

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

People's initiative to strengthen food security will be launched

Interview with National Councillor Rudolf Joder, SVP (Swiss People's Party)



National Councillor
Rudolf Joder
(picture thk)

Just at the right time a people's initiative to improve food security is launched in Switzerland. Its objective is the amendment of Article 104 of the Constitution by 104a in order to strengthen "the supply of the population with food from diverse, sustainable, domestic production".

The following interview with one of the initiators, National Councillor Rudolf Joder, provides the reader with an insight into the political and economic background of this initiative and its contents.

Current Concerns: Why is this initiative for food security now being prepared, what is it to achieve?

National Councillor Rudolf Joder: The objective of the initiative is to maintain and ensure a minimum food sovereignty. Swiss agriculture faces a severe shrinking process. Since the year 2000, 42,000 jobs in the agricultural sector have been lost; that is, 15,000 farms had to give up. Every year, 2,000 hectares of arable land get lost. According to the initiators this shrinking process must be stopped. Otherwise, it is foreseeable that in a few years we will no longer have an essential agricultural supply in Switzerland.

The initiative is launched by you – the Joder/Graber Group – together with the Farmers' Association. What are the specific points?

The text of the people's initiative includes the following points: First, the strengthening of domestic production, second the protection of cultivated land including the summer grazing areas, for Alpine

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2014 – United Nations Year of Family Farms

thk. The issue of hunger and the solution to this problem has concerned mankind for centuries. To be able to actively fight hunger, an international working group, consisting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, OECD and UN had worked out the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and presented them to the world public in 2001.¹ Until 2015 significant improvements were to be achieved on our planet in eight different areas of life. One of these development objectives was to include reducing the number of the hungry by half, from nearly one billion to 500 million. On the one hand this is a huge task if we look at the severe hunger and drought disasters on our globe; on the other hand it is a shame that people are starving despite full food bins and sufficient arable land and foodstuff. Fully aware of this *Jean Ziegler* entitled his book, that was published last

year: "Betting on Famine: Why the world still goes hungry".² Jean Ziegler, former UN Special Correspondent on the right to food, who had grappled with the problem of hunger for years and had obtained profound insight in the world food situation thanks to his UN mandate, views hunger and starvation ultimately neither as a result of a series of weather disasters nor a period of droughts nor of an ever-growing population, but as a perverse business, that originates from speculation and unjust distribution of goods. He believes that 12 billion people can easily find enough food on our planet, and thus the Earth is by far not overpopulated.³ But taking the position of the Malthusians, people may see a solution to the hunger problem only in a decimation of the world's population or one is ready to accept hunger to continue

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Food security by means of family farming

thk. In 2011 the UN General Assembly decided to make the year 2014 the "International Year of Family Farming" (IYFF). The initiative came from the World Rural Forum and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).¹ Thus, on its website the FAO emphasizes the significance of the world's family farms and smallholder farms for agriculture because they comprehensively care for the safeguarding of the entire food sector and safeguard the associated care for the environment. This applies both to the developing countries and the developed nations, to the same extent. In summary, one can say: "The family farm plays a very important socio-economic, environmental and cultural role." (See box on page 2)

Switzerland, which has an agriculture that is primarily based on family farms, is also actively involved in the organization of the International Year of Family Farming.² Various organizations such as the "Schweizerischer Bauernverband" (Swiss Farmers' Association, SBV) or the "Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Berggebiete" (Swiss Group for Mountain Regions, SAB) as well as many others up to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) are to participate in the performance of various events on this topic.

The above-mentioned dossier² deals with the significance of family farming in detail. (See box on page 2) Especially in Switzerland, whose communal life is based on the cooperative principle and the solidarity among citizens, the family and the family business, not only the peasant family, are a very important part of the economy and the political system. The organization of peasant farms and cooperatives is as much a tradition of farms worldwide as the family farms. Especially in the developing and emerging countries cooperatives increasingly gain in social and economic importance. In the context of food security and food sovereignty, which are closely linked with the conservation of state independence and democracy, both organizational forms gain a high priority. •

¹ www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/

² Dossier on the International Year of Family Farming. Edited by the Swiss Committee for the IYFF

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farming must be included. Furthermore we considered three other aspects. The third point includes the quality of food and food products. Point four is the reduction of the administrative costs, because an increasingly larger portion of direct payments in agriculture never reaches the farmers, but ends up with environmental agencies. The last point is that we necessarily want to get away from the four-year cycle of changes in the legal framework for agriculture.

What does that exactly mean?

The Federal Council and the Federal Department for Agriculture say that this four-year cycle is a result of the payment framework for agriculture, which is determined every four years. This statement is legally incorrect because both in education and in development policy we set a payment schedule every four years, without fundamentally adapting the appropriate legislation each time. Therefore, this principle must also apply to agriculture. Therefore, we demand more security in planning and investment and a greater legal security for the farms, so that they have enough time to make changes in their farm, in case they want to break new ground in their production.

The initiative is therefore a response to the Federal Council's agricultural policy? This is exactly what it is. The initiative aims at clearly correcting the wrong course, which the agricultural policy took from 2014 to 2017 with the guidelines AP 14/17 that required an extensification in agriculture. For example, they want to massively reduce agricultural production, the cultivation of grain, sugar beet, but also the breeding of animals. The initiative aims at stopping this process and ensuring a productive agriculture. It is clearly in the interests of the Swiss population that a certain amount of food in good quality is produced here.

With AP 2014/17, for example, the grazing area is more highly subsidized than the livestock.

That is true. To put it pointedly, the new concept of agricultural policy is the following: The less a farmer works, the more money he gets in the context of direct payments. That cannot be true. The core task of agriculture is to produce food for the population and food in good quality and not to operate direct landscape maintenance. All the more so, since nature conservation legislation in Switzerland is already very comprehensive compared with many foreign countries.

Food Security Initiative**Article 104a (new) Food Security**

1. The Swiss Federal Government will strengthen the population's supply with food from diverse, sustainable, domestic production; it takes effective measures, in particular against the loss of cultivated land, including summer grazing areas, and for the implementation of a quality strategy.
2. In agriculture it provides for low administrative expenses and for a reasonable security both with respect to investment and legal matters.

Transitional provisions

The Federal Council requests appropriate statutes from the Federal Assembly no later than two years after the adoption of Article 104a by the people and the cantons.

Source: www.sbv-usp.ch

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

How can we achieve food sovereignty by means of this initiative?

Food sovereignty is not only threatened by the new AP 14/17, but by the clear policy of the Federal Council who pursues to open agricultural markets. This clear strategy, for example in future negotiations with the EU, is completely misdirected. We already import many more agricultural products than we export. Since 2007 the liberalization of the cheese market has very clearly shown that local agriculture will be on the losing side when markets are further opened. This process must vigorously be stopped. The Federal Council's policy has to be corrected. That is what we want to achieve with the initiative.

Is there a plausible justification that we should deal with agricultural products in the same way as with other business products?

Behind the Federal Council's policy there are different, completely wrong considerations. For me it is an essential difference whether it is machinery that is traded as economic goods or whether it is food. My clear conviction is that food should be grown where it is consumed. Despite all globalization and the opening of markets, this principle gets more and more support.

This approach can be found in the UN World Agricultural Report of 2006. It stipulates that a small-scale agriculture, which is locally based and organized in family farms, will be able to solve the problem of hunger in our world.

Yes, we have realized that much damage can be done worldwide by shifting and transporting food back and forth. It is not only about the environmental impact of very long transport routes, it is not only about the loss of quality, but it is also about the destruction of the farms in the developing and emerging countries. The result is that the economies of these countries remain backward if the locally grown foods have to constantly compete against cheapest imported goods from the industrialized countries. These industrial countries take their agricultural goods to these markets and undermine domestic production this way. The US, for example, subsidizes their agricultural produce very strongly. So they can charge prices that are so low that they undermine the production in other countries and thus destroy agriculture in the developing and emerging countries. This process must be stopped at the international level. It is imperative to change thinking.

