

Current Concerns

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A clear 'No' to the complete revision of the Epidemics Act

by Dr phil. Henriette Hanke Güttinger, historian; Dr med. Susanne Lippmann Rieder, Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

The complete revision of the Epidemics Act (revised Epidemics Act = nEpG) is another attempt to switch the approved Swiss health care¹ from the responsibility of the cantons to the centralized control by the Federal Government.

Although Parliament has rejected the Federal Act on Prevention and Health Promotion (Prevention Act) in autumn 2012, the same objectives reappear in the nEpG: the undermining of federalism and state control of citizens' behavior. These proceedings disregard once again the will of the sovereign. The people in our country are independent and do not want any "behavior control". They stand by Switzerland's federal structure.

Various citizens' committees have brought the referendum about with great success (around 80,000 signatures!) so that the people of Switzerland can vote on the revised Epidemics Act on 22 September 2013.

Our arguments at a glance:

1. Switzerland has already a good Epidemics Act²

Switzerland needs no revision of the Epidemics Act! The current act of 18 September 1970 is excellent and covers all eventualities. It has been proven for over 40 years and has been continuously adapted to infectiological challenges. It served in full its purpose to fight communicable diseases to humans. The act's content is understandable for every citizen and provides high security for everyone. The competences and duties of the authority are clearly defined in accordance with our Swiss federal system. The current Epidemics Act is based on medical and scientific foundations. The individual rights are safeguarded.

2. Centralisation contradicts the Swiss concept of the State

It is the nature of federalism that the cantons regulate their affairs in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity: the federal government will only act where the cantons are not able to cope with their tasks. The same principle applies in the relation between the canton and the communes.

The proposed Epidemics Act would be a paradigm change. The health sector, which is within the competence of the cantons, would to a large extent be withdrawn from cantonal sovereignty and handed over to the federal government. Communes and cantons would be mere agents of centralized instructions.

The Federal Council intends to take this strange step "to strengthen the leadership role of the federal authorities" (Message on the revision of the EpG, p. 336).

It is undemocratic and against our federalism if the federal government enacts an Act for itself to seize power. The people are the sovereign, they do not want to be lead anywhere.

3. "All power to the Federal Office For Public Health (FOPH)" – the abundance of power of an absolutist ruler

The revised Epidemics Act makes the concentration of power in the FOPH obvious. A mere federal authority would have the final say throughout the country and would be given a free hand as the central command over the population and the cantons. Such a thing has never before existed in Switzerland!

According to nEpG, the FOPH could, for example, impose its national programs throughout Switzerland (Art. 5)³, it could dictate the cantons which measures they were to take against the population (Art. 8)⁴ and, according to the Message of the Federal Council (p. 370), organize "broad based campaigns for behaviour control". The FOPH would thus be authorized to collect our personal health data, to create personal files ("Fichen") and pass them on, even to the authorities of other states and to supranational and international organisations at any time (Art. 60, Art. 62)⁵. Given such great power makes us feel reminiscent of the "Comité du salut public" (so-called Welfare Committee) at the time of the French Revolution. We are also reminded of totalitarian states which regulate and determine the most intimate spheres of their citizens' lives; more recently of the American "Homeland Security".

In plain language: With the new Epidemics Act, the FOPH would be equipped with the abundance of power of an absolutist ruler while at the same time the separation of powers would be resolved and the cantons would be degraded to law enforcement agents: The FOPH would determine the basis of fighting the epidemics (legislative function), at the same time it would tell the cantons, population, health workers and the laboratories what they have to do (executive function), and finally it would "monitor" and "evaluate" its own encroachments (judiciary function)!

4. No Emergency Law in everyday life!

In the current Epidemics Act (EpG), administrative coercive measures are limited to "exceptional circumstances"⁶. Article 10 of the EpG is based on the emergency ordinances of the Federal Council in accordance with Article 185, Paragraph 3 of the Federal Constitution.⁷ Emergency regulations are to be limited in time.

With Article 6 of the nEpG something new would be introduced: the "particular situation". An unprecedented intrusion into our privacy would be made possible. E.g. a "moderate pandemic influenza"⁸ would be included in such particular situations, an elastic concept that can also include the annual flu epidemic. Without emergency decree, coercive measures could therefore be taken by the Federal Council. Hence the Message of the Federal Council (p. 365): "In particular situations the Federal Council shall get the power to declare vaccinations mandatory for certain population groups."

Referring to Article 6b nEpG the WHO would get a statutory power of decision in Switzerland for the first time.

"Article 6 'Particular situation'

Paragraph 1: A particular situation exists if: [...] b. The World Health Organization (WHO) has found that there is a health risk of international scope and by this public health in Switzerland would be at risk."

Such a law, with which Switzerland assigns its national decision-making power and thus

"A clear 'No' to the complete revision ..."

continued from page 1

a part of its sovereignty to an international organization, has never existed before.

Remember: In 2009 WHO proclaimed the highest pandemic level for the swine flu – with all the consequences for Switzerland. In retrospect, it was found that swine flu was less dangerous than a normal seasonal flu. Just imagine if at that time, unexamined vaccines would have been rushed off and used to mandatorily vaccinate our children as a vulnerable part of the population or elderly people or pregnant women. Since more and more information is available about the intertwining of the pharmaceutical industry with the WHO, serious concerns in relation to this Act are indicated.

Remember the drug Tamiflu, popularly known as "Ramiflu", which made only of the former Secretary of Defense *Rumsfeld* recover due to his financial involvement?⁹ On a recommendation by the WHO, Switzerland bought Tamiflu worth 4 million Swiss francs against the bird and swine flu and swine flu vaccine for 56 million Swiss francs which later had to be burned in large part as a hazardous waste. "Huge expense (for the taxpayers) no recompense."

5. Trust in the population instead of "behavior control"

In Switzerland, we are accustomed to think things through and to participate actively. If we get factually substantiated information, everybody makes appropriate and meaningful conclusions for his personal situation. That is fully guaranteed by the existing Epidemics Act.¹⁰

The nEpG, however, foresees new extended national programs (e.g. Articles 5, 11, 19, 20 and 21) as campaigns for "behavior control" of the population. Remember previous FOPH campaigns: "Sign up at the doctor's office if your willie has a flu" or "Don't take drugs if you don't feel good" – a language that perhaps corresponds to the intellectual level of the slogans' creator but never to that of the Swiss population. Quote from the Message of the Federal Council, p. 370: "Further measures include [...] broad-based campaigns for behavior control."

We neither need "behavior control" nor remote control from any Federal Authority! Therefore, a reasonable savings proposal for our government is to cancel without substitution all national programs and the related PR consultants and use the money for something reasonable.

6. No compulsory vaccinations

With the nEpG forced vaccinations are applied in a "particular situation" (Art. 6). In Article 21 "promotion of vaccina-

tions" mandatory vaccinations are provided even in normal situations: "The cantons promote vaccinations, by: [...] c. making sure that the people affected by the vaccination recommendations are fully vaccinated."

That means in plain language: With this Act, we would have reached the tyrannical State or a dictatorship of health.¹¹ Each vaccination (injection) is legally a physical injury.¹² Therefore everyone must be able to choose freely whether he wants to be vaccinated by a doctor he trusts in. People who do not want to be vaccinated for personal, spiritual or religious reasons must be respected in their decision. Does the Government want to ensure now with a centralized coercive apparatus that Articles 6 and 21 would be enforced against the wishes of the individual? The vast majority of the population is in favor of reasonable vaccination, but opposes to mandatory vaccination.

Last winter the Swiss population experienced unpleasant harbingers of such efforts as the non-vaccinated medical staff was marked in some hospitals.¹³

It has been shown that careful information of the population about the vaccinations made it possible to eradicate diseases on a voluntary basis such as in the case of polio.¹⁴

7. No monitoring and disclosure of data

Given disturbing reports of illegal collection of global electronic data by intelligence services, multiple items of the nEpG give rise to the greatest concern: hence Article 59, which provides for the exchange of personal data between the Confederation and the cantons to a degree that has no place in a liberal constitutional state (such as information on travel routes, places of residence and contact with people, animals and objects). Or Article 60, according to which the FOPH will make a file "on persons [...] who are sick, suspected of being sick, infected or suspected of being infectious or secrete pathogens."

Particularly alarming is the disclosure of personal data, including data on health, to foreign authorities as well as supranational and international organizations (Article 62). We do not wish our privacy to be internationalized!

The Europe-wide *eHealth online* database has already been planned. The corresponding pilot project in Switzerland is the *e-vaccination dossier*. Should this to date voluntary project become mandatory with the nEpG? This could serve well to enforce Article 21, par. c. nEpG: as law enforcement agents the cantons should "ensure that the persons affected by the vaccination recommendations are fully vaccinated".

8. Spiraling costs for the Confederation and the Cantons

All of these new creations would not be free of cost. In normal times, according to the Federal Council's Message, from 2013 on they would cost 4.4 million francs annually and 300 job percentage points¹⁵ more than today. In special situations – for example every winter during flu season – of course far larger sums would be needed. Where the Federal Council wants to take those millions remains untold.

Although the cantons will be degraded to mere law enforcement agents, it will not protect them from a cost increase of at least 4 million Swiss francs or 10.7% – so the Message (p. 440).

And if that were not enough: with Article 70 nEpG, the Federal Government would hand over a blank check to the pharmaceutical industry to cover the damage which may arise as a result of a recommended or ordered use of remedies issued by the Federal Government! This scheme is already included in the current EpG, we think it should be deleted.

