to defend our country in case of an attack? •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**"Swan songs for the Greenback"****The US could be compelled to have Yuan in stock in the near future**

Is there a rearrangement and change in store for the world's monetary system, such as we haven't seen one for many decades? Currency specialists in Europe see and feel that, especially in the Far East, the "swan songs for the greenback" are proliferating. In a conversation, a major global bank's department manager for foreign exchange trading talked of an "acute danger of burnout". Especially in Asia and in the oil trading business ways are found to get around the world reserve currency. In trade, the US is falling back even behind China. And more and more observers in the United States fear a disaster coming as a result of ultra-loose monetary policy of the *FED* ...

A conspicuous sign: The emerging markets of the BRICS group – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – are more or less open about building their own development bank. Planned start-up capital: \$ 50 billion (!). It is clearly intended as – at a later stage – a potential competitor to the International Monetary Fund, in which the United States call the shots. The People's Republic of China in turn is ever more strongly and openly expediting the distribution of the Yuan. It is quickly ascending to a preferred settlement currency in intra-Asian trade. While Europe is struggling through a painful debt crisis, the US are threatened by another recession after the gross domestic product decline in the fourth quarter of 2012. But China, despite less growth, ascended to the world's major trading nation in 2012, and shortly but painfully took the crown from the United States – which have had it since the Second World War ...

The German *Manager Magazine* states in plain words: After decades in which the US superpower called the shots in the rest of the world by way of globalization, strategic contracts and expanding Wall Street giants such as *Coca-Cola*, *General Electric* and

IBM, now the tide is turning. And this change is a dramatic one. A new infrastructure is developing in world trade, and this is increasingly willing to give up dollars as the world reserve currency. "The new top players in the rapidly changing economic Champions League come from Asia, Latin America, Africa" ...

These days, the *Boston Consulting Group* has set up a list of the 100 biggest challengers from the emerging countries for the fifth time since 2006. 30 out of the "Top 100 Global Challengers" are from China, 20 from India. A whopping number of 1,000 companies from the rising emerging markets have broken the barrier of \$1 billion in annual sales since 2006. The study calls them the *Volkswagen*, *Wal-Marts* and *Apples* of the future! Now they are about to teach the West the meaning of fear. And the reserve currency for their worldwide attack on the established global economic system is no longer automatically the dollar, but increasingly the Renminbi. Real soon now the US could find themselves constrained to create a stock of Renminbi to fully keep pace in the world trade ...

The nervousness in the US facing this changing in leadership is in some places already turning to cynicism. "We see a currency war," the Euro Pacific Capital CEO, *Peter Schiff* says. "What distinguishes currency wars from other wars," he adds, "is the fact that you kill yourself in these wars, and in this sense, the US seem to be fixed for certain as the winner already now."

Also the media tycoon and billionaire *Steve Forbes* is slowly getting queasy: "The Federal Reserve Bank produces disasters time and again like an addict," he says and he fears that the current monetary policy could even ruin the US economy ...

Source: *Vertraulicher Schweizer Brief* No. 1350 of 21.2.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**Current Concerns**

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The debate on the introduction of a professional army in Austria with special emphasis on the Austrian Social Democratic Party

Since its foundation, the Austrian Social Democratic Party, SPÖ, has always advocated general conscription, i.e. mandatory military service. The “Hainfelder Program”, passed at the unification party conference in 1889/90, had already required the general arming of the people, and rightly unmasked standing armies as an exclusive tool of the ruling bourgeoisie.

Primarily due to the experiences of 12 February 1934 – when the labor movement and its organizations were fought by the Austro-fascists under Chancellor Dollfuss while the Austrian army, which was at that time a professional army pen-

etrated by former imperial and royal officers and nobles, fired on public housing and workers’ homes with heavy artillery – the Social Democrats had always rejected a professional army. In addition, the SPÖ was the party that had co-founded Austrian neutrality with the State Treaty and the Neutrality Act of 1955, and then in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s made it a tried and tested means of an active, confident and balanced foreign and peace policy. Not least names like *Bruno Kreisky*, *Erwin Lanc* and others are associated with this policy.