One has the impression that Federal Councillor Schneider-Ammann is pig-headed in this respect.

Yes, this becomes evident in the questionable passage on agriculture in the Free Trade Agreement that was concluded between Switzerland and China. It makes no sense to increase chicken and rabbit meat import to Switzerland from China as a result of tariff reductions. Rabbit and chicken can be produced in Switzerland, we do

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not rely on this meat being transported in our country over a distance of 20,000 km.

This naturally raises the question of animal husbandry and whether our high standards are at all achieved in China. This adds to the entire problem, because there is virtually no animal welfare in China. In Switzerland, we have very strict rules concerning animal welfare. The products are made in entirely different ways; the spears do not have the same length. The citizens in Switzerland do not want meat that has been produced under unbearable conditions for animals.

The supply of people in their own country with sufficient food has a safety aspect, as well. How can you maintain the sovereignty of the country and prevent increasing dependence? We would be at the mercy of the other states' goodwill in crisis situations.

This is a very important aspect. Therefore, we demand that the current state of 50 to 60 per cent self-subsistence is to be reached as well in the future. If we reduce this self-subsistence, then of course Switzerland's dependence on foreign countries will grow and grow. This means that our country is increasingly vulnerable to blackmail. This cannot be the objective of our security policy. All the more, the Federal Council's attitude with regard to these agricultural issues is completely incomprehensible. Self-subsistence really has something to do with a country's sovereignty and independence. It is no coincidence that China, for example, seeks a self-subsistence rate of 95%.

That means more free trade agreements are counter-productive in terms of security. But what does it mean for our farms, if we enter into various free trade agreements and agriculture is not excluded, as was done in the EFTA agreements intentionally?

Basically this amplifies the pressure on our agriculture. The domestic prices for the respective foodstuff fall and the cost cannot be adequately compensated. In practice this means a loss of market share for domestic agriculture. That is why I work together with law professor *Paul Richli* on a parliamentary initiative whose topic is the protection of Swiss agriculture from market openings. Unfortunately, this aspect could not be included in the people's initiative. But I am now about to politically take up this topic via a parliamentary initiative. The point is to protect agriculture against free trade. The point is to prevent the Federal Council's further steps toward liberalization in general, because our agriculture usually is not competitive due to the cost situation and the difficult topographical situation in our country and it cannot compete with cheap foreign imports.

So you can say that your efforts concerning agriculture and its protection are very closely linked to the safeguarding of our national sovereignty.

Yes, absolutely! Especially in the age of globalization, it is very important that we do not lose sight of this aspect. Agriculture is very important for the future of Switzerland; not only because of the strong population growth – since 2000 we have had a population increase of nearly a million people – but also for reasons of independence and sovereignty. If we are dependent on foreign foodstuff for the nutrition of our people, we are vulnerable to blackmail and are no longer sovereign and independent.

Mr National Councillor Joder, thank you for the interview. •

Interview: Thomas Kaiser

WHAT IS FAMILY FARMING?

Family farming includes all family-based agricultural activities, and it is linked to several areas of the rural development. Family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's. Both in developing and developed countries, family farming is the predominant form of agriculture in the food production sector. At national

level, there are a number of factors that are key for a successful development of family farming, such as: agro-ecological conditions and territorial characteristics; policy environment; access to markets; access to land and natural resources; access to technology and extension services; access to finance; demographic, economic and socio-cultural conditions; availability of specialized education among others.

Source: www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/

Achievements of Family Farming

- Family farming makes an essential contribution to the supply with food for the local population.
- It exploits the natural resources in a sustainable way.
- Family farming has comprehensive knowledge at its disposal about local ecological systems, their changes and how to deal with them.
- Family farming has a diversified production and does not cultivate giant areas of monoculture.
- Family farming works sustainably so that descendants can live on it, as well.
- Family farming bears the responsibility for the production and their products. This way high quality is guaranteed.
- Family farmers are careful and responsible with their animals and respect animal welfare.
- Value creation from food production as well as decision-making in agriculture remain with the rural

- population thanks to family farming.
- Family farming contributes to creating and maintaining jobs in rural areas as upstream and downstream sectors depend on their activities. In developing countries this achievement is particularly vital for the reduction of poverty.
- Family farming is distinguished by flexibility and versatility (adaptation) even in difficult circumstances as for example in a critical situation of world economy or in difficult climatic conditions.
- Family farming promotes decentralized settlement and slows down migration from the country to the cities.
- Family farming shapes the countryside of the region.
- Family farming contributes to the maintenance of traditions.
- Within the farmer families there is a knowledge transfer between the generations.

From all these aspects you can conclude that family farming stands for sustainability in all three dimensions:

- Ecology: They cultivate their soil and the natural resources in such a way that their descendants can also produce in the enterprise.
- Economy: They operate in a way so as their children and grandchildren assume an enterprise that stands on sound financial pillars.
- Social: Social security is given through the cohabitation of generations. Beyond the family they form a strong community as their activities make the survival of other sectors in rural areas possible and as they maintain regional traditions and customs.

Source: http://www.familyfarming.ch/images/dossier/IYFF_Dossier_D_2013-08-23.pdf, pp. 12.

(Translation Current Concerns)

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as an immutable fact. A sinister approach, which is advocated in certain circles today but has since long been disproved by international politics.

In 2003 against the backdrop of this infinite number of starving people on our planet the United Nations in cooperation with the World Bank triggered an international process resulting in the publication of the "World Agriculture Report" (International assessment of agricultural knowledge, science and technology for development: IAASTD) at the end of 2008.⁴ More than 500 scientists from around the world, as well as some representatives from Switzerland, contributed to this comprehensive report. Roughly speaking, this "World Agriculture Report" is an answer to speculation and corrupt power politics, as it puts the agricultural production back into the hands of the citizens or the farmers. That way it proposes an alternative to the multinational companies operating their business with the hunger worldwide, an alternative which is not only more economic, but also environment-friendly, sustainable and thus more successful: "diversified, smallholder farms provide the lion's share of global agriculture. Even if the produc-

tion growth can be reached more quickly in the specialized large companies with high output, the largest room to act for the improvement of livelihoods and equity lies in the small-scale and diverse production systems of developing countries. The smallholder sector is highly dynamic and reacts quickly to changing natural socioeconomic conditions adapting its product range and also increasing production answering to increasing demand."⁵

This means nothing but that the future of agriculture does not lie in further industrialization, but in a sensible use of the possibilities which are provided mainly in small-scale agriculture. Further it is stated in the report, that the smallholders ultimately "get more revenue out of the ground, have shorter decision-making paths, constantly improve and are much less damaging to the environment".⁶

In 90 percent of cases the farms are organized as family farms. According to the World Agriculture Report this structure has proved to be effective and will present the future of our agriculture. Particularly in developing countries, but not only there, this structure has formed the basis for the producing agriculture for centuries.

Since this form of cultivation is obviously insufficiently supported by politics, but the agriculture is often part of international free trade agreements, and there-

fore extradited to a merciless competition, the market of developing or small countries is often flooded with cheaper mass production from the industrialized nations. Finally the respective local agriculture is destroyed, people are dependent on the import of foreign producers and the intended food security and sovereignty is lost.

