

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

With the power of the two currencies out of the crisis Economist Wilhelm Hankel explains why the return to the Deutsch-Mark alone is not sufficient

Interview with Professor Dr Wilhelm Hankel by Manfred Schermer, "Fuldaer Zeitung"



Professor Dr W. Hankel
(picture ef)

He is known as one of the most prominent German economist and euro-critic from the very start. Professor Dr Wilhelm Hankel recently lectured in Fulda. At the side of the event he presented a proposal for the

solution of the euro-crisis: returning to the traditional national currencies, while retaining the euro at the same time.

Fuldaer Zeitung: As early as 1997 you filed a suit at the Federal Constitutional Court against the euro. That was at a time when everything seemed fine due to the Treaty of Maastrich. What made you doubt at such an early point of time?

Prof Dr Hankel: It was obvious as early as then that the basic concern of Maastricht – to continue the policy of the Federal Bank of Germany – was going to fail. However, the Court said at the time that it was unable to adjudicate on the basis of my prognosis.

Why then were you convinced that it was not possible to continue the policy of the Federal in all of Europe?

The answer is quite simple: Each and every currency policy is a kind of tailor-made suit for the respective national economy. And one tailor-made suit for eleven national economies – simply doesn't work. That is what we set forth to the Court, we also published it in our complaint. But the Court said: Wait and see!

That means that you are taken aback by the euro-crisis, aren't you?

In the meantime the "wait and see" has shown that we were right then; it became obvious primarily when Greece applied for support. The request alone had been a gross offense against Maastrich, since any support of foreign states by euro-partners was and still is excluded by the Treaty, by the so-called bail-out clause. In the Spring of 2008 we brought an action. And we were very surprised when the then Federal President Horst Köhler – who had negotiated the treaties for the most part [in 1991 when he was state secretary in the Federal Ministry of Finance] – signed, although he must have realized that he was approving a breach of contract.

Was that the actual reason for his demission?

I suppose so; although I would have liked it better if he had resigned before and not after his signing.

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Professor Dr *Wilhelm Hankel* was born on 10 January 1929 in Gdansk. He studied economics in Mainz and Amsterdam and obtained his doctorate at the University of Mainz in 1953.

His professional path began in 1952 at the "Bank Deutscher Länder", the predecessor of the German Central Bank, and led him to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (until 1956), the *Federal Foreign Office* (until 1957) and the *Loan Cooperation* (Chief Economist, 1959). As the Head of the *Department of Money and Credit* in the *Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs* (1967) he had a determining influence on the evolution of the *Federal Treasury Notes* and the *Special drawing rights (SDRs)* of the *IMF*. From 1972 to 1974 Hankel was chairman of the "Hessische Landesbank".

Since 1970 he is Honorary Professor of Monetary and Development Policy at the University of Frankfurt. Various guest professorships also led him to Harvard (1974/75) and to the Konrad-Adenauer-professorship at the Georgetown University in Washington D.C. (1975/76).

Furthermore, he received numerous consulting engagements of the "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit" (German Agency for Technical Cooperation), among others in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia as well as in many countries of the Third World.

As early as 1997 Hankel together with other professors filed a suit against the Treaty of Amsterdam on the introduction of the euro, which however was not successful.

A constitutional challenge against the Euro Rescue packages EFSM, EFSF and ESM, the durable *European Stability Mechanism*, followed. The case of the Federal Constitutional Court is still pending.

Source: *Fuldaer Zeitung* of 23.3.2013
(Translation Current Concerns)

Addendum to the report on the "Compact" conference in Leipzig Marriott Hotel with Prof Dr Wilhelm Hankel on 15 March 2013

The editors of *Zeit-Fragen* kindly request the following addendum to the report (blog <http://juergenelsaesser.wordpress.com/2013/03/16/100-besucher-bei-compact-veranstaltung-im-leipzig-marriott/>): It has been discussed for some time to tackle the current problems of the euro countries with the euro as parallel currency modelled on the former ECU. The euro is to continue and with their national parallel currencies the individual countries would be able to appreciate or to depreciate their currency.

With this position Professor *Hankel* contributes to the efforts to find a solution with the lowest possible social and political turmoil and with a non-violent approach. *Zeit-Fragen* editors and cooperative support this effort wholeheartedly. Democracy must emerge stronger from this currency crisis.

Editors and cooperative *Zeit-Fragen/Horizons et débats/Current Concerns*

"With the power of the two currencies ..."
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During the past months the former British Prime Minister Margret Thatcher has often been quoted with her famous phrase: "I want my money back." Will we ever hear something like that from our Chancellor?

I hope so! And I will present a proposal which will be very close to what was once submitted by the British side, both for Europe: the euro and national currencies. I am explaining this concept in my new book "The Euro-Bomb". John Major who was then Margret Thatcher's treasurer, proposed to the Europeans: Keep your Pound Sterling and introduce the euro – called ecu at the time – nonetheless! That proposal needs to be reactivated, with appropriate alterations.

What advantages would result?

Huge advantages. On the one hand every one of the euro-countries – by now there are 17, and soon there will be 18 – would be able to pursue their own currency policies, that is necessary to fight the crisis. Above all, however, the deep ditch that we

"Falling revenues, profits and employment will reduce taxes and social-security payments so that also states can run into financial troubles and social insurance systems are threatened in their existence because they have to pay more and get less.

This is why the US Secretary of the Treasury Paulson – previously head of the largest US gambler bank Goldman Sachs und hence most notably responsible for the production of the financial toxic waste – has tried to stop the deflationary reduction of money supply by a flood of state money in order to shift the losses of his fellow banksters towards the state, that is, to all tax-paying citizens. Subsequently, in response to US pressure, all satellite governments had to repeat the same mistakes, also vouching to the limit. Thus the bank crisis became a crisis of state finances not only in the US but also in other states."

Source: *From the financial crisis via a real-economy crisis and society crisis to a crisis of meaning,*
by Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer, see p. 5 of this edition.

have between euro-countries and non-euro-countries in the EU since the introduction of the euro could be filled up again. Euro-zone and EU would be the same and would be able to speak with one voice to the outside world. And the EU would become attractive for today's non-EU-countries and they might want to join, e.g. Switzerland or Russia or Norway. For, if everyone has the euro as well as his national money, there would be no differences in Europe.

But why keep the euro then?

For a very important reason: We have a huge amount of old debts in Europe. 12 to 13 trillion euro in the Mediterranean countries alone. An unconceivable sum. If you cancelled that overnight by abolishing the euro, we would have the biggest financial crisis in Europe from time immemorial. Worse than the Black Friday in 1929. One has to install a transition period, or even better: a co-existence between euro and the national currencies.

But what do you gain by this?

Time, first of all, to reduce the debt. Secondly – and this is even more important: today's crisis- and inflation-countries would finally be able to do what they should have done since the past five or six years. They could finally devalue their currencies against the euro. Greece, Spain and Italy would become competitive again.

Why should they do that?

They would be able – although it would take some time – to reduce the biggest parts of their debts from their own potential. They would pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. The crucial mistake within the whole euro-construct was abolishing the exchange rates of the currencies. I call to mind a crucial phrase of a great economist, Milton Friedman: It is always easier to change the price of a national economy, namely the exchange rate, than changing those millions of singular prices, incomes and costs, which would have to be changed instead.

And if this does not happen?

In that case Europe will be ruined by capital flight. We will simply run out of money. And what is to follow then? It is the way the former GDR went: prohibition of payments to abroad, caging up in the currency jail. In that case the euro would no longer be a world currency.

How likely is it that your proposal will be accepted, in view of this prospect?

I hope that our governments realize that this is the only chance to save the euro and nevertheless cope with the crisis. The euro

"A part of the middle class will impoverish in a real crisis, because its members have invested in evaporating investments instead of material assets, because they are too much indebted, or because as an entrepreneur he does not know the defensive strategies in a declining market. A dual society of upper class and lower class is again created by the shrinking of the middle class. And if the middle class is no longer strong enough to carry the freedom systems of democracy and market economy, these systems will also get into a crisis, because the upper class wants power business with central power and the underclass does not want freedom and personal responsibility, but security and leadership. It will be exciting to see whether and to what extent we save our democracy through the crisis."

Source: *From the financial crisis via a real-economy crisis and society crisis to a crisis of meaning,*
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would continue to exist as an accounting unit, as another ecu.

What would happen to the new rescue package ESM? It does not include an opting-out clause?

Right! But in case my proposal is accepted the ESM is dispensable. It will be no longer used, since the remaining euro-debts could be liquidated via the existing debt-consolidation clubs – the Paris Club or the London Club, as was the case in Argentina or the Ukraine. It is not for the first time that states face national bankruptcy. Furthermore I call to mind that the suit of Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider, myself and our fellow campaigners is still under way. The German Constitutional Court merely rejected the emergency appeal – arguing quite reasonably that the judges would need some time to examine the whole case. Therefore I reckon that we will have a trial in the main cause. And in this case we will see whether the Constitutional Court will rule that the ESM is unconstitutional. This outcome is still possible.

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What are you going to do in case you fail again?

