

# Current Concerns

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## Cyclic processes in political life

A hardly known and seldom discussed text

by Jean-Rodolphe von Salis from the year 1971 – Part 4

Cyclic processes impressively occur in the transition process from peace to war and from war to peace. The gradual increase of provocation, the challenge followed by the response (“challenge and response” by *Toynbee*), the finite failure of diplomatic efforts to preserve the peace and the belief that only violence could cut the knot: This process has been repeated countless of times with monotonous uniformity.

The state of peace following war is primarily the political expression of the dominant balance of power after the hostilities ended. The victorious power or coalition of powers is willing to defend the benefits that they have achieved through their military supremacy. This is easier to achieve in case there is a single winning state – for example, Prussia-Germany after 1871

– than if the victory was gained by a coalition. Winning coalitions have a tendency to crumble after having achieved the common military objective, as each partner is conscious of its own particular interests, which are not usually identical with those of his wartime allies. After 1815, after 1918, after 1945 the unanimity and common euphoria of victory was followed by the newly awakened rivalry between the allies (examples from previous eras would give evidence of the same process). Nevertheless, there remains a common bond: the winners in the race for supremacy do not want to let go the fruits of their victory. *Lenin* was not wrong when he said, the winner is always a pacifist, he wants to maintain the “Pax Romana”, the “Pax Britannica”, the “Pax Germanica”, the “Pax

Gallica”, the “Pax Americana”, the “Pax Russica”: a peace to preserve the benefits won in war.

The next stage of the process is characterized by the recovery and resurgence of the defeated, which deprives the former victor from the reckless use of the law of the jungle; henceforth he must again reckon with the former defeated power as an active political factor, especially if he is again able to bring his military strength into the foreign policy play. If we limit our observations to Europe, a defeated nation usually needs fifteen years to recover. Fifteen years after Waterloo the Paris July Revolution and the operations in Belgium followed in 1830, which challenged

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### “Quiet Hour”

*What do you want to tell me  
You green, laughing spring day?  
The merry thrushes beat  
As if drunken in the dark hedge nearby.  
My field seems to dream  
It is very quiet under the trees,  
I hear the quiet hour strike.*

*It comes with each springtime,  
Rises like a sunk property,  
Far back at childhood's borders  
I'm walking under my faithful eyes' care.  
A fragrance lies above the vastness,  
The secret bells are ringing:  
You are doing well, you are doing well!*

*I see my mother's hands,  
Worn out and hard – and yet so soft!  
She struggles without ends*

Just like *Alfred Huggenberger* has set bounds to his life, as does the superior farmer who calculates the size of his land according to his capacities, *Huggenberger* also set bounds to his work while probably denying the dazzling variety of other visions and landscapes; but this by moderation, by this reflection on himself, he provides

it with the captive gold value of the soul that does neither tatter nor evaporate.

It is there, and it stays. It develops by telling the lives of the “little people” and the “fellow villagers”, it blooms by the delicacy and purity of “dear women”, it carries the dreams, dreamed “behind the plow”, like a honeycomb; it roars with

*And gives and gives and yet stays rich.  
Secure in the field's soil  
Her blessings and worries sleep  
And make it a fairyland to me.*

### “To be written on a stable door”

*Man, you have been chosen as a god  
To creatures who believe in you.  
See that no one loses the consolation  
Never let your crown be stolen!*

*Helpless is the creature  
Given to your grace,  
In the yoke of unnaturalness  
The patient life adapts.*

*But eyes look at you –  
Seek to read in their ground!  
He who may kill trust,  
No prayer will redeem him.*

the waters of the depth and the voice of the blood, like the “fountain of the homeland” roar, and it weaves together the “blessing of the soil” and the “secret power”; it has the tensions that the “struggle with life” brings about; and everything is still in it: the joyful courage, the affirmation of life, the humor and the wicked, the tale of the forest woman, the blackbird song and the silence of the fields, the flowers of the summer garden, innumerable figures, gnarled, quirky, whimsical and upright, fighting men, fragrant bread, March winds and cloud movement, and above all prayer, piety, the devotion, the harvest, the farmers' thanks.

*Alfred Huggenberger* has opened our eyes again for the beauty and richness of our earth; through him the Thurgau soul became visible and sounding, its longings and its dreams, its reality, its sorrows and everyday life. He has become a good friend of the Thurgau, as has *Johann Peter Hebel* for the land near Basel. And so we are confronted with his figure that with the

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**"Cyclic processes in political life"**

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the system of the Vienna Congress ideologically and with respect to foreign policy. Fifteen years after the Peace of Frankfurt, France with General *Boulangier* and his newly assembled army faced *Bismarck* in 1886, who had to come to terms with a resurgent France. Fifteen years after the victory of the Entente of 1918 the appointment of *Hitler* as German chancellor followed, raising to question the political order of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. It is noteworthy that in his book "The Troubled Partnership" *Henry Kissinger*, a professor at Harvard, makes the statement that in 1960 – fifteen years after the German surrender in 1945 – the American hegemony had come to an end, not only Western Germany, the remains of the former empire, had recovered; the European allies of the United States, exhausted by war and occupation, were once again able to focus on their particular interests, with the result that America within the Atlantic system could no longer dictate its allies their policy. Within fifteen years the communist world had also been able to loosen the Stalinist discipline. The cycle reaches the level where the winner is no longer able to command but must negotiate and come to agreements.

However, this queries all his principles, ideologies, contracts and alliances. Fifteen years after the end of a war it is hard to cling to specified agreements or to just a de facto state against new trends and needs. Contractual agreements, arrangements and international military structures either prove to be flexible and adaptable

enough to serve their purpose in a new stage of foreign policy or ruptures and a new conflict situation will occur.

The major wars that seriously affected the entire state system and with it the usual order – for example the Thirty Years' War, the wars of the French Revolution and of *Napoleon*, the German War against the coalition of West and East between 1914 and 1945 – are probably followed by the desire to rebuild the political and social life afresh on proven, "legitimate" foundations. What had been painstakingly restored by the Peace of Westphalia and what was called "restoration" after 1815, was expressed with the slogan "back to normalcy" by the Americans after 1918; this need for normalization was characterized after 1945 in the camp of western as well as eastern victors by a return to the tried and true principles and practices. Both the recovered liberal-bourgeois-capitalist orders of the West as well as the restored monolithic dictatorial communist order of Russian Stalinism were such "restorations" of the ancient conditions which were considered legitimate.

However, the political process cannot leave unaltered such protective measures that may serve their purpose after a disaster. The holy (or unholy) alliance suffers the same destiny: they wear out, their authority is challenged, life, and with it the opposition, come into their rights, and it is an almost recurring phenomenon that the system breaks at one or more points. Such fractures can be exactly dated; they were made against the Holy Alliance with the abandonment of England in 1823, and later, with the uprisings in France and Belgium in 1830, against the hegemony of the Triple Alliance with the Franco-Russian alliance of 1892 and the *Entente Cordiale*

of 1904, against the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles with the defection of Japan, Germany and Italy, which had already taken place in the 1930s in quick succession; against the Soviet Russian hegemony with the defection of Yugoslavia in 1948, before China took its turn against Moscow and uprisings took place in Eastern Europe against American hegemony with the emancipation of France after 1960, with the hostility of Cuba, with the insurgency in Vietnam, with the turning away of the countries of the Arab world.

These examples are only intended to point out possibilities of a casuistry that would undertake to work out similar, typical, constant appearances in the course of inter-state relations. A comparison of the political and historical material reveals that these relationships are cyclical and characterized by typical stages.

We would like to counter the possible objection that in the present study we mostly took our examples from European countries and the world system of states centered around Europe, while yet in this century in all other continents an independent and energetic world of states was created, with the remark that scientific findings and derived laws always refer to a complex that is based on common conditions. Universal formulas do not exist, neither for nature nor for the social world. *Hegel's* words: "The true is the whole" reveals the metaphysician, whose concern is to provide a meaning to universal history. Our plan is more modest, it can detect only partial truths with its empiricism. •

From: J. R. von Salis. *Geschichte und Politik. Betrachtungen zur Geschichte und Politik. Beiträge zur Zeitgeschichte*. Zurich 1971. Orell Füssli publishing house. Part 4, pp. 143–146.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

**"Alfred Huggenberger ..."**

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mystery of the great magician rolls up the landscape with far reaching gestures; but it is not in his simple utter appearance, nor his attitude and clothes, not even in his humorously appearing word that resounds in us, which all make our encounters with Alfred Huggenberger the most memorable events: It is his countenance that lives in us and clearly and closely emerges, when we think of him or scroll in his books; the face of a farmer who struggled with the soil. However, in this face the spiritual has become visible and has taken away the hardness and angularity; it aglows from within and is animated; it lives in this high brow, in those warm eyes looking so clever now and roguishly and kindly smiling the next moment; it lives in listening skills, as if he was some-

times listening to himself lost in thought; we can also find it in facial expressions when he tells a little story or in his verses of happiness and the pleasure of his work ...

We were recently standing in front of his home in Gerlikon in the canton of Thurgau, and it seemed to me that I was standing next to a secret king, with an invisible crown, pointing out with a far-reaching gesture over the country: "All this, it lives through me. I have shaped this country, the small wall over there, the little path down into the valley, the apple trees; I descended into the murmuring shafts and have listened to the flooding of its nature. Deep down in me lives the country. I hold the crumbling earth in my hands, my soil world that I have built upon and that I have got to know about. I grow like the tree from this ground. Oh, and I followed the people and have lured

them into my eyes and my heart and have given them back the richness and beauty of their homeland."

Does he really talk like that? Oh no, he is the plain, simple farmer with the clever mind and the eyes so young at heart, who chats in our native dialect.

But I cannot forget his devoted and seemingly praying face when he recited his poem about thanksgiving for harvest and bread in a church. It seemed to me then, caught by the magic of the word that he was not praying alone, but the whole community was praying with him. The spiritual is woven into Huggenberger's poetry and lifts it into the light of humanity.