9. For the health of humans or for bulging coffers of the pharmaceutical industry?¹⁶

With Article 6 nEpG the WHO gets the right to determine when "public health is at risk" in Switzerland. With the increasing influence of the pharmaceutical industry and private donors to the WHO, the latter is no longer independent, and there it is at risk of deviating from its original objectives. The WHO designs its vaccination recommendations under the eyes of the global pharmaceutical industry. The SAGE (*Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization*)¹⁷ of the WHO, which defines the pandemic levels, has strong affiliations to the pharmaceutical industry. In addition, the WHO is increasingly involved in financial dependence on private donors. This was the title of the "Tages-Anzeiger" on 22 February 2013: "*Bill Gates dominiert zusehends die WHO*" (Bill Gates increasingly dominates the WHO).

In America, new laws in health care always emerged in the context of the pharmaceutical industry's interests and positions in politics.¹⁸ In Switzerland, you label that as "pigs pot – pigs pot lid". – It raises the question to what extent interests of the pharmaceutical industry have played a role in drafting the nEpG.

10. Where does the complete revision of the EpG imposed from outside originate?

Since the bill is absolutely untypical of Switzerland, we have done some research

"A clear 'No' to the complete revision ..."

continued from page 2

on where this essentially totalitarian approach comes from. Our research led us to the German sociologist and political scientist *Ilona Kickbusch*¹⁹, inter alia consultant of the FOPH. Along with *Thomas Zeltner* – she has already been the driving force behind the Prevention Act²⁰. Note: *Ilona Kickbusch* has never been a member of the medical faculty, and she completely lacks an understanding of our Confederation and its health care system.

As a sociologist / political scientist her approach is a sociological and political, not a medical one. She relies on obsolete approaches including Third-Way theorist *Anthony Giddens* and *Gregory Bateson*, who, as a cultural anthropologist at the service of the CIA, prepared the ground for the US hegemony after the Second World War. *Kickbusch's* consultancy work in various national and international bodies in the health care system does not seem to be motivated by a genuine concern for health. The "Graduate Institute Geneva", whose post as Director for *Global Health* she holds, collaborates with the *Novartis Foundation for sustainable development* and is partially financed by the *Rockefeller Foundation*²¹.

The Swiss electorate is well advised to sharply rebuff this access to national sovereignty and maintains its proven federal healthcare system. ●

¹ "OECD und WHO halten fest, dass das Schweizerische Gesundheitssystem im internationalen Wettbewerb zu den besten gehört. (OECD and WHO emphasise that in international competition the Swiss health care system belongs to

the best.)" Stefan Spycher, OECD-WHO-Analyse des schweizerischen Gesundheitssystems: *Alter Wein in neuen Schläuchen? In: Die Volkswirtschaft*, 3-2012, p. 45.

² Federal Act on the Control of Communicable Diseases in Humans (Epidemics Act, EpG), originally introduced on 18 September 1970 (as of 1 January 2013).

³ Art. 5 nEpG "National programmes: [...] par. 2 The Confederation and the Cantons care for the implementation of national programmes within the scope of their responsibilities."

⁴ Art. 8 nEpG: "Preparatory measures: [...] par. 2: The FOPH can order the Cantons to take certain measures with regard to a special threat for public health, in particular, [...]"

⁵ Cf. "Our arguments at a glance" No. 7: "No surveillance and passing on of data". The US intelligence service NSA would certainly welcome it. (cf. NSA affair June 2013)

⁶ nEpG Article 10, paragraph 1: "If exceptional circumstances require it the Federal Council can order the necessary measures for the whole country or for individual parts of the country."

⁷ Art. 185 FC "External and internal security": [...] 3 "It [the Federal Council] may in direct application of this Article issue ordinances and rulings in order to counter existing or imminent threats of serious disruption to public order or internal or external security. Such ordinances must be limited in duration."

⁸ Message of the Federal Council, p. 363

⁹ "Kauft Ihr Land auch 'Rummy Flu' für x Millionen?" Dr med. D. Güntert, *Zeit -Fragen*, 27 Nov. 2006

¹⁰ Current Epidemics Act Article 3: "Information The Federal Office for Public Health publishes weekly, monthly and annual compilations on the basis of the notifications received in accordance with Article 27.

² If necessary it shall inform the authorities, the medical profession and the public by more releases.

³ It publishes guidelines for combating communicable diseases and how to deal with agents and continually adapts them to the latest scientific state."

¹¹ see July Zeh, *Corpus Delicti – ein Prozess*, Frankfurt am Main 2009.

¹² "In today's medicine the patient is treated as a responsible citizen. He must be informed fully and precisely before any intervention by his doctor about all the risks of an imminent intervention and

he must give his consent freely and independently. This information and consent obligation must apply also in the case of vaccines. Mass and mandatory vaccinations are therefore per se a problem for democracy. In today's world so much confidence has been battered in so many areas that this may not even take place in health care.", *Current Concerns*, 19 August 2009

¹³ Cantonal Hospital in Geneva, winter 2012/2013: during the annual flu season, staff, who did not vaccinate, had to wear a brown button with the text "I'm wearing a mask to protect you"; "Genfer Pflegegenossen wehren sich gegen Impfabzeichen", "Tages-Anzeiger" of 13 November 2012

¹⁴ Dr med. A. Bau, "Voluntary oral polio vaccine leads to polio eradication"

¹⁵ In addition to the recently adopted FOPH extension of 600 per cent of jobs by Federal Councillor Berse

¹⁶ Klaus Hartmann, "Impfen bis der Arzt kommt. Wenn bei Pharmakonzernen Profit über Gesundheit geht" (Vaccination until the doctor comes. If in pharmaceutical companies profit has priority over health), Munich 2012

¹⁷ Michael Winckler, "Das Impf-Kartell, Die Akte Schweinegrippe" (The vaccine cartel. The dossier of the swine flu), Tübingen 2009, pp. 48

¹⁸ Marcia Angell (former editor in chief of *The New England Journal of Medicine*), *The Truth About the Drug Companies*, 2004

¹⁹ During her studies in Constance she was a member of the left spectrum in the student body and the academic staff, then she made a meteoric rise, or would you rather say "march through the institutions"? For many years she has worked at the WHO headquarters in Geneva and she has an active and comprehensive consulting service in Switzerland (FOPH, Careum, Public Health Switzerland, Health Promotion Switzerland) and abroad (Rockefeller Foundation, International Social Security Association). I. Kickbusch's customers include the giant pharmaceutical and vaccine manufacturer *Merck* and *Pfizer Europe* and *Dohme MSD*. The question is whether Mrs Kickbusch acts of her own accord or performs "foreign orders".

²⁰ On her website www.ilonakickbusch.com we read: "She served as senior advisor to the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health for the development of the Swiss act on health promotion and prevention."

²¹ *Annual Report*, Graduate Institute, Global Health Programme, Geneva 2011, p. 20

Federalism – a guarantor of a meaningful fight against epidemics

No to the abolition of the good federal health care system in Switzerland

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Everyone agrees that Switzerland has a very well-developed and well-functioning health care system. This is only possible because of the responsibility of the cantons and communes which adopt their responsibilities on a small-scale level.

- The projected Epidemics Act would amount to a paradigm shift: It would deprive the cantons, in whose responsibility the health care sector lies in accordance with the Federal Constitution, of their cantonal sovereignty to a large part.
- There is no need for a centralized control.
- It is a well-known fact that a new organization always generates new costs, as well. Can we afford another state apparatus, the benefit of which is not proved in any way?

The legal text and the Message of the Swiss Federal Council reveal a strange and highly alarming trend in many passages:

Strengthening the leading role of the federal authorities?

- On Article 4 nEpG (new Epidemics Act): “In order to strengthen the leading role of the federal authorities, the federal government – in consultation with the cantons – will be entrusted with the competence to define the essential national goals and strategies in the area of detection, monitoring, prevention and control of communicable diseases [...]” (Message, p. 336)

“To strengthen the leading role of the federal authorities” is a wording that does in no way correspond to the Swiss way of thinking. It cannot and should not be the objective of a federal law that the federal authorities’ leading role is to be strengthened! The people are the sovereign, and they do not want to be led.

Rather, it reflects the nature of the federalist understanding that the cantons handle their affairs themselves as much as possible, and the federal authorities only become active – by rule of the subsidiarity principle – in those cases in which the cantons are not able to cope with their tasks.

The Federal Constitution reads accordingly:

Article 3 Cantons

The Cantons are sovereign except to the extent that their sovereignty is

limited by the Federal Constitution. They shall exercise all rights that are not vested in the Confederation.

This principle also applies to the health sector. According to Article 118, Section 1 FC, “the Confederation shall, within the limits of its powers, take measures for the protection of health.” Hence the confederation is to legislate on “the combating of communicable, widespread or particularly dangerous human and animal diseases”. (Article 118 paragraph 2 b). The Confederation fulfilled its constitutional competence in the Epidemics Act (EA) of 1970, which was adapted to the particular requirements of the time, with numerous revisions. There is no need for a new law, and certainly not for one that breaks the framework of the Constitution.

“In consultation with the cantons” – a poor imitation of federalism

- On Article 4 and 5 nEpG: The Federal Council determines the objectives and strategies, “in consultation with the cantons” (Art. 4), the FOPH (Federal Office of Public Health) will work out so-called “national programs” “in consultation with the cantons” (Article 5).

In many responses to the legislative process by consultation, the cantons’ degradation to mere enforcement agents was rejected: “8 cantons and 4 organizations reject the solution, because it only provides for a hearing of the cantons.” (Message, p. 331) Therefore, the Federal Council has replaced the word hearing by consultation and asserted that the cantons might “participate [...] in the development of goals and strategies for the control of communicable diseases.” (p. 334)

Whoever thinks that the demands for the preservation of federalism are satisfied is completely wrong. For “participation of the Cantons” has not meant for a long time that all 26 cantonal governments would be allowed to submit a written reply to an affair and that those comments would have a specific corrective effect. Rather in the acting of the Confederation today, the participation of the cantons consists of the participation of some board members in the respective “Conference of Directors”, here the GDK (*Conference of Cantonal Health Directors*) at the meetings of the Federal Administrative Agency, hence the FOPH.