In that case we will again reproach the Court, together with Professor Schachtschneider, of denying right, for the Constitutional Court must check the lawfulness of politics. That is what it neither did in case of the euro, nor in case of the ESM up to now, arguing that such things had to be decided in the "Bundestag" (Chamber of the German Parliament). But such proceedings are not covered by the law about the Constitutional Court. Its president *Andreas Vosskuhle* told me he was not willing to check the substantial content of laws. When I – a bit bewildered – asked him, what he actually checked then, he answered the lawfulness of the proceedings. The Constitutional Court obviously considers itself a kind of notary. The question is whether this is compatible with the Constitution. Professor Schachtschneider and I agree that, if need be, we will appeal to the European Judicial Court to have this checked.

What do you answer politicians if they utter the frequently told phrase: Germany had the greatest profit from the euro?

"This is because we are part of the generation that was left behind and experienced that baffled and helpless searching for new objectives after all ideals had been destroyed by the War. At that time we had an immense sense of a new area of piety, a search for a Christian life.

The Americans, however, conveyed the view to us – by the media that they controlled – that idealistic objectives were no longer fashionable but that our lives had to serve the pursuit of prosperity and accumulation of material goods. Our parents then changed from idealistic humanistic liberal arts over to economic and technical disciplines and built up the economic miracle."

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"A presupposition for that to happen, however, would be that our cultural middle class in Europe would break loose from the direction and manipulation of the materialistically oriented global media rule, if they would spiritually dig a little more profoundly for the roots of our national education and ideas. It is here that the best ones of our people perceive their task, to search for the spiritual ascension and new ideal meaningful objectives out of the economic crisis and its materialism.

All great ideas have been developed in small circles. Non-materialistic idealistic circles have mostly contributed the greatest achievements for the concepts of freedom, people and democracy in order to overcome feudalism, 150 years ago. Why should such idealistic groups not become the germ-cell of an idealistic renewal, today?"

Source: *From the financial crisis via a real-economy crisis and society crisis to a crisis of meaning*, by Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer, see p. 5 of this edition.

That is a grotesque misapprehension of economic relations, or may be even an intentional deception. With the help of the euro the long overdue revaluation of the D-Mark was avoided. This brought some advantages to the German export, but serious disadvantages to the German national economy – which is more than just the export.

Disadvantages? Isn't Germany the European boom locomotive?

What the euro's disadvantages for Germany are, can be assessed at a glance: Look at Switzerland that vigorously revaluated its franc. This has been stopped now. But she is the country that is best positioned in Europe with respect to money stability, growth and unemployment. We would have the same situation, for, as long as we had the D-Mark, there was no significant difference between the success of the German and the Swiss national economy. It is a consequence of our being disadvantaged by the euro that we couldn't keep pace with Switzerland – not to speak of the payments that Germany has to render because of the crisis.

Now Angela Merkel is proclaiming like a mantra: If the euro fails, Europe will fail. Is this really so?

He who sees no alternatives is no politician. Politics is always the recognizing of alternatives. Always. There is nothing more to say!

You invented the Federal Treasury Note in 1969. Do you regret that it ended?

Regret? I do curse the people who did that, because the *Federal Treasury Note* was citizen-oriented and had all the advantages of a savings book. Crucial for the national economy however was the fact that the German national debt stayed inside the country. The "Bundesschätzchen" (little treasure) never had a foreign market. There were years when 40 to 45 per cent of the national debt were held in treasury notes. This is what made Germany independent of the fluctuations at the international capital markets.

This is an advantage that the Japanese use for themselves until today, isn't it?

Correct. Japan's huge debt can only be explained by the fact that the Japanese themselves buy their securities and only very small sums arrive abroad. The Federal Treasury Note made the funding in the interior possible. Only a fool like *Wolfgang Schäuble* could abolish it. •

Source: *Fuldaer Zeitung* of 23.3.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"It would be worth the sweat of all noble ones to tackle such a task, to gather under such a mission, to make use of the network of idealists to work on that task and to have their own part in the search for a new guiding principle and objective of happiness for today's humans.

Let us regard the crisis as a chance in this sense. Much is succumbing, but something new is going to emerge from it. And we must contribute to this new thing, we may even be able to give new and decisive impulses."

Source: *From the financial crisis via a real-economy crisis and society crisis to a crisis of meaning*, by Prof Dr Eberhard Hamer, see p. 5 of this edition.

From the Arab Spring to the Arab Winter

by Professor Dr Albert Stahel, Institute for Strategic Studies, Wädenswil, Switzerland

Two years ago the Arab Spring began with the downfall of the Tunisian president. The western world – partly influenced by the media – had hoped that this downfall and the subsequent unrest in other Arab states would lead to democratization. They ignored that not all riots are revolutions and that democratic governments have rarely been established by revolutions. While there is chaos in Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood have seized power in Egypt by way of an election, and in Syria, there is a bloody war between *Assad's* Alawite dictatorship and the Sunni Islamists. The Arab Spring has turned into an Arab winter.

At the same time, the EU faces the possible bankruptcy of the Southern European countries. Should their economies and societies collapse, the European Limes might dissolve into nothing, as well. Central Europe would be particular-

ly confronted by a mass of asylum-seeking young people.

In two other regions confrontations are looming in the Persian Gulf and the Western Pacific. As before, the regime in Tehran promotes the unhindered development of nuclear weapons. Still Washington DC hopes for the regime of the ayatollahs to be forced onto its knees through economic sanctions. In case this strategy is not successful, we might expect an air strike by the US against Iran's nuclear facilities later this year.

In the Western Pacific, the highly indebted United States is challenged to an increasing extent as a seapower by the leadership in Beijing. The Chinese government claims the unrestricted sovereignty over the entire South China Sea. The realization of these rights would constitute a violation of international law on the freedom of navigation in international waters; it would also endanger and even

prevent the trade of American allies, of Japan, South Korea and the Philippines by sea. Whether the United States, given their long-term debt and the stagnation of their economy, can assert their hegemony in the western Pacific towards China is doubtful.

In addition to the implications of the situation described in terms of security policy, the industrialized countries are facing further threats. These include terrorism and cyber warfare. While the US has been successful in their fight against international terrorism in recent years, cyber war activities have increased worldwide. In addition to the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, the gangs of organized crime use the cyber war as a means to achieve their criminal aims and objectives. •

Source: www.strategische-studien.com
on 25.03.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“What the Reichstag Fire of 1933 meant for the subsequent development of Germany and world history until 1945, does 24 March 1999 mean for the deprivation of rights in international relations.”

For the deserving issue No. 13 on the anniversary of the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, I want to express my sincere thanks to *Current Concerns*. For me, who grew up as an officer in the old German army, the ethical maxim of peace researcher General *Wolf Graf Baudissin*, founding director of the *Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg* and the intellectual father of the “Internal Leadership” (citizen in uniform) is still true: the mission of the soldier is to prevent war, he is a soldier for peace.

In this respect I am personally affected by the breach of constitutional and international law by the red-green Federal Government, which materialized on 24 March 1999 with the participation of German ECR tornados in the elimination of the Serbian air defence. I had to experience this day a year before my retirement in the *Federal Ministry of Defense (BMVg)*. Until the presence this

day has meant a day of shame and disgrace for me. Beyond personal assessment, I would like to direct your attention towards something fundamental. The former Parliamentary State Secretary in the Ministry of Defense (1987–1992) and longtime foreign policy expert *Willy Wimmer*, CDU (Christian Democrats), who is well known to you and to your readers has expressed this with the following comparison: What the Reichstag Fire in 1933 meant for the subsequent development of Germany and the world history until 1945, does 24 March 1999 mean for the deprivation of rights in international relations.

By the fact that not a single German general publicly refused this crime under international law, the annual ritual at the Bendlerblock Berlin to commemorate the 20 July 1944 is exposed as a hypocrisy. (The officers of the 20 July 1944 paid with their lives. Today's generals would be dismissed with 75 percent of their salaries into early

retirement at worst.) The military leadership was at least as well informed as myself of the actual situation in Kosovo, due to the access to the Ministry's objective situation analysis. The operating politicians turned these findings into the exact opposite in order to manipulate the parliament and the public with the help of the compliant media, including the public broadcasters. I want to explain my above view by quoting the management report of the “Office of communications of the Bundeswehr” (does not exist in this form any longer) from 23 March 1999, one day before the war started: “Tendencies towards ethnic cleansing are still not noticeable.” Sometimes the anger outweighs, sometimes nausea, often both comes together, when I think of Germany at night.

Jochen Scholz, Berlin

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

From the financial crisis via a real-economy crisis and crisis of society to a crisis of meaning

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer

The outbreak of the Financial Crisis in 2008 has surprised most people. And even today the significance of this crisis has not yet been realized by all.

And yet, back in 2002, some 50 experts have compiled the study "What will happen when the crash comes?", a study that drew laughs from the ruling circles of bankers, politicians, journalists and unfortunately also from my colleagues in science who shrugged it off as an absurdity. Meanwhile, however, our analysis is increasingly becoming reality:

1. The current financial crisis was not only predictable but downright inevitable since in the last 30 years – based on an increase of the real economy by only a factor of four, while the amount of dollars increased by a factor of 40. This means that a huge unsecured financial bubble of excessively printed money, overpriced investments, careless credits and even wanton gamblers' financial products has built up. The reason that this was possible is that the *Federal Reserve Bank* is a private bank endowed with the privilege of printing money which means that, like the Gold-Ass in the fairy tale, its owners could abuse it for an uninhibited multiplication of money. This money has been pumped into the world under the headline of globalization, allowing the owners of the *FED* to buy the world's assets, to support states, wage wars, buy whole market segments, especially in raw materials and industry sectors, and to force foreign central banks to invest their currency reserves in foul dollars. Thus for two decades, the dollar glut has granted the world a false boom. It was easier to become rich by speculation than by work. Larger and larger parts of the pop-

"The breakdown of this financial orgy was but a question of time."

ulation took part in ever dodgier financial products, allowing stock prices to rise and rise. Thousands of foul bonds and certificates were sold like hot cakes and banks did business in a more and more daring style, up to 800 times their equity capital.