Hence the defensive nature of the Austrian army as a purely defensive army (for-

mally addressed to the East and West) has been defined for decades. This changed dramatically with the end of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the end of the USSR and Austria’s increasing integration into the EU. Step by step the integration into EU military structures was pursued; Austria joined the “NATO Partnership for Peace”; laws were often secretly and insidiously changed and thus neutrality was curtailed bit by bit. Nevertheless, we formally remained neutral and rejected, as for example in 1999 NATO air force flying to Yugoslavia over the territory of Austria.

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Resolution of 20 November 2012

Committee meeting of the SPÖ Schwechat-Section 3 on 20.11.2012 in the SPÖ Schwechat Communication Center. Unanimous decision.

Resolution

Commitment to general conscription

We, the SPÖ Schwechat-Section 3, commit ourselves to general conscription and reject any professional army, volunteer army or whatever the name of the alternative model to replace mandatory military service, for the following reasons:

Only conscription guarantees a mixing of all levels of society within the army. Experience from other countries, but also the full-time section of the Austrian Army show that a purely professional army would reflect an unrepresentative part of the average (male) population, which would result in a social and political imbalance in the Austrian military. A professional army always involves the danger of becoming a playground for right-wing extremists, weapon fanatics and the like, as developments in other countries have shown.

Turning away from general conscription would equally mean an even further integration of Austria into EU military structures. Even now Austria deploys soldiers to the *EU Battle Groups*. They should, however, according to the plans of EU military strategists, be expanded to a more powerful force and even an EU army. *Hannes Androsch*, head of the pro-professional army-person committee said that a professional army was more compatible and flexible for foreign missions. In future we would have to face missions for the securing of raw materials, resources and transport routes, which were going to be carried out in the context of the EU and in cooperation with NATO. This is exactly what gives reason for concern from

the perspective of neutrality policy! Austrian soldiers should not be used at EU or NATO command for economic and European Great Power interests abroad. On the contrary: Social democracy must fight for a revival of a serious policy of neutrality and must base it on *Kreisky’s* Foreign Policy from which Austria benefited a lot.

This also raises the question of who controls an army. Both an army with mandatory military service, as well as a pure professional army, is under the rule of the state’s democratic elements. But what form of an army is better prepared if a state turns the back on democracy, human rights and the rule of law? And here we have history teaching us that the answer can only be: conscription. The SP has not in vain demanded the “abolition of all standing armies and the general arming of the people” in the 1889 *Hainfelder Declaration of Principles*. The 12 February 1934 would most likely not have ended so tragically if the workers had not been confronted with a professional army. Especially at a time, in which strong social ruptures become evident again in Europe and the gap between rich and poor is greater than ever, political conflicts will escalate, and a situation similar to that in the 1930s can no longer be denied. A system of mandatory military service ensures that there is a direct relation between the population and the military because in practically every family there are people who have done their military service. In a professional army this relation is discontinued.

It is true that we live in a Europe of peace and wars are hopefully something of the past. However, in 1918 the slogan was “No more war!”, and a good 20 years later, Europe was plunged into the most terrible war in human history. No one can guarantee that the present



state will last forever, even if we wish so for our continent. And for a broad, comprehensive national defense a conscript-army is much better than a purely professional army, if only because of its manpower (size).

We welcome the decision of the SPÖ NÖ, not to give any recommendation with respect to the referendum for a professional army and decontrol the vote for members and officials.

The SPÖ Schwechat-Section 3 calls for:

- The maintenance of conscription as a model for the future.
- Reform of the Austrian army, to make it more attractive to conscripts and to improve efficiency.
- The revival of a serious Austrian policy of neutrality by the SPÖ.
- We call on the members of the SPÖ Schwechat-Section 3, to vote for conscription and against a professional army for the purposes of this resolution in the referendum on 20 January 2013.