To make the hunger a thing of the past, rethinking must occur in the industrial nations. Not the maximum profit for a few must be driving force of national and international agricultural policy, but the supply to the population with good local products at reasonable prices that compensate the farmers according to their efforts. It is unlikely that one will succeed in reducing the number of hungry people to half until the end of 2014. Nevertheless the effort of mankind must be to make enough food available for all people. •

¹ http://www.un.org/depts/german/millennium/fs_millennium.html

² Jean Ziegler, *Betting on Famine: Why the world still goes hungry*, 2012, ISBN 978-1-59558-849-4

³ Jean Ziegler, *Das Imperium der Schande* (The Empire of Shame), 2008, ISBN 3-442-15513-4

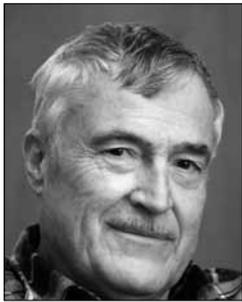
⁴ International assessment of agricultural knowledge, science and technology for development (IAASTD): *global report* edited by Beverly D. McIntyre... [et al.].

⁵ *ibid*, p. 379

⁶ *ibid*, p. 379

Why does Switzerland need the Gripen fighter aircraft?

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



Prof Dr Albert Stahel
(picture thk)

Almost three years ago, the Tunisian president and dictator *El Abidine Ben Ali* was overthrown. Supported by the reports in their own media, the western world believed that this fall and the subsequent riots in other Arab States

would lead to the establishment of democracies. It was overlooked that not all riots are revolutions and that democratically elected governments rarely arise from revolutions. Recall the Bolsheviks' October Revolution in Russia in 1917, which ended with mass murder in one of the worst dictatorships that the world has ever seen. A similar development might loom ahead in the Arab world. While chaos prevails in Libya, the generals in Egypt overthrew Muslimbrother *Mursi* and usurped the rule. In Syria, there is a bloody war going on between Alawite *Assad's* dictatorship and Sunni Islamists. At the same time despots in the so-called Arab monarchies maintain their power, trampling on human and women's rights. At the same time offshoots of *Al-Qaeda* are trying to seize power in the Sahel. At the eleventh hour the French intervention in Mali prevented the Islamic extremists' seizure of power. Threats such as terrorism and even civil wars in their immediate vicinity are likely become imminent for Europe very soon.

The Arab Spring spawned merely an Arab winter, which could lead to the destabilization of the entire region. There is a risk that the economies of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria might collapse. The consequences would be chaos and a mass exodus from these countries to Europe. At the same time, the EU is still faced with a possible bankruptcy of the Southern States. In case their economies and societies got in serious trouble, the European Limes against the chaos and the refugee movements from the Middle East would dissolve into nothing. Then, in particular Central Europe would be faced with a mass of job-seeking adolescents and even extremists.

Despite the rapprochement between the US and Iran, it is still unclear what the further development of the geopolitical situation in the Persian Gulf is going to be like. At the same time the world and seapower USA is increasingly being challenged in the western Pacific by the



picture © armasuisse

leadership in Beijing. They claim the unhindered domination over the East and the South China Sea. To implement these rights would not only violate international law on freedom of navigation in international waters, they would also hinder or even prevent the trade of the American allies – Japan, South Korea and the Philippines – on the sea. Sooner or later the US will not be able to avoid this confrontation with China and will perhaps even effectuate their newest operating concept *Air-Sea-Battle*, the combined use of air and seapower, against selected targets in China.

Having said this, it is obvious that the security situation in the world is still dominated by conflicts and wars. Such a world situation therefore requires each state to enforce the three-element principle of international law. According to this a state consists of three elements: a state territory, a state people and a government. A state can only exist if a government can protect its territory and its people with an army. If this is not the case, this country will be judged as having failed by the international community and be called a "failed state". This connection also applies to Switzerland. As long as the Swiss government wants to keep up the claim that Switzerland is a functional and sovereign state in Europe, it will need to maintain an army by all means and with this means it will need to protect and control the territory of Switzerland. This territory includes the airspace over Switzerland. The Swiss Army is only credible, as long as it has its

own Air Force, by means of which Switzerland's airspace is controlled.

In the history of warfare, there are plenty of examples, first that an air force is the guarantor of a state's sovereignty in peace, and secondly that without an air shield an army will be destroyed in case of war. Therefore, an army without an air force is implausible even in peacetime. In 1940, Great Britain could only prevent a German invasion thanks to the *Royal Air Force*.

Concerning the current inventory of combat aircraft, Switzerland is still equipped with about 54 *F-5E Tiger II* in accordance with the *Military Balance 2013* of the prestigious *International Institute for Strategic Studies* in London. These aircraft stem from the time before the Vietnam war technologically and thus from the first half of the 60s. After the last crash we still have 32 *F/A-18C/D Hornet*. Based on the voting results of 1993, these fighter aircraft were procured from the mid-90s. However, even their technology comes from the 80s. The US Navy, which was largely equipped with this type of aircraft until recently, replaced its *F/A-18C/D* by more modern *F/A-18E/F*.

Unfortunately, the second tranche of *F/A-18*, as it was provided in the procurement message, was not realized in the 90s in Switzerland for domestic political fears. With the 32 *F/A-18* the control of our airspace cannot be guaranteed in case of a terrorist threat in the long run. Therefore, the Swiss Air Force urgently

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Who actually knows what is hidden behind the US monster tax law FATCA?

FATCA is an abbreviation for "Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act"

In future, this American tax law shall take effect in as many countries around the world as possible – including Switzerland. It is a monster law that matches the NSA surveillance program's way of thinking: Gathering as much data as possible worldwide to keep people under control. Obedience is the goal, monitoring is the means!

In the whole FATCA law there is no provision targeting real tax evasion activities...!

With FATCA our country is supposed to be forced under American legislation, which has nothing to do with our Swiss legal system, instead it is a manifestation of American despotic rule. In addition, we would have to accept and implement any further development of this American law without having any say in the matter! National sovereignty

and the protection of citizens' and consumers' privacy are being sacrificed.

On 27 September, in order to make the effectuation of this monster law possible in Switzerland, the Federal Council and the Parliament – who both are displaying a very submissive behaviour towards the US without any justification – adopted a federal decision which approved of the "Agreement between Switzerland and the United States on cooperation for easier implementation of FATCA", which authorized the Federal Council to ratify the agreement.

On 8 October a citizens' committee of the Romandie launched a referendum against this federal decision. Until 16 January 2014 50,000 signatures must be collected and certified by the communes so that

the referendum can take place. This is the only way to stop this uneffable agreement – until today hardly anyone even knows about its existence.

Time is running out, please sign this referendum, and collect signatures yourself. There remain two weeks to collect the missing signatures.

Fully or partially filled lists of signatures can also be handed directly to the respective commune for checking and returning!

Returning address:
Referendum committee Stop FATCA
PO Box 6297
1002 Lausanne

Further lists of signatures can be downloaded under www.stop-fatca.ch.

Letter to  the Editor

No US law for Switzerland Sign the referendum against FACTA

The referendum against the non-acceptable FACTA agreement with the USA should be signed till 16 January 2014. (see www.stop-fatca.ch). The parliament bowed to the US dictate under pressure and signed the finance agreement which will have serious consequences. This way American law is being converted into "Swiss law". Therefore American state residents, US companies in the whole world, but also double citizens and civil partners of US-citizens may be tracked down by the American tax au-

thority. Having once studied in the United States is already enough to become an American taxpayer! The Swiss implementation law to FACTA would oblige our banks to deliver all consumer data to the United States. This would allow an unacceptable intrusion into personal freedom. All Swiss employees in a US company established in Switzerland would be affected as well. In the future our Swiss courts will not have to judge under Swiss but under American legislation and all future modifications in US-

law will have to be automatically adopted. Where on earth are we living? Bankrupt America still takes the liberty to impose its dictate on the world instead of solving its own problems. This can't be allowed. The referendum enables the – not intended – wide discussion and a popular vote. For us, the citizens, it's a duty to defend our self-determination. Switzerland and our youth deserve a little more sense of honour.