*It is just like in a “future workshop”:
In the so-called “participatory process”*

some people may participate and express their opinion – this has absolutely nothing to do with the direct democratic right of citizens to decide. Similarly, the federal constitutional powers of the cantons are not observed merely by some Councillors attending meetings of the FOPH.

FOPH national programs shift the cantons’ responsibility over to the Confederation

- Article 5 nEpG: “The subject areas of national programs are determined in coordination with the objectives and policies (Art. 4 E-EpG) by the FOPH.” (p. 360)
- “Subject of a national program can be a health risk or a certain disease.” (p. 360)

In plain language: The point is not to fight generally dangerous epidemics – rather the cantons’ constitutional responsibility for health care is simply taken over.

The “consultation with the cantons” is to serve the FOPH’s interest “to coordinate its activities in a particular subject area with those of other public and private stakeholders at the federal, cantonal and communal level and to coordinate them.” (p. 360) No federal division of responsibilities at all!

Communes do not exist in the EpG

During the consultation process criticism arose that the communes are not included in the cooperation to combat epidemics. (p. 332) Obviously, as a kind of appeasement, the communal level is suddenly mentioned in the message (p. 360).

It is a fact that without the full and responsible participation of the communes and their finely meshed organization nothing will work in Switzerland when it comes to combating a health hazard or an environmental disaster. That should be well known in Berne.

Cantons degraded to be mere enforcement agents

- On Article 77 nEpG: “The powers of the Confederation concerning the supervision and coordination of enforcement measures by the cantons are amplified in the bill.”

The cantons are therefore not only to become mere law enforcement agencies, but the Confederation is to be appointed to the actual controller of the cantons. As citi-

"Federalism – a guarantor ..."

continued from page 4

zens who are used to federalism we begin to wonder from where – and on whose behalf – the wind blows. The state structure of the Swiss Confederation and the revised EpG are like chalk and cheese anyway.

Whoever thinks this criticism is exaggerated should read the message of the Federal Council. On page 337 it states, for example: "It [i.e. the Federal Government] may dictate measures to the cantons in particular threats to public health for uniform enforcement and instruct them to take certain enforcement measures (prohibitions of public events, isolation of certain persons, etc.)."

That is just what we need, that under the rule of the EpG any federal official might dictate the Canton Ticino such measures. Certainly, we know for sure that cantons and communes have to remain responsible to look after their healthcare requirements.

"Coordinating body" and "mission body" – two completely unnecessary centralist switch points that have been rejected by many addressees in the legal consultation process

– On Articles 54/55 nEpG: "The nEpG provides for the creation of a 'coordinating body' including 'subsidiary bodies' that improve cooperation between the Confederation and the Cantons, coordinate the measures to prepare for situations with a special health risk and aim at a uniform implementation." Furthermore it is to coordinate the respective information and communication. (Article 54) In addition to this coordination body, a second new body is to be created; a so-called "mission body" that advises and supports the Federal Council "in the management of a special or extraordinary situation". (Article 55) "Federal agencies, the cantons, and if necessary other professionals and the economy are to be represented in these new structures." (Message, p. 338)

Although in the legislative process by consultation many cantons, cities, parties and associations have rejected the necessity of a coordinating body and / or a mission body, the Federal Council simply ignores them. (p. 332)

It remains obscure why the federal government requires so many new bodies for "coordination" or issuing commands over the cantons and population.

The only thing that is clear – that way the already oversized FOPH would establish other departments with numerous jobs after the prevention law was rejected by

Parliament and the hoped-for extension was denied to the FOPH.

Now they establish prevention via the Epidemics Act and receive the federal funds for a "coordinating body", a "mission body" and many other new items of expenditure.

The revised EpG would cause significant additional costs for the federal government

"According to current knowledge, an additional 4.4 million francs and 300 job percentage points are required annually (see Table 4). The additional expenditure will be estimated at a later time. The Federal Council will then decide on the counter-financing of this annual burden.

These expected additional costs will arise regardless of epidemiological events and threats. In crisis situations, necessary measures to protect the public health will certainly cause additional charges." (Message, p. 429)

The Federal Council has already mentioned in a subtle manner that this cost estimate is likely to be far exceeded in reality: If higher costs occur, the Federal Council may say that it had said yes, the increased demand estimates were "of current knowledge". In any case, given the additional costs of 55,000 francs and 10 percentage points for the coordinating body and the mission body were therefore unlikely modest (p. 329). By the way, 4.4 million and 300 percentage points are a handsome sum – all this without "epidemiological events and threats". That is, in case the annual flu epidemic is pending or a dead bird lies on the shore of a Swiss lake, the matter would have to be much more expensive.

This raises the urgent question: Where will the Federal Council take the millions from, on whose "counter-financing" will it then decide?

Enforcement agents – the cantons – will have to dig deeper into their pockets

And who is going to pay for the enforcement of the FOPH' commands? Correct, it is the cantons that with the new Epidemic Act will have no more say, but undoubtedly will have more to pay.

Although the Federal Council whitewashes itself by saying that due to the "great heterogeneity of the cantons" (once called federalism) the costs cannot be precisely quantified. (Message, p. 432) But some things are fixed anyway:

- The revised EpG will lead to higher costs for all cantons.
- Especially those cantons will have to expect much higher costs, "which are currently less involved in the prevention and control of communicable diseases".

- The Federal Council assumes "additional costs in the amount of approximately four million francs" for the cantons, "which corresponds to a cost increase of around 10.7%".
- The additional costs for the cantons "depend on future regulations and objectives of the Federal Council so that an estimate of the ensuing costs for the cantons is subject to greater uncertainty". (p. 432)

In plain language: The future "goals and strategies" of the Federal Council (nEpG Article 4) and the "national programs" of the FOPH (nEpG Article 5), whose contents and size the population and the cantonal authorities do not know anything about, will cost several millions more – and their coercive enforcement will put an even greater burden on the cantons.

Power headquarters FOPH (Federal Office of Public Health)

- It is particularly alarming that in the new Epidemics Act the FOPH does no longer hide behind the Federal Act, but openly declares the intended rapid expansion of its power position. In the former Epidemics Act, the FOPH was mentioned, but only as an information and advisory board. A mere federal authority should now have the say all over the country according to a federal law and have a carte blanche as an absolutist command center towards the population and the cantons? Such a process can only be described as scandalous for the federalist and direct democratic country of Switzerland.
- In accordance with Article 5 nEpG the FOPH could deliberately set up specific national programs for the detection, monitoring, prevention and control of communicable diseases and make the cantons enforce these programs – although the cantons are, in accordance with the Federal Constitution, responsible for the health care system!
- In accordance with Article 8, paragraph 2 the FOPH might, "order the cantons to take certain measures with respect to a particular risk to public health", for example "measures with respect to individual persons" or "with respect to the people" or "the distribution of remedies".

The cantons as mere law enforcement agents for forced vaccinations and sex education programs (allegedly for the purpose of HIV/AIDS prevention!) of a lobby within the FOPH which are slaves to foreign countries and focused on specific sexual practices?

- The FOPH "informs the public, certain groups of people as well as authorities and experts about the dangers of com-

EHEC endemic epidemic: Successful disease control due to federalist structure

by Dr med. Andreas Bau

The exemplary way of dealing with the EHEC¹ endemics² in Northern Germany in May 2011 which developed into an epidemic in the course of time, shows impressively how capable a careful, responsible, close cooperation of various decentralized institutions can be. In a minimum of time, the Hamburg Institute of Hygiene and the Robert Koch Institute were able to identify the often lethal and in this case new EHEC bacterium by an act of close cooperation of several clinics and their doctors, led by the University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf (inter alia close cooperation with the Beijing Genomics Institute, a research institute near Hong Kong),³ and so they could provide hundreds of treatment centers for the often very seriously ill patients. The intensive tracking for the origin of the contaminated food was successful within a few days thanks to a constructive cooperation between different institutions. Here, the main responsibility was at the Robert Koch Institute and the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment. Moreover, the vegetable producers domiciled in very different places and suspected to be the cause of the disease could be won for cooperation. It was the interdisciplinary approach and the short-distance structures that once again proved to be excellent as they had often done in the past. The crisis team ensured cooperation at eye level. The enormous commitment of all the actors involved was not weakened by organizational, controller-related obstacles. By this, the lives of many patients could be saved. The University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf can rightly be proud of having overcome the many challenges within the EHEC epidemic so brilliantly. The processes and the overcoming of the EHEC epidemic that occurred in Germany in 2011 should encourage us to a deep-

er reflection and at the same time it should be a warning not to reduce federal structures in health care or elsewhere and replace them by centralized ones, as pushed forward by various sides.

Given a EHEC endemic that first was limited to a small region, an approach commanded by a central office – as the WHO or a Brussels-based large controlling authority – would presumably have failed miserably. What can be solved locally should be solved locally. What cannot be solved like this should be solved in a subsidiary way in collaboration with higher institutions. •

¹ EHEC: Enterohaemorrhagic Escherichia coli, name of the agent. It is a dangerous highly con-

tagious infectious disease. The highly aggressive bacterium EHEC 0104:H4 which was responsible for the cases of the disease and which originated in a combination of bacteria had previously been unknown; “man-made”? The disease is so dangerous because of complications due to the often lethal kidney failure in a HUS (hemolytic uremic syndrome).

² Endemic: *constant occurrence of a disease in a restricted area. Epidemic: very frequent occurrence of a disease in a restricted area and time.*

³ A visiting scientist at the University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE), Dr Liang Yang, contacted the Beijing Genomics Institute (Research Institute near Hong Kong), which has devices that are able to decipher the genetic sequences at terrific speed. The result was available within a few days after the transmission of a pathogen sample: This is an unusual strain of E.coli, with a particular combination of pathogenic attributes found in the genome.