Source: *Alfred Huggenberger erzählt sein Leben*. theaterverlag elgg, Belp 2000, pp. 19-22

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# Citizens and foreign policy

by Friedrich Traugott Wahlen

## Farewell and gratitude

To the United Chambers of the Federal Assembly  
on 8 December 1965

Mr President

Honoured gentlemen of the National Council and Council of States

Mr President, first of all allow me to thank you for the friendly and honourable words that you dedicated to my work in the service of the country. Therein you expressed the appreciation of my work, which again and again I was granted to feel on the part of the members of both Councils during my participation in the Federal Government and for this, gentlemen, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart. Today the reasons for gratitude are even entirely on my side. To begin with I think of my dear former and present colleagues in the Federal Council, whose friendship and trust made the work a pleasure for me during those seven years.

It is also to the personnel of the several Swiss Federal Departments, the guidance of which was assigned to me by my colleagues over the years, that I owe great gratitude. In particular, I wish to thank my current employees at all levels in Berne and in the out-

posts, whose expertise and commitment meant a lot to me.

Honoured gentlemen of the National Council and Council of States, my years in office took place at a time when – after the end of the war – the consequences of rapid technical and economic development made themselves more clearly perceptible, a development, which we have not yet been able to cope with both in human and political respect. In addition, in an ever-shrinking world, burdened with more difficult problems to be solved, we have to bear an ever-increasing share of responsibility. So our people, both chambers of Parliament and the Federal Council are facing major challenges both in domestic and foreign policy. They can only be solved in developing the common potential, in a spirit of self-sacrifice and cooperation in trust. It is my heartfelt desire in this hour of farewell that our Confederation may pass this (litmus) test.

Thank you.

Source: Dem Gewissen verpflichtet. F.T. Wahlen. Zeugnisse aus den Jahren 1940 bis 1965. Edited by Alfred A. Hasler. Fretz & Wasmuth Verlag AG. Zurich / Stuttgart 1966



*Bound by conscience*

importance which they do not possess in reality. I remember quite localized actions that were interpreted as generally existing tendencies towards xenophobia abroad, which was particularly strange given our traditional reputation for hospitality and understanding among different language groups. Even the often-heard complaint that the Swiss National virtues of simplicity and honesty are about to suffer from an increasing materialism – a concern that is by the way shared by responsible circles in our country – must provide serious reason for thought. Moreover, the fact that some of our constitutional provisions are no longer understood abroad must be mentioned here. It is not enough to try to explain their persistence by our extremely individual institutions of direct democracy, since understanding is largely lacking for this context. Here, the political parties and the press are facing a gratuitous task; it is primarily their task to provide the necessary education so that urgent concerns may be tackled without the risk of failing by a popular majority or a majority of the cantons. A failure in this direction would harm our reputation abroad even more than the persistence of outdated regulations. Special care must be taken for the preservation of achievements, which have cost us major efforts throughout the centuries and which belong to the image of Switzerland in a very special way. I think primarily of peace among the different linguistic and confessional groups, which belongs to the most delightful achievements our forefathers have

Finally, I would like to focus briefly on the relationship between domestic and foreign policy, and thus also on the role of the individual citizen from the point of view of foreign policy. On several occasions in severe times, the Federal Council confirmed the principle that the state's neutrality maxim does not require the citizens' neutrality of the mind. However, like any principle, this one should not be exaggerated, either, if it is not to destroy itself. In the case of Switzerland it should be noted that the people and the cantons represent the highest bodies of the state and may ultimately determine the most important issues in foreign policy, for example, by exercising the right of the initiative. The citizen bears greater responsibility than he does in a parliamentary democracy. Therefore, constitutional freedoms right like the right to freedom of expression are limited by the responsibility for the whole. The Federal Council has discussed these issues in detail in connection with our relations to the Communist world when answering the interpellation

*Reverdin* in the March 1962 session. What has been said then is still fully valid, so I do not need to refer to it. The individual citizen, however, does not only have a responsibility in his attitude towards states and groups of states imposing upon him a certain reserve, but also in regard to his opinions on some domestic issues and his overall behavior, because the "image" and thus the position of Switzerland abroad are greatly influenced by them. Recently we could hear talk about a haze of Switzerland's image abroad, an issue that constitutes this year's 'Auslandschweizertag' (Day of the Swiss Abroad) main concern. You do not go wrong in assuming that the Federal Council will also be concerned with it. I think, I believe I may say that many manifestations of alarm are not justified in reality, whereas others give us cause to think. We must not make light of it in any case. The current amount of coverage by the press, radio and television, partly linked to a hunt for sensation, can also blow up insignificant incidents and provide undesirable tendencies with an

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**"Citizens and foreign policy"**

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bequeathed on us as a heritage worth to be preserved. In the age of revived nationalism partly nourished by racial and ethnic conflicts the preservation of this good is not only a national, but also an internationally important act. I must leave it at these few indications concerning matters that need our attention, for now. In addition I would like to point out that besides the removal of areas that represent targets of attack to which we must devote ourselves with all seriousness, we must try to win support for a better knowledge and a better understanding of the very numerous positive sides of our state, its foreign affairs, its economy and above all its spiritual and cultural achievements. This can happen in various ways. The extension of our diplomatic and consular outposts, to which direct responsibility is being transferred in this field, has reached a substantial degree, however, it still requires specific of personnel with respect to this important issue. After taking up the debate on the Swiss Abroad article in our Federal Constitution in the December session, I would also like to point to the potential that we possess with our foreign Swiss colonies. The schools founded by them, the sum of their efforts in centres and

an increased cultural activity can deepen the knowledge of Switzerland in their host countries. Only recently the Council of States agreed to an application of the Federal Council for gradual rise of federal contributions to the foundation *Pro Helvetia* and it is not to be doubted that the National Assembly will take the same position. This is a hugely welcome step. One should consider whether we might aim at a closer cooperation based on voluntary work of many private and semi-private organisations, dealing with the representation of Swiss interests abroad in any form. Here, I cannot list up all the possible organisations and companies nor can I draw attention to all remaining possibilities of a purposeful publicity for our country. However, the catalogue of available possibilities is so impressive that a certain coordination of all efforts might improve the result decisively. On purpose, I have put these indications at the end of my remarks to make clear that foreign affairs do not happen in an empty space. It is neither a fabric of abstract maxims nor a question of bare representation for which the government and the Department of Foreign Affairs would alone be responsible. Its base lines are given by the vital demands of the state and the people in proportion to the environment. Just because our country takes a special position in the community of nations which must be made clear

over and over again, it is a common task in which the Federal Council and the Federal Parliament must be supported by every single citizen and by all kind of groups. Only a nation that understands this great challenge, after having covered material demands and secured the existence of the individual persons, is determined enough to take it up, while even neglecting single interests and group interests if necessary. Thus it may hope with the help of providence, to furthermore, count on continuity of a destiny of which many do envy us. With respect to the conduct of foreign affairs the Federal Council will make every effort to carry out conscientiously and carefully the duties devolved to him by the constitutional regulations cited at the beginning. Hoping to create the foundations for the fulfilment of the just mentioned common task which is nothing but the meaning of the nice word "Confederation" translated into action and everyday life.

Source: *Die Schweiz in der Welt*. Antwort des Bundesrats auf die Interpellationen Furgler und Hubacher, erteilt am 7. Oktober 1965, S. 241–245. (*Switzerland in the world*. Answer of the Federal Council to the interpellations Furgler and Hubacher, given on 7 October 1965, pp. 241–245.) From: *Dem Gewissen verpflichtet. F.T. Wahlen. Zeugnisse aus den Jahren 1940 bis 1965*. Ed. by Alfred A. Häslar. Fretz & Wasmuth Verlag AG. Zurich/Stuttgart 1966

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

*To know with the mind of the other;  
To hear as he hears;  
To feel with the heart of the other;  
His hopes and his fears.  
To walk with his step,  
To see with his eyes,  
To breathe with his breath,  
To weep with his cries.*

\*

*To feel a second heart like his in yours,  
To know what he needs and to seek it with him.  
Gemeinschaftsgefühl, communion of heart,  
Gemeinschaftsgefühl, communion of soul.*

\*

*To know yourself well, now that's a good start,  
And then know the other.  
To sense what he needs, before he can tell  
Like a child with his mother.  
To stand in his shoes,  
To see from his past,  
You must learn how to lose –  
That's the first and the last.*

*Joe McCarroll (after the reading of "Das Gemeinschaftsgefühl – Entstehung und Bedeutung für die menschliche Entwicklung. Eine Darstellung wichtiger Befunde aus der modernen Psychologie (The Gemeinschaftsgefühl – formation and significance for human development. A presentation of important findings of modern Psychology)" by Annemarie Kaiser, Zurich 1981)*

# Economic war against Switzerland: Romandy is fighting back – what about the rest of Switzerland?

## France following the arrogant footsteps of Germany and the United States

*sl.* There is a rough wind blowing. Switzerland is being blackmailed by the US, our northern neighbour Germany has threatened to send the cavalry to force Switzerland to its knees, and in the West, France now wants to fill its empty state coffers with inheritance taxes levied on Swiss real estate. The *NZZ am Sonntag* of 21 July speaks of an economic war. Switzerland is involved in its entirety. In the French-speaking part, early resistance is forming ...

In 2011, France notified Switzerland that the 1953 agreement on the avoidance of double taxation pertaining to inheritance taxes no longer corresponded to the French provisions in this area. This bilateral agreement was connected with considerable tax losses, which is why France was considering its termination. To prevent the termination of the agreement, Switzerland entered into revision negotiations with France.

On 5 July 2012 a first draft agreement was initialed and released for consultation. Due to the numerous negative reactions of several cantons and other participants to the consultation, Switzerland requested that France should improve the project, but this was only minimally achieved.

On 13 May 2013 *Jean-René Germanier*, Valais member of the National Council (FDP), with wise foresight submitted the following motion on behalf of the Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation of the National Council (WAK-N):

Taxation of real estate in the agreement between Switzerland and France on the avoidance of double taxation in the area of inheritance taxes.