Issued for information to the SPÖ Schwechat Municipality Party Committee, SPÖ Schwechat District Board and the SPÖ NÖ national organization and together with the request to become active in terms of the resolution.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Taxpayers are to be liable for insolvent banks abroad

**EU wants to wave through the banking union.
Bailout fund also planned for non-euro countries**

by Prof Dr Klaus Buchner

Largely unnoticed by the public the ECB President *Draghi* and the European Commission agreed to establish a European "banking union". To that end the Commission will prepare a draft proposal and parts of the EU Parliament have already indicated their agreement in principle.

The most important content of the "banking union" is a fund to be set up to handle insolvent banks. The funds are to come from European banks. But that will not be sufficient. Therefore *Draghi* states already now that the taxpayer's money is needed. But even this will not be enough. In addition the banking union is to get a common deposit insurance and thus make German savings at banks usable for the securing of foreign banks.

The debts of the European banks amount to more than 18 trillion (18 000 000 000 000) euro, of which more than 9 trillion are apportioned to the debts

of the endangered southern European banks. As comparison: the entire German net assets amount to only 8.7 trillion. So it is less than the debt that these banks have accumulated by irresponsible speculation. Since the three major economies in the Euro area Italy and France are highly indebted, the main burden of the banking union will be borne by the Germans.

The money for the bank liquidation or bank bailouts will go to the creditors of the insolvent banks in southern Europe and Ireland. These are major international investors such as the *German Bank*, the *Allianz* and the US institutes *Goldman Sachs* and *Rothschild*. Actually the "banking union", which should be better called "profit guarantee for large investors", means transferring German taxpayers' money and saving deposits to international investors in Europe and the USA. Here sums of money are concerned that could

destroy the economic power of Germany. Of course that must not become known yet. It is therefore not a coincidence that only a few economic news and no daily newspapers reported it.

Moreover, the EU will put up a bailout fund for non-euro countries as well. This is mainly to stabilize Romania and Bulgaria. Thus Germany will have to face an additional burden of billions without any possibility of control by the Federal Parliament.

It is not known when the European Commission will present its proposal for the banking union to the EU Parliament. This can take a few weeks but also months. In any case, it is necessary to act immediately and to inform the general public. Right now with important elections ahead this is a good opportunity to force governments and the European Parliament to give in.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"The debate over the introduction"

continued from page 11

Military integration and the militarization of the EU, however, increased year after year. We have to assess the debate on the abolition of conscription and the establishment of a professional army against this background. The army is to be made fit and flexible for the imperialist EU necessities in the end so that it can finally perform the "out of area" operations with a "robust mandate". Added to this was an electoral campaign gag by the Vienna mayor *Michael Häupl* SP shortly before the municipal elections in late 2010. Hoping to win many young voters, he openly demanded the introduction of professional military forces and the abolition of conscription. That was definitely breaking a taboo to many traditional socialists in the SPÖ. A few days later, the SP-Defense Minister *Darabos* fell in with the new party line, which is contrary to the current party platform. Finally the government parties SPÖ and Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) agreed on a referendum whose outcome was to be binding.

Many grassroots organizations and party structures of the social democrats did not come to terms with the new line of the leaders of the federal party and therefore passed resolutions, calling for a vote in favor of a continuation of conscription in the referendum on 20 January 2013.

As an example, the resolution of the SPÖ *Schwechat-Section 3* is to be quoted here:

Greece needs a further debt cut

"More harm than good is done by the chosen austerity"

As experts from the EU and IMF agree that Greece needs a further debt cut, even if they may not admit so publicly (yet). Obviously Greece's problem cannot be solved without another massive (!) haircut and/or a controlled state bankruptcy. Indirectly the IMF is even more or less apologizing to the Greeks. The world financial organization admits that by the chosen austerity measures more harm than good has been done.

Only after almost three years of meddling with income cuts, pension reductions and permanent new taxes the IMF realised that these measures didn't burden the GDP with a factor of 0.5 per "saved" Euro, but in fact led to a 1.7 fold reduction of the Greek GDP! Not without reason Greece meanwhile has become European champion in unemployment. 27% of officially registered unemployed are certainly not signs of a successful reform program. With 58 percent of youth unemployment, the country has become the lonely leader for a long time. Remarkable 34 percent (i.e.

one of three) of unemployed at the age of 35 to 45 years document that the country is losing not only its youth but also its most productive generation ...