(Source: *UKE news*, September 2011)

Eradication of polio through voluntary oral vaccination

anb. In the 1950s up to 10,000 people, mostly children between 2 and 8 years came down with polio in Germany every year, especially in the summer months. Each epidemic hundreds of children had to be ventilated temporarily or sometimes lifelong in artificial lungs due to a paralysis of the diaphragm. There were many deaths. As the virus is primarily transmitted via a droplet infection, hence also via water, a number of hygienic measures was taken such as closing schools, kindergartens and public swimming pools and imposing a bathing ban for bathing areas in lakes and rivers. The health authorities of different countries and regions could decide independently about the protective measures necessary during a polio epidemic.

In the early sixties the attenuated live vaccine against polio which was developed by *Sabin* was the beginning of the triumphal march as an oral polio vaccine with the motto: “oral vaccine is sweet – polio is cruel”.¹ The vaccination was a recommended vaccination and neither an obligatory nor a mandatory vaccination. The people were keen on participating in this reasonable vaccination which was accompanied by only little side-effects. Thus, the polio disease could be eradicated in a worldwide campaign within a few years, except for some occasional centers of infections. A blessing for the entire world.

¹ www.polio-initiative-europa.de/praevention/impfung

Shall the FOPH be enabled to identify vaccination opponents nationwide by only one mouse click?

Reading the revised Swiss Epidemics Act (nEpG) concerning the plans about data collection, particularly the documentation of vaccinated persons (Article 24, paragraph 2¹), and the duty of the cantons “to ensure that the relevant persons are fully vaccinated” (!) (Article 21 paragraph c) one may ask how this comprehensive, centralized data collection is to be conducted. So far these data have only been known to the family doctor and documented in the personal vaccination card.

It is not surprising that “eHealth Switzerland” has launched a pilot project at the same time for an online vaccination dossier: “For the first time ‘eHealth Switzerland’ wants to support a nationally coordinated ‘eHealth project’ by implementing the electronic vaccination dossier. The topic is very useful to make ‘eHealth Switzerland’ known all over Switzerland.”²

“eHealth” is a very controversial project. It was established by the EU Commission in 2004 by the “action plan for a European eHealth area” (see also “10 Killerkriterien für eHealth” [10 killer cri-

teria for eHealth], *H. Bhend*, Swiss Medical Journal SAEZ 2011; 9249, and “Wenn die Diagnose zum öffentlichen Gut wird” [If the diagnosis becomes a public good...] *J. Wagner*, SAEZ 2010; 91:38).

It must be considered that the planned “eVaccination dossier” will become part of the future “ePatientdossier”:

“The electronic vaccination dossier is not just about the digitalization of paper-based information to make them electronically available independent from time and location. It is also of medical value due to the option of an automated electronic vaccination control. Hence vaccination gaps can be detected, making the data available for the user.”³ An extensive collection of personal data is to be set up: “Personal data: Name, age, gender, place of residence, vaccination; medical history, i.e. diagnoses, allergies, contraindications, vaccine complications, and serology titer determinations; professional and geographical risk profiles.”⁴

Compatible to the nEpG “there are plans for nationwide electronic service for

checking the vaccination and immune status. Vaccination gaps of a person can then be found online (eVaccinationCheckService).”⁵

In the future persons who refuse to be vaccinated might be identified nationwide by only one mouse click – brave new world!

Dr med. Karla Neuhaus

¹ “Die zuständigen kantonalen Behörden erheben den Anteil der geimpften Personen und informieren das BAG regelmässig über die Impfungsrate und über die Massnahmen, die zu deren Erhöhung getroffen wurden.” (“The respective cantonal authorities register the share of vaccinated persons and inform the FOPH on a regular basis about the vaccination rate and about the measures taken to increase it.”)

² www.e-health-suisse.ch/umsetzung/00135/00218/index.html?lang=de (as of 20 June 2013)

³ eHealth Suisse. “Zwischenbericht elektronisches Impfdossier”, 19.04.2012, p. 4

⁴ eHealth Suisse. “Elektronisches Impfdossier”, 17.01.2013, p.4

⁵ Report of the hearing “Austauschformat elektronisches Impfdossier”, draft, 21.05.2013

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Federalism – a guarantor...”

continued from page 5

municable diseases and the possibilities for their prevention and control.” (Article 9 nEpG).

The revised Law on Epidemics would open the floodgates for the FOPH to expand its unspeakable “information campaigns” that have been applied for years to dissolve our society of values (“For a one night stand take at least a rubber johnny”, or in the current campaign: “See the doctor if your willie has a cold” or the like).

– The FOPH is to take over the management of communicable diseases “in coordination with international systems” (Art. 11); the FOPH appoints individual laboratories as “reference centers” (Article 17); the FOPH estab-

lishes a “national vaccination plan”, which all doctors and health care workers have to submit to (Art. 19); the FOPH is the monitoring and evaluation office (Article 24).

In plain language: With the new Epidemics Act, the FOPH would be equipped with the abundance of power of an absolutist ruler while at the same time the separation of powers would be resolved and the cantons would be degraded to law enforcement agents: The FOPH determines the basis of fighting the epidemics (legislative function), at the same time it would tell the cantons, populations, health workers and the laboratories what they had to do (executive function), and finally it would “monitor” and “evaluate” its own encroachments (judiciary function)! •

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Only a well-equipped militia is a guarantor for the security of our country

Courage to change course – Swiss security policy at a turning point

by Thomas Kaiser



Our Heimat must be defended, not with the old Mirage, as shown on the photo, but with the new Gripen. (picture ma)

On 22 September the Swiss population holds a vote on the general mandatory military service and thus on the question whether the militia is to remain or whether it should be turned into a professional army by making it an army of volunteers.

This initiative is part of a series of political initiatives that, for 20 years now, have been working towards a reduction of defense capabilities and ultimately towards dismantling the sovereignty of our country.

With the argument of the security dividend as a “profit distribution” after the Cold War, the Swiss citizens were lured into saying goodbye to combat readiness, to agree to a gradual reduction of the army and to be guided by the romancers dreaming of an always peaceful Europe. Switzerland, the argument goes, is now only “surrounded by friends” and therefore no longer at risk. A good perspective after all ...

Indeed, reality is different, and what our country has been going through for several years, is anything but peaceful behaviour of the neighbours. No country in

Europe is currently being under attack to the same extent as Switzerland. There is an economic and financial war going on, and Switzerland has become the target of bankrupt industrial countries. Political stability, the sound economy, the well regulated financial system and a functioning direct democracy are in the way of the power politics and centralism of the neighbouring countries that have united in the EU, a supranational power structure that sneers at any form of democracy. Those who do not want to see these signs, have either nothing to do with democracy, are keen on a post in Brussels, addicted to power themselves or just naive. Anyone who wants to understand reality is warmly recommended to read the book “Mut zur Kursänderung – Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik am Wendepunkt” (Courage to change course – Swiss security policy at the turning point) by the *Group Giardino*, published by *Eikos** publishers. This collaborative work of several former high-ranking officers of the Swiss army reveals the unvarnished reality of security policy and brings home the condition of our army

which has been led into an extremely precarious condition through unfavourable reforms. The various authors of the articles in this book draw a clear picture of the “threat” and the so far inadequate military response.

The army being reformed to death

The starting position is clear: Through several reform steps the army has been slashed both in terms of staff and material to an extent that the authors call a “clear violation of the constitutional mandate” whose top priority is the defence of the country. For good reasons the authors start at this point and clearly demonstrate what the consequences of this policy will be.

Reading the chapter “350 Jahre Militärgeschichte und nichts gelernt?” (Nothing learned from 350 years of military history?) by *Hermann Suter*, graduated historian and former lieutenant colonel, is amazed, on the one hand, how history repeats itself and, on the other hand, how each era has its own peculiarities and idio-

"Only a well-equipped militia ..."

continued from page 8

syncretisms. One thing is clear. It is always people who take bad decisions that have a devastating impact on the country and the people out of short-sighted self-interest or personal insufficiencies. In several cases this has led to blunders with terrible consequences in terms of military strategy and armaments policy. Already during the Franco-German War of 1870/71 Switzerland was not sufficiently equipped to prevent an expansion of the war on its territory. Herzog, the then deployed General, pointed out to the Federal Council the inadequate military preparedness, however without much success, until he wrote a revealing report on the state of the army. "In his report on the border occupation of 1870/71 Herzog covered with ruthless candour the shortcomings and inadequacies of the army." (p. 31) Only years later there was a response to it and the army was being adapted to the effective threat.

... "where masculinity fades away every day" ...

In 1905, the victory of an Asian country over a European great power for the first time in modern history, namely the defeat of the Russian Empire by Japan, left a deep impression. A quote from the *Allgemeine Schweizerische Militärzeitung* (General Swiss Military Newspaper) of that time brings it to the point: "Let us bear in mind at any time that only a long soldierly education had made it possible to gain the victory for Japan's flag and that we, the Swiss, if we are willing to assert our existence, have to intervene with all our energy against the symptoms of an ailing soul of the people, where manhood dwindles every day and where money is threatening to replace the concept of the fatherland." (p. 33) Whichever way you look at it, more than 100 years later we are probably back at the same stage. We have an army that, if degradation continues, will not be able to protect our grandparents, wives and children against possible attacks from the outside, and we live in a society that would rather deal with market gains, leisure, fun and pleasure than tackle the upcoming tasks, including the military ones, and complete them in a sovereign way that is our way.