The breakdown of this financial orgy was but a question of time. But whoever expressed this insight was ridiculed, defamed and discriminated. Now, however, our crash book, before only good for some laughs, became a bestseller. The financial orgy has started in the US and so did the crash. When the real es-

tate objects, financed to up to 120% of the price, could no longer be sold and their prices and loan values fell, the first mortgage crisis broke out, followed by a credit card crisis in the US. Consumers were able to overdraw up to 20 credit cards with up to \$2000. Such credits of nearly \$90 billion have also been sold worldwide, tagged with maximum ratings of the in-house rating agencies. And we are still waiting for a crisis which will have ten times its volume: the crisis of the derivatives, the breakdown of credit-financed bets and locust deals which unscrupulous gambler banks have infested the world with. This way the credit crisis has been systematically globalized and turned into a world financial crisis.

2. The shrinking of an uncovered cred-

"The financial orgy has started in the US and so did the crash."

it bubble would mean a deflation. The amount of money excessively extended by unsecured financial products and financial speculations needs to be reduced to bring the streams of money and goods back into equilibrium.

Just like the expansion of the amount of money created a sham heyday, a reduction (deflation) would have the effect of a crisis of the real-economy:

- A breakdown of banks, credits and bank investments would also cause a credit crisis for enterprises.
- When enterprises are no longer able to obtain credits or even find their credits dismissed, they will run into liquidity

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problems; they will stop investing and even divest.

- Factory capacities will be reduced; not only in material but also in employees. This will lead to the breakdown of enterprises and layoffs, loss of orders and falling prices. The most indebted companies will be the first to yield. Wages will be falling; unemployment will be rising.

During the Depression of 1929, almost one third of all enterprises had to give up; the wages fell by about one third and there was mass unemployment in all developed countries. This is what we have to envisage now, as well.

3. Deflation and the crisis of the real economy are seen as a catastrophe by surprised politicians, by the economy and by the unions. In fact, a financial crisis does not only affect the real economy but also has effects on state finances:

Falling revenues, profits and employment will reduce taxes and social-security payments so that also states can run into financial troubles and social insurance systems are threatened in their existence because they have to pay more and get less.

This is why the US Secretary of the Treasury *Paulson* – previously head of the largest US gambler bank *Goldman Sachs* and hence most notably responsible for the production of the financial toxic waste – has tried to stop the deflationary reduction of money supply by a flood of state money in order to shift the losses of his fellow bankers towards the state, that is, to all tax-paying citizens. Subsequently, in response to US pressure, all satellite governments had to repeat the same mistakes, also vouching to the limit. Thus the bank crisis became a crisis of state finances not only in the US but also in other states. Even now we see that the financial industry does not trust the currencies any longer. It is trying to escape from liquidity, expecting inflation and a subsequent currency reform. Hence the financial crisis was bound to extend into crises of states which we have described in our book.

4. A real-economy crisis and a crisis of the state always cause a social crisis, a crisis in our society.

On one hand this applies to the social existence of many people:

- A part of the middle class will impoverish in a real crisis, because its members have invested in evaporating in-

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vestments instead of material assets, because they are too much indebted, or because as an entrepreneur he does not know the defensive strategies in a declining market. A dual society of upper class and lower class is again created by the shrinking of the middle class. And if the middle class is no longer strong enough to carry the freedom systems of democracy and market economy, these systems will also get into a crisis, because the upper class wants power business with central power and the underclass does not

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- A breakdown of banks, credits and bank investments would also cause a credit crisis for enterprises.
 - When enterprises are no longer able to obtain credits or even find their credits dismissed, they will run into liquidity problems; they will stop investing and even divest.
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want freedom and personal responsibility, but security and leadership. It will be exciting to see whether and to what extent we save our democracy through the crisis. At least it is expected that the currently ruling politicians and parties are blamed for the crisis and they will not survive.

- For the lower classes especially the real-economy crises and the state crises are a disaster. Mass unemployment and insolvency of the social security systems will bring along a proletarianization of the lower classes of the population. And you can easily imagine what the 11 million (of 16 million) immigrants living on our social system will do if the social benefits (to which they

believe to be eventually entitled) can no longer be paid. And how will pensioners react when their pensions either are reduced in reality or devalued by inflation, so they get poorer? Too long politicians and media have promised the

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people in our country general opulence and wealth without work, they did not inform them about necessary corrections and they even lied to them about the security of pensions and social security; – people will be surprised by the consequences that they will face and might react differently than the seducers expected.

In any case, not only the specious prosperity but also the false security collapses in this crisis, a security by which the people so far believed their meaning of life and their existence to be secured:

- Savings deposits and the accumulated capital will evaporate,
- the real income will decline nationwide,
- the statutory pensions will be reduced or have to be reduced by inflation to a minimum supply,
- and social benefits will be corrected dramatically. There will probably no longer be social benefits without working and lifelong social reference.

The majority of our population will have to say good-bye to prosperity in the course of the crisis levels and will have to realize bitterly that their previous goal of material prosperity has broken down, so they have used their previous life for an evanescent phantom.

5. We as the seniors are the ones that have to accept this economic crisis as a challenge that reaches beyond our own interests. The challenge has to do with our personal meaning in life as well as with the objectives of our society. This is because we are part of the generation that was left behind and experienced that baffled and helpless searching for new objectives after all ideals had been destroyed by the War. At that time we had we had an immense sense of a new area of piety, a search for a Christian life.

The Americans, however, conveyed the view to us – by the media that they controlled – that idealistic objectives were no longer fashionable but that our lives had to serve the pursuit of prosperity and accumulation of material goods. Our parents then changed from idealistic humanistic liberal arts over to economic and technical disciplines and built up the economic miracle.

For too long a time did we believe in prosperity as an objective in life, even when we proceeded to attain a kind of pseudo-prosperity beyond our genuine prosperity. This life objective of attaining material goods is now collapsing for many. People are going to realize ever more that they are left behind with empty hands, that obviously they had been chasing after a false god. Just as after 1945 they will begin to search for a new mean-

"So we are facing two crucial questions:

- In what direction do we have to search for new life objectives for ourselves and our society?
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ing and objective that will lay the foundation for another life. There is no society in the world that can preserve its cohesion without shared objectives. When the old visions prove to be a fallacy, new ones are needed, not only to find a sense in one's own life but also in order to keep together and develop the society by means of new shared objectives in life.

Where – after the collapse – is the new meaning of life to be found for ourselves and our society?

We do not know yet. 98 per cent of our contemporaries do not yet perceive the necessity of a new objective in life, because the crisis accompanied by the collapse of the old material worths has not reached their minds. New ideas always come from small elites. So we are facing two crucial questions:

- In what direction do we have to search for new life objectives for ourselves and our society?
- What are the elite groups from which we might expect the development of such new guiding principles?

When we examine the various epochs of our history for their inherent main ideas, we will realize that there has always been an alteration between material and immaterial (idealistic or religious) dominant ideas. It is even more often that human happiness was sought in an immaterial than a material realm. Just think of the Gothic period, Reformation, Classicism, the Romantic period, as well as the various socialist ideologies. They all believed that the happiness of man lay in the realization of religious or ideal rather than material objectives. It is beyond dispute that people can be happy by their faith, their

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concepts like family or other non-material objectives. When now it shows how deceitful and transitory material life objectives have become, the coming guiding principle is most likely to be sought in religious or humanitarian life objectives. Whoever is now capable of putting these new visions into words, is going to be able to show our society a new meaning in life after the breakdown of materialism and to inspire people to a new beginning. Thus our task of today is to recognize new, non-materialistic guiding principles, which are apt to bring happiness to man, even without prosperity.

When wondering who could develop such new guiding principles, we will have to do without the biggest world powers; the USA as an exporting country are going to implode in the crisis, lose their world empire and will be hit harder than most other countries. And China is at the very beginning of materialism and there is no ideal transition to be detected. I assume therefore that now as before new guiding principles will arise from the classic cultural regions of Europe and India. From Europe because it – in spite of all globalization and centralization tendencies it has

still preserved a unique cultural richness and tradition.

In former times sustainable central concepts themes for our Christian Occident came from the Christian Churches. However, I have my doubts whether the churches will have the power for a new Reformation.

During Feudalism new ideas and new values arose mainly from the upper class, the nobility. However, this class as well has not only lost its function but also its strength and significance.

What remains are the middle classes, in particular the cultural middle class. It is to this class that we owe the greatest ideas of the last 200 years. Just remember what the parsonages meant for our cultural history, for literature, philosophy and science. After the great achievements of the economic middle classes, I now perceive the times of the cultural middle classes return – of the scientists, the educationalists, the artists and writers. A presupposition for that to happen, however, would be that our cultural middle class in Europe would break loose from the direction and manipulation of the materialistically oriented global media rule, if they would spiritually dig a little more profoundly for the roots of our national education and ideas.

It is here that the best ones of our people perceive their task, to search for the spiritual ascension and new ideal meaningful objectives out of the economic crisis and its materialism.