Urs and Lene Knoblauch, Fruthwilen

"Why does Switzerland need ..."

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needs a supplement to the 32 F/A-18. At present the *Gripen* is the cheapest fighter aircraft that is available in the West. To this end, this fighter aircraft can be flown also by reserve pilots. For the aircraft types *Rafale* and *Eurofighter* this is not the case. Furthermore, the *Gripen* has a great potential for further development. So *Gripen* might later be further developed into drones. *Rafale* and *Eurofighter*

er are the end product of a development series. And finally the *Gripen* originates from neutral Sweden. Through this procurement, Switzerland will not automatically be obliged to cooperate with NATO.

There is a correlation between the state Switzerland, its army and its air force. If the latter is eliminated the existence and credibility of Switzerland as a state is questioned. If Switzerland loses this credibility the enforcement of its sovereignty is no longer credible. But the loss of this independence would have se-

rious consequences for the economy of our country. The impression of a Switzerland that is safe for investments would dissolve into nothing. In such a case also the withdrawal of foreign investors and foreign capital from Switzerland could result. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Washington drives the world toward war

by Paul Craig Roberts



Paul Craig Roberts (picture ma)

Washington has had the US at war for 12 years: Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Yemen, and almost Syria, which could still happen, with Iran waiting in the wings. These wars have been expensive in terms of money, prestige, and deaths and injuries of both US soldiers and the attacked civilian populations. None of these wars appears to have any compelling reason or justifiable explanation. The wars have been important to the profits of the military/security complex. The wars have provided cover for the construction of a Stasi police state in America, and the wars have served Israel's interest by removing obstacles to Israel's annexation of the entire West Bank and southern Lebanon.

As costly and destructive as these wars have been, they are far below the level of a world war, much less a world war against nuclear armed opponents.

The fatal war for humanity is the war with Russia and China toward which Washington is driving the US and Washington's NATO and Asian puppet states. There are a number of factors contributing to Washington's drive toward the final war, but the overarching one is the doctrine of American exceptionalism.

According to this self-righteous doctrine, America is the indispensable country. What this means is that the US has been chosen by history to establish the hegemony of secular "democratic capitalism" over the world. The primacy of this goal places the US government above traditional morality and above all law, both its own and international.

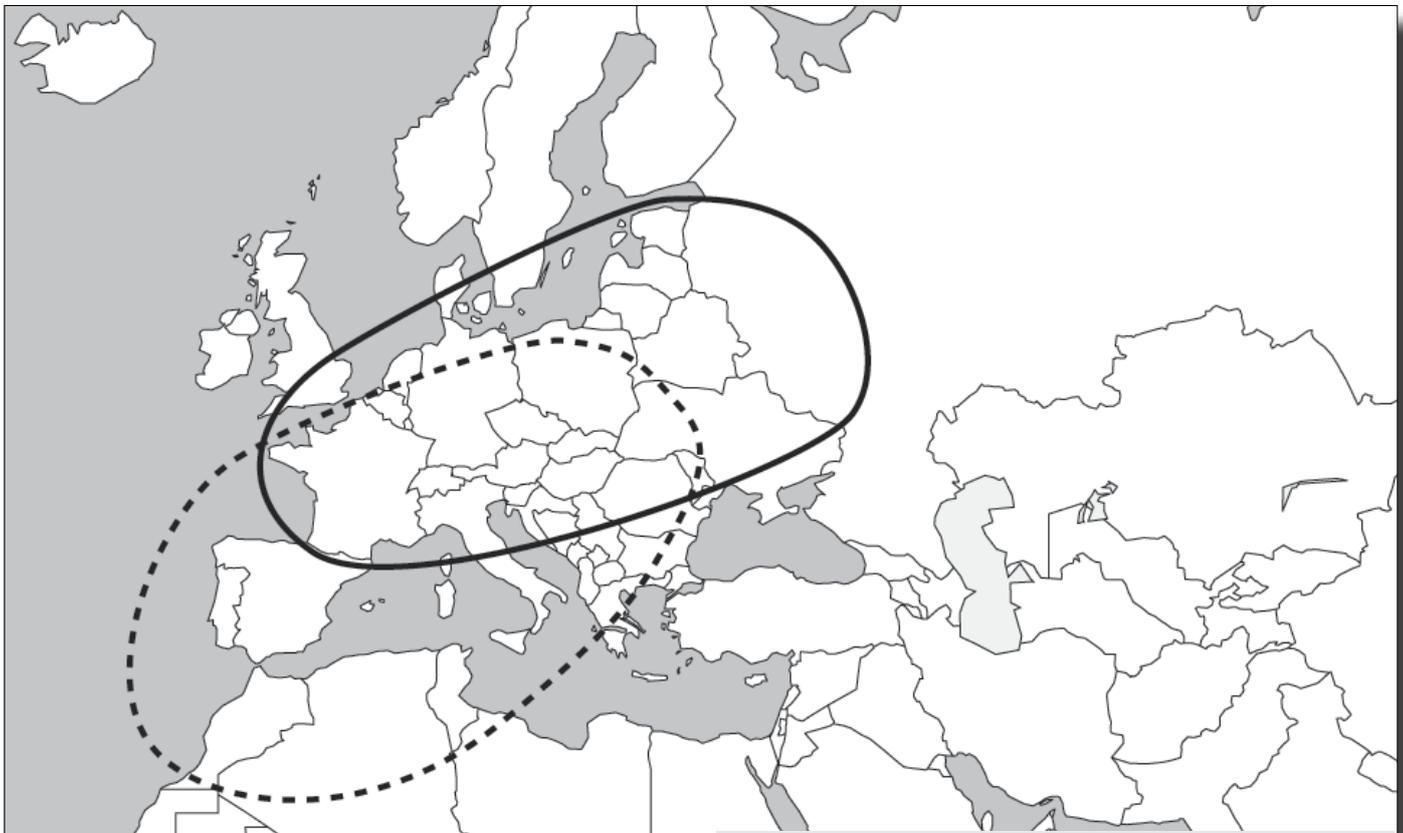
Thus, no one in the US government has been held accountable for unprovoked aggression against other countries and for attacking civilian populations, unambiguous war crimes under international law and the Nuremberg standard. Neither has anyone

in the US government been held accountable for torture, a prohibited crime under US law and the Geneva Conventions. Neither has anyone been held accountable for numerous violations of constitutional rights—spying without warrants, warrantless searches, violations of habeas corpus, murder of citizens without due process, denial of legal representation, conviction on secret evidence. The list is long.

A person might wonder what is exceptional and indispensable about a government that is a reincarnation of Nazi Germany in every respect. People propagandized into the belief that they are the world's special people inevitably lose their humanity. Thus, as the US military video released by *Bradley Manning* reveals, US troops get their jollies by mowing down innocent people as they walk along a city street.

With the exception of the ACLU, constitutional rights groups and independent Internet voices, the American people including the Christian churches have ac-

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Special geopolitic spheres of influence of Germany and France

----- French spheres of influence

———— German spheres of influence

In Zbigniew Brzezinski's book *"The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives"* (ISBN 0-465-02725-3) you find a map on page 85, which indicates the French and German spheres of influence. (Grafik/Iroho)

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cepted their government's criminality and immorality with scant protest.

The absence of moral denunciation emboldens Washington which is now pushing hard against Russia and China, the current governments of which stand in the way of Washington's world hegemony.

Washington has been working against Russia for 22 years ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In violation of the *Reagan-Gorbachev* agreement, Washington expanded NATO into Eastern Europe and the Baltic states and established military bases on Russia's borders. Washington is also seeking to extend NATO into former constituent parts of Russia itself such as Georgia and Ukraine.