Anyone, who currently believes that the world has become more peaceful since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, turns a blind eye on reality. Things that have been clear to everybody since 1945, "No more war" on European territory and certainly not "from German soil", turned into bitter reality a few years after the opening of the Iron Curtain. The disintegration

of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the role of the West in that process show very clearly who destroyed the desire for "peace" in no time with a "new dimension of war". At least since NATO's illegal war of aggression against what remained of Yugoslavia, the theory that "democracies do not wage war" has been reduced to absurdity. The fact that all neighbouring countries except Austria were involved leaves an uncomfortable feeling, especially when you see that today many of these countries put enormous pressure on Switzerland together with the EU and pick on its democratic legal system. The urgent federal act on the tax dispute with the United States, currently negotiated in parliament, is an expression of how great powers deal with small states. If there is no more inner will for defence and if basic political attitudes do no longer include the preservation of state sovereignty, the state will soon turn into a banana republic which will have lost all the respect on the international level.

"Unaltered power blocs"

Former Major General *Franz Betschon*, main contributor to the reviewed book, says that Switzerland always earned respect when it could defend against attacks from outside: verbally or, when diplomacy failed, even militarily. "Against blackmailing of any kind the military arm of the security policy is still essential when it comes to mere survival." (p. 55) Franz Betschon shows in the chapter "Unveränderte Machtblöcke" (Unaltered power blocs) that, despite the ending of the Cold War and the ensuing initial, significant shift of power towards the USA, we have again the two well-known and an additional third power bloc with China and Asia. The development ranges from a mono-polar to a multi-polar world, where the old power blocs face each other in a somewhat different constellation. "With the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus the end of the Cold War we have had the chance until 1993 to integrate Russia into NATO, and thus the opportunity to create new stable relationships. But the US had become high-spirited. Russia has been taken to the cleaners. The American leaders had another goal in mind than recognizing Russia as an equal partner." (p. 52)

Anyone who has read the book by *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, "The Grand Chessboard", knows that the author, a former security advisor to the US government, only sees the future of the United States as a world power with predominance on the Eurasian continent and thus defines the direct sphere of Russian influence as a legitimate desirability of the United States. This is – how else should it be – all about the exploitation of mineral resources. Ac-

ording to Brzezinski's view the US can (and must) remain a world power if they dominate the Eurasian continent.

Russia protects international law

The mentioned integration of Russia into NATO may be an option. Another one would have been the dissolution of NATO. After the collapse of the *Warsaw Pact*, it was without necessity and legitimacy, because it had been founded in 1949 to prevent communist attacks on its member states. Probably wars such as the Kosovo war, the Afghanistan war and, ultimately, the Libya war would not have been feasible along these lines. At that time, domestically weakened Russia was not able to oppose the upgraded US. Today the situation is different. The reinvigorated Russia has become obvious in the case of Syria. The veto in the UN Security Council has prevented the Western powers from having bogarted Syria. After the experience in Libya, Russia will not permit another violation of international law. The fact that Russia is now taking on this role, is reassuring. It has put an initial stop to the US tyranny, and the other states are committed to international law.

In the current situation of the constant attacks on Switzerland, especially from the Western camp, it might be worth considering for our country to work more closely with Russia, particularly in the military sector. A suggestion that the Russian President *Dmitry Medvedev* has already made during his visit to Switzerland in 2009. (Cf. *Zeit-Fragen*, No. 38 2009) This would be better than continuing to join the US and its submissive vassals in NATO.

The persisting tensions between the major powers also have an impact on Switzerland, mainly because our country has always preserved a certain independence, but has increasingly been attacked and hurt, especially by the former friendly countries of the Western camp. Our state is very poorly prepared for such things. Hence Franz Betschon draws the following conclusion: "The collapse of the international legal system, the disintegration of the quality of our politics and the disintegration of Swiss military security component allow the desire to make use of our resources. On the military level, our country is currently not able to guarantee its obligation under international law to maintain the monopoly of power of the state. The struggle for getting down to the nitty-gitty is in full swing." (p. 61) This is an assessment that actually requires a clear reversal in policy.

"Switzerland in the vise"

In other chapters of the book, written by different authors, the struggle for global

continued on page 10

Russia, the ideal arms supplier for Switzerland

Prof Dr Albert A. Stahel, Institute for Strategic Studies, Wädenswil

Whereas before 1992, the Soviet Union had an excellent defense industry that developed and produced modern weapons, after the end of the Cold War the Russian defense industry was neglected under the presidency of *Yeltsin* and almost shut down. During some years the Russian arms export was limited largely to the supply of weapons, which originated from the arsenals of the Russian armed forces. New developments were stopped.

Only after *Putin* took over power, since 1999, the defense sector has been again promoted by the Russian Federation little by little. In recent years, the defense industry of the Russian Federation has developed and put into operation a range of modern weapons. This includes the development of the different variants of the defense system S-300 against aircrafts and ballistic missiles. The oldest version, the S-300PS, was put into service already in 1982/83.¹ 1998, the further developed S-300VM was ready for use, so was the S-400 Triumph in 2007. The S-400 has an operational range of 250 km. With this system short-and medium-range ballistic missiles (range up to 5,500 miles) can be intercepted and destroyed with a conventional fragmentation warhead. A recent development is the 40N6 missile, which is ready in 2013 with a range of 400 km. The S-500 Prometheus with an operational range of 500–600 km is in development, with which even intercontinental ballistic missiles (range over 5,500 km, equipped

with a nuclear warhead) can be intercepted and destroyed. For all of these systems target detection and tracking radars have been developed.

If this information is true – which cannot be doubted due to the tradition of Russian armaments industry of anti-aircraft weapons – the performance of the S-400 exceeds that of the American defense system Patriot PAC-3 by far. The PAC-3 has an operational range of 15 to 45 km against aircrafts and ballistic missiles.

Since the ill-conceived decommissioning of the Bloodhound anti-aircraft missiles under Federal Councilor *Ogi* in 1999, Switzerland has no more far reaching air defense systems. In case of procuring the system S-400, Switzerland could be protected against aircrafts as well against ballistic missiles.

But Russia also produces other military equipment, which should be of interest for a small state because of the price-performance ratio. This includes the multi-purpose fighter Su-27 from *Suchoi* in particular. Since the spectacular maneuver *Pugaschews Cobra* in Le Bourget in 1989 more aircraft models based on the Su-27 by *Suchoi* have been developed as fighters and fighter-bombers, so the Su-30, -33, -35, -35S and -37. But still the Su-27, which entered service in 1984, with the maximum speed of Mach 2.35 and the operational range of 3,530 km enjoys an excellent international reputation. A few years ago, the Indian Air Force Su-30 proved to be superior to the US Air Force

F-15 in an exercise.

Switzerland, which is increasingly treated like a rogue state and extorted by the so-called “friends”, would be well-advised if its government

and parliament took Russia's arms offers seriously in future. In contrast to the western “friends” the Russians has always treated Switzerland with respect. Given the centuries of lasting relationship and friendship between Switzerland and Russia – we would like to mention the Admiral of *Peter the Great*, *F.J. Lefort* (1656-1699) from Geneva, Colonel and educator of the Grand Duke *Alexander*, *F.C. de Laharpe* (1754-1838) from Vaud and the general and military adviser to various Tsars, *Antoine-Henri Jomini* (1779–1869) from Vaud – Russia is the ideal arms supplier for Switzerland in these difficult times. •



Albert A. Stahel
(picture Jean-Jacques Ruchti)

¹ Jana Hoková, *Current Developments in Russia's Ballistic Missile Defense*, The Marshall Institute, 2013, pp. 10-11.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Only a well-equipped militia ...”

continued from page 9

dominance is explained clearly and bluntly. Although we experienced the end of the first Cold War at the beginning of the 1990s, however, “the world had abruptly been involved in a second Cold War.” (p. 63) Anyone who observes the world attentively, can hardly contradict this assessment. The impact of the financial and economic crises has increased the power behaviour of the western industrialized nations. The superpower United States, which faces bankruptcy every three months, lost its dominance in many areas, especially by the rapid rise of Asia and the resulting confidence in the Asian countries. What was once forced out of the former vassal states is now taken from the

rich countries of the West. Here, Switzerland is a grateful victim, because in this country you hardly reckon with the evilness of actually friendly states. So *René Zeller* aptly writes in the editorial of the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 22-23 June entitled “Schweiz im Schraubstock” (Switzerland in the vise): “It is in fact uncomfortable to be surrounded by friends, who put the power before law, who rather threaten than negotiate. It is as if the Swiss financial center was put in a vice.”

In this delicate and “uncomfortable” situation, nearly two decades of disaster in the Swiss Department of Defense become visible, apart from the weak leadership of the Swiss magistrates in the Federal Council. And here the authors do not mince their words. Anyone who has done his military service knows what the mili-

tary specialists talk about. The excellent strategic and political analysis contrasts in particular with the disaster of our army that has once been the pride of our nation, because with all bad planning it showed so much determination that Switzerland was neither drawn into the First nor into the Second World War.

The degeneration of international law

Today, the fronts seem to be less precise as they still were during the Second World War and the Cold War. Nevertheless, the geostrategic analysis reveals that the world has in no way become a safer place and that a military confrontation between single states is basically possible even if they are considered to be “friends”. No-

continued on page 11

"Only a well-equipped militia ..."

continued from page 10

body had expected that Yugoslavia would break apart and the peoples, so closely related over decades, have reacted to each other with hatred and violence. Ten years are an enormously short time. The idea to reduce an army in so-called "times of peace" and then be able to react on time with an "upgrading phase" in order to strengthen the army has to be banned into the realm of phantasy after all the experiences made. In accordance with the "experts" who are responsible for the *Reform of the Army XXI*, it was said that 10 years ahead would be long enough to realise in time that an acute situation of threat was looming. "Since the founding of the federal state in 1848, Switzerland's military history has not seen a more massive destruction process of national defence than in the past twenty years. The responsible politicians – the state government and the majority of the Federal Councillors – justify their behaviour by saying that the scenario of "war" have receded into the far distance, and if the worst comes to the worst there would be enough time to eliminate the deficiencies within a reasonable 'upgrading phase'. Here, the wish was father to the thought." (p. 117). In the case of Yugoslavia it would have meant that what was going to happen in the country 10 years later had already been noticed in the early 1980s. At this time, there was no talk of a quick end to the Soviet Union. For the Yugoslavs all this happened almost overnight. That in the end NATO attacked militarily without UN mandate and that international law was violated shows how far the West has moved away from internationally applicable legal standards

and how international mechanisms for the prevention of war were abrogated.