All great ideas have been developed in small circles. Non-materialistic idealistic circles have mostly contributed the greatest achievements for the concepts of freedom, people and democracy in order to overcome feudalism, 150 years ago. Why should such idealistic groups not become the germ-cell of an idealistic renewal, today? It would be worth the sweat of all noble ones to tackle such a task, to gather under such a mission, to make use of the network of idealists to work on that task and to have their own part in the search for a new guiding principle and objective of happiness for today's humans.

Let us regard the crisis as a chance in this sense. Much is succumbing, but something new is going to emerge from it. And we must contribute to this new thing, we may even be able to give new and decisive impulses.

It would be a good thing if we could help develop a new spiritual and cultural fresh impetus and if we could contribute to new happiness with new and sustainable guiding principles. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Re-start of EU exit referendum

Direct democracy is possible only outside the EU

With immediate effect a petition for a referendum about the EU exit can be signed at every Austrian district or municipal office. The new text will not be refuted any longer as was assured and confirmed in writing by the head of the department for elections and referendums, Ministerialrat *Robert Stein*.

The new text of the petition now reads: "The Republic's National Council may enact Austria's exit of the European Union by federal constitutional law, which is to be subjected to a referendum." This was announced by the representative of the referendum, *Inge Rauscher*, chairwoman of the "Initiative Heimat & Umwelt".

How important this unambiguous objective is for obtaining a genuine direct democracy in Austria, becomes clear by looking at the (former) politicians' initiative "My OE" with their "Demokratie Jetzt" (democracy now) referendum that is going to take place next week. "This is a fraud of first rank," Inge Rauscher states and quotes the following passage from the official referendum statement under the heading "More direct democracy" (!): "On petitions for referendums supported by more than 300 000 registered voters, there will be a referendum. This does not apply to petitions by which fundamental rights or freedoms or European law would be limited." Mrs Rauscher adds, "The proponents of that EU-submission petition are of course aware of the fact that in the EU member states, according to official studies, well over 80% (!) of all laws – especially the important ones – are de-

termined by EU legislation and that, taking into account that complete lack of national sovereignty, it must be qualified as nothing but sham."

Implementation of animal welfare referendum 17 years overdue

This wording makes clear that genuine direct democracy like in Switzerland is only possible outside the EU, one of the reasons for the badly needed withdrawal from the EU. This was also confirmed by Dr *Franz-Josef Plank*, president of the animal rights group *Animal Spirit* and member of the non-party "committee for the EU exit petition": "Since 1996 460 000 Austrians have been waiting for the implementation of the conducted animal welfare referendum that was very successful at the time and which among other things stipulated that animal welfare should be taken into the constitution as a national objective. However, to date this has been blocked, and especially consistently by the ÖVP. Even the once very advanced Austrian animal transport law was overruled by EU bureaucracy, which has led to the present situation that day-long horror animal transports to Italian slaughterhouses or harbours are rolling through Austria without hindrance. The same applies to the emergence of ever larger monster factory farms modelled on North Germany, Holland and Belgium."

Mrs Rauscher added: "Other reasons for the renewed conducting of the EU exit referendum are the more or less blatant abandonment of Austrian neutrality,

the increasing sellout of Austria due to the ratification of the ESM ('European Debt-Moloch') by red-black-green, the inflation policy of the ECB at the expense of future generations, the impending expropriation even of the citizens' savings for the sake of "rescuing the banks" – as the current example of Cyprus shows dramatically" – the gradual participation in the EU military pact, etc.

Among the independent committee persons supporting the EU exit referendum is also the former Minister of Justice party free Univ. Prof Emeritus Dr *Hans R. Klecatsky* as well as the Vienna lawyer *Eva Maria Barki*, an expert on human rights, ethnic and minority rights.

Why starting anew?

Back in December 2011 almost ten thousand support declarations for an EU-exit referendum, approved by the local authorities from all over Austria, were handed in at the Interior Ministry by the proponents of the referendum (see also www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20111219_OTS0019), the public registration week (the actual referendum petition) would therefore have had to take place in May/June of last year. Because of bloodcurdling formal objections that cannot be deduced from the Referendum Act, the support declarations were rejected. The appeal against that decision was dismissed by the Constitutional Court, but something was requested that never before this referendum petition had ever been interpreted as being part of the law

nor of the corresponding legal decisions by the Constitutional Court, namely that the text on the support declaration must be exactly identical to the (full) text of the official application for the referendum petition. The new support declaration has now provided for that – all people willing to support the petition must go once more to their municipal office or district exchange and sign the new form so that the EU exit referendum petition can finally become a reality!

For more details: www.eu-austritts-volksbegehren.at

Contact: Inge Rauscher, +43 2242-70516, ihu@al.net
Dr. Franz-Josef Plank, +43 676 7082434, office@animal-spirit.at
Source: <http://www.ots.at/pressemag/17/aom> on 19 March 2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

AUSTRITT aus der EU
Überparteiliches VOLKSBEGEHREN

Well Österreichs Bürger nicht länger als Melkkuh für die „Rettung“ des TEURO und der Banken-Milchwirtschaft erhalten wollen!
Immer höhere Milieuzahlungen für „Büttsel“ - das Faß ohne Boden - bedeuten eine kalte Enteignung der Bürger-Einkommen. Ständessen Wieder-Eintritt in die funktionierende und sparsame EFTA zur Regelung der Handelsbeziehungen.

Well echte NEUTRALITÄT jegliche Mitwirkung an einem Militärpakt wie der EU-Armee (mit ihrem Naheverhältnis zur NATO) ausschließt - siehe Schweiz.

Well wir nicht Mitglieder der ATOMMACHT EU bleiben und für diese auch nicht weiter zahlen wollen (EURATOM-Vertrag).

Well das oberste Prinzip der EU - der grenzenlose, völlig ungetriggerte FREIHANDEL - nur dem Konzernintressen dient zum Schaden von Volkswirtschaft, Natur und Gesundheit!
Erdgas, Verfall der Löhne, Gehälter und Pensionen, Verbot der örtlichen Nahversorgung, Lebens-Tiertransporte über riesige Entfernungen, ICH (Einfuhr) Schutz vor genmanipulierten Substanzen.

Well mit dem Lissabon-Vertrag, der geltenden Arbeitsgrundlage der EU, die wichtigsten Prinzipien jeglicher DEMOKRATIE (zum Beispiel die Gewaltenteilung) ausgeschaltet wurden.
Nicht gewählte Kommissare bestimmen, das EU-Parlament hat keine Gesetzgebungsbefugnis.

So können Sie das Volksbegehren unterstützen:

- Mit der unmittelbaren Unterstützung-Erklärung und einem **authentischen Lichtbildausweis** (Paß, Personalausweis, Führerschein) zu den üblichen Parteienverhältnissen in das **Gemeindeamt bzw. magistratische Bezirksamt** Ihres Hauptwohnsitzortes gehen.
- Dort die mitgelieferte Unterstützung-Erklärung vor dem **Beamten** unterschreiben und nach erfolgter Bestätigung durch die Behörde dieses Original-Formular wieder umgehend an uns retournieren.
- Zur gültigen Unterzeichnung von Volksbegehren sind alle österreichischen Staatsbürger berechtigt, die das **16. Lebensjahr** vollendet haben. Sobald mindestens 8 460 (acht Tausend vierhundertsechzig) gültige Unterstützungserklärungen vorliegen, sind vom Innenministerium die sogenannte öffentliche Eintragungswache, das eigentliche Volksbegehren, in ganz Österreich anberaunt.

Wer sind die Betreiber des Volksbegehrens?

Ein überparteiliches Petitionskomitee aus langjährigen Inge und Robert Stein, Mitgliedern unabhängiger Bürgerinitiativen: **Inge RAUSCHER** (Initiative Heimat & Umwelt), **Helmut SCHRAMM** (Austriens), **Dr. Franz-Josef PLANK** (Tierrechtsorganisation Animal Spirit), **Renate ZITMAYR** (Rechts), **Mag. Markus LECHNER** (Forschung), **Dr. U.R. Inge SCHERFF** (Art/Artenvielfalt), usw. Unterstützt sind das Volksbegehren auch von bekannten politischen Aktivistinnen **Hans Richard KLECATSKY** (für Lebensmittelsicherheit für Österreichische Bevölkerung), und den Wissenschaftlern **Dr. Eva Maria BARKI**, spezialisiert auf Menschen-, Naturschutz und Milieuprobleme, Rechtsadresse: Initiative Heimat & Umwelt, 3424 Zeiselmauer, Hagengasse 5, Tel. 02242/70516, ihu@al.net.

www.eu-austritts-volksbegehren.at

Bitte dieses Feld für Prüfvermerke der Bundeswahlbehörde freihalten!

Unterstützungserklärung

Der (Die) Gefertigte unterstützt hiermit den Antrag auf Einleitung des Verfahrens für ein Volksbegehren betreffend folgende, durch Bundesgesetz zu regelnde Angelegenheit:

(Allfällige Kurzbezeichnung)
Der Nationalrat möge den Austritt der Republik Österreich aus der Europäischen Union mit Bundesverfassungsgesetz, welches einer Volksabstimmung zu unterziehen ist, beschließen.