Nevertheless the Minister of Finance *Yannis Stournaras* – he has given his word to the EU – stubbornly insists on a new property tax. Even critics from the government parties leave him cold. Already now millions of Greeks even cannot raise the existing property taxes, which in a large part are collected via electricity bill. To those who can't settle two consecutive electricity bills the *Public Power Company* simply turns off the line. This measure also hits the sick and disabled. The embitterment among the home and apartment owners is increasing every day. "Here the next big potential for conflict is emerging" the experts refer to and promise a hot spring and summer in Greece.

Source: *Vertraulicher Schweizer Brief Nr. 1349 of 12.2.2013*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Resolution of the SPÖ *Schwechat-Section 3*

The referendum on 20 January 2013 was won by the supporters of conscription from different political sides and for different reasons with a majority of 60% to 40%. A by-election survey showed that for 57% of the conscription supporters the direct connection between a "profession-

al army and a definitive abandonment of neutrality" was the crucial point. This is very positive; and this is where we have to start off politically.

David Stockinger, chairman of the SPÖ *Schwechat-Section 3* and a member of the Party City Presidium, spokesman for the initiative "Social Democrats against a Professional Army".

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Iraq and the betrayal of a people – impunity forever?”

by Hans-Christof von Sponeck



Hans-Christof
von Sponeck
(picture ma)

Iraq's recent history includes two far reaching events, on the 2 August 1990 Iraq's invasion into Kuwait and on 19 March 2003 the US/UK invasion into Iraq. Whether political leaders will draw lessons from these events will be, at best, questionable. Iraqis continue to be

wronged. Danger to life and turmoil remain a cruel part of Iraq's reality in early 2013. The collective suffering of a nation is visibly all pervasive. It can not be hidden.

The Iraqi puzzle of life confirms an endless number of tragedies:

Ethnic tension and sectarianism have become a major element in Iraqi politics since the US/UK invasion of 2003, a polarization of inter-group relations Iraqis had not know before. This explains much of the existing hideous crime including murder, kidnapping, property destruction and, most noteworthy, the deteriorating relationships between Baghdad and the three northern Kurdish governorates.

Since the years of war, sanctions and occupation, Iraq's once state-of-the-art medical system has all but collapsed. Mal-

nutrition and diseases, almost forgotten in Iraq, such as respiratory infections; measles; typhoid fever and tuberculosis have re-emerged on a large scale. The planned destruction of water and sanitation facilities, especially in the 1991 war, and recurrent drug shortages, throughout the period of sanctions and after the 2003 invasion, promoted significantly ill-being, morbidity and mortality in the country (WHO).

“First they destroyed our economy and now they are trying to kill our minds”

Depleted uranium, the armour-piercing radio-active munition, and white phosphorus used by the US military in 1991 and 2003 have created serious health and environmental dangers in Iraq. In early 2000 the US Government sought to prevent WHO from surveying areas in southern Iraq where DU had been used. It also rejected any causality with increases in lung cancer, leukaemia and congenital birth defects. Fortunately national and international efforts have not deterred the collection of more evidence to show the relevance of these war contaminants.

A 2009 Iraq Government mental health survey concluded that mass displacement, a climate of fear, torture, death and violence have contributed to the high ratio of mental illness in the country. It reflects what an old man in Mosul observed:

“First they destroyed our economy and now they are trying to kill our minds.”

Iraq is said to have the third largest oil reserves in the world. Its current oil exports nevertheless remain below the average export of 2.2 million barrels/day Iraq was able to market during the years of sanctions. Sabotage against pipelines, corruption, inability to rehabilitate oil installations in the post-invasion era and Iraqi resistance to handover oil exploration to foreign interests (PSAs)¹ are among the causes.