"Kosovo War as the watershed"

In autumn 1999, i.e. six months after the war in Kosovo, the former US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor *Henry Kissinger*, certainly no dove, warned in an article in the *Welt am Sonntag* of 15 September 1999 that the high-handedness of the NATO during the war against Serbia led to a violation of international law: "The varied allied leaders are correct in treating Kosovo as the watershed. The Alliance abandoned its historical definition of itself as a strictly defensive coalition and insisted on the right to occupy a province of a state with which it was not at war. And it reinforced this unprecedented ultimatum by coupling it with the demand for the right of free movement of NATO troops throughout Yugoslavia. An issue that would have even been rejected by a moderate Serbian leadership.

This abrupt abandonment of the concept of national sovereignty, coupled with a belligerent diplomacy, marked a new style of foreign policy driven by domestic politics and the invocation of universal moralistic slogans."

Franz Betschon points exactly to this state of degeneration of law: "For many years, since the end of Cold War, however in an accelerated manner, international law has been hollowed increasingly. The right to pre-emptive war, the law of the jungle, then, has gradually made itself the maxim." (p. 84) Seen this apparent disregard for the international legal system, there is an urgent need to adapt to all kinds of military scenarios. The authors of this publication are exactly asking to do so.

The fact that the current candidate for chancellor of the German Socialist Party threatens a friendly country, namely Switzerland, to send the "cavalry", may seem a verbal derailment of a boorish power politician of German origin for some people, but it actually shows the excesses of the arrogance of power. First, there are always only words ... Did we not experience that already? Currently the case with Germany shows the arrogance with which a big state, in violation of all diplomatic practice, dictates the smaller one what to do. To obtain a correct assessment of reality, we must not fool ourselves. We can read it almost every day in the newspapers.

"The way in which they deal with Switzerland within the Western camp, the way it is humiliated and blackmailed, is unparalleled in history. Switzerland is one of the main trading partners of the EU, especially of Germany, and yet it is rebuked disrespectfully even by German regional politicians. It cannot be assumed that the same politicians would dare to treat the Netherlands, Belgium or France and Italy in such

a way." (p. 157) The way they deal with Greece is perhaps a foretaste of what a State within and outside the EU has to expect.

In such a tense situation in which "good friends" are building up a (still) verbal threat of force, the question of our own defence capability is the logical consequence. The threat scenarios, as they are recorded by the authors, are varied and do not necessarily lead to a sound sleep.

Switzerland is blackmailed

Today, we are basically facing a similar situation as our forefathers during the war of 1870/71: a poorly equipped army and a political leadership that does not take the constitutional order serious. Especially the last three weeks have shown how the US tries to subdue Switzerland by using blackmail and threats. All the countries around us are watching exactly how much resistance Switzerland is showing, and are already figuring out when to launch their "attack". Even if everyone talks about a global world, this means to throw sand in the eyes of those who think this is all inevitable. The great powers have nothing else in mind than protecting their self-interests and enforcing them on a global level, and, where necessary, also by force of arms.

Maintaining a well-equipped militia

According to the authors, the Swiss Armed Forces have been massively weakened and degraded. This is unflatteringly revealed in this book. But they are still there, and in Switzerland, the population has a unique opportunity to vote on vital questions such as war and peace or resistance and surrender. This gives an opportunity to correct the mistakes of the past and to give back to the country a defence army worth the name. On 22 September, we are called to vote on the preservation of our militia, and next spring about the partly replacement of the "Tiger", the new fighter aircraft Gripen. Alongside with all the justified criticism about the current state of the Army, the authors of the book are describing accurately and convincingly what the Swiss army of the future should look like. It is to their credit that these outstanding issues will be discussed and reviewed. Those who are guided by their statements will have sufficient information and arguments to actively participate in the referendum campaign. For the military personnel, who realise the disaster, it provides a professionally qualified support in the struggle to preserve a well-trained and efficient army. It was time for the publishing of such a book, and it just comes at the right time.

* Group Giardino: *Mut zur Kursänderung. Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik am Wendepunkt.* (The courage to change course. Swiss security policy at a turning point) Eikos Publishers 2013. ISBN 978-3-033-03917-9

(All quotations translated by *Current Concerns*)



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Communes are laying the ground for the international success of the location Switzerland

Speech by Federal President Ueli Maurer at the annual general meeting of the Swiss Association of Municipalities on 20 June 2013 in Bern



Federal President Ueli Maurer
(picture thk)

I am taking up the topic of the first part of the this morning's conference - which you entitled "communities and economy - together for strong locations": I would like to submit some reflections on the location Switzerland and the international competition of locations. In the foreground of my considerations there is the national political context, on which I will focus in the following.

Just as it is important for the communities that they are attractive locations, the same is also important for countries. So whatever you experience at the level of communities, is repeated at the level of states. However, there is one fundamental difference:

The competition of locations among the states is ever less legally correct and fair game. Ever more it is about power politics.

Let's at first quickly outline the big picture: we have a global debt crisis. Most of the countries of the EU are affected, as well as other major economies such as the United States and Japan. Despite austerity measures and tax increases, debt is on the rise almost everywhere.

Many of the major economies are suffering a recession. Some already the second, within a few years. Everywhere we hear of high and rising unemployment.

So, we have a world that is suffering from recession and debt crisis. And in this world, there is a small state, which is doing well. The Swiss economy is robust and solid. The quality of life is generally high.

This is thanks to our liberal order and our political stability. The municipalities contribute very much to that. They are laying the fundament for the international success of the location Switzerland.

The liberal order and our political stability are based on three important basic

principles, which are being lived in our communities throughout Switzerland: federalism, direct democracy and the militia principle.

Federalism

The first principle is federalism, including municipal autonomy and subsidiarity. Only the federalism allows the diversity our country requires.

Napoléon Bonaparte already recognized the importance of diversity, when he once wanted Switzerland to get centrally organized by force. The consequences were riots, coups, civil war. In short, our country was ungovernable. The conclusion that Napoleon drew, has been reported – and I quote:

"Switzerland is not comparable to any other state; be it due to the events of past centuries, the topographical conditions, the different languages and religions, as well as the extreme differences that exist in the various parts of the country regarding to customs and traditions. Nature has made your state federalist, and it wouldn't be wise to disregard this."

This is still true today: it wouldn't be wise to disregard federalism. And from the viewpoint of the communes this is with what you should critically encounter all centralizing tendencies.

This small-scale splitting into cantons and communes has proved to be a blessing.

Because federalism and local autonomy bring us a huge variety of different ideas and solutions. This leads on the one hand to the possibility of customized solutions, solutions that are found for citizens and close to the citizens. On the other hand, a permanent competition of ideas and of solutions prevails in Switzerland.

And competition means encouragement, not only in regard to the economy, but also in politics.

Direct Democracy

The second basic principle is direct democracy. All communes have their own functioning democracy.

The communal council must be elected, the school board must be elected, the church board needs to be elected, the auditing commission must be elected, etc. And on factual issues concerning the commune there is a vote at the town meeting or at the ballot box.

This shapes our character. This is because in the communes democracy is visible and tangible. It is not something

abstract, but it concerns parking in the village center up to the reconstruction of the school building or the change of the zonal plan.

When in the 19th century the new liberal constitutions in the cantons were discussed, much emphasis was put on democracy in the communes. Communes were called the "schools of democracy". Citizens can practically learn just outside their front door how a democratic commune works. This is crucial for democracy at the cantonal and federal level. In your communes you create the basis for our political stability!

There is something else very important: the people itself fixes the tax rate and determines the amount of taxes. This helps to keep the tax burden at a relatively acceptable level. The tax burden is a key factor in the attractiveness of locations. This way, communes are contributing directly to our strong position in the international competition for investment.

Militia principle

The third element is the militia principle. We, the citizens, all of us together, we are the state. We establish it, by taking over tasks at all levels, from the communal up to the federal level. And this is often done according to the militia principle. This keeps the state apparatus reasonably slim, at least in relation to other countries.

And what is also important: the militia principle prevents citizens from becoming alienated from the state. This is because citizens take their experiences from their work life with them to their public duties.

This also applies for the military. We benefit from the staff pool, which enables excellent performances in one of the best economies in the world. And at the same time, there is no better democratic control of the army than making it up of the people themselves.

Therefore, the abolition of compulsory military service is not solely a military-political question. This initiative is directly targeted at our state structure; it is aimed at the citizen who takes responsibility for our community and supports this state. It is about nothing less than our liberal state order and thus about the success model Switzerland.

This can be seen exemplarily in the communes: Many of the public tasks are taken over by militia. Therefore, the local authorities are down to earth and close to the people. They are the link between the

continued on page 13

"Communes are laying the ground ..."

continued from page 12

state and its citizens in order to create confidence in the state institutions.

Personally, this may not always be pleasant for you; I know this from personal experience. On Sunday evening you have to talk to the infamous local maverick on the phone; and you are approached about some communal issue while queuing at the local supermarket.