(Allfällige Kurzbezeichnung)
EU-AUSTRITTS-VOLKSBEGEHREN

Vor- und Familienname des (der) Unterstützungserklärenden

Wohnort: _____ Geburtdatum (Tag, Monat, Jahr): _____

Staat unverändert Österreich (Bitte mit Unterschrift bestätigen, falls andersfalls anzuzeigen)

Staat für amtliche gerichtliche oder notarielle Beglaubigung der nebenstehenden Unterschrift

Eigenhändige Unterschrift

Bestätigung der Gemeinde

Die nachstehende Gemeinde bestätigt, dass der (die) Unterstützungserklärende in der Wählerverzeichnis eingetragen ist und das 16. Lebensjahr vollendet hat und in dieser Gemeinde den Hauptwohnsitz hat.

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Politische Bezirk, Verwaltungsbezirk, Statutarort, Land: _____ ggf. Sperrleg. Nr. _____
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Questionable credits for school buildings are driving the next generation into debt

California is facing a financial time bomb

by George Szpiro

California authorities have taken out loans whose repayment will be due in a few decades – with interest. Future generations will have to answer for the accumulated old debts.

In recent years, California communities have sometimes been forced to enlarge schools or renovate ramshackle buildings and grounds without having any funds at their disposal due to the financial crisis. So city officials, school boards and parents' associations came up with a peach of an idea: They decided to issue so-called *Capital Appreciation Bonds (CAB)*. These are bonds whose principal, interest and accrued compound interest do not – similar to zero-coupon bonds – have to be paid before the due date, but then everything has to be settled up all at once.

Rules easily circumvented

The arrangement seemed beneficial for all parties. City fathers were able to take the liberty of posing at the opening of schools all wreathed in smiles while pointing out that they had, notwithstanding the crisis, complied with their pre-election promises without any increase of taxes. Students could move into new classrooms. Parents were pleased with the modern sports facilities. Financial advisers pocketed fees. But the taxpayers had the best reason to be satisfied: The whole thing had not cost them a cent. The burden had simply been laid on the shoulders of the city's taxpayers one or two generations in the future.

Until 2009, the California Code had not allowed municipalities to issue financial instruments of that sort. But then the legislature summarily struck off a crucial protection clause, and so derestricted irresponsible borrowing completely. A building boom began. 360 California schools purchased bonds totalling about 3.6 billion dollars, with an average repayment period of about 25 years. Including interest and compound interest, the owed sums will amount to over 18 billion dollars by the time they have to be repaid. The interest rate, that is mentioned nowhere, thus amounts to a roughly estimated average of 6.65 per cent, but dozens of communities pay 10 per cent or more and have repayment periods of more than 35 years. At an in-

terest rate of 10 per cent and a repayment period of 40 years, the sum due at maturity will have increased a hundred-fold from the raised capital. Never having voted for the bonds, future California taxpayers will have to compensate the "balloon payments". And to add insult to injury: Their children will enjoy their lessons in school buildings already thirty or forty years old and receive their physical education using dilapidated sports facilities.

Yet now California officials have become attentive: California State Treasurer Bill Lockyer compares the CAB to the machinations of financial advisors and investment banks that led to the housing bubble and to the financial crisis with its still continuing effects. He wants the civil servants and school board members who were short-sighted enough to endorse these bonds to be dismissed or voted out of office.

Calculation of interest not grasped

City officials, school administrators and parents pleaded that they had had no choice left to them in the matter because financing the inevitable investments in the school system would otherwise have failed. The debt would not have been a problem as the coming decades would most probably bring an increase in value of properties and homes. Therefore, the liquidation of the debts could then be financed with property taxes. The decision-makers seem to have learned nothing from the debacles of the recent past. It was precisely this assumption that house prices would rise all the time that caused the recent crisis. In general, civil servants and people's representatives at local level seem to have little idea of simple financial mathematics.

Media like the reputable "Los Angeles Times" do not trust their readers to have any idea of interest calculation. In their articles on the topic the actual interest rates are never mentioned. Instead, it is all about the amount owed in ratio to the initial borrowings. Without specifying the repayment period, however, this reveals nothing about the quality of a bond. Even a directive of the California Department of Finance, according to which this ratio should not exceed a value of 4.0, establishes little clarity. In combination

with a repayment period of 40 years, a ratio of 4.0 corresponds to an interest rate of 3.5 per cent, with a repayment period of 15 years, however, the interest rate would amount to almost 10 per cent.

Legal brakes

Lawmakers in the capital city of Sacramento are now considering how the machinations can be stopped. Other US states have already taken precautions against this kind of malpractice in the past. In Michigan, for example, CABs are totally prohibited, and in Ohio debt management has to stay within the same limits every year. Liabilities can thus not be put off for decades.

Source: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 25.03.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Russia as a seapower in the Eastern Mediterranean?

by Professor Dr Albert Stahel, Institute for Strategic Studies, Wädenswil, Switzerland

The first tsar to make great efforts to strive for Russia's status as a seapower was Peter the Great (1672–1725). After having crushed the Moscow Streltsi Milices rebellion (1682–1684) and after having enforced his autocracy in Moscow, he proceeded to the conquest of the Asow Sea, seizing it from the Ottomans.

In this military expedition, which lasted from summer 1695 to July 1696, he was supported by his friend, the Russian admiral *F.J. Lefort*, born in Geneva. (1656–1699). The victory over Sweden in the sea battle of Hangö (7 July 1714) crowned his endeavors to enforce Russia's status as a seapower in the Baltic Sea. The geographic concessions that Peter forced upon the Swedish people in the *Treaty of Nystad* (30 August 1721) was to renounce the Baltic countries and South Karelia. Russia became the main seapower. On 2 November 1721 Peter appointed himself Emperor.

All following tsars strived for the extension of Russia's status as a seapower. As a seapower Russia was to advance to the warm seas and push the other seapowers out of these seas. It was already in 1809 that Russia under *Alexander I.* reached this goal in the Baltic Sea by annexing Finland, which meant the definite conquest of the Swedes. The advance into the Eastern Mediterranean, however, caused greater difficulties for the Russians. The Ottoman Empire, ruling over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles had to be forced out of power. To that end the tsars used their military power as well as their claim to be the protectors of the Orthodox churches. Tsar *Ivan IV* (the Terrible, 1533–1584) had called Moscow the "Third Rome" on the occasion when he was crowned tsar, and he had declared that he was the successor of the Emperor of Byzantium. To the tsars who claimed to be the protectors of the Orthodoxy it was obvious that they should re-conquer Byzantium, the second Rome that had been occupied by the Ottoman Empire in 1453. In the 19th century Russia declared herself the liberator of the Christians who were subjects of the unbelieving sultans in South Eastern Europe, and they used their power over the Orthodox Christians to stir them against the sultans for their own intentions.

After Russia had been defeated by an alliance of the British, the French and

the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean War – which included Russia's attack on the Ottoman Empire – it appeared that Russia had definitely renounced this pretention to control the Eastern Mediterranean. During the 1917 October Revolution even the tsars' reign was done away with.

It was not until the end of World War II that the Russian ruler *Stalin* claimed again to control the Eastern Mediterranean. In order to impose that reign he supported the Civil War of the Communists against the Greek government in Athens since 1945. Announcing the Doctrine of Truman on 12 March 1947 the USA replaced the British as the leading power in the Eastern Mediterranean; the economy of the British being on the verge of economic collapse on account of their expenses during the Second World War. Due to the Yugoslavian ruler *Tito's* breaking off with Stalin the Communist rebellion in Greece collapsed. The USA defended Turkey against the territorial demands which had been brought forward by Stalin. Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 put a first end to the USSR's advances into the Eastern Mediterranean.

When the Soviet General Secretary *Nikita Khrushchev* rose to power Moscow established closer relationships with Arabic despots in the Eastern Mediterranean. In May 1964 during a journey through Egypt Khrushchev distinguished the ruler over the country around the Nile, *Nasser*, by awarding him the Lenin Medal and the title of "hero of the Soviet Union". Gradually the USSR gained access to the Egyptian harbors on the Mediterranean Salum and Alexandria and Latakia in Syria. Before the wars of 1967 and 1973 both of these Arabic states were supplied with massive deliveries of arms by Moscow. Thanks to those harbors it was always possible that a Soviet armed squadron could be stationed in the Eastern Mediterranean. It was by Egypt's turning away from Moscow in 1972 under the Egyptian ruler *Sadat* that the position of the USSR in the Eastern Mediterranean seemed to be weakened. A further backlash was inflicted upon Moscow by the breakdown of USSR in 1991 and at by the almost materialized dissolution of its Black Sea Fleet. This fleet was not only subdivided among the Russian Federation and the Ukraine, moreover it did

not receive any new war-ships because of the Russian armaments industry's decay.

After he came to power in 1999 the new Russian president *Vladimir Putin* started off a change. It is true that the Black Sea Fleet in the Black Sea did not receive any more war-ships but the fleet is now better provided for, and the presence of the Russians in the Eastern Mediterranean has been consolidated. During the war against Georgia in 2008 the Black Sea Fleet in the Black Sea proved that it was ready and prepared for interventions. And it prevented that the US-Navy in the Mediterranean supported Georgia.