*The Federal Council is called upon to allow by no means that real estate located in Switzerland may be taxed by third countries in the context of the renewal negotiations of the agreements on the avoidance of double taxation pertaining to inheritance taxes, in particular with France.*

This motion was discussed in the National Council on 19 June 2013 and adopted by a large majority.

Notwithstanding this adopted motion, when Federal Councillor *Evelyne Widmer-Schlumpf* met the French Economic and Finance Minister *Pierre Moscovici* on 11 July to discuss unresolved issues in the area of finances and

taxation, she signed an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation pertaining to inheritance taxes. Amongst other things, this agreement allows the French Treasury to tax heirs domiciled in France (and this includes 180,000 Swiss who have been living in France for at least 8 years), even in case the testator lived in Switzerland and real estate in Switzerland is involved. Thus French tax authority is expanded to include Switzerland. Direct descendants can be charged up to 45% of French inheritance tax, unrelated heirs must pay up to 60%. In Switzerland, the tax rates vary between 0-7%, depending on the canton, so that the revision would have a considerable impact on the heirs. In Western Switzerland the outrage is considerable. A coalition of bourgeois parties from all French speaking cantons and from Berne is protesting against this slap in the face of the cantons, whose tax authority is being disregarded. At a press conference they made it clear that this federal course of action constituted a violation of the principle of federalism and the rule of law, and urged parliament not to ratify the agreement in any way. Otherwise the referendum would be taken by the cantons. •

## “The people must have the final say”

by Benjamin Lebreton, attorney, specialized in tax law, and Jean-Daniel Balet, founding member of Swiss Respect

Despite strong opposition and a red line set by the National Council, the Swiss Federal Councillor of Finance signed the new inheritance tax agreement and an additional protocol – whose contents must be analyzed with the greatest caution – in Bercy on 11 July.

Although France has taken a calming attitude by revoking the agreement not before 30 June, the Federal Council hastened to sign a text that was still just as unacceptable as it was before this date.

The concessions obtained have not been improved since February 2013 and do not correspond to the specifications of the National Council on 19 June 2013 in its very balanced and prudent statement.

*SwissRespect* is convinced that the deadline conceded to Switzerland by France would have allowed finding a compromise between the French and Swiss viewpoints. The Federal Council's over-zeal put a very unfortunate end to the affair.

### Is the prevailing paradigm about to be changed?

This question is legitimate, because the attitude of the Federal Council implies pushing Parliament and the people into an extreme situation, that is, to give them the choice of either accepting the unacceptable, or rejecting a new and in many respects legitimate text as a whole, although there are merely certain points that are unacceptable.

France opposes bypassing the French inheritance tax laws concerning the French living in Switzerland who want to transfer their assets to their descendants. This requirement could be accepted by Switzerland (regardless of the impact that this measure could have in terms of mobility behavior of the mentioned heirs to the French interests).

However, it is unacceptable that deceased persons' estates located in Switzerland – Swiss or foreigners, however not Frenchmen – may be taxed in France on the grounds that the heirs are residing in France.

*SwissRespect* stresses that Article 11 of the agreement, which takes a text from interior French law, is unacceptable. The same applies to the anti-abuse clause, which generalizes the concept of the suspect.

### So, what to do?

First, continue to use all sources of information. The arguments of the proponents of the new agreement, who hold the view that it would provide legal certainty and would be preferable to a situation without agreement, are legally inaccurate. *SwissRespect* will take the necessary steps to disseminate accurate information on this point.

Moreover, it is necessary to support the National Council's position of 19 July 2013 on the principle of non-taxation of real estate in Switzerland.

And finally, we must be careful not to fall into a trap by thinking that we would receive a service in return tomorrow on

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“The people must have the final say”  
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## Broad coalition against the inheritance tax agreement with France

the basis of concessions made today. Thus, before the ink of the signatures was dry, the French finance minister announced that this agreement constituted a positive first step towards the automatic exchange of information, which constitutes an unacceptable mixing of issues.

Miles away from any polemical intention or warlike dialectic, we believe that adjustments are still possible. This would allow adopting the new agreement by mutual agreement and in accordance with the spirit of the Swiss political system and our values, while at the same time maintaining the dialogue with our neighboring country.

We could achieve a settlement through re-negotiations, in which compliance with the required points, especially the non-application of the provisions of Article 11 would be guaranteed to Swiss citizens.

If no progress is made in this matter, the agreement should be rejected.

In case Parliament, contrary to expectations, ratifies the agreement unchanged, a referendum is needed to ensure that the people can have the final say. •

Press Release 16 July 2013

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Source: [www.swissrespect.ch](http://www.swissrespect.ch)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

A coalition of cantonal parliamentarians of the Liberal Party (FDP), Christian Democrats (CVP), of the Swiss People's Party, the Green Liberals, of the Movement Citoyen Genevois (MCG) and BDP Waadt from all Western Swiss cantons and Berne requested from parliament to renounce the ratification of the Double Taxation Agreement between Switzerland and France in the area of inheritance tax, otherwise the cantonal referendum will be taken.

In signing the controversial agreement on inheritance tax, the Federal Council ignored the most significant objections of the French-speaking cantons. They would rather have no agreement than the one-sided text that is contrary to the interests of Switzerland and that makes possible the – often massive – taxation of inheritances of the deceased Swiss. Respect for federalism would however require putting the needs of the Swiss cantons before those of foreign countries.

Ratifying such an agreement would be a bad signal to our European partners, who could be inspired by that to try and obtain further concessions from Switzerland. The 1953 agreement, which would be replaced, respects the international inheritance rules in contrast to the model proposed by Berne. In the framework of a difficult international situation the respect for the rule of law, the valid agreements and the regulations established by international organizations is a condition sine qua non for the preservation of Switzerland's interests, whose authori-

ties do not want to become the branches of the French Treasury.

In the cantons of Geneva, Vaud, Valais, Neuchâtel, Fribourg, Jura and Berne bourgeois parliamentarians got together, in order to request from the Federal Assembly, to renounce the ratification of this bad text. Once the National Council has adopted the “Motion Germanier”, it must insist on its position and reject the agreement. Otherwise the cantonal referendum will be taken.

On behalf of Swiss solidarity, cantonal parliaments are all invited to join this procedure.

The undersigned members hold the opinion that the cantonal parliaments must take up the matter and firmly enforce their interests. It is not within the competence of the Federal Government to impose inheritance rules; with its course of action the Federal Government violates the division of powers between the federal and the cantonal governments.

The cantonal referendum requires the participation of eight cantons. In addition to the already organized coalition of seven cantons, the talks with Basel-City and Basel-Country are just before completion. •

Press release of 17 July 2013

Source: Blog of Philippe Nantermod, cantonal FDP parliamentarian of Canton Valais  
[www.blorange.com/nantermod/une-large-coalition-de-deputes-contre-la-convention-successorale-franco-suisse/?lang=fr](http://www.blorange.com/nantermod/une-large-coalition-de-deputes-contre-la-convention-successorale-franco-suisse/?lang=fr)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## “The miserable performance of Mrs Widmer-Schlumpf has disastrous consequences”

by Philippe Barraud, journalist and writer, Canton of Vaud

France is a threat to Switzerland. And tomorrow the same will apply to the other neighbors, if Paris manages to force us to our knees. Since the Federal Council is willing to make sacrifices, other forces – the cantons, the people – must become active and offer resistance.

“Switzerland needs the world, but the world does not need Switzerland”, a French member of Parliament has complacently dared to say. This is an attack of outrageous force that would be worth the summons of the French Ambassador. Of course nothing like this happens: our Minister of Foreign Affairs has other, very important business, unless he is on holiday.

Incidentally, the French Deputy errs twice: First of all, even if he doesn't like it, France is not the world. Secondly, it is a matter of fact that France needs Swit-

zerland because our country with its companies is the number one employer in Franche-Comté.

We are told that our country will lose credibility if Parliament or the people rescind what the Government adopted, or rejects the agreements they have signed. But pardon me: Where is the error? If the Government in the person of Mrs *Widmer-Schlumpf* signs anything to please their partners without submitting the issue in advance to the country's proper institutions, who undermines the credibility of Switzerland then?

In fact, the Parliament and the people unfortunately must play the role of the fire brigade behind an incompetent Councilor which would long have had to resign in any other democratic country. However, we are functioning like dictatorships: even

if they have made obvious errors and lack the support of the Parliament, our Ministers cannot be dismissed, because this is the political game – you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

The miserable performance of Mrs Widmer-Schlumpf in Paris where a cheerful macho Minister publicly humiliated her and called her by her first name – why not just address her with the familiar “du” while we're at it? – has had such devastating effects and had shown to France that the piggy bank – Switzerland – is ready to be robbed: This way you will find the money! The tax expert *Philippe Kenel* did not hesitate to describe this as “Helvetic Munich”<sup>1</sup>.

# “They gave the keys of the house to the CIA and other US agencies”

## 12 years of the consequences of NATO case of alliance ... and the war

*An interview of the German radio station Deutschlandfunk with Dick Marty*

*Dick Marty, special investigator of the Council of Europe on the CIA, assumes that European states had so far been very pleased to cooperate with the CIA. In order to obtain information, states had given the Americans great leave, Marty said. Meanwhile the Americans have become dominant in the field of surveillance.*

*Deutschlandfunk: Dick Marty examined the machinations of the CIA like nobody else. Starting in 2005 the Swiss had been special investigator of the Council of Europe on the secret flights and secret prisons of the CIA in Europe. I talked to him before the program started. Good morning, Mr Marty.*

*Dick Marty: Good morning!*

*When you did the research on secret CIA prisons in Europe – did you already notice some of those spying programs?*

No, not really. At that time we focused on the secret prisons, on the flights. But I am not surprised at all, that such methods were agreed upon as early as then. I think one of the most important findings of the report has been overlooked in my opinion: the fact that the Americans based their activities on Article 5 of the NATO Treaty as early as October 2001.