But this is exactly how you fulfil this immensely valuable role: The communes are clearly organized, people know each other and they know you. They give de-

mocracy a face. You embody your commune and thus a part of Switzerland's communes for the population.

Advantage for Switzerland

I briefly summarize: The federal, small-scale organization, direct democracy and the militia principle make our country a strong, attractive location.

Through our national principles we differ from most other countries. Let's look at the countries of the EU: they are developing in a different direction, further away from the citizens.

Increasingly important decisions are not taken by individuals who are accountable to their people. Ever less it is the

elected officials who decide what is going to happen. No longer are the really important decisions taken by the governments of the countries.

There are the so-called Troika or the European Central Bank or the International Monetary Fund or other complex constructs, called rescue funds for simplicity. There are committees and expert bodies, of which you hardly know that they exist. Maybe you know the abbreviation EFSF or ESM, but who and for whatever reason they are pulling the strings remains obscure.

Entire economies, entire countries must conform to foreign standards, without knowing the real leaders by name. This is how leadership without responsibility emerges, a leadership without democratic legitimacy; and therefore also without support of the population.

Fortunately, this is different with us. The fact that Switzerland is doing so well is not simply coincidence or fate. It is the result of our state model, which makes the economic success possible. It is an essential part of it. It provides the basis for our unique quality of life and our prosperity.

This also means, however, that it is not necessarily going to continue this way. If we give up our successful model, we endanger our own success. I mentioned the attack on the militia principle, before.

There are attacks on our system of government coming from outside. In recent years, Switzerland has been under massive pressure, repeatedly. Every few months we are facing new demands, new threats, and new blackmail. Other states or international organizations request us to adjust our own domestic order according to foreign command. Not because Switzerland would do anything wrong. But because it does so many things right. Because we are doing so well. Because something can be taken from here.

With this, we are standing in the midst of international politics with our well-proven Swiss communal system and our proven liberal principles of government. For me it is clear: If we want to succeed as location Switzerland, we must go on to have strong and committed communes. And we need all of you as citizens to help us keep up this successful model Switzerland. – Thank you. •

Source: <http://www.vbs.admin.ch>
(Translation Current Concerns)

Ticino people cultivate Swiss sense of unity and solidarity

In the canton of Ticino the national anthem is again getting the place it merits. A motion entitled "Im Musikunterricht der Volksschule soll das Erlernen der Nationalhymne (Schweizerpsalm) wieder obligatorisch werden" (In music lessons of the elementary school learning the national anthem (Swiss Psalm) should be mandatory again) was submitted for a vote in the Grand Council on 20 April 2013. The motion of a minority had already been filed in 2008 and was adopted with 49 to 22 votes and 5 abstentions. There were three major efforts that led to the submission of the motion: The observation that fewer and fewer people know the national anthem, secondly the opinion that "Quando Bionda auro-ra" (When the morning skies grow red) strengthens the national cohesion of the population, and furthermore the observation that people consider this concern as an important element of a living tradition and as a sign of pride in themselves. Although the Ticino Grand Council had recommended the rejection of the motion in its Message of October 2012 and the majority of the "Commissione scolastica speciale del Gran Consiglio" also advocated a "No", it was interestingly adopted by a large majority. So in all schools in Ticino, the Swiss anthem will in future be sung again.

A second strong sign for the strengthening of national identity was set by a small cross-party committee by start-

ing a cantonal people's initiative for the reintroduction of civics education in schools. On 9 April 2013, a week before the official end of the petition, the committee was able to hand in 10,230 instead of the required 7,000 signatures at the State Chancellery in Bellinzona. The Ticino Grand Council must now deal with the initiative, and if it can not find any satisfactory solution for the initiators, the population will be able to vote on whether the civics education lessons will reenter the Ticino schools (high school and vocational school), specifically two lessons per month with written grading.

These two examples show that many residents of the canton of Ticino have become aware of the creeping loss of citizenship in recent decades and want to give priority to our direct democracy with its federalism, with the concordance and the subsidiarity principle. They have rightly realized that the awareness on this unique system and its improvement must begin with children and young people. It is not surprising and it says something about all Ticino citizens that they – being a cultural minority living in the geographical south – put much weight on a good cohesion with the rest of the country and on the education of their children to confident Swiss citizens. We can only congratulate them!

Rico Calcagnini

Letters to the Editor

In response to our editorial note in issue No. 19 of 13 June, we received many more positive echos, a small selection of which we would once again like to share with our readers. We would like to thank everybody for his often personal response and also differentiated thoughts.

The Editors

Dear readers,

originally it was my intention to cut down on my calling as the voice in the wilderness since the receivers of my postings probably share my views in general.

But now the *Current Concerns* editorial team is concerned because financial means are short, in spite of the voluntary work. Apparently this “weekly” paper is considering to come out only every fortnight. In order to preserve their independence, the editors refrain from publishing ads. Instead of bowing to the Zeitgeist, *Current Concerns* does not shrink back from straight talk. You do not have to agree with everything but I think it is necessary to consider and to weigh all arguments before coming to a balanced conclusion.

In the issue mentioned we once again find highly interesting articles on political processes, a speech of the new Pope, an interview with *Stephen Halbrook* regarding the “Model Switzerland”, a critical poll on questions of education, an appraisal of the transition of the Bourbaki Army in 1871, a call for “Courage to Change the Course” from Dr *Judith Barben* etc.

Years ago I read *Stephen Halbrook's* book “Target Switzerland” and I was highly impressed. I also studied a leaflet by Dr *Judith Barben* dealing with the methods of spin doctors with great interest.

From time to time I have used appropriate means of disseminating *Current Concerns* among people I know, hoping as well to find new subscribers.

I am also a subscriber to *Ulrich Schlier's* *Schweizerzeit* and the *Weltwoche* and happy to acquire a critical view of the world this way. The mainstream newspapers, radio and TV are not able to provide a truly neutral view.

I know that daily politics pose other challenges as well, but we need to extend our horizon beyond this.

Although I am now close to 86, I cannot just “unwind” and “enjoy life”; I want to dig deeper.

*With kindest regards
K.J. B-T., Beringen*

Dear editorial staff of *Current Concerns*
It was a piece of luck that led me to your page. I like reading what your authors have written. You have thrown light on many points of view and made me consider in a

different light what is happening around me. At the same time, you have confirmed what a *dpa* correspondent strongly recommended in the time of the Kosovo war: “If you want to know what is actually happening, then ask around in Switzerland. Read and listen to Swiss media. Talk to Swiss people.” Of course I know from personal experience, that and how manipulation also occurs in Switzerland and topics are staged. However, in Switzerland there is – as *Current Concerns* has verified – still that kind of journalism which has become quite rare beyond your northern border.

My particular interest is for your observations and commentaries on the EU. That you suspiciously observe this structure for various reasons lies in the nature of Swiss history and the Swiss identity. That is all right and has to be respected by us non-Swiss. Especially we Germans should have a special reason for suspicion: it was the economist from Reutlingen and later US Secretary of Railway *Friedrich List*, who in his work on the system of national economy scientifically explained that in an economic agreement, the political agreement must necessarily precede. *Bismarck* followed him and was able to establish the German Empire in 1871. The Scandinavians failed with their economic and financial alliance in the 1920s, because they renounced the political agreement. At that time Sweden applied the emergency brakes, abandoned the alliance, and while the Great Depression caused harm to the surrounding countries, in Sweden things were soon looking good for the country.

The political union of European countries is an utopia at present. Neither the states with Federal Constitutions want to give up this constitution, nor do those who have done well with centralized structures, want to give up their system. *Current Concerns* has pointed out repeatedly, and rightly, that there is a practical solution that makes this area of conflict invalid. This solution is the construction of EFTA. Following this path of mutual respect and peaceful co-operation seems to be impossible, as long as the transatlanticists in Germany and Europe have the last word.

We may well speculate about the consequences of this inability. It is obvious for numerous observers that an “EU” which is

politically not unified will have no chance in the long run. Basically, the “EU” has failed for a long time and is now nothing more than an unproductive and meaningless shell of companies. The people I know would love to be Europeans, but not under the really existing “EU” conditions. Their hearts do not beat for this centrally planned economy, this technocratic-bureaucratic and soulless apparatus. Possibly a big bang should happen, which the former *Opel* boss and later *General Motors* Europe head outlined and characterized in an interview almost 20 years ago in the German weekly magazine “*Die Woche*” which is not published any more. Please survive for the sake of your readers.

W. Sch., Stuttgart

Dear Editors

I came across *Current Concerns* only recently and I would like to thank you for your excellent work. The articles you publish have a much more meaningful content than we are used to from the other media, which are more or less brought into line. Above all, it is highly to be appreciated that you make your archive available without charge. I have read your articles, particularly those about the Swiss schools and educational system, with great profit. I am always on the lookout for alternative voices and have – in the form of *Current Concerns* – now found a second Swiss publication next to the magazine “*Der Europäer*” that can safeguard my brain against getting rusty.

As a token of my appreciation I have donated 100 francs. Keep up your good work! Even if *Current Concerns* will in future appear only biweekly.

W. G., Ticino

Dear Sir and Madam

It is with dismay that I read your short editorial message on page 1 of *Current Concerns* 19/2013. Your decision to issue *Current Concerns* in a bi-weekly rhythm suits me in so far, that being single and a low-wage earner, I have very little free time. That is also the reason why I have not been able to write letters to the editor with comments or questions or even – in very rare cases – critique of your highly interesting articles, which I would often have liked to do. But please: Go on publishing *Current Concerns*!

If I were to evaluate *Current Concerns* according to the German school grading system, they would receive, without hesitation, an A = very good! I usually cut out

continued on page 15

"Letters to the Editor"

continued from page 14

the most interesting articles, to keep them on file as arguments for letters that I write to the local press. Unfortunately, letters directed against the EU are no longer published by daily newspapers.