Due to the EU's difficulties in rescuing Cyprus from state bankruptcy Moscow has now attained a new opportunity to expand its strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean. In doing so Putin again employs the tsars' means: On the one hand Moscow again claims to be the protecting power for the Orthodoxy and on the other hand Russia exerts its influence on Greek-Orthodox Cyprus indirectly via the Cypriot-Orthodox Church. The objective of that manoeuvre is quite obvious. At least Moscow wants to re-gain the old status in the Eastern Mediterranean before the collapse of the USSR. That would happen at the cost of the EU. The long-term goal however might be to realize the tsars' old plan. With the help of the orthodox brother nations on the Balkans and the help of Iran – allied with Moscow – the submission of Turkey might be brought about and the lock barring Russia's advance into the Eastern Mediterranean might be eliminated. Israel as well, since there is a large Russian Jewish community in Israel, might support the Russian strategy. After the humiliation of Turkey there might be an opportunity to keep up Assad's Syrian regime due to the enforced ending of the Turkish aid to the Syrian rebels. In case this Russian strategy succeeds the USA would lose their sea strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean. The loss of this power position would be equivalent to the loss of their geo-political hegemony in Europe. In such a situation Russia would not only be able to dominate as a seapower in the Eastern Mediterranean but also be capable of dictating the Russian claims to the Europeans. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The strategy of the new Silk Roads – a peace model for Eurasia

For Europeans should not lag behind in history –
Franz Betschon's¹ brilliant analysis of the general political climate

by Tobias Salander, historian

While the US is reeling from one crisis into the next and Europe gazes wide-eyed at its former protector, hoping not to be torn down with him, optimism prevails in Asia, Latin America and Africa. For quite some time, authors like Kishore Mahbubani have been trying to show the contemporaries of the Western Hemisphere that they are obviously facing a turning point in history. But what is to be done, especially in Europe? With whom to cooperate if not with the descending belligerent power USA?

Would it not be logical to turn our sight to the East? Europe is situated on the edge of the big world island Eurasia. Our sight – but not in the imperialist sense of Bismarck, who pinpointed “his Africa” in Eastern Europe, neither captivated in thought patterns of the Cold War, which has fortunately been over more than 20 years ago. Why not an approaching those countries in partnership, friendship and respect for the achievements of their peoples?

If we do not perceive how Asia is developing, Asia will develop into a new center of gravity of the world economy without us: This is the point of view of an analyst who has widely travelled, who is cosmopolitan and educated and still rooted in the best Swiss tradition: Franz Betschon entitled his book “The Eurasian Chess Tournament”, reviewed below, following the title of the similar-sounding work of Zbigniew Brzezinski. However, the tone, the basis of the analysis and the view is a counterpoint to the negative standard work on imperial geo-strategy and super-power hubris.

“The Empire is over.” The US empire, the hegemony of the world's only superpower USA, is over, a Eurasia-centric world order is spreading, however an Asia-centric, only in case Europe does not make a move toward Asia. This is the quintessence of the exceptionally readable and clarifying book “The Eurasian chess tournament. Crises, background and forecasts” written by Franz Betschon. The Swiss citizen has a doctor's degree in sciences and is a certified mechanical engineer of the FIT Zurich; he is also a graduate of the Harvard Business School in Boston, a retired Colonel of the General Staff of the Swiss Air Forces, hence a scientist and cosmopolitan economist trained in the best Swiss manner, with a sharp an-

alytical mind. As one who has traveled around the world, worked among others as a member of the board of an Israeli high-tech company, which – built with Swiss help – has become one of today's leading companies of its kind in the world, the author tries to compare and deepen his experiences and observations with the study of publicly available sources in order to understand the present times and not to run the risk of lagging behind the general development. Thus Betschon draws on sources from many corners of the world, since during his studies he noticed that the European perspective on the world is quite narrow and has been tainted by the decades of the Cold War, whereas in other parts of the world the same problems are seen in a very different light. Recognizing the signs of the times also means adjusting to new developments and meeting any possible dangers more adequately.

As his great role model, a thing which is painfully lacking in today's world and especially in Switzerland, Betschon mentions the great historian *Jean Rodolphe von Salis*. What that Swiss and world citizen achieved in World War II starting off from Switzerland which gained him and our country worldwide respect, namely providing a coherent assessment of the military situation, von Salis could do merely because of his widely ramified network of relationships. In telephone conversations with acquaintances in the various countries von Salis had built up his knowledge despite intelligence eavesdroppers.

How much easier this is today! In times of the *World Wide Web* a mouse click takes us to newspapers from the Asian, African or Latin American regions.

From what time on did the US become so violent? Keyword “QDR”

The analysis which Betschon collected on over 200 pages and which culminates in the above-quoted conclusion is a compelling read and puts in order the thoughts that can get into a deadlock so easily by today's tide of mainstream titillation.

When the author concludes that the days of US dominance are irretrievably gone, there are no anti-American sentiments behind this statement, as one might be inclined to think. Quite the contrary, the author appreciates the United States' selfless commitment during the darkest



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hours of World War II in Europe – however, he raises the question at what point in time America has suddenly become so violent again: so that it rendered torture acceptable again, waged preemptive wars without ever thinking of the Nuremberg Trial and principles, which had declared the war of aggression the most serious crime and in which the chief US prosecutor *Robert Jackson* had demanded that in future the US would have to be measured by this standard as well.

It became evident that something was wrong in the state of USA when the Pentagon's 5-year plans “Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR)” for the years 2001 and 2006 were released. They argued in favor of the right to pre-emptive war although this violated international law. In order to let the reader really imagine the monstrosity, the author transfers this attitude on to the neighborly coexistence of individuals, which would then be something like “You can always shoot your neighbor if he bothers you. You have to fulfill two conditions: You have to say that you felt threatened, and you will have to aim so well that he subsequently can not testify.” (Betschon, p 52) The author points out that this shameless contempt for all the values that the West had fought for for centuries would harm the people of the Middle East, first and foremost, but also

continued on page 12

"The strategy of the new Silk ..."

continued from page 11

the civil society of the aggressors in the medium and long term.

The principle of sovereign states vs. the principle of "divide and conquer"

The author classifies the empire's aggressive and inhumane foreign policy against the backdrop of two principles: the principle of sovereign states on the one hand and that of "divide and conquer" on the other. What the generation that lived through the Cold War would have thought hardly possible, making a clear view on the present so difficult, is the fact that the first of the two principles, the principle of sovereign nation-states, gained after the 30-year war in the Peace of Westphalia, is today no longer represented by the once acclaimed US democracy, but by the once outlawed Russia, while the Machiavellian principle of "divide et impera" has been and still is upheld by *George W. Bush* and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate *Obama*. Although the author is not really pleased about this surprising finding, it is to his credit that he presents the genuine facts without being blinded by mindcuffs and personal preferences.

What had become obvious as early as at the *Munich Security Conference* in 2007, namely that Russia under *Putin* was no longer the weak and exploitable post-Soviet country, but again a superpower that was willing and capable of defending itself both economically and militarily, became concrete for everyone at the same-named conference in 2008: While presenting a self-confident country the Russian Deputy Prime Minister *Sergei Ivanov* stressed that this did not mean a new block thinking and confrontation, but the peaceful coexistence of sovereign states. On the other side stood US Defense Secretary *Robert Gates*, who presented the view of the aggressive hegemon. Therewith *Gates* positioned himself in the model of the British Empire à la *Churchill* and not in that of *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*. *Betschon* works out these two contrasting policy approaches: While the British Empire pursued a policy of conflict and manipulation, hence the "Divide and conquer!", the pre- and post-war US President *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* advocated the other model of cooperation, i.e. that among sovereign nations. Due to the early death of *Roosevelt*, the hardliner *Truman* then joined the British line and employed the atomic bomb without any consideration.

Europe and Asia coalesce economically

Even if the US foreign policy before *Truman* may not always have been quite as unblemished as presented above: it is beneficial anyway that the author avoids the

West's Russia-bashing and opens up new ways of perception. Only if the Russian enemy stereotype is questioned, the road of the long-overdue collaboration between the European countries and the big neighbor in the near but also in the far East will be opened.

In the chapter "Megatrends", the author dares to make some highly exciting and actually most obvious predictions of future developments: Without tying ourselves down on time and order too much, we might expect the following:

1. Europe and Asia will irreversibly grow together economically.
2. Eurasia will develop a federal trade, foreign and security policy.
3. The term "West" will be unnecessary: Western Europe, North America and Israel will no longer form a unit.
4. Continental Europe will be oriented eastbound. North America will only be of interest for the trade.
5. EU and NATO might be reconsidered and replaced by something new.

And what if the Bretton Woods institutions and the UN were moved into the new center of gravity of the world economy, to Shanghai for example? Or if the Asian countries came to the conclusion that there was no longer any need for this US-dominated institutions, that we could live well and above all better without them? And that they had lived together with Europe for over 2,000 years – long before the American double continent was marred by the Anglo-Saxons? It took indeed a very long time in the so-called New World until the whites could be brought to apologizing with regard to the genocide of the indigenous population.

Betschon is not sure whether the Europeans already became aware of the signs of the times and will make a move towards Asia – but nonetheless, the Asians are already coming to meet us. We do not only talk about tourism and the booming watch stores in Lucerne and Interlaken, which are often frequented by the rising Chinese middle class, but also about investors from China and India, who increasingly have saved long-established brands in Europe from ruin, such as India's *Tata Group* that did not only take over the British steel company *Corus*, but also the car companies *Jaguar* and *Land Rover* in 2007.