An immensely oil-rich country but 22.9% out of the est. 33 million Iraqis have been living in poverty and many more have to survive under near-poverty living conditions. The GNI per capita/annum (2011) amounted to a mere \$2,640 (WB). *Transparency International* classified Iraq's public sector corruption among the highest in the world - ranking 169 out of 176 countries (2012).

Rahim Hassan al-Uqailee, as head of the Iraqi Commission of Integrity wrote in an open letter to the Iraqi parliament's anti-graft committee (2011): “The fight over stealing the money of state and its proper-

ty is the unspoken part of the struggle for power in Iraq today.”

Despite the despicable gap between the rich and the poor, the Iraqi authorities signed a deal (2011) with the US Government for the purchase of 18 *F-16* fighter jets at a cost of \$ 3 billion! At that time almost a quarter of the Iraqi population lived in poverty and the unemployment rate exceeded 28% (UN).

There is a saying in the Middle East: “Egyptians write, Lebanese print and Iraqis read”. Prior to Iraq's invasion into Kuwait in August 1990, Iraq had among the highest literacy rates in the Middle East.

5 million school age children were not in school

Sanctions changed that.

A *World Bank*/Government of Iraq survey (2007) showed that “almost 23 percent of Iraqis were illiterate”, 5 million school age children were not in school and gender disparity in education had become severe. There have been other serious developments in the education sector since 2003: a sectarian element has found its way into the school system affecting mostly Sunni and Shiite students and, most disturbingly, a 2011 Ghent University/*Brussels Tribunal* publication states: “Iraq's intellectual and technical class has been subject to a systematic campaign of intimidation, abduction, extortion, random killings and targeted assassinations”. Conditions in Iraq were “reminiscent of ‘educide’ or genocide of the educated segments of Iraqi society”.

Other serious and life-threatening dangers have confronted Iraqis in recent years:

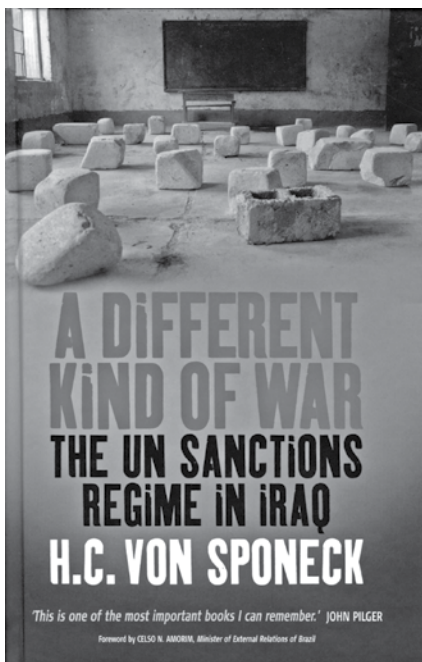
“... since the US-led invasion in 2003, Iraq has become a transit point in the flow of hashish and heroin from Iran and Afghanistan”, according to the UN. The Iraqi Ministry of Health confirms that local “addiction rates are climbing steadily” while before drug use was not an Iraqi problem.

4.5 million Iraqi children who have lost their parents – a horrific 14% of Iraq's population are orphans!

During the 13 years of sanctions and beyond, it was difficult to obtain building materials for the construction of additional housing. This resulted in a steep rise in overcrowded accommodation which in turn promoted domestic violence, often involving women as victims. A UN report estimates that “one in five women in Iraq suffer from domestic abuse”.

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* Hans-C. Graf Sponeck, former UN Assistant Secretary General and UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq



ISBN: 1845452224

"Iraq and the betrayal ..."

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Wars and violence have fundamentally changed the demographic and social profile of Iraq.

Iraq's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs indicates (2011) there are an estimated 4.5 million Iraqi children who have lost their parents – a horrific 14% of Iraq's population are orphans! 70% of these children became orphans since the 2003 invasion. Around 600,000 of these are living in the streets and a few in the 18 orphanages that exist in the country, we are told. In the Iraq tradition, it must be remembered, there was no need for orphanages. The extended family took care of those who had lost their parents.