Besides your articles on current issues I also always enjoy reading about the history of Switzerland, as well as about its political system, direct democracy and the militia system. You adopt a reasonable position on practically all issues and problems, be it the defence of Swiss national sovereignty, national defence, the school system, environmental protection, etc. I also like your publications of foreign politicians' statements (from *Putin* to *Lafontaine*) or of Pope *Francis*' speech to foreign ambassadors in *Current Concerns* No. 19.

I also find the articles written by financial and economic experts such as *Wilhelm Hankel* and *Eberhard Hamer* highly interesting. While reading a recent article by Professor Hamer (entrepreneur and representative of the SMEs), I remembered reports of the *Beijing Review*, which in Mao's time demonized any form of private entrepreneurship, but after the death of *Mao* and the Cultural Revolution refuted the doctrines of *Karl Marx*. Since 1967 I have been in correspondence with *China Radio International* – formerly *Radio Beijing* – and till the year 2000 also subscribed to the *Beijing Review* and *China Today*. One must not overlook the fact that the reform policy in China has led to extreme class antagonism under a corrupt dictatorial system. Last but not least my knowledge of China makes Switzerland appear (not only) in my eyes a wonderful model, as *Stephen Halbrook* also expressed in *Current Concerns* No. 19.

You, dear contributors to *Current Concerns*, contribute to Switzerland's survival and to giving other countries the opportunity to learn from it. Please do keep up like that!

Yours sincerely, G.F., Bielefeld

Very esteemed editor of the weekly journal *Current Concerns*!

For a long time you have been sending me your weekly journal, for which I am very grateful. What I like in particular is the fact

that you also deal with problems that are beyond the Swiss borders and especially the objective reporting, the excellent comments on world events as well as your strong commitment to democracy in Switzerland, which is a role model for Europe and has not failed to have an effect in Austria, too.

Unfortunately, I am already 83 years old and reading has already become difficult for me, but I hope that I will still be able to do it for a little while. I say a heartfelt thank you to you and all your staff, I wish you continued courage, success and confidence and send greetings from the Pielach valley.

Yours A. P., Rabenstein

I am not really a writer of letters to the editor but this does not mean that I do not like the newspaper. On the contrary: today I think that it has been *Current Concerns* that turned me into a critical and thinking person. *Zeit-Fragen* has opened my eyes on so many topics, complementing the information provided by the large mainstream media.

Reading *Current Concerns* for the first time, many years ago, I thought sometimes: This cannot (or should not) be written like this, or: this cannot be true. In the course of the years, however, it has shown many times that the articles published by *Current Concerns* gave a clear account of what was going on! Even though it was in contradiction to the headlines of daily newspapers, TV etc.

What I also liked about *Current Concerns* is that the articles always try to bring peoples together and not, as the other media, inciting peoples against each other.

In short: I do not only find *Current Concerns* interesting but downright excellent. This is why I keep all the old issues.

I can only thank those who are responsible for having *Current Concerns* being edited regularly!

*Thank you and kind regards,
W.D., Embrach*

I just want to express my (and in behalf of my people) gratitude to your open-mindedness, your concern for the truth and your incessant dedication towards higher goals. I hope you'll overcome misfortunes you have fallen into and continue even stronger!

Greetings from Serbia! G.M.

Dear Sir and Madam

It is with great regret that I read your notification in the issue of 27 May 2013 telling the readers that the publisher reserves the right to publish *Current Concerns* only on a fortnightly basis. I always expected joyfully and excitedly this journal every week.

I would like to emphasize that the informative and revealing reading is written with brisance and humor and especially contains and transfers knowledge.

My interest in *Current Concerns* is great, because I need this reading. I will continue to be among your readers.

*With best regards
G. M., Holzminden*

Dear Mrs Chief Editor,

Dear Madams and Sirs,

Since I have been abroad in May, it was not until 3 June that I learned from *Horizons et débats* that you are going to issue your highly valuable newspaper only every fortnight. I do not see a problem in this if quality and size were compensating the weekly publication. Your excellent newspaper needs to remain a lighthouse and a torch to illuminate the minds of people and to give them an orientation in these times of great upheavals.

As a geopolitician and geographer, I am also at the forefront of those who analyze the perfidious alterations threatening our societies and endangering our freedom.

Your determination and your courage as well as your words and deeds are a guarantee of the independence of the mind.

I have not yet had the pleasure to meet the Chief Editor but I am remaining an unconditional supporter of this newspaper and its courageous volunteer staff.

Please contact me in case your doubts were persistent.

P.K., Yverdon

(All letters translated by *Current Concerns*)

Kyrgyzstan – Land of Hope

Gesucht –Wanted – Ricercato

For current and urgent reasons, we ask the readers of all our editions to compare the following two photos from the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” of 21 June with the text below. Who can make relevant notes on this subject is asked to report these to the Federal Police in Switzerland (CH). The editors refuse to continue working before this urgent question is not solved. Without clarification of the crucial contradiction, again the wrong person will be sent to death or killed in an “emergency

situation” in road traffic with the latest medication (lingual). (The cardiological curve then very quickly will tend toward: 0.00/0.00.00.0.00.000.0

or toward 0 – 00 – / –
0 – 00 – /// –
0 – 0 – 00X –

or toward ...)

In research this is still an open question.

The Editors



Left: US soldiers board a military plane that brings them to Afghanistan. (picture Reuters)



Right: US soldiers in a military plane on the way to their base in Kyrgyzstan. Since 2001 there has been a base in Kyrgyzstan for US forces in the Afghan war. Kyrgyzstan now wants the Americans to close down their base. (picture Damon Winter/Redux/Laif)

In her white, freshly-laundered dress, dark quilted jacket and white kerchief she slowly walks along the path through the stubble. There is not a soul anywhere. Summer is over. No voices can be heard in the field, no lorries raise a trail of dust on the dirt roads, no harvesters can be seen on the horizon, and the herds have not yet been put out to graze in the stubble.

Beyond the grey high road the autumn steppe fades away into the distance. Rows of smoky clouds move soundlessly above it. The wind sweeps soundlessly over the field, rippling the feather-grass and dry weeds and slips off soundlessly towards the river. There is a smell of wet grass drenched by morning hoarfrost. The earth is relaxing after the harvest. Bad weather will soon set in, the rains will come, the first snow will cover the earth and blizzards will rage. But now it is quiet and peaceful.

Let's not disturb her. She has stopped and gazes about with the dull eyes of old age.

"Hello, Field," she calls softly.

"Hello, Tolgonai. So you've come? You've got much older. Your hair is white. And you carry a staff?"

"Yes, I'm getting old. Another year has passed, and you, Field, have had another harvest. Today is the day of commemoration."

"I know. I've waited for you, Tolgonai. But have you come alone again?"

"Yes, as you see, I'm alone again."

"Then you haven't told him yet, Tolgonai?"

"No, I didn't dare."

"Do you think no one will ever tell him? Do you think no one will ever mention it by accident?"

"I know. Sooner or later he'll find out. He's bigger now, he might find it out from others. But to me he's still a child. And I'm afraid, so afraid to say anything."

"A person must learn the truth, Tolgonai."

"I know. But how can I tell him? That which I know, that which you know, my beloved field, that which everyone also knows, he alone does not know. And when he finds out, what will he think, how will he look upon all that has happened? Will his mind and his heart lead him to the truth? He is still a boy. That is why I am uncertain about what I am to do, how, I am to keep him from turning his back on life. I want him always to look upon it boldly. [...]"

[...] The men would not let me go home. They said I was their guest and should stay the night in the field. They made me a bed on the straw. As I looked up at the sky that night I fancied the Milky Way was sprinkled with fresh golden straw, spilled grain and chaff. And in the starry heights, across the Way of the Reaper, like a far-off song, a troop train was fading into the distance, the clatter of its wheels very faint now. I fell asleep to the dying clatter with the knowledge that a new tiller had taken his place in the world that day. May he have a long life, may he have as much grain as there are stars in the sky.

I rose at dawn and started home, not wanting to disturb the others.

It had been a long time since I had seen such a sunrise over the mountains. It had been a long time since I had heard a skylark singing so sweetly. It flew higher and higher into the clearing sky, hanging suspended there like a little grey ball, beating and fluttering like a human heart, its song ringing over the steppe, "Look! It's our skylark singing!" Suvankul had said once. How strange, we had even had our own skylark. You, too, are immortal, my skylark!

"O, my cherished field, you are resting now after the harvesting. No voices can be heard, no lorries raise a trail of dust on the dirt roads, no harvesters are to be seen and the herds have not yet been put out to graze in the stubble. You have given us your fruits and are resting now as a woman after child-birth. You will rest till the autumn ploughing. There are only the two of us, you and I, and no one else. You know the whole story of my life. Today is the day of commemoration. Today I bow down to the memory of Suvankul, Kasym, Maselbek, Djainak and Aliman. As long as I live I shall remember them. The time will come and I shall tell Zhanbolot everything. If he has been blessed with a mind and a heart he will understand. But what about all the others, all the other people in the world? I must speak to them. How can I reach everyone's heart?"

"Sun, you shine in the sky, you circle round the Earth, you tell them.

"Rain-cloud, fall upon the world in a bright shower and with every raindrop tell them!"

"Earth, Mother-Earth, you support us all upon your breast, you feed people in every corner of the world. Tell them, dear Earth, tell them!"

"No, Tolgonai. You tell them. You are a Human Being. You are above everything. You are wiser than all others. You are a Human Being. You tell them!"

"Are you leaving, Tolgonai?"

"Yes. If I am still alive, I shall come again. Farewell, Field.

*Both text passages are taken from Chingiz Aitmatov: Mother Earth in:
James Riordan: The Young Oxford Book of War Stories, OUP, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0192781741*