*That was immediately after September, 11<sup>th</sup>.*

That was three weeks later. That means that a week later President Bush gave special competences to the CIA as was never the case before. And at the very beginning of October 2001 a normal NATO session took place in Brussels, and in this session, the Americans relied on Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. This clause says that if a member of the alliance is attacked militarily, the other members have to help.

*What exactly was then decided at the NATO session in October 2001? The secret prisons, the secret abductions?*

No. Then, it was asserted that this Article 5 was to be applied. This means that all members agree to provide assistance. And then, after the annual session, a secret session was convened, and there they agreed upon the operational management in a very small body.

*Do you think, Mr Marty, that intelligence cooperation between the United States and Europe was talked about in this secret part of the meeting?*

Yes. In other words, the first decision was: All operations are to lie in the hands of the CIA. The member states of NATO, but also those who were candidates for NATO, agreed to grant total immunity to these

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### “The miserable performance of ...”

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France is getting violent against us because it is in a desperate situation: an immense debt, a substantial recession, however, stubbornly denied, unbearably high social spending, unemployment at record levels – the collapse in a Greece manner is looming – so they must just get the money where it is located, if necessary by force. For example, by literally ruining Swiss heirs resident in France or French people resident in Switzerland: How can you pay 45% taxes on the value of a house or a business? Sale – also burdened with high taxes – is the only solution. Incidentally, it is surprising, however, that the profit making enclaves of Monaco and Andorra are not referred to as “Rogue States” by French MPs as Switzerland is.

With regard to the defense of Swiss interests, nothing is to be expected from the Federal Council. Its ongoing concessions to other governments and foreign judges, its maneuvering in tax matters is

beginning to irritate foreign investors of our banks and companies. Some of these have already headed out to settle in countries where the tax system does not change monthly.

The resistance must come from the civil society. The non-socialist parties in the French speaking part of Switzerland have all come together and seem determined to pursue this issue: All the better! The issue will, however, be hard to handle. We may deem it certain that the majority of the population is in the camp of resistance. But you cannot hear them. Rather, you can hear the left and the big media – radio and television in particular – that traditionally enjoy Switzerland being attacked and humiliated and then play the other party’s game. We nevertheless hope for a little patriotic spark of the Social Democratic Party that cannot just give away the interests of Switzerland out of ideological solidarity with the majority power in France. All the more as things will probably change there...-

Switzerland is not loved. But we are weak just because we cannot stand it.

That’s why we always give in, in the obviously false hope that they will love us then. We should rather take an example of strong countries: the United States, Russia, China and Israel are all countries which are not loved. But unlike us they do not care; they stand by, because the defense of their interests is above everything else. And that makes them strong countries, countries that push through their interests and their point of view. It is the good old recipe of Caligula: “Let them hate me as long as they fear me!” •

<sup>1</sup> The Munich Agreement was a settlement permitting Nazi Germany’s annexation of Czechoslovakia’s areas along the country’s western borders, the “Sudetenland”. The agreement was negotiated at a conference held in Munich and signed by Hitler (Germany), Daladier (France), Chamberlain (United Kingdom) and Mussolini (Italy). However, Czechoslovakia had not been present. (ed. note)

Source: Commentaires.com – e-magazines contre le néo conformisme du 18/7/13 [www.commentaires.com/suisse/suisse-france-qui-conduira-la-resistance](http://www.commentaires.com/suisse/suisse-france-qui-conduira-la-resistance)

(Translation Current Concerns)

**“They gave the keys of the house ...”**

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agents, which by the way is unlawful. Third decision: The whole operation is to be set at the highest top secret level, according to the famous “need to know” principle. This means: That which was decided in Brussels at the time, only individual members of the European governments knew about.

*Did the Prime Ministers know? Did the then Chancellor in Germany know?*

This varies from country to country. Normally, the Prime Minister respectively the President, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Defence and the political leaders of the intelligence services were involved.

*Today the German Government says, we did not know of the United States’ secret eavesdropping program “Prism”.*

Yes! They also said they had known nothing of rendition.

*These are abductions, renditions.*

Yes. In the case of *Khaled al-Masri*, the Bundestag then convened a committee of inquiry. This happened as a response to a motion of the Liberals (FDP) and the Left (Die Linke). At that time I was extensively questioned as a witness. And then, the federal government presented a report on the case of al-Masri, but about 80 percent of the content was classified as secret, so you couldn’t even read it. And if you remember, at that time, the FDP filed a complaint to the Federal Constitutional Court, because they, the FDP, were of the opinion that the government had violated its duty and obligation to inform the Parliament.

*Very briefly, just to clarify: At that time al-Masri has been kidnapped by the CIA in the Balkans, in Macedonia. He was taken to Afghanistan, and your investigations showed that the German side did become aware of that sometime. Mr Marty, do you conclude that the federal government is well-informed about the CIA’s and NSA’s activities in Europe?*

They probably do not know the details, but they gave leave to the CIA. And the fact that about 80 percent of the al-Masri report was classified as a state secret and was not even given the committee of inquiry to read shows that the Federal Government knew something. This means that they knew something, at least about the al-Masri case. But also at that time the Federal Government said that it had never known anything of that.

*How much do the parliamentary control committees of the Bundestag learn of such proceedings?*

Very little. – Very little! – In most states, and this was evident in Italy thanks to a great work of the Milan Public Prosecutor, since we have learned about all the details in a kidnapping case. At that time the military intelligence agencies of the country usually acted and cooperated with the CIA. And as you know, the military intelligence services are much less controlled, if at all.

*Who is responsible for controlling the military intelligence in general?*

This is the Department of Defence, but it differs from country to country. This may also be the Ministry of the Interior, or in Germany at that time the chief of the Chancellery has played a certain role.

*Mr Marty, what is your conclusion from the investigation into secret prisons and kidnappings by the CIA, which you did then? What should the cooperation between US and European intelligence services and German authorities look like?*

Well, this is hard to say. But I think they have given the keys of the house to the CIA and other services of the United States, and they do no longer know what they were exactly doing with these keys. You also have to say, in these last years – three, five years, no more – the storage capacity of electronic data has increased so massively that today the spying attacks have adopted a totally new, previously unknown extent.

*Should governments request the Americans to give the keys back?*

I believe yes, but that does not only affect Germany. I think it relates to the whole of Europe, and I think there is a certain hypocrisy in these European protests. I think they have always been happy to cooperate with the CIA, because the CIA had unlimited resources and could always provide us with information, and this has naturally caused a hierarchy. The Americans are dominant in this area, and the others have therefore allowed much in order to obtain the information. The question today is, how much and to what extent did politics know about it. But politics, I think, is at least negligent, because they did not exercise their supervisory duties in recent years.

*The Swiss politician Dick Marty was special investigator of the Council of Europe on the secret flights and prisons of the CIA in Europe. Mr Marty, thank you for the interview and good bye to Switzerland.*

Goodbye, have a nice day.

Source: *Deutschlandfunk* of 9.7.2013

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*km. The many reports and statements on the worldwide and each concerned monitoring and data collection activities of the US, the UK and many other intelligence agencies concerning everybody and filling the media every day for weeks now, raise many questions but also shed some light.*

*Questions are for example the following: To what end do things that are actually long been known take up so much space in the media all of a sudden and lead to amazing statements about the transatlantic relationship, and especially in Germany to a new raising of themes like the country’s sovereignty.*

*Statements are enlightening, which do not only describe processes, but put them in a wider context, as well.*

*The interview with the Swiss Dick Marty, who became internationally famous after 2005 as special investigator of the Council of Europe on secret prisoner transports and prisoner-and-torture camps of the US intelligence service CIA in Europe, belongs to this enlightening comments.*

*In an interview with the “Deutschlandfunk”, Dick Marty raises the question, whether the carte blanche for the comprehensive collection of private and government E-Mail and Internet data was not perhaps given at the beginning of the so-called “war on terrorism” in 2001 and the negligent – and to this day never not repealed – declaration of the alliance case under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty; and that this authorization was indeed kept secret, but supported by all NATO governments.*

*Indeed, this is also a consequence of war: the war of the governments and their power apparatus against their own citizens. While on the countless fronts in the world there is thousandfold murdering and a generation of brutalized soldiery is being brought up, while trillions of national wealth are squandered on war expenditures and other cultures are being destroyed, the control and surveillance of citizens by their governments grows at totalitarian dimensions.*

*Others see it that way. Former Secretary of State in the German Ministry of Defence and Member of Parliament for the CDU for many years, Willy Wimmer, spoke plain text in an interview: “To siphon off an entire society, as obviously the United States are doing with the German society, can only be called totalitarian, and that is what I call it as well”. (<http://german.trib.ir/analysen/interviews/item/223752-interview-mit-willy-wimmer/>; of 20 July 2013)*

*A look at the neighbouring country Germany shows, however, that in the struggle for political power in the country – on September 22 the new Bundestag will be elected – the election campaign is to focus on this topic. What is the use of that?*

# The United States – in a permanent state of war

by Professor Dr Albert A. Stahel, Institute for Strategic Studies, Wädenswil

Since its acknowledgement as an independent state in the Peace Treaty of Paris of 3 September 1783 the US have been at war. From 1801 to 1805 it waged the First Barbary war against Morocco, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. On 18 June 1812 the US declared war on Britain with the goal of conquering Canada. The war was ended on 24 December 1814 with the Treaty of Ghent. In 1815 the Second Barbary War against Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli followed.

With the *Removal Act* in 1834 administration and congress passed the resolution to relocate all indigenous tribes in the east across the Mississippi. In 1838/39 the Cherokee from North Carolina were forcibly expelled to the Indian Territory, the later Oklahoma. At the same time, the war against the Seminoles in Florida was raging.

In 1845, the Republic of Texas, an internationally recognized State was annexed. With the war against Mexico from 1846 to 1848 California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah and parts of Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming were conquered and annexed. With one single stroke Mexico lost half of its territory.

In 1853, Commodore *Matthew Perry* forced the opening of Japanese ports threatening them with his warships. In 1854 the Nicaraguan town of Greytown was totally destroyed by an attack of warships. The arrest of a US citizen served as a pretext.