Dictatorship, wars, sanctions and crime have changed this.

There are an estimated one million female-headed households in Iraq. Most of these women are widows, victims of armed conflict and sectarian violence (ICRC/2010).

Apart from extreme physical, mental, economic and social damages, Iraqis have also faced a grim reality of pu-

nitive financial limitations during the years of sanctions. From 1990 until 1996, the year when the *Oil-for-Food Programme* (OFFP) became operative, all of Iraq's foreign accounts were frozen and oil was not allowed to be sold internationally. The Iraqi people were almost entirely dependent on meager help from abroad – a far cry from a dignified survival.

The OFFP (1996–2003), allegedly a "humanitarian" exemption but fully financed(!) with sanctions-limited Iraqi oil money, was little more than an underfunded supply programme. Out of a total oil income of \$64 billion about \$19 billion were transferred to the *UN Compensation Commission* (UNCC) in Geneva. At that time Iraq's child mortality of 130/1000 was among the highest in the world. This transfer to the UNCC was to compensate individuals, companies and governments, especially the Government of Kuwait, for claims resulting from Iraq's invasion into Kuwait. Had there been any moral leadership in the UN Security Council, much of this compensation could have been postponed. It would have prevented many deaths among Iraqi children!

During 6½ years, only \$43 billion were available to meet the needs of 23 million Iraqis – a pittance! Out of this amount only \$28 billion² were actually utilized for this purpose. Micro-management and extreme bureaucratization of the OFFP by the UN Security Council and also the deliberate blocking by the US & UK of much needed supplies for the people of Iraq were main causes.

The UN humanitarian programme was not meant to work!

The end result: the per capita value/day of humanitarian goods actually benefiting Iraqis amounted to 51 US cents – a shameful reality for which the US & UK Governments were largely responsible.

As of October 2012 Iraq has paid \$38.7 billion in compensation to the three parties identified above. The rightful demand by Iraqis to-day that time has come to obtain their own compensation from abroad for war devastation, air, water and soil pollution, destruction of farmland, physical infrastructure, water, sanitation and electricity facilities to date has been ignored by the international community.

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Iraq conference in Geneva demands: Those responsible for conducting war must be made accountable

ef. On 19 March ten years will have gone by since the attack against Iraq, was carried out contrary to international law and by the "Coalition of the willing" which was directed by the US. This caused a series of events which took place at the UN *Palais des Nations* in Geneva on 14 and 15 March. Rather reputable NGOs participated in organising these events. On 19 March 2003, the US and Great Britain invaded Iraq together with the "coalition of the willing". The war decimated the country and its population. A culture which dates back 3,000 years was targeted to be destroyed. At the same time as the troops retreated, most media left the country too. Reports about the current situation in the country are restricted to few short messages. Obviously, Iraq is left to cope with the consequences of the war by itself.

Who is going to hold those responsible for the war accountable in front of a court of law? Who is going to put an end to impunity?

This theme was addressed by more than 100 organizations, defenders of human rights and academic institutions rooted in civil society. Nearly 200 participants have gathered here in Geneva.

Rémy Pagani, mayor of Geneva, warmly welcomed the guests. The war against Iraq, as Rémy Pagani emphasized, was conducted in contradiction

to international law, an inhuman act; moreover, justice must be restored once again. The conference is a humanitarian act. In introducing his speech, Pagani reminded the audience of the obligation of the city and town of Geneva: Geneva is a shelter for international law and for the humanitarian international law, as well as the home and cradle of the Red Cross. Geneva is the town where the four *Geneva Conventions* were born, all these institutions serve to protect humans: International law must be respected more than it is today.

Millions of people worldwide resisted the war against Iraq. Even though the war could not be stopped, it became evident that human beings, men and women all over the world backed and supported the UN Charter: At the beginning of that war a lot of countries were hesitating to criticize and denounce the role played by the US and the British Governments.

Today, ten years later, there is a change in international relations, as an Iraqi economist accentuated: The hegemony of the US and of the countries of EU is diminishing, while other countries such as China and Russia are clearly advancing.