The only reason for Washington to establish military and missile bases on Russia's frontiers is to negate Russia's ability to resist Washington's hegemony. Russia has made no threatening gestures toward its neighbors, and with the sole exception of Russia's response to Georgia's invasion of South Ossetia, has been extremely passive in the face of US provocations.

This is now changing. Faced with the *George W. Bush* regime's alteration of US war doctrine, which elevated nuclear weapons from a defensive, retaliatory use to pre-emptive first strike, together with the construction on Russia's borders of US anti-ballistic missile bases and Washington's weaponization of new technologies, has made it clear to the Russian government that Washington is setting up Russia for a decapitating first strike.

In his presidential address to the Russian National Assembly (both chambers of parliament) on December 12, *Vladimir Putin* addressed the offensive military threat that Washington poses to Russia. Putin said that Washington calls its anti-ballistic missile system defensive, but "in fact it is a significant part of the strategic offensive potential" and designed to tip the balance of power in Washington's favor. Having acknowledged the threat, Putin re-

plied to the threat: "Let no one have illusions that he can achieve military superiority over Russia. We will never allow it."

Faced with the *Obama* regime's murder of the nuclear weapons reduction treaty, Putin said: "We realize all this and know what we need to do."

If anyone remains to write a history, the *Obama* regime will be known as the regime that resurrected the cold war, which President *Reagan* worked so hard to end, and drove it into a hot war.

Not content to make Russia an enemy, the *Obama* regime has also made an enemy of China. The *Obama* regime declared the South China Sea to be an area of "US national security interest". This is akin to China declaring the Gulf of Mexico to be an area of Chinese national security interest.

To make clear that the claim to the South China Sea was not rhetorical, the *Obama* regime announced its "Pivot to Asia," which calls for the redeployment of 60% of the US fleet to China's zone of influence. Washington is busy at work securing naval and air bases from the Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam, Australia, and Thailand. Washington has increased the provocation by aligning itself with China's neighbors who are disputing China's claims to various islands and an expanded air space.

China has not been intimidated. China has called for "de-americanizing the world". Last month the Chinese government announced that it now possesses sufficient nuclear weapons and delivery systems to wipe the US off of the face of the earth. A couple of days ago, China aggressively harassed a US missile cruiser in the South China Sea.

The militarily aggressive stance that Washington has taken toward Russia and China is indicative of the extreme self-assuredness that usually ends in war. Washington is told that US technological prowess can prevent or intercept the launch of Russian and Chinese missiles, thus elevating a US pre-emptive attack to slam-dunk status. Yet the potential dan-

ger from Iran acquiring nuclear weapons is said to be so great that a pre-emptive war is necessary right now, and a massive Department of Homeland Security is justified on the grounds that the US remains vulnerable to a few stateless Muslims who might acquire a nuclear weapon. It is an anomalous situation that the Russian and Chinese retaliatory response to US attack is considered to be inconsequential, but not nuclear threats from Iran and stateless Muslims.

Not content with sending war signals to Russia and China, Washington has apparently also decided to torpedo the Iranian settlement by announcing new sanctions against companies doing business with Iran. The Iranians understood Washington's monkey wrench as Washington probably intended, as a lack of Washington's commitment to the agreement, left Geneva and returned to Iran. It remains to be seen whether the agreement can be resurrected or whether the Israel Lobby has succeeded in derailing the agreement that promised to end the threat of war with Iran.

American citizens seem to have little, if any, influence on their government or even awareness of its intentions. Moreover, there is no organized opposition behind which Americans could rally to stop Washington's drive toward world war. Hope, if there is any, would seem to lie with Washington's European and Asian puppets. What interests do these governments have in putting the existence of their countries at risk for no other purpose than to help Washington acquire hegemony over the world? Cannot they realize that Washington's game is a death-dealing one for them?

Germany alone could save the world from war while simultaneously serving its own interests. All Germany has to do is to exit the EU and NATO. The alliance would collapse, and its fall would terminate Washington's hegemonic ambition. •

Source: www.paulcraigroberts.org/2013/12/14/washington-drives-world-toward-war-paul-craig-roberts/print/

Germany can prevent the war

by Karl Müller

Paul Craig Roberts is one of the renowned and dedicated US critics of the US war course that has been going on now for more than 20 years. His criticism is pointed and distinct. He knows the administration's work in the US at close range, as a former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Ministry of Finance of the US government. So there is no reason to ignore or dismiss Paul Craig Roberts's considerations. His current warning of a planned US World War should prey on everybody's mind. And if at the end of his article he comes to speak about Germany, every German citizen must feel concerned.

For more than 20 years, the US government has assigned Germany a certain role in the US pursuit of world domination. It is true that the then US government under the leadership of President *George H. W. Bush* pleaded for the merger with the GDR and thus for a more powerful Germany at the interface to Eastern Europe, and that he did so much more than e.g. the British or French government. It is in fact revealing that *Condoleezza Rice* – Associate at the National Security Agency under *George H. W. Bush*, and later National Security Advisor and Secretary of State under *George W. Bush* – has written a very thick book on the US contribution to a more powerful Germany (“Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft”, Harvard University Press, 1997) and moreover it is a clue to the long line of the past two decades.

It has been a well-maintained German illusion since the early 90s that the

US administration committed itself to the so-called “reunification” out of love for Germany and the Germans. The actual plan, however, was to use the “new” Germany and the European Union under the leadership of this new Germany as a spearhead against Eastern Europe and especially against Russia, in particular in the interest of the United States and ultimately at the expense of Germany and Europe. Who may be unbelieving should read the chapter on Germany's part in the eastern enlargement of EU and NATO as well as its role towards Russia in the book by US Government advisor *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, first published in 1997, “The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives”. Interestingly enough, the book's German edition comes with a foreword by *Hans-Dietrich Genscher*, the former German Foreign Minister, who is now in the headlines again, because he has been working for more than 2 years “in quiet diplomacy” for the release of the Russian oligarch who had wanted to sell out Russia's oil reserves to US corporations, neither is he a dark horse otherwise, nor a political martyr, what Germany is trying to make of him.

The fact that for some time now the German media's spitefulness against Russia has reached a particularly malignant quality, matches Paul Craig Roberts' writing, as well as the role that is intended for Germany. However, the massive anti-Russian propaganda in the German media and on the part of an influential share of the German elites also indicates that in Germany there are still important

voices speaking up against it, even if currently they meet with only minor public hearing. A glance at the map, economic interests but also historical experience play a role in this process. No German should forget that Germany's aggressions against Russia has inflicted untold suffering on two countries and peoples. This will still be embedded in the collective memory of both nations. Who can account for history repeating itself one day in such a terrible way?

Paul Craig Roberts writes, “Germany alone could save the world from war while simultaneously serving its own interests.” He is absolutely right. And he continues, “All Germany has to do is to exit the EU and NATO. The alliance would collapse, and its fall would terminate Washington's hegemonic ambition.” Again, he is right. But that is a very big step. Perhaps it would be enough for the moment to let all the “allies” in the EU and NATO definitely know that there will be a hundred percent German veto against an aggressive policy towards Russia. Whether the German government will dare that on its own is doubtful. But if the citizens in Germany declare that they do not want a third world war, if they make clear that they only want to deal peacefully and beneficially for all sides with their near and distant neighbors in Europe, if there will be a German crescendo against the war and in favor of peace – then even a double-minded German policy cannot flinch from the people's will and the media, run by whomever, might as well pack up with their smear campaign and go home. •

Pro memoria

Germany's role in the new world order according to Brzezinski

"With the end of the Cold War, that link assumed new importance for Germany. In the past, it had sheltered Germany from an external but very proximate threat and was the necessary precondition for the eventual reunification of the country. With the Soviet Union gone and Germany reunified, the link to America now provided the umbrella under which Germany could more openly assume a leadership role in Central Europe without simultaneously threatening its neighbors. The American connection provided more than the certificate of good behavior: it reassured Germany's neighbors that a close relationship with Gwemany also meant a closer relationship with America. All of that made it easier for Germany to define more openly its own geopolitical priorities. [...]"