From 1861 to 1865 the Civil War raged. From 1862 to 1864 General *Carlton* subjected the New Mexico Indians. The Big Sioux uprising in Minnesota was bloodily crushed under *Lincoln* in 1862. In 1864, a village of the Cheyenne was extinguished by Colonel *Chivington* at Sand Creek. From 1866 on until the massacre at Wounded Knee in the year 1890 Sioux and Cheyenne tribes were subjected in various campaigns and driven into reservations.

In 1898, the war with Spain was allegedly triggered because of an explosion on a US warship before Cuba. After the destruction of the Spanish fleet, Puerto Rico

and the Philippines were conquered. The US smashed the uprising of the Filipinos against the American occupation in a war that lasted from 12 June 1898 to 4 July 1902. On 12 August 1898 the islands of Hawaii, which had been an independent kingdom up to this time, were annexed. From 1903 to 1940 the US conducted military interventions in Honduras, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Mexico over and again.

The series of wars continues up to this day. Since 2001 war has been raging in Afghanistan. With respect to time it is the longest war that the United States have waged since their independence. A new war is currently being prepared against Iran.

The history of the United States not only shows a chain of official wars and interventions. So-called uprisings were indirectly supported and promoted by their CIA after 1945, as well. Only the support of the partisans in the Eastern European countries occupied by the USSR after 1945 and in the Soviet republics, are to be mentioned here. This “help” lasted until 1950.

A common characteristic of many of these wars is that the US usually invaded a foreign country under a pretext and without a declaration of war. By this procedure the actually valid International Law was often broken. The violations of international law included the annexation of independent States, such as Hawaii.

In the course of their warfare, the US repeatedly violated the international laws of war, for example, the genocide of their own indigenous population and the suppression of the Filipino uprising. Likewise, in the Vietnam War 1964–1973, they violated the international laws of war. *Kissinger's* 11-day war employing 200 heavy B-52 bombers against Hanoi and Haiphong at the end of December 1972 should be mentioned here. In 729 deployments 15,000 tons of bombs were dropped on these two cities!

In its short history, the United States proved to be a state that does not hesitate to break international law and inter-

national laws of war. Particularly against small countries, the US have never shown any understanding and mercy. With threats of war and by war itself these states were prostrated, humiliated and even annexed. Good relationships were never of long duration. International contracts – including the many with the indigenous population – were again and again declared null and void and broken. Of course, in each case the blame on the war was shifted on to the others. On the basis of this approach in its brief history, the US should be prosecuted internationally nowadays. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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# The USA and their allies – “limited sovereignty” modelled on the Brezhnev Doctrine

by Willy Wimmer\*

*The revelations of Snowden illustrate with lightning strike clarity: Our country is by no means a partner for the USA, instead it is treated as a haven of terrorism.*

We will have to remember the open and somehow sympathetic face of *Edward Snowden*. Who has ever managed to present for press purposes – out of a Hong Kong refuge – such an impact, that the American President immediately had a lot of explaining to do about the state of fundamental civil liberty rights and security issues in his country? If it wasn't such a serious matter, one might say: sportive, sportive! But this word gets stuck in your throat, because you cannot believe it. Here is somebody who wants to protect the basic liberties and civil rights in his country and flees – where to? – to China.

With one stroke – just like Kremlin Aviator *Mathias Rust* in 1987 – young Mister Snowden tore the mask off his home country's face. No longer do the United States live up to their reputation as a state committed to democratic and inalienable values. Well, China is not exactly known as a *Præceptor Libertatis*, nor the Russian Federation. Although, for quite some time Moscow has been adopting the role of a manful advocate of national law. Here again, the previously unique selling point is being taken away from the United States and the West in general. It has not been forgotten, however, that – as early as in 1999 – this was sacrificed on the altar of selfish American interests with the illegal war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. And now that affair! China's leaders have not come into their offices according to criteria familiar to us. This does not mean that they do not carefully weigh up the interests of their country. Not even then, when they allowed the young man to move on to somewhere via Moscow. They have created the conditions, that the ball remains in the air, which was played in front of their feet by a young American and by America in disarray.

The brutal control that Edward Snowden found in the *National Security Agency* (NSA) and its contractors, could hardly be known at a worse point of time. What he had to say, affected mainly Germany. The unimaginable sniffing orgies do affect us, the Germans, in the first place. Now everyone here has to rub his eyes, because – regardless of those wars against international law – somehow you imagine yourself here in the status of an ally of the US and not as a haven for inter-

national terrorism. A great signal, sent out so shortly before the Berlin visit of the US President *Obama*. Then it got even worse: We are the officially declared target of a total surveillance together with our continental friends, and yet almost in a singular situation: the enemy status clause of the United Nations is being kept up in the Fort Meade, NSA headquarter.

In Berlin, the Liberty Bell is hanging from the ceiling of the *Schöneberg Town Hall*. It is not just a big-hearted gift from the USA to defeated Germany. By the inscription, according to which “this world is to be born to new freedom under God” has become and still is somewhat the leit-motif of our democratic country. So, we seem to have already forgotten that after the reunification, reportedly well about 2,000 employees of the CIA investigated throughout all of Germany, what influence they might still be able to exert. Since everybody in the State Department of the US Internal Revenue Service in Washington has his own intelligence apparatus, anyone in Berlin can figure out what the total number of floppy hats from “*Freunde-land*” may be in our country. This does not even include the former Stasi and SSD employees who were “reversed” by the US services immediately after the fall of the Wall, when in certain neighborhoods in Berlin their recruiters went from door to door with their lists.

Now President Obama left. He, who is a highly estimated person in Germany, has continued his way to check Guantanamo and other prison islands around the world alongside. Perhaps our Federal President remembers his grateful tears when the American anthem was played in front of the *Bellevue Palace* and his understanding words about the observation by a friend of a friend. Still, someone should go and have a look at *Schöneberg Town Hall* whether the famous Liberty Bell has not cracked, because too much is definitely too much.

The tremendous concussion caused by Mr Snowden, however, should not make us forget that we need not be surprised at all. For some years we have been dealing with the so-called *Echelon* problem. Thereby it came to light that, as a direct consequence of the Second World War, the Anglo-Saxon winner coalition did not only maintain but immeasurably increase their *Sigint* cooperation – i.e. their monitoring of telephone, radio and electronic communication. Our London friends have taken on the task of tapping and immediately transferring the entire Europe-

an e-mail communication to the USA via listening stations, purposes of industrial espionage included. And now something comes to light, which for decades could be found in Europe and of course also in Germany: It is self-evident that German government institutions are subject to parliamentary control and must comply with the national laws. The American friends however, of course completely selfless, let such German state organs participate in their interception knowledge that would never have got permission by their government or the German Federal Parliament to do so themselves. This behaviour does not only make friends, but it levers out our state order. There are enough examples so that you may ask yourself whether certain state institutions in Germany are not paying too much attention to a parallel government based in Washington ...

Anyway, not only since the publication on the NSA data-hoovers, you get the impression that, in the relationship between the US and their allies, ours is a system of “limited sovereignty” modelled on the *Brezhnev Doctrine*. Beginning with the financial rules of Basel II, on to the statute of the *International Criminal Court* in The Hague and the Guantanamo prison up to the supposedly self-evident right of the United States to conduct “wars on demand” in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, there is a long line of examples of how the United States have positioned themselves above any international legal order.

They have been scrupulous in ensuring that we Europeans comply with the strict rules on capital requirements for companies and financial institutions (Basel II and soon III) – but the US themselves implement the provisions only quite laxly. Referring to financial policy they hold the cards close to their vest and make others look like fools. As regards the statutory regulations of the war crimes tribunal in The Hague the US force the American law on the other states, so that Europe can be rolled up, too. For themselves, however, they reserve the right to attack other countries, if American soldiers might be brought to trial because of war crimes. Not only in the Netherlands they may have registered this fact with the greatest interest.

According to Mr Snowden's *Prism*-revelations, the vehicle to enforce this “limited sovereignty” are the US industrial giants operating on the data sector. The gateway for the erosion of the European legal order in the area of fundamental civil rights and

# Hunger is not a law of nature, it is part of the political agenda

## Jean Ziegler – hunger as a weapon, food as an object of speculation and what we can do about it

By Thomas Kaiser

The US Dow Jones index and the German stock market have recently reached an all-time high, compensating losses from the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008. Once again the gambling spirit is back and the consequences of rampant speculation on the stock market seem to be forgotten. Those who are not joining in are soon under the impression that they are missing a chance to make fast buck. It seems like all those things that dominated the daily news just a few months ago is out of our minds: that our states are hopelessly indebted, that the western governments have pumped trillions into the market so that the speculation business could go on, that private property was dispossessed in order to pay for the due debts of the state, and other measures of the executive to keep the casino going.

But while the stock market profits are soaring, the unemployment figures are also mounting. France, Italy, Portugal, Spain; the latter for example has a youth unemployment rate exceeding 50 percent.

When considering this development, we have to be aware that only a vanishingly small part of mankind is profiting from the speculations. The bigger part is on the loser side, carrying the burden of the unjust distribution. Those worst off are people from third world countries who have next to nothing to eat while food is traded for peak prices at the stock exchange. And this is part of the general development and a result of the gambling spirit. So the market price of wheat has doubled since 2011. And this is aggravated by the speculation

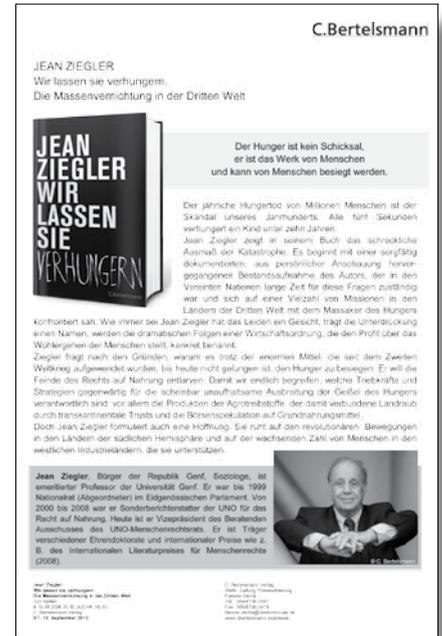
between the producer and the consumer. Before a batch of this essential good reaches its country of destination, it has been sold several times so that it will eventually be sold for a multiple of the original price. Countries most urgently in need of this wheat can hardly pay for it. Is this the social system which mankind – otherwise able to fulfill the highest technological standards – has developed in the era of *homo sapiens sapiens*?