Hans-Christof von Sponeck was welcomed by Iraqi participants with the following words: "We will hear our voices".

For him the war began in 1990 at the time the sanctions were initiated against Iraq. "What you have seen, you can not forget." Never has a country been imposed such a severe punishment as Iraq.

It took but seven or eight months, and the country that was prospering before was decimated: Using very clear words, Sponeck condemned the politics of the sanctions, the mendacity of those who are on the warpath, and the cynicism you can hardly overhear and which is so indescribable. This was evident in the commentary made by Barack Obama, US president, in Fort Bragg in 2011 when the US troops of retreated from Iraq: "We leave behind a free, stable, democratic Iraq."

Dirk Adriaensen of the Brussels Tribunal reminds us of the systematic killing of the Iraqi intellectuals, a further blemish of the annihilation of a country and its people. The People were robbed and the Country was delivered into the hands of the neoliberal agenda.

In the discussion at the conference many participants demanded the nomination of a Special Rapporteur for Iraq from the Human Rights Council in Geneva, in order to demand. This would be an important step towards accountability and to restore justice in and for Iraq, thus it means an important step for the future of this country.

"Iraq and the betrayal ..."

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This constitutes an intolerable and unacceptable double standard.

In March 2003, at the end of the Government of *Saddam Hussein*, Iraq's total debt burden was identified as between \$50 to \$80 billion. The 19 *Paris Club* members, mostly European, identify an Iraq debt to them of \$38.9 billion. Iraq's other creditors are primarily Arab (GCC) countries.

Detractors of the evidence of willful destruction of Iraq's heritage, its culture, the artifact pilferage; the gross violation of national and international law; planted dis- and misinformation; crime; brutality; disregard for fundamental human concerns and ethical standards, will either reject these accusations as preposterous, ideological and stupid or remain mute.

Pitiful as this is they have no more to offer! In the name of democracy they insist that the infamous "bigger picture", their bigger picture, justified the means.

It is not about potato chips and coke but about human security

They do not understand what democracy and humanness really entails. It is not about potato chips and coke but about human security and the opportunity to shape one's life in freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Iraq, a major owner of global oil and gas, should have no problem in giving its people such a life. Instead Iraq has become a "failing state" vying with other disadvantaged countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia and, of course, the State of Palestine, for the crown of misery.

The overall impact of these elements on life in Iraq constitutes an indescribable human drama. Perpetrators, however, will not be allowed to lean back for ever and assume that their crimes will simply disappear into the far horizon of nowhere. Accountability will prevail.

Governments in the US and in the UK: culpability for war crimes and crimes of torture

The *Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission* (KLWCC) founded in 2005 by *Tun*

Dr Mahathir, Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981–2003 worked for many years to produce an impressive body of evidence from legal documents and victims testimonies. This material, carefully reviewed by the *Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal*, allowed the Court to pronounce in November 2011 and in May 2012 that culpability exists at the highest levels of government in the United States and in the United Kingdom for war crimes and the crimes of torture. This can not possibly come as a surprise for *George W. Bush* and *Anthony Blair*!

The Tribunal's verdict: the two leaders and their senior advisors had committed serious crimes against peace "in that they planned, prepared and invaded the sovereign state of Iraq in violation of international law and committed crimes of torture and war crimes, ignoring the *Geneva Conventions* and the UN torture law."³

What one has seen can not be unseen! How much can a people take?

2013 must become the year during which these perpetrators will see an end to their impunity, especially those who were instrumental in creating decades of Iraqi suffering. Due process must be for everyone, Iraqi and non-Iraqi; facing justice, however, is not just for those who lost!

The international public, as the "power from below", will intensify its efforts during this tenth year after an illegal invasion into Iraq, to reassure the Iraqi people that they are not alone in their search for redress. •

Russia's Communist Party leader questions natural death of Hugo Chávez

After the decease of *Hugo Chavez* the Russian Communists doubt, that the Venezuelan President has died a natural death and call for an international investigation.