On the map of Europe, the zone of German special interest could be sketched in the shape of an oblong, [...] in the East spanning the newly emancipated post-Communist states of Central Europe, including the Baltic republics, embracing Ukraine and Belarus, and reaching even into Russia. [...] In many respects, that zone corresponds to the historical radius of constructive German cultural influence, carved out in the prena-

tionalist era by German urban and agricultural colonists in East-Central Europe and in the Baltic republics. [...]"

Central European acceptance of German leadership [...] was eased by the very evident German commitment to the eastward expansion of Europe's key institutions. In so committing itself, Germany undertook a historical mission much at variance with some rather deeply rooted Western European outlooks. [...]"

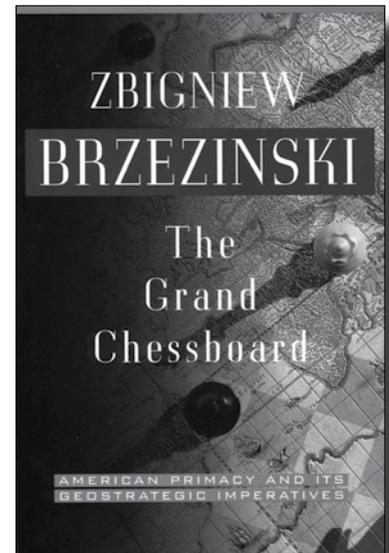
[...] the German defense minister was among the first to suggest that the fiftieth anniversary of NATO's founding [1999] was an appropriately symbolic date for the alliance's eastern expansion. [...]"

Indeed, a comprehensive US policy for Eurasia as a whole will not be possible if the effort to widen NATO, having been launched by the United States, stalls and falters. That failure would discredit American leadership; it would shatter the concept of an expanding Europe; it would demoralize the Central Europeans; and it could reignite currently dormant or dying Russian geopolitical aspirations in Central Europe. [...]"

Hence, America's central geostrategic goal in Europe can be summed up quite simply: it is to consolidate through a more genuine transatlan-

tic partnership the US bridgehead on the Eurasian continent so that an enlarging Europe can become a more viable springboard for projecting into Eurasia the international democratic and cooperative order."

Extracts from Zbigniew Brzezinski: The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives, New York 1997, pp. 68–86



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“We will never allow it” Statement by President Putin

“Colleagues,
A few words about our actions to further strengthen our Armed Forces.

I just mentioned the issue of missile defence, and here’s what I would like to say in this regard. We are all perfectly aware that the missile defence system is defensive in name only. In fact, it is a crucial component of strategic offensive capabilities. The development of new weapons systems, such as low-yield nuclear weapons, strategic non-nuclear missiles and hypersonic high-precision non-nuclear systems for prompt, long-range strikes are also causes for concern.

We are closely following the development of the so-called Prompt Global Strike system, which is being actively developed by some countries. Implementing all of these plans could have extremely negative consequences for regional and global stability.

The ramping up of high-precision strategic non-nuclear systems by other countries, in combination with the build-up of missile defence capabilities, could negate all previous agreements on the limitation and reduction of strategic nuclear weapons, and disrupt the strategic balance of power.

We understand this very well, and in this context we know exactly what we need to do. No one should entertain any illusions about achieving military superiority over Russia; we will never allow it. Russia will respond to all these challenges, both political and technological. We have all we need in order to do so.”

Source: Extract from the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of 12 December 2013. Official site of the President of Russia.

Letter to  the Editor

Ukraine – quo vadis ?

Most – appropriate – assessments of the heated situation in Ukraine bring the geo-strategic and economic aspect to the fore. Meanwhile, Polish activists seem to intrude themselves into this so very “just” uprising in order to protest e.g. against human rights violations in the Crimea. “Individualists” of all colours dance on the Maidan – actually they are dancing for the Golden Calf, in simple terms the economic interests of the US and the EU, especially of Germany. They dance to flare up an East-West confrontation, becoming manifest not least in the missile shield conflict against Iran(?). A grand radar in northeastern Poland overlooks the peaceful countryside ... As earlier movements

in Eastern Europe, our simple-minded individualists on the Maidan are subject, mostly without their knowledge, to control by Western services. Recently it turned out that the founder of *Otpor* in Serbia has been in the service of the *Stratfor Institute*, an intelligence agency that represents *Goldman Sachs’* interests. The *Otpor* founder *Popovic* gave his extensive address material directly to Stratfor ... compare www.voltairenet.com.

Furthermore, it has now become known that institutions for microbiological research have emerged in various small towns in Ukraine or are to be built under the auspices of the United States. The residents are afraid, for example, in

Odessa or in Kharkov. Apparently it is a side effect of the search for the perpetrators of the sarin attack in Syria that now several bio-laboratories are becoming more visible in the public – laboratories that are run by the Pentagon respectively by privatized CIA people in Kazakhstan, Georgia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria etc., and even in Ukraine.

Actually, the dance is over. No one can close his eyes to the gigantic manipulations that run via Internet and “democracy-building”. Les jeux sont fait – open your eyes, chers individualistes sur le Maidan et dans Pologne ...

Dr Barbara Hug

Direct democracy is possible everywhere – but needs to be built up step by step

International Scientific Conference on direct democracy in Dresden

by Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller, Lene and Urs Knoblauch

On 5 and 6 December 2013, the “Deutsches Institut für Sachunmittelbare Demokratie, DISUD” (German Institute for Direct Democracy; see box below) organised its sixth scientific conference at the Dresden University of Technology under the direction of the president and founder, Dr Peter Neumann (see interview below), entitled “Direct Democracy in the Interdisciplinary and International Context 2013/2014 – Central and Eastern Europe/Austria Switzerland Germany”.

Well organized and in an extremely pleasant working atmosphere twenty short lectures followed by discussions were presented on two days. The approximately 50 participants and contributors from Switzerland, Austria and Germany were hospitably received. In his welcome address, *Wolf-Eckehard Wormser*, Chancellor of TU (University of Technology) Dresden, said that there was a lot to learn from Switzerland. Even in the post-communist countries there are many possibilities of direct democracy: “Therefore, what works in Switzerland might work in Eastern Europe, as well. “

The first day was dedicated to the (new) developments of direct democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. The numerous contributions about people’s rights in Hungary, the Baltic States, Russia, Romania and Bulgaria made clear that there are many direct democratic instruments, especially at the communal level and that they are also being used. For example, Hungary had direct democratic elements even as

Direct Democracy: an explanation of its two aspects

ef. The distinction between direct democracy on the personal level (direct elections of persons - “personenunmittelbar”), and direct democracy on the factual level (direct decisions on matters of substance - “sachunmittelbar”) origins from the founder of the German Institute für Sachunmittelbare Demokratie (DISUD), Peter Neumann. “Directness (Unmittelbarkeit) in this case means that between the citizens’ vote and consequent result no further instance, no further act of will must occur. Direct elections of deputies by the citizens are an expression of direct democracy on the personal level; the citizens’ vote on matters of substance is a case of direct democracy on the factual level.