### 1.2 billion people live in “extreme poverty”

Jean Ziegler, the strident professor of sociology, is one of those men who have ever and again denounced this flagrant injustice. As a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and now as Vice President of the UN Human Rights Council, he has not missed any opportunity to point out this grave injustice of malnutrition of millions of people. Guided by a deep inner outrage he has exposed industrialized nations but also emerging and developing countries, castigating the inhuman treatment of the poorest of the poor. While food stocks sometimes gained more than 100% within a short time, the number of underfed people and people threatened by famine has been growing constantly and is now close to one billion.

### Deficiency in vitamins and minerals can lead to severe health problems

Jean Ziegler’s book “Betting on Famine” (the German edition appeared in fall 2012, the English edition has just come out) de-



ISBN 978-3-570-10126-1

scribes reality unflatteringly. Ziegler proceeds relentlessly. He accuses the market traders’ greed as well as the corrupt governments in the developing countries who accept bribes from the West. The World Bank estimates that 1.2 billion people are living in “extreme poverty”. That is, they are able to spend only less than \$1.25 per day. In 2010 98-99 percent of all underfed persons lived in the developing countries. Who would be surprised? But this should not cover up the fact that there are also

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### “The USA and their allies – ...” continued from page 10

freedoms is the otherwise lovable Ireland. Ireland lets the data multinationals have free rein – and our rights and the legal order that is protecting these rights is evaporating into thin air. That opens the floodgates to the huge US lawyers factories and the Europeans will not even have as much of their legal system left as the Indians in the British Empire had when “the home rule” was exercised. This is the configuration with which Europe is entering the negotiations for the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement, which will already have changed into a Transatlantic

Colonial Treaty, before the first steps are taken.

Even at the times of President Clinton, when the foundations of the new American world order were laid and wars were provoked one after another, they thought of the role of the US economy on the globe. The industry sectors were defined, and in every sector US companies were to occupy positions 1 to 3. Just look at the today’s situation and show respect for the planners. They have achieved a lot! Does the free trade agreement have the function to extend the basis of this concept? Are the Europeans to meet the same fate in the concerned industrial fields as the data multinationals are now demonstrating? Only American spoken? How does the

average European government, and how does the EU Commission conceive of negotiations with the US when the NSA in Fort Meade in Maryland is aware of the German or the European concepts for the negotiations before they have been completed on their own laptops? Those who know the Situation Room in Fort Meade know: one does not cross a red light in Berlin or Brussels without the offender’s face being displayed on the screen. •

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\* Willy Wimmer, born in 1943, entered the CDU in 1958 and was a Member of the German Bundestag from 1976 to 2009. From 1988 to 1992 he served as undersecretary of defense for the Federal Government.

(Translation Current Concerns)

**"Hunger is not a law of nature, ..."**

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hungry people in the industrialized countries. The Spanish government, in consequence of the austerity policy imposed by *Merkel*, had to cut social spending, leaving "2.2 million infants severely and permanently underfed".

In the chapter on "Invisible Hunger", Jean Ziegler points out the consequences of longstanding malnutrition for a young person. The problem is not only the visible lack of calories, but also the lack of vitamins and minerals. "Lack of vitamins and minerals can lead to severe health problems: much higher susceptibility for infections, blindness, anemia, avolition, reduced ability to learn, mental retardation, congenital abnormalities, death". It is what the UN calls "silent hunger". More precisely, Ziegler calls it "invisible hunger", because malnutrition strains the body and people often cry out with pain. The misery caused this way is so immense that it is hard to bear. One of the most severe illnesses due to former malnutrition is *Noma* (*Cancerum oris*). Malnourished children are particularly prone for this illness which literally erodes a

person's face. 80 percent of the sick die painfully. Every year, 120,000 people in Africa miserably die of this disease, for the only reason that they have no access to balanced nutrition. Aside from the physical damage, Ziegler points out that malnutrition "can cause severe mental and psychological damage". For us well-fed people it is hard to imagine what people suffer who do not know if and when they will get any food the next day.

"Imagine a mother whose children are crying from hunger and who somehow succeeds in borrowing some milk from a neighbor. How will she feed her little ones the next day? What can prevent her from madness? What father, who is not able to earn a living for his family, will not lose his dignity in his own eyes?"

A family excluded from regular access to sufficient food is a ruined family. The ten thousands of Indian farmers who have committed suicide over the last years tragically document this situation."

We are all live on the same planet; we are humans like all humans and we must not close our eyes to these conditions. It is not tolerable to accept this as an irremediable fate, as some try to make us believe.

**"Eradication of hunger is part of the responsibility of man"**

In the chapter "Famine and Fatalism: Malthus and Natural Selection", the consequences of the Malthusian thinking, which finds supporters still, is analyzed and portrayed critically. The English Theologian *Thomas Malthus* born in 1766 was impressed by the suffering of the so-called *lumpenproletariat* at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; therefore he became concerned with the question of how to feed the population. He came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to supply sufficient food for a growing population. In his view, the population grows relentlessly whereas the land available for food production is finite. As Ziegler states, "a decrease of the population caused by hunger was the only chance to prevent an inevitable economic catastrophe." A fatal notion which is still alive in certain circles and which prevents those from a bad conscience who believe in its inevitability. That way everything can be justified; even war, when it comes to the worst, because it

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**The initiative: Stop the speculation****The text of the initiative:**

We are collecting 100,000 signatures for the federal popular initiative "No speculation with food." This way we want to amend the Federal Constitution by the following text:

I. The Federal Constitution is amended as follows:

**Article 98a (new) combating the speculation with agricultural commodities and food**

1 The Confederation legislates on combating of speculation with agricultural commodities and food. It is committed to the following principles:

- a. banks, securities dealers, private insurances, collective investment schemes and persons involved with management and asset management, social security

facilities and other institutional investors and independent asset managers which are either headquartered or have branches in Switzerland are not allowed to invest neither for themselves nor for their customers and neither to invest directly nor indirectly in financial instruments that refer to agricultural commodities and food. The same applies for the sale of analogously structured products.

b. contracts with producers and traders of agricultural commodities and food on scheduling or hedging of prices of certain deliveries are allowed.

2 The Confederation ensures effective enforcement of the regulations. It respects the following principles:

- a. surveillance as well as prosecution and assessment are a matter of the federal government.

b. Guilty enterprises can be punished directly regardless of organizational deficiencies.

3 The federal government is working at international level to ensure that the speculation with agricultural raw materials and food is effectively combatted worldwide.

II The transitional provisions of the Federal Constitution are changed as follows:  
**Article 197 para. 9 (new)**

**9. Transitional provision to Art. 98 a (Combating the speculation with agricultural commodities and food)**

If the appropriate legal measures are not in force within three years after the adoption of Article 98a by the majority of the people and the Cantons, the Federal Council establishes the necessary provisions by decree; these apply until the commencement of the legal provisions.

**The initiative aims at ...****... stopping speculators ...**

The financial groups know no borders. They scorn the basic needs of people. The speculators wage on rising food prices and benefit from hunger and misery, without creating real value.

In no area is there a need for speculation, it just serves the gain of the hyper-rich and financial groups at the cost of the poorest population. Let us stop concerted-ly the most disgusting form of profiteering – speculation in food commodities.

**... fighting hunger ...**

Only a small part of the food trade serves real exchange; the vast majority is wagers at the stock market. Repeatedly, this speculation in food commodities leads to incredible fluctuations and a massive increase of food prices. Millions of people are driven into poverty and hunger. We want to bring food trade back to reality so that it concentrates again on the supply of the people.

**... thinking globally, acting locally.**

A large part of the speculation in food commodities runs via Swiss banks and the world's largest raw materials companies are headquartered here. Therefore, the fight against the business with hunger must start here. Switzerland can give a strong signal against food speculation that would be felt worldwide.

Source: [www.juso.ch/files/120917\\_Argumentarium\\_ausfuehrlich.pdf](http://www.juso.ch/files/120917_Argumentarium_ausfuehrlich.pdf)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# “Tired of wasting a third”

## Focal point in “Culture and Politics – Journal of environmental, social and economic contexts” on World Food Day

*A third of food in Switzerland ends in the rubbish! At the same time 870 million people are starving worldwide. While a small part of the world population can select between agricultural products from all over the world – strawberry, kiwi, lychee, papaya, oranges in each season – a big part of mankind lives in hunger.*

*On the occasion of The World Food Day in October 2012 the magazine “Culture and Politics” of Bioforum Switzerland (issue 4/12) deals with the question of how it can happen, that one third of our food ends up on the scrapheap.*

rt. A third of the food ends up in the rubbish, a part at the producer, during processing, the trade and the consumer. That things don't have to be like this is wellknown at least since the *World Agriculture Report* of 2008.

In “Culture and Politics” various contributions investigate the backgrounds of waste during simultaneous hunger. As an origin is seen the growth ideology, opposed to a biological, indigenous and sustainable agriculture: a small scale agriculture adapted to regional peculiarities. Linked with regional processing and marketing this form of agriculture is able to nourish the population sufficiently without waste.

The reimmersion in the world of consumerism (after a longer holiday in the Swiss Alps) is described ironically by *Markus Schär*: I have followed “after months of abstinence I finally could run

through the consumption racecourse completely self-determined and could – if I wished to do so – live out the consumers much vaunted freedom of choice and assimilate the most exotic food. Welcome in the realexisting consumerism! Doesn't that sound cynical? But it is a fact. In that way Markus Schär entitles “freedom” as a hollow freedom of choice in our consumer world.