"How is it possible that the six Latin American leaders who defied US policy and who wanted to form a united and powerful block in order to become more independent, come down with the same disease as Chavez?" asked *Gennadi Zyuganov*, chairman of the Communist party of Russia, on Russian television. "I think this cannot be coincidence. We must investigate under international control. "

Venezuelan President *Hugo Chavez*, who had been fighting cancer for nearly two years died on March 5 2013, 16.25 local time clock (9.55 clock CET), at the age of 58. Interim President *Nicolas Maduro* of Venezuela held enemies of Venezuela responsible for the death of their head of state. There are corresponding "traces", which will be followed up, he promised. *Maduro* accused U.S. Air Force Attaché *David Del Monaco* of destabilizing the situation in Venezuela and expelled him from the country.

Source: *RIA Novosti* on 03/06/2013 (Translation *Current Concerns*)

¹ *Production Sharing Agreement* (PSA) is a form of contract with oil and gas concessions at which one or more oil companies and the host country share the oil and natural gas production for a specified key.

² During the years of US occupation of Iraq, the monthly cost of maintaining troops in Iraq amounted to an est. US \$ 12 billion. In other words, what Iraqis had from the OFFP for survival during the entire 6 14 years corresponded to less than 3 months of the cost of maintaining US troops in Iraq!

³ see: *Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal – Case 1 and Case 2: Judgements of 22 November 2011 and 11 May 2012* (ISBN 978-937-10817 1-6 and ISBN 978-967-10817-2-3)

Ridiculous answers in view of the crisis

by Alain Bournazel,

President of the "Rassemblement pour l'indépendance de la France" (RIF)

Everyone knows that the economic situation of France is not good. The year 2012 can be described as a black year. The employment situation remains the central problem.

Last year, our industry has lost 1% of its jobs: 0.7% in construction, 0.2% in the tertiary sector. Within the last ten years 750,000 jobs in the industry have been cut. But throughout the last year, the number of unemployed has increased by 258,000.

Since it is much easier to talk about the future than to deal with the present, the government announced an increase of 0.8% for the gross national income (GNI) for 2013. The French *National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies* (INSEE, Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques) estimates that the increase will not exceed 0.2%. We trust the INSEE more

than the government. It has to be clearly seen that the growth rate of Switzerland is three times higher than that of France.

No matter from which angle you look at the situation, France is on the slippery slope. The aim to bring down the state budget deficit below 3% appears unattainable. In view of the real existing and increasing crisis our government representatives have only ridiculous or undignified answers.

The Head of State is entangled in bad jokes, the Finance Minister said that one must "draw the tax revenue from the pockets of the one and the other", while the Minister of Education is quibbling on "inappropriate announcements" about the duration of the school holidays. The economic recovery of France is still a long way ahead. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Government in Berne wants to prohibit mercenary firms in Switzerland

The Government in Bern wants to place a ban on mercenary companies in Switzerland, and to introduce a compulsory registration for security services abroad. With the law the Federal Council notably wants to contribute to maintaining Swiss neutrality and guaranteeing compliance with international law.

Subject to the law are Swiss based companies, providing security services abroad or performing related activities inside Switzerland. It also covers companies based in Switzerland, which control companies operating abroad (holdings companies).

Source: *Vertraulicher Schweizer Brief*
Nr. 1348 from, 2.2.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Surveillance of public opinion"

The European Parliament intends to establish "patrols" which are to monitor all discussions about the EU on the internet, according to a confidential document that was published by the British "Daily Telegraph". The 2 million project employs EU-officials who follow a strategy of "surveillance of pub-

lic opinion". They are to intervene immediately if in blogs and forums the impression is raised that the "EU was a problem" and they should express that "considering the current challenges the solution wouldn't be 'less Europe' but rather 'more Europe'." With regard to the European votes in 2014 the doc-

ument suggests that „one should work especially on countries, in which EU-critical tones could spread." Take courage, gentlemen, there are 27 of them.

Source: *Bastille-République-Nation (BRN)*
of 27.2.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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