For several years, the DISUD holds the Scientific Conference. The pictures dates from the Conference 2010/2011 and shows Dr Peter Neumann, the head of the Institute. (picture ma)

early as before the change. However, after the change, reforms led to a more restrictive legislation. There are important citizens’ concerns when it comes to the high expenses for housing, water and electricity, assisted suicide and school issues. However, the EU accession of Hungary and the financial crisis led to a significant decline in people’s initiatives. Whereas there are only few people’s rights in Estonia and referendums are being used rather as an outlet for discontent, in Latvia there are direct democratic instruments in many areas whose application is supported by the state. 10,000 signatures are needed for a people’s initiative, at least 10 % of the citizens have to participate in a vote, and the state provides locations and venues for this purpose.

In Russia many people’s rights are enshrined in the Constitution. They are used with success, in particular at the local level. In 2012, a total of 165 votes were carried out at the communal level (in 2013, there were 90 votes, especially on the funding of local projects, such as the construction of roads). The necessary rooms and the expenses for printing are made available by the state budget. The people can also enforce a vote against the authorities. Recently, for example, a referendum was conducted against the new

parking fees in Moscow. The (legitimate) fear of color revolutions, however, led to significant restrictions in national votes.

Since the 90s, there is also an extension of popular rights in Romania. Thus, a few years ago, starting mainly from church groups and at the initiative of Parliament, a constitutional amendment to protect the family was achieved.

The second day was dedicated to the development of direct democracy in Austria, Switzerland and Germany.

For Austria it was reported that a total of 37 popular petitions were carried out between 1964 and 2013. However, the results are usually “schelved” as a popular referendum does not necessarily need to follow. Most referendums were initiated in Vorarlberg – not quite by accident, because of the proximity to Switzerland, as the speaker remarked. In Vorarlberg, there is also the highest level of acceptance with respect to the voting results. This year, the first referendum on conscription (consultative referendum, since 1988) was conducted in Austria. The first Austria-wide referendum is not legally binding, but the government parties SPÖ and ÖVP made clear in advance, that they would abide by the result. With a poll of 52.4 % of the

“A country also changes with its political instruments”

“... the political discussion in Switzerland is clearly more matter-of-fact”

Interview with Dr Peter Neumann, director of the “Deutsches Institut für Sachunmittelbare Demokratie” (DISUD)



Dr Peter Neumann
(picture ma)

Current Concerns: Dr Neumann, for a few years now you have organized an international and interdisciplinary science conference on “sachunmittelbare” democracy – usually called “direct” democracy – every year. This year’s conference has just ended. Are you satisfied with the result?

Dr Peter Neumann: Absolutely, it was a wonderful meeting. It was a good turnout, there were quite outstanding presentations. On Thursday we were concerned with Central and Eastern Europe, the scientific contributions to the Baltics, to Hungary, to Romania and Russia were excellent. The whole was crowned by a reception with the Romanian ambassador in the evening, and today the subject has been direct democracy in Austria, Switzerland and Germany – which has been wonderful.

What was the objective of this year’s meeting?

We are a scientific institute at the Technical University (TU) Dresden, insofar the scientific exchange is self-evident. This also includes that you meet and exchange views on a specific topic, which is direct democracy in this case. In addition, indirect effects can be achieved, because not only university professionals but also citizens, politicians, political parties and other interested parties are present. This also has an influence on general education. In the course of this, we place emphasis on a cultivated style. Admittedly, this is only a small detail, but doing so we also appeal to people who otherwise might have a certain distance to citizen’s rights, because they associate them falsely with something radical.

I understand what you mean. There are many in Germany, who confuse direct democracy, or as you say, “sachunmittelbare” democracy, with grassroots movement or council-based democracy. Those who look at Switzerland and study the

local direct democracy know, however, that this is not the case. In Switzerland, the referendum, originally the people’s veto against legislation, was at the beginning of the people’s rights. In Germany, however, the discussion very much revolves around the right of initiative, i.e. the right of citizens to formulate laws and take them to vote. If I understand you correctly, you require a certain shift in focus towards the demand for referendums at the federal level. What significance would a referendum at the federal level have in Germany?

Primarily it would be come down to the question what kind of referendum it is. For a start the mandatory constitutional referendum would certainly be a natural feedback to the people that gives itself a basic order and must then confirm changes within this basic order. The facultative referendum for ordinary laws would certainly mean a certain disciplining of the legislature, as Switzerland already knows: from Switzerland you know the “threat”

continued on page 14

“Direct democracy is possible ...”

continued from page 12

votes, the maintenance of the conscription was voted for by 59.7 %.

From Switzerland, Professor Dr *Christoph Schaltegger* reported on “Finances and direct democracy”. In international comparison, Switzerland is doing well with its strong federalism: government spending and debt ratio are very low. By means of a referendum in 2001 that achieved 85 %, the people agreed upon a “brake on expenses and debts”, which took effect in 2003. The fiscal independence of the cantons is a big advantage, because fiscal policy is mainly made in the cantons. The possibility of the veto by the Swiss people sets a correction mechanism in motion: politics listens more to the voice of the people. In general, the objective is to make laws “referendum-resistant”.

The practice of direct democracy in Switzerland generally leads to a careful handling of issues and a stronger identification with the state. Nevertheless, a creeping centralization that is worrying and has to be counteracted takes place in Switzerland.

In a further contribution from Germany (Professor Dr *Olaf Jandura*) the demands for direct democracy on the media

were highlighted. The crucial factor is a civilized form of debate; it should be discursive and task-oriented and should give the actors the possibility to present their different perspectives and organizations. The reality in German media is unfortunately characterized by little pluralism, there is little real political information and a strong personalization and tabloidisation. Only 10–15 % of the population informs itself about political issues and only 4% of the internet users (55% of the population uses the internet) take their political information from the internet. It is primarily used for entertainment by the rest.

Also in Germany, there is a tradition of popular rights, historically. This was made clear by the contribution of DISUD director, Dr Peter Neumann: an historical report on peoples’ rights after World War II shows, however, little discussion in the sixties and seventies concerning the introduction of democratic rights in the “Grundgesetz” (Basic Law). An interesting aspect was that until the reunification, the people’s rights were practically not manageable in the old “Länder”, with the exception of Bavaria, and that new impulses to the rights of the people in Germany are mainly due to the east German “Länder”.

The contributions to the discussions included issues of democracy’s abuse and the manipulation of the citizens. The greater the knowledge about the substantive issue, the higher the participation. An honest reporting and a wide public task-based discussion are essential prerequisites for the protection against manipulation and for citizens’ participation in appropriate direct democratic processes. Especially at the local level, there is certainly progress and success in this respect in all countries. Building up from the bottom is particularly important. One panelist pointed out that living together well in families and communes constitute the major foundations of democracy. In schools high-quality and ideology-free civics lesson should be more encouraged. The essence of democracy are ethics, that include honesty, integrity and trust. The decisive factor is the question of values. The historical experience of Switzerland shows that it is advisable to introduce direct democratic instruments step by step and that it takes a lot of patience ...

If you want more detailed information on the conference contents, we recommend the conference report which is soon to be released as well as the reports on previous conferences (see: www.disud.de).

“A country also changes ...”

continued from page 13

that people will take the referendum, and certainly that has some disciplining effects concerning the quality of draft laws or on the budgetary discipline – if one speaks of a facultative referendum, which will be submitted at the request of the people, and not of optional referendums that may be requested by the government or by a part of the parliament. This is something that we do have in the German federal Länder constitutions only rudimentary, not everywhere, but of course, it is almost not used, because the interests of the governments and parliaments tend to not using. The case of Stuttgart 21 was an exception. Moreover, by using the referendum there would also be the opportunity to debunk a publicly claimed majority as a minority if the corresponding bill is not accepted by the people.