Tomorrow's world: Latin America, Asia, Europe – and the US on the side

In Africa we realize that we are facing or else that we are amid a turning time in history: more and more Chinese companies are doing what so far has been reserved to the Europeans: establishing trade relations, making investments, exploiting raw materials – but the Chinese are able to combine their profits with real benefits for the locals, something that one

has never encountered in European colonialism, imperialism and in the present neo-colonialism.

While the West suspiciously is staring at the Chinese dragon full of distrust, wondering whether it is going to work like the American eagle, i.e. reveal an aggressive militarism, we overlook that the world has turned into a square world: Today it is made up by Latin America, Asia, Europe and North America on the side. On the side? Our Western media like to conceal this: Increasingly important decisions are taken without the former superpower Number 1. *Current Concerns* reported the Phnom Penh humiliation.² Since this event was simply non-existent in the mainstream media of the West, we had to resort to an article in the "Asia Times", which showed quite clearly how far we lag behind the real development in the west. *Obama* had been disinvented by a meeting of the ASEAN countries. The United States, which wanted to sow a spirit of discord between the Asian countries, especially between the smaller ones and China, saw themselves left out. The world has become a different one, as *Kishore Mahbubani* has been trying to explain to us for a long time – friendly, but very determinedly. And if the West does not want to acknowledge this, the fracture will be irreversible. It would be better for everyone to advance into the future together. But to that end the West would have to really live its values that are highly respected by the rest of the world, rather than operate toughest interest policy under the guise of values.

IMF and dollar hegemony are declining

Betschon mentions several events that illustrate this turning point in time:

The ten Southeast Asian countries of ASEAN – since we hardly know them in the West, they are listed by name here: These are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam – these ten states together with China, Japan and South Korea have created the *Asian Monetary Fund* with the RMB/yen as their central currency – a process that makes the US-dominated IMF superfluous.

The same happens in South America: the founding of the *Latin American Monetary Fund* causes the IMF to close its offices in one state after the other. Venezuela gives its members the necessary loans to pay off the IMF.

In Europe the euro, originally intended as an alternative to the dollar, faces massive attacks, but not from China! Russia, however, neither dances to Washington's tune any longer: There, the gradual dismissal of IMF and dollar hegemony is tak-

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ing place by increasingly relying on their own resources and gold.

These are all operations that in the long run will make it impossible for the US to impose their own debts to other countries of the world with the help of the dollar printing press. Especially since the funds for the military should be reduced and thus the well-tried, however no less burglary-gang like gunboat diplomacy will no longer work.

A key year for the waning of US influence on this planet was the year 2008: Coinciding with the *Lehman Brothers* the following events occurred without any input from the US, so busily concerned with their own interests:

- In Lima, the 60 nations met at a World Food Summit, with *Angela Merkel* and *China* being invited but not the United States.
- Simultaneously, the foreign ministers of the BRIC countries gathered in Yekaterinburg in Russia. Brazil, Russia, India and China had indeed invited the Europeans, but not the United States.
- By the end of May, the new Russian president made his first trip abroad. In the past, this trip went to the US first; however this time China was the first stop.
- At the same time an important summit between Japan and China took place – without the United States, which would have been inconceivable in the past.

Europe: out of the US stranglehold, back to its own values

In this situation of a world that is easily organized without the Empire, Europe faces the question whether it should not continue to live the best values that the US neocons have contemptuously called that of the "old Europe": on the one hand this would mean a move away from late colonialist ideas, the respect for the sovereignty of other states and non-interference in their internal affairs – in other words a rejection of questionable R2P strategy, the "responsibility to protect", which, as stated by Dr *Hans-Christoph von Sponeck*³, has always been used as a pretext to intervene in other countries to secure the raw materials there and keep China out, just like in Sudan, in Libya, and almost in Syria if Russia and China had not objected with a courageous "Nyet". Or as the Russian political scientist *Fursov*⁴ formulated in simple terms: In Syria, the Western crusaders ran into the Great Wall of China!

Finally Betschon advises Europe not to use double standards. There are ample examples listed in the books by Kishore

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Mahbubani⁵, but also in the articles of the international law expert Professor *Hans Köchler*⁶, who among others sharply criticizes the practice of charges by the *International Criminal Courts (ICC)*.

Development corridors with pearl necklace-like development centers

Europe based on its new-old foundation of this best Western tradition would easily find an ally in the East, which includes about a quarter of today's world population: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as members regularly meet in this context with the observer states Mongolia, India, Pakistan and Iran. Whoever in Europe is of the opinion that nothing can grow together, because it does not belong together, must rethink his or her world view, which goes back to the ancient Euro-centric antiquity. There is no intra-Eurasian border in a true geographical-geological sense, but only in a historical and cultural one. However, the boundaries have been blurred early; we just have to recall the Russian-Western European entanglements, which refer to the exchange of craftsmanship, scholars and blue blood. And behind Russia there is China, which has been working since the mid-1990s on the establishment of five major infrastructure corridors that will connect Asia with Europe: Railways are there to form the backbone. Betschon stresses that this development corridors may similarly establish pearl necklace-like development corridors similar to the ancient silk roads with great effects.

Beijing-Hamburg: Railway faster than ships

However, who was aware of Europe starting at the USA with fascination? For example, that on 9 January 2008 a Pioneer Railway of goods for Europe was set in motion for the first time, from Beijing indeed. Its destination was Hamburg! A distance of 9,800 km across six countries. The result? It reached Hamburg after 18 days – container ships in order to reach the same destination would have

taken almost 40 days on sea! An event, which opened up new dimensions – and a glance at the map of Eurasia shows: What is more obvious than the expansion of the land routes from China to Europe? Eurasia is a continent, a contiguous land mass that naturally belongs together – something that we cannot say about the links between Europe and the US, separated by two oceans.

Of course, a historian will also remember dark times when contemplating the issue of trans-Eurasian transport corridors: continental European countries had already tried to connect with the East by land. We remember the project of a "Berlin-Baghdad railway". As historian *Daniele Ganser* shows in his book "Europa im Erdölrausch" (Europe in the oil rush) cheap oil could have been transported from Iraq to the Central European business centers, without being dependent on the British fleet and thus the empire of Great Britain. We all know what happened next: a small strip of land was not included in the German-Habsburg-Ottoman land bridge: Serbia. It is a well-known fact that in Austro-occupied Sarajevo the shot was fired which was to secure the oil monopoly in the Middle East for the naval power of Great Britain, we also call it the First World War, though perhaps less frequently with the above-mentioned background.

May the European countries, Russia and China watch out and keep in mind that today's (as yet) number one naval power, the United States, wanted to stage something similar to the British in 1914. Past attempts to destabilize the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, the Central Asian republics could be filed against this background.

The Empire in retrogression – daily in the newspapers

Franz Betschon published his illuminating analysis in 2009. He needn't correct anything, just like his revered idol von Salis. On the contrary, many problem areas mentioned by him have only be-

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come more visible in the three years since that time. It is very revealing that President Obama appointed *Hagel* his Secretary of Defense: that a US Secretary of Defense warns of the pro-Israel lobby and seeks negotiations with Iran; or that a Secretary of Foreign Affairs *John Kerry* visits Cairo, Riyadh, Doha, but misses Tel Aviv, is the one thing. That there are now talks with Iran in which the United States is present, and at the same time China and Russia are present, too, is the other. That the Turkish Prime Minister equated Zionism with racism, fascism, anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism and condemned it, for which he was sharply criticized in Israeli media⁷, but still remains a close ally of the United States and wants to join the EU despite or even with these statements, is a third thing. It is startling that *Kenneth Waltz* in *Foreign Affairs* of July/August 2012⁸ wanted to grant Iran the bomb, because the world might become safer, especially the Middle East, because the nuclear power Israel would have a counterpart – Israel, which according to this grand old man of US political science, represented the main danger for peace in the region. This sounds like a *Brzezinski* chessboard strategy, to which Betschon refers several times, but as an exit strategy of the Empire's chess players.

Continuing Roosevelt's concept of respect for the sovereignty of nation states

We would wish the peoples in Eurasia, but also the peoples of the Middle East, and indeed regardless of nationality or religion, that the Chinese strategy of the new Silk Road and thus the peaceful interaction in economic and political terms without transatlantic disruptions could be realized. How many blossoming landscapes could develop if the great continent grew

together, the way Kishore Mahbubani has repeatedly described. If the former mortal enemies Japan and China can cooperate peacefully today after the horrors of World War II, after more than 30 million Chinese killed by the Japanese, why should that be impossible in the Middle East? And why should the US not be oriented towards Roosevelt's concept of respect for the sovereignty of nation states? Given the horrendous debt this is actually a top priority – and common sense. A task that would befit Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Obama well. And the EU could prove worthy of their Nobel Prize and bury its hostilities towards the East. Moreover, the Swiss population could become involved as a nation of good offices and mediate this complex situation and with their federalism they could be a model for fruitful and peaceful coexistence without flirting with large structures.

If the book by Franz Betschon is able to direct the thinking, feeling and acting into this direction, it will have beneficial effects. We'd like to wish this book a large readership – not only in Switzerland. •

¹ Franz Betschon: *Das eurasische Schachturnier: Krisen, Hintergründe und Prognosen* (The Eur-

asian chess tournament. Crises, background and forecasts.) Frankfurt/Main, 2009. ISBN 978-3-8301-1234-1.