The undemocratic globalized economic system of transnational corporations, set out in the WTO rules, increases the gap between rich and poor, also within the individual companies. So also in Switzerland institutions such as “The Wishing Table” or “The Swiss Table” supplying the poor with food rise. This correlation is described by the author *Wendy Peter*. She once more points out that more and more areas under cultivation are taken away from the countries of the third world having hunger crises. Those areas under cultivation are supposed to the countries self subsistence, but rich people buy them up and lease them for their consumption.

A frequent trap in that today a “green” economy can lead if the current system is not questioned, is described by *Sieglinde Lorz* as a representative of “Décroissance Berne”: “The ecological orientated economy dreams of the *Green economy* and the *Green new deal*, which means nothing else than green economic increase, are built on misinterpreted efficiency. Again the consumer society is not questioned. Instead one pays scrupulous attention, that people can keep their sub-

stantial prosperity and that even with a green, clean conscience. The policy requires voters.”

The magazine “Culture and Politics” of “Bioforum Switzerland” gives a wide insight to the problem of nutrition supply, but – through their own activities within the “Bioforum Switzerland” – gives also an outlook towards possible alternatives. The club itself has a long rural tradition. •

Source: *Kultur und Politik. Zeitschrift für ökologische, soziale und wirtschaftliche Zusammenhänge.* (Culture and politics. Journal for ecological, social and economic contexts.)

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### “Hunger is not a law of nature, ...”

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will lead to a reduction of the population and “natural selection”.

Fortunately, humanity has also generated different thinkers who have come to important conclusions by way of natural law, based on the tradition of the Christian-Occidental culture and the Enlightenment: that human life is unique and has to be protected by all means. This eventually has been put down in the UN charter and in the sanctity of human dignity. After the horrors of World War II, the notion gained acceptance that “the eradication of hunger is part of the responsibili-

ty of man; there is no fateful inevitability to this problem“.

Our mother earth has enough soil to supply food for a growing mankind. There is a study that the Congo alone has enough fertile soil to provide food for all of Africa.

### Geopolitics of hunger

An important contribution to working on the hunger issue and to the slowly changing attitude was – according to Jean Ziegler – accomplished by the Brazilian doctor Josué de Castro. “More than any other person has one man made the peoples of the West aware of the problem of hunger: the Brazilian doctor Josué Apolônio de Castro.” (p. 103) Touched by the misery

of the haggard and emaciated people, he started to investigate the causes of hunger. In his main work “Geografia da fome” he concluded “that hunger, even though it can be partly attributed to the geographical conditions, is primarily a political phenomenon. Not the condition of the soil, but solely the actions of man are responsible for its continued existence.” (p. 109) While Malthus with his devastating theory regarded hunger as a «natural phenomenon» and tried to “justify the mass extinction based on the ‘law of necessity’”, Castro pointed out and made aware of the fact “that permanent under- and malnutrition affect the society as a whole, the

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**"Hunger is not a law of nature, ..."**

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starving as well as the well-fed." Castro made this very clear in the following statement: "Half of the Brazilians do not sleep because they are hungry, but the other half does not sleep because they are afraid of those who are hungry." If a human being is hungry, it always affects the whole of humanity.

**Innocent human beings are killed under the guise of human rights**

Not just Adolf Hitler recognized that hunger can be specifically used as a weapon. With his strategy of the "scorched earth" he let dozens of foreign nations starve to death during the German war campaigns. Already during the Russian Revolution and the subsequent forced collectivization millions of people fell victim to hunger who did not want to submit to the communist dictatorship or who disagreed with the directives of the Central Committee in Moscow. Not to mention the European campaigns of conquest during the colonial period and the period of imperialism. But even today the hunger weapon is used, not as obviously as under Hitler and usually under the guise of having to defend human rights.

The UN sanctions against Iraq which were introduced on behalf of Western pressure have brought death to almost one million people because of blocked medical supplies and lack of food. The situation in Iran, which has also been placed under sanctions for years, severely affected the supply situation of the country which lived mostly on oil exports and had therefore promoted its agriculture insufficiently. In an addendum entitled «The Ghetto of Gaza» Ziegler mentions the situation in the Gaza Strip. According to the Geneva Conventions, the occupying power, Israel, would be responsible for the maintenance of the people living there. But the fact is that in 2010 "about 80 per cent of the population [...] were dependent on international aid for survival" (p. 65) as a result of the blockade policy.

It is totally absurd that innocent human beings are killed for the alleged defense of human rights. Here it is obvious that it is all about power interests, in particular of the great powers. The right to exploit the resources of another state or to enforce reforms of any kind in a country, if necessary even by force of arms, is indeed part of the new NATO doctrine, but has nothing to do with human rights: actually it is in stark contradiction to them. Hunger as a weapon is devastating and

today no less deadly and destructive than during the Second World War.

**Biofuel for the well-fed instead of food for the hungry**

In consequence of free trade agreements many countries have paid too little attention to promoting their agriculture. Thus, they are dependent on the import of foreign goods. This is also true for our country which has to import nearly 45 percent of its foodstuff. As long as the nations deal with each other peacefully, there is no danger, but we have not yet reached the "eternal peace" and the arrogance of the great nations when it comes to their advantage, can be observed every day. It is one of the key principles of a state to obtain a high degree of sovereignty and independence. This includes a sufficient supply of food for the population as well as the ability to defend itself with a powerful army against attacks from outside in an emergency.

It would not be Jean Ziegler, if he did not name horse and rider in his book. He accuses the UN, which severely failed with respect to the hunger issue according to his point of view, because it is dominated by the industrialized nations; he denounces as well all the other international organizations such as the WTO, World Bank and IMF. But not only the West, which keeps exploiting the other countries and their peoples with ruthless interest-driven policies and plunges them into ruin, contributes to the problem of hunger. Also the governments depending on the West and companies in the emerging and developing countries with their often selfish policies focusing on maintaining power do their bit. Several countries in Africa sold some of their most fertile land where corn or soy for biofuel is now grown, while their own population remains in the dependence on UN food aid. Particularly glaring are the contrasts in countries such as Brazil and India. Both countries have emerging markets which have a large capacity, whereas hundreds of thousands live below the poverty line and do not know how to get through the next day. Many developing countries have sold vast lands to private corporations, which do not use the fertile soil for food, but to produce allegedly less polluting biofuel. For 50 liters of bioethanol you need 7 centners of maize ... This ratio is a catastrophe!

**Food markets are victims of locusts**

Jean Ziegler's book demonstrates very clearly into what hunger catastrophe humanity is marching, unless urgent rethinking begins. The theory that everything was regulated by the market and globalization was a benefit for everyone,

especially for the poorest, turned out to be completely insupportable and led to the financial markets' disaster. The profiteers are big finance and certain industries as well as those who want to abolish the nation state by globalization and to establish global rules for everybody without democratic legitimacy. Regarding the EU countries, however, poverty has largely increased whereas stock prices have reached new record highs. The sovereignty of the nation states is being limited more and more, particularly in the EU. Countries, such as Greece which are "helped" with large sums of money have to put up with foreign Revenue Commissioners controlling their budget. As the stock market began to falter in 2008 and many investors sold their shares and were then sitting on vast sums of money, they searched for new investment or speculation opportunities for the released funds. Among these victims of the locusts were the food markets. They had existed for a long time, indeed, but they had never experienced this wild growth as they did in the last 5 years. Ziegler writes:

"For the speculators agricultural products are market products like any other. They are not at all interested in the consequences of their operations for millions of people due to the price increase". Unlike the trader, the speculator does not buy the goods in the end, he just speculates with the prices and reckons with their increase or their fall. This results in a huge bubble on the food market, and when it comes to burst, it will destroy huge assets and will plunge the economy into the abyss. The consequence will be poverty and even greater famine. The Young Socialists of Switzerland have launched an initiative in order to erect barriers to these doings, that is to set limits to the speculation with food (see box: "The stop speculation-initiative"). Commodity exchanges are not a problem in themselves, but "originally they served to secure the prices for food producers and processors [...]. The excessive speculation, as prevailing today on the commodity markets, has no safeguarding function any more. On the contrary, prices are repeatedly driven up massively and vary hugely, because the market is flooded with a huge amount of capital. "(Arguments of the Stop-speculation-initiative.) Many of my generation will remember the movie "September wheat" broadcasted at the end of 1979, which as early as then very clearly drew attention to the problem of speculation, even before "GM" and "globalization". (see box)

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**"Hunger is not a law of nature, ..."**

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**Small-scale farming, organized in family businesses or in cooperatives as a solution to the problem of hunger**

Moreover, with his book Jean Ziegler achieves an increased reflection on the things that define our world affairs. His book is a clear plea against globalization and the unrestrained preying on the sometimes very fragile economies. But it is also a clear commitment to democracy, when he suggests for Germany, for instance: "people could have an impact on the parliament by various forms of political engagement with the aim to alter the Stock Exchange Act and to prohibit the speculation with basic foodstuff, the EU's agricultural dumping and the import of biofuels" (p. 305). Moreover it is a confirmation of the World Agriculture Report, of food sovereignty, i.e. an agricultural policy, that

Between 2003 and 2008 speculations on agricultural commodities increased by 23 per cent by investing in index funds. According to the FAO (report 2011) in actually only 2 per cent of the commodity futures lead to the delivery of the goods. *Frederick Kaufmann* summarizes the situation as follows: "The more the agricultural commodities increase, the more money flows into this market, the higher the already exorbitant prices rise."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Kaufmann, cited in: Horand Knaup, Michael Schiessl and Anne Seith, "Die Ware Hunger (The product hunger)", *Der Spiegel*, Hamburg, 29 August 2011 (Translation *Current Concerns*)

**The film "September Wheat"**

The term "September Wheat" means a wheat contract in the USA that is due in September. In 7 chapters the film shows the wheat's path from its growth in America to the consumer. The film describes how farmers, scientists, traders, processors and politicians deal with the topic in the USA. Seed growers throw more profit-yielding hybrids on the market, making the farmers dependent on them. The USA started the dumping program "Food for peace" to export its agricultural surplus and let the wheat flow to the third world. Examples from Africa, Latin America and

is determined by the citizens themselves and advocates small-scale agriculture, organized in family businesses or in cooperatives, recommended as a solution to the problem of hunger.