² David P. Goldman: *Post-US world born in Phnom Penh*. In: *Current Concerns* No. 53 of 31.12.2012

³ Dr Hans-Christof von Sponeck: The R2P attempt failed miserably in Libya. In: *Current Concerns* No. 18/19 of 08.05.2012

⁴ Hit Syria – Target: Russia. Interview with Professor Andrei Ilyich Fursow. In: *Current Concerns* No 37 of 10.09.2012

⁵ Kishore Mahbubani: *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistable Shift of Global Power to the East*. 2008. ISBN-13: 978-1586484668.

⁶ Hans Köchler: *Weltgericht ohne Weltstaat. Strafrecht unter dem Diktat der Realpolitik?* Kommentar zu Idee und Wirklichkeit des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofes zehn Jahre nach dem Inkrafttreten des Römer Statutes. Vienna, 01.07.2012. <http://ipo.org/Koehler-ICC-Weltgericht-ohne-Weltstaat-IPO-OP-1July2012.htm>

⁷ At UN conference, Erdogan calls Zionism "crime against humanity". In: *Ha'aretz*, 28.02.2013.

⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz: *Why Iran should get the bomb. Nuclear balancing would mean stability*. In: *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2012. Edited by the Council on Foreign Relations. *Current Concerns* No. 43/44 of 22.10.2012

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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“Cuckoo, cuckoo” – (still) calling from the forest

On 18 April he is coming, on the 19th he has to come!

by Heini Hofmann

Everybody rejoices, when the ornithological signet of spring, the melodious double call of the Cuckoo is heard for the first time. It's not only this call that made the Cuckoo the gallion figure of the equally-named clock, but also the eccentric behaviour of the Cuckoo who as a breed parasite lays eggs into other birds' nests. Today, this feathered nerd gets ever more into existential difficulties.

Being a migratory bird, the Cuckoo remains in Africa during the winter season. From there in spring, the agile flier traverses with pace and purpose and often without interruption northwards via the Sahara and North Africa. He is an unsociable bird that migrates alone and at night.

Only the males call

Around mid-April, the Cuckoo, also named *gauch*, appears in Central Europe. There is a popular saying, “He comes on 18 April on the 19th he has to come!” In case he is there earlier, does this mean nothing else but that old peasant rules are not infallible ...

One thing is for sure, the males arrive first and again it is them that utter the well-known, two-syllable call the bird earned his resounding name from. The Cuckoo spends just one third of the year with us, until he starts off for the return trip in mid-summer again. Nonetheless, he has managed to become one of the most popular birds who, when his call is first heard, compels us to reach for our money bag ...

So lazy at breeding but so much in love

Although the Cuckoo is a pronounced parasite bird and generously delegates his parental responsibilities, he does not want to miss the pertaining excitement and anticipation to breeding. “As breed-lazy the bird is, as much he is in love”, animal lover *Brehm* once said. “He is literally mad as long as the mating season lasts. He calls incessantly so that the voice is snapping. He is permanently chasing his territory and suspects a rival everywhere, the most hateful of all opponents.”

When it comes to marriage, however, the Cuckoo isn't all that particular. At breeding time, different males get together with one female and vice versa. Such libertinage, however, seems to be related to the not-particular territoriality. Apparently, it is a suitable principle for a parasite bird. That way, the host bird offer can better be made use of.

The only parasite bird

Birds are real technically obligatory parasites when they fulfill three conditions,



A Eurasian Reed Warbler is feeding a young Cuckoo, that is getting considerably taller than its foster parents. (picture wikimedia.org)

no nest preparation, never incubate eggs and no feeding through own billing. This is the Cuckoo and notabene the only bird species in Europe that practices parasitism. Predominantly, insectivorous songbirds act as foster parents. Despite the imposing size of the Cuckoo, he abuses primarily small birds for his purpose, from Leaf Warbler to thrush size. In Switzerland alone, more than thirty species of host birds are known. In Germany close to ninety.

It is important that the host birds have high population density and that they build

easily recognizable nests which are suitable for the cuckoo's purposes. They have to have little aversion towards foreign eggs, need similar egg sizes and show appropriate feeding behaviour. This applies to Wag-tails, Pipits, Warblers, Dunnocks, Reed Warblers, Redstarts, Robins and Shrikes. Pure cave breeders are not chosen.

Tricks of nature

The Cuckoo is indeed recognized by the host birds. Where he shows up, they fly

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“Cuckoo, cuckoo” – (still) calling ...”

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at him under nagging and “hate at him” like on hawks and cats. They attack him particularly forcefully close by their nests, whereby they are betrayed all the more. For this reason and yet another one, this kind of hate is not unwelcome to the Cuckoo. While the calling male attracts the haters, the female unnoticed can lay her egg into the nest of the host birds.

Furthermore, the “hawking”, i.e. the striated coloring of the breast, gives the Cuckoo the appearance of a hawk to some extent. Neither is this bird-of-prey masquerade purely incidental, because the imitation of fortified animals by bird parasites is a trick, repeatedly applied by nature. The sophistication, too, with which the Cuckoo female slips her egg to the host parents, sounds like a thriller.

First of all, she finds her victims in her detective manner by watching from a hide-out or in flight search. To avoid the attack by the foster parents when laying her eggs, she chooses a favorable moment in burglar fashion namely the general quiet time in the early afternoon hours. Egg deposition usually takes place in incomplete clutches and needs only few seconds. For deceptive balance, the Cuckoo female often carries off a host bird egg in her beak. Before the “blissful” songbird parents realize anything, the spook is over.

Born as bouncer

With only approximately twelve days, the incubation time of the Cuckoo’s egg

is very short and ensures that the young parasite slips before the step siblings. The Cuckoo embryo seems also to be less sensitive to interruptions of incubation. Nature favors the Cuckoo embryo in many ways. Once hatched, he is almost twice the size of his nest mates, but blind and naked as well.

But only after few hours of living, an uncanny instinct comes up in the small parasite. Everything in the nest, whether eggs, step siblings, or, which is rare enough a second Cuckoo’s egg (if by chance two mothers did lay into the same host nest), absolutely everything is thrown overboard. And how vigorously!

Obedying his instinct, the small, flesh-colored beast on its back and up along the nest wall stems the good-for-nothing burden. With one last striking jerk it is transported on or over the edge of the nest. And again, the tough rules of nature have a say. What lies motionless on the rim of the nest and even if it is the own children, to the host parents it remains nothing else but debris to be cleaned away, comparable to droppings that have to be cleaned away.

Like a toad in the nest

At the age of a few days only, feathers similar to black stubbles start to sprout on the young Cuckoo. In Brehm’s words, now he looks “as if a toad was sitting in the nest”. At the same time, his urge as bouncer extinguishes. But this nest-filling changeling is hungry! His enormous bright-orange blocking throat has the effect of an abnormal trigger on the foster parents. To exhaustion, they feed

this insatiable bird that can hardly find any space in the tiny nest of the songbird.

Finally, when at the delicate age of approximately three weeks he leaves the nest, he is easily up to fifty times heavier than when hatching. But only within another three weeks he becomes independent. Meantime, the giant baby enjoys being fed nonstop. Because of the difference in size, this requires an acrobatic contribution on the part of the foster parents. To feed him, they either place themselves on top of the head of the mammoth young, or they remain in the air shaking in front of him, whereby putting their head deep into his blocking throat.

Unthinkable, if ...

Now, who is afraid the Cuckoo might jeopardize certain species of songbirds by his parasitism, as any Cuckoo’s egg signifies something like a lost host brood, underestimates the ingenious regulatory mechanisms of nature. Namely, if in fact regional bottlenecks of host bird population species are caused by the Cuckoo, the Cuckoo himself is forced to either make a change of location or of foster parents. Thereupon the harassed host bird species may recover again.

But danger lurks for the Cuckoo himself which is manmade, namely the progressive removal of the half-open landscape and its fragmentation. By this, important host bird species disappear increasingly. Unthinkable, how dull it would be, if some spring there was no more “cuckoo, cuckoo” calling from the forest!

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Phenomenal Cuckoo’s egg

Not only the bird, the egg also is adapted to brood parasitism: a more break-age resistant skin, a relatively small egg size as well as an enormous variety with respect to colour and markings, which means colour matching (mimicry) on the eggs of the foster parents.

While the Cuckoo’s eggs of different females – according to their main hosts – are very differently coloured, the single female lays the same type of egg her whole life long, namely in the nests of those bird species, of which it was itself reared up. Optical-acoustic imprinting in the early nestling age, combined with an ingenious mechanism of inheritance (a gene on the Y-chromosome

determines the type of egg), controls the mimicry of Cuckoo’s eggs.

In each host nest the female Cuckoo lays only one egg, but – because of the high loss rate – of various foster parents, which is double the egg production rate of other birds with corresponding size. And something else is phenomenal: by means of hormonally synchronization of ovulation in females Cuckoos the egg production rate of the parasite is adapted to the nesting cycle and the laying activity of the foster parents. More perfection is not possible!

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Current attempt of an address book fraud

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs Seco was made aware of the current attempt of an address book fraud by various people. Many companies in Switzerland received a form in which they were asked to fill in the required fields and return the signed form. Whoever sends back the signed form as requested, allegedly concludes an insertion contract for two years for 25 francs per month. It is not an official form of the commercial register office, although this is suggested by the title and the printed-on Swiss national emblem. According to Seco this is a clear attempt to deceive ...

Source: *Vertraulicher Schweizer Brief*
(Confidential Swiss letter)
on 21.03.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)