Ziegler cites the preamble in the declaration, which Via Campesina submitted to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in March 2011,:

"The farmers provide almost half the world's population. Even in the world of high technology, people eat the food farmers produce. Agriculture is not simply an economic activity, but again closely connected with the life and survival on our earth. The safety of the public depends on the welfare of the farmers and on a sustainable agriculture. In order to protect the life of humanity, we must recognize the farmers' rights and enforce them. Actually the continuing violation of the farmers' rights threaten human life and the planet."

In spite of all the sinister proceedings in relation to the production and distribution of food Jean Ziegler manages not to let the reader sink into a depression. Incited by his honest commitment to the starving people on our planet and his humane outrage at the maladministration that people have created and may therefore change again, if the political will is manifest, an awareness is created that not only laments the evil but stimulates concrete action. And action is needed, especially in the industrialized democracies. Here the opportunity is given, to take part in the political discourse, to encourage conversation with friends and neighbours in order to create such an awareness as to contribute to an improvement of the situation. For Jean Ziegler it is evident and his book is a proof, hunger does not just exist but is made by people. The earth could easily feed even billions of people more.

Asia make clear, how the Americans used the wheat as a political weapon by allocating or withdrawing. The center of the world's wheat trading is the stock market in Chicago. This is the place where speculation is taking place and the prices are being made. Day and night "continental bakeries" produce a kind of "wonder bread" to which aromatic and other chemical substances are added, having hardly any nutritional value and leading to an unhealthier nutrition.

Source: [www.film.at/septemberweisen\\_1/detail.html?cc\\_detailpage=full](http://www.film.at/septemberweisen_1/detail.html?cc_detailpage=full) (Translation *Current Concerns*)

A poem by Mercedes Sosa, which closes the book, expresses what Jean Ziegler ultimately would like to achieve with his great commitment:

*"I only ask of God  
that I not be indifferent to pain  
that death will not find me empty  
and alone  
without having done what was necessary  
on this earth"* •

**Investigation about the loss of fruit and vegetables in the course of production**

*thk.* In the country of unlimited possibilities the wasteful handling of food seems to be unlimited, as well. In a detailed study the *Natural Resources Defense Council* (NRDC), domiciliated in the US, illustrates that more than 40 per cent of the produced food does not end up on the table of the final consumer, i.e. the citizens, but in the garbage-can respectively it is destroyed in the process of production and distribution. That means they "miss the opportunity", as they write themselves, that the huge number of people in need worldwide might enjoy this foodstuff. The FAO estimates that 20 per cent of fruit and vegetables are destroyed in the course of production.

«The volume of commercial transactions with raw material that were concluded in Geneva – amongst them a lot of agricultural raw material in foodstuffs – amounted to 1,5 billion dollars in 2000, to 12 billion in 2009 and to 17 billion dollars in 2010.<sup>1</sup>

For 2010 the *National Bank* estimates that the investments in funds that were concluded in Switzerland amount to 4,5 trillion of Swiss Francs... But only one third of this astronomical sum slumbers in Swiss investment funds. In other words: funds administered under Swiss law.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the hedgefonds sold in Switzerland have their seats on the Bahamas, the Caiman Islands, in Curacao, Jersey, Aruba, Barbados etc., this way evading any legal control in Switzerland.» (J. Ziegler, p. 278)

<sup>1</sup> cf. *Matthew Allen*, „Genève, paradis du négoce“, *Le Courrier, Genf*, 28 March 2011

<sup>2</sup> cf. study by *Elisabeth Eckert*, "1500 milliards de francs suisse au moins échappent à tout contrôle en Suisse", (at least 1500 billion francs escape from any Swiss control) *Le Matin Dimanche*, 3 April 2011

## “Some thoughts meant to challenge people’s consciences and lead them to reflection and a concrete change of heart”

Homily of Holy Father Francis on the “Arena” sports camp, Salina Quarter (Lampedusa Island) on 8 July 2013



Holy Father Francis (picture Reuters)

“Immigrants dying at sea, in boats which were vehicles of hope and became vehicles of death.” That is how the headlines put it.

When I first heard of this tragedy a few weeks ago, and realized that it happens all too frequently, it has constantly come back to me like a painful thorn in my heart. So I felt that I had to come here today, to pray and to offer a sign of my closeness, but also to challenge our consciences lest this tragedy be repeated. Please, let it not be repeated! First, however, I want to say a word of heartfelt gratitude and encouragement to you, the people of Lampedusa and Linosa, and to the various associations, volunteers and security personnel who continue to attend to the needs of people journeying towards a better future. You are so few, and yet you offer an example of solidarity! Thank you! I also thank Archbishop *Francesco Montenegro* for all his help, his efforts and his close pastoral care. I offer a cordial greeting to Mayor *Giusi Nicolini*: thank you so much for what you have done and are doing. I also think with affection of those Muslim immigrants who this evening begin the fast of Ramadan, which I trust will bear abundant spiritual fruit. The Church is at your side as you seek a more dignified life for yourselves and your families. To all of you: o’scià!

This morning, in the light of God’s word which has just been proclaimed, I wish to offer some thoughts meant to challenge people’s consciences and lead them to reflection and a concrete change of heart.

“Adam, where are you?” This is the first question which God asks man after his sin. “Adam, where are you?” Adam lost his bearings, his place in creation, because he thought he could be powerful, able to control everything, to be God. Harmony was lost; man erred and this error occurs over and over again also in relationships with

others. “The other” is no longer a brother or sister to be loved, but simply someone who disturbs my life and my comfort. God asks a second question: “Cain, where is your brother?” The illusion of being powerful, of being as great as God, even of being God himself, leads to a whole series of errors, a chain of death, even to the spilling of a brother’s blood!

God’s two questions echo even today, as forcefully as ever! How many of us, myself included, have lost our bearings; we are no longer attentive to the world in which we live; we don’t care; we don’t protect what God created for everyone, and we end up unable even to care for one another! And when humanity as a whole loses its bearings, it results in tragedies like the one we have witnessed.

“Where is your brother?” His blood cries out to me, says the Lord. This is not a question directed to others; it is a question directed to me, to you, to each of us. These brothers and sisters of ours were trying to escape difficult situations to find some serenity and peace; they were looking for a better place for themselves and their families, but instead they found death. How often do such people fail to find understanding, fail to find acceptance, fail to find solidarity. And their cry rises up to God! Once again I thank you, the people of Lampedusa, for your solidarity. I recently listened to one of these brothers of ours. Before arriving here, he and the others were at the mercy of traffickers, people who exploit the poverty of others, people who live off the misery of others. How much these people have suffered! Some of them never made it here.

“Where is your brother?” Who is responsible for this blood? In Spanish literature we have a comedy of *Lope de Vega* which tells how the people of the town of Fuente Ovejuna kill their governor because he is a tyrant. They do it in such a way that no one knows who the actual killer is. So when the royal judge asks: “Who killed the governor?”, they all reply: “Fuente Ovejuna, sir”. Everybody and nobody! Today too, the question has to be asked: Who is responsible for the blood of these brothers and sisters of ours? Nobody! That is our answer: It isn’t me; I don’t have anything to do with it; it must be someone else, but certainly not me. Yet God is asking each of us: “Where is the blood of your brother which cries out to me?” Today no one in our world feels responsible; we have lost a sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters. We have fallen into the hy-

pocrisy of the priest and the levite whom Jesus described in the parable of the Good Samaritan: we see our brother half dead on the side of the road, and perhaps we say to ourselves: “poor soul...!”, and then go on our way. It’s not our responsibility, and with that we feel reassured, assuaged. The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference. In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!

Here we can think of *Manzoni*’s character – “the Unnamed”. The globalization of indifference makes us all “unnamed”, responsible, yet nameless and faceless.

“Adam, where are you?” “Where is your brother?” These are the two questions which God asks at the dawn of human history, and which he also asks each man and woman in our own day, which he also asks us. But I would like us to ask a third question: “Has any one of us wept because of this situation and others like it?” Has any one of us grieved for the death of these brothers and sisters? Has any one of us wept for these persons who were on the boat? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For these men who were looking for a means of supporting their families? We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion – “suffering with” others: the globalization of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep! In the Gospel we have heard the crying, the wailing, the great lamentation: “Rachel weeps for her children... because they are no more”. Herod sowed death to protect his own comfort, his own soap bubble. And so it continues ... Let us ask the Lord to remove the part of Herod that lurks in our hearts; let us ask the Lord for the grace to weep over our indifference, to weep over the cruelty of our world, of our own hearts, and of all those who in anonymity make social and economic decisions which open the door to tragic situations like this. “Has any one wept?” Today has anyone wept in our world?

Lord, in this liturgy, a penitential liturgy, we beg forgiveness for our indifference to so many of our brothers

**“Some thoughts meant to challenge ...”**

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and sisters. Father, we ask your pardon for those who are complacent and closed amid comforts which have deadened their hearts; we beg your forgiveness for those who by their decisions on the global level have created situations that lead to these tragedies. Forgive us, Lord!

Today too, Lord, we hear you asking: “Adam, where are you?” “Where is the blood of your brother?”

*At the end of Mass, the Pope said the following words :*

Before imparting my blessing to you I want to thank you once again; you people of Lampedusa, for the example of love, charity and hospitality that you have set us and are still setting us. The Bishop said that Lampedusa is a bea-

con. May this example be a beacon that shines throughout the world, so that people will have the courage to welcome those in search of a better life. Thank you for bearing this witness! And I also want to thank you for your tenderness which I have felt in Fr *Stefano* himself. He told me on the boat what he and the parochial vicar do. I thank you all, and I thank you, Fr *Stefano*. •

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