Because the Baden-Wuerttemberg people could only vote on Stuttgart 21, because the state government and then also the state parliament majority wanted it ... Otherwise the German politicians so far have been very refraining concerning the expansion of people's rights. Again and again one outlines the horror scenario, that direct democratic rights for the people would be the precursor of dictatorship – by referring to the allegedly bad experiences in the Weimar Republic. Allegedly, because in reality this republic has not failed because of the civil rights. Nevertheless, the question is: Can people's rights be dangerous ?

It is generally true, that electoral and voting rights are dangerous wherever deficits in the system are prevailing in principle or where historical, political, social, or other framework conditions are difficult, thus allowing the abuse of democratic instruments. In stable societies, however, this is certainly not the case. In my opinion, we have stable societies in Central Europe; or, if they are not stable, where else in the world do stable states exist? If here we were afraid of making use of civil rights, of practicing or introducing them, that would be quite a tragedy.

What is the role Swiss direct democracy plays in your research?

Switzerland is the mother country of direct democracy. We are traveling to Switzerland every year, visiting the Swiss universities in a field excursion. And we always use the opportunity to observe a

“Landsgemeinde” and call on the “Center for Democracy” in Aarau and the “Center for Democracy” (ZDA) in Zurich.

We find it always conspicuous that discussions in Switzerland are much more matter-of-fact. The language is also different and there is more respect for the voters' decisions. I find this a very positive difference. It is a different culture – but it has developed in centuries. This is something we have to take into account in Germany. A country also changes with its political instruments. The Swiss have gone through this; they have changed with the instruments. Coming from the mandatory to the optional referendum and finally to the initiative – this is a certain path, they treaded. This is why it surprises me that the promoters of direct democracy in Germany are only demanding the initiative and not the referendum. This is remarkable.

Did I understand you correctly: you are pleading for a step-by-step approach?

I have always thought so. In the mid-90s I wrote a draft bill for North Rhine-Westphalia ruling the optional referendum, but also an initiative procedure. You can read about the legislation criteria in my book “Sachunmittelbare Demokratie” (direct democracy). But I would definitely start with the optional referendum. In case the right for initiatives is also desired, in Germany we should start with the right to initiate legislation, leaving out the right to decide on laws by a referendum. There are these anxieties and reservations in Germany. And maybe it is a good idea to soothe these fears and reservations with such a step a bit.

Where do you see the political culture starting points for the introduction of direct democracy instruments?

Historically we have had a preference for the initiative in Germany (popular petitions and plebiscites); in the Weimar Republic they were ruled both in the Federal constitution and in the states. But we also have the referendum. The President of the Reich e.g. was able to – would have been able, he never did it – let the people vote on financial issues. But this is also proof that the financial taboo, that is the taboo never to let the people vote on financial issues, is not mandatory in Germany. This would e.g. be a starting point for the optional referendum. So there would be starting points. But, honestly: We do not have to continue a tradition of initiatives which we perceive as difficult

or afflicted, if we have found something better. I do not mean to say that initiatives are a bad thing, but it may be more prudent to introduce an optional referendum first or maybe even to start with a mandatory referendum. Or, as CSU and SPD have discussed and set down in a position paper, a referendum on European issues.

Thank you very much for the interview. •

Interview:

Dr Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

Contact: www.disud.org

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Intrepid under Hitler and Stalin

On the death of Erwin Jöris (1912–2013)

Erwin Jöris together with Helmut Bärwald and some others founded our round table in 2000. From this time on his wife Gerda and he were regularly at the meetings. Erwin Jöris gave lectures and formed the spirit of the round table significantly. If he was not able to come to the meetings himself he always asked for a detailed report.

Erwin Jöris was born on 5 October 1912 in Berlin. With his parents and his two brothers he lived in a working-class-district in Berlin.

Already as a child he had his first contact with active politics because his father often met with political friends at his home. During the days of revolution in 1918/19 these meetings took place illegally. Of course Erwin Jöris and his brothers realized that other people went in and out. But unlike his brothers who turned on the other side to sleep on he kept wide awake and pricked up his ears.

As a young man he appreciated the political discussions in the so called "Berliner Jugendhäusern" (Berlin youth-houses).

There the youth-groups of the different parties had rooms where to read the newspaper, to discuss and to work. The nice thing about these institutions was the fact, that the different parties' youth met each other at the discussions. Thus already at an early age the free conversation, the free acquaintance with the other opinion, the free dealing with one's fellows came into being. Erwin Jöris enjoyed talking and listening to others.

It was just at this time that Erwin Jöris developed the profoundly rooted conviction that freedom must be the highest good for the individual. Therefore already as a young man he fought against political tutelage, ban on speaking, and upcoming dictatorship with an impressing resolution. Also in his own party he showed this straightness. For example in November 1932 during a strike of the Berlin transport services the fact that the communist party made common cause with the Nazis against the strikers, was condemned by him just as frankly as vehemently.

Influenced by the great number of discussions in the so-called Berlin Rooms and especially formed by his father, he joined the Communist Youth at an age of 16 and soon became head of the sub-district. He participated in meetings and street fights and at the time, when already haphazard shootings from the outside against the communist meeting places occurred, he fortunately and very deliberately always searched for the places in the room where he was safe against the shots.

On 31 February 1933 Erwin Jöris together with others drove in a car full of pamphlets to take them to different companies. With the pamphlets with the heading: "Hitler means the Second World War", they called for a general strike against *Hitler*.

Shortly afterwards the hunt for him and his associates began. On 20 March 1933, at an age of 21, he was arrested for the first time. Then together with the officials of the KPD (German Communist Party) and the SPD (German Socialist Party) he was subjected to terror and torture in the first Nazi concentration camp (Sonnenburg). He was released in October 1933.

From 1934 to 1937, as a young communist, Erwin Jöris stayed in the Soviet Union in order to get to know the country of "true freedom", as he saw it at that time.

But he was not satisfied by the theories of communist doctrine in the cadre training, so he soon sought the company of the Russian people. In the families, in the country and in the cities on long evenings he learned, how dangerous it was in the Soviet Union as well to have one's own opinion, deviating from the party line. Those, who were not willing to succumb to the prevailing totalitarianism, were taken to camp in endless trains, where most of them died soon. Erwin Jöris had to recognize that the Communist youth ideals – freedom and equality – were not realized. Enthusiastically, he had travelled to the Soviet Union. Deeply

disappointed, both in political terms and as a human being, he turned his back on Russia after nine months imprisonment in the Lubyanka – because even in the Soviet Union, he used freedom like the air we breathe.

On his return to Germany he was immediately arrested. The charge was preparation to high treason. He remained in prison until February 1939. In May 1940, he was drafted to be a soldier in the Wehrmacht. In 1946 he returned from Russian imprisonment and remained in the Soviet occupied zone until 1950.

Already since 1947 he had been secretly persecuted, and on 19.12.1950 he was arrested. Erwin Jöris was sentenced by the Supreme Soviet Military Court to 25 years – in the camp Vorkuta in Siberia. Referring to the day of his arrest, he once said: "Now I knew I had to be brave. That's what I was." Hard years in Vorkuta followed. Fellow prisoners reported from this time, how Erwin Jöris had encouraged them to hold on and to stay strong.

In 1955 Adenauer enforced the release of the German prisoners.

So, a little later he stood at the door and told his wife: "Here I am again!" She had waited for him in deep solidarity and she had been sure that he would come back.

On 12.12.1955 he had arrived in East Berlin, where he was located and where he had to return – and on 14.12.1955 he went to the West, because Erwin Jöris knew that they would not leave him alone and that they would seize him again. His brave wife went with him.

In Cologne an apartment was given to them, where they stayed.

In 2005 Gerda Jöris died. This was a severe blow to him. Gerda Jöris was a very warm-hearted, approachable and humane woman. She loved her husband above all things and always stood by him. Every day she took afresh interest in his experiences.

Erwin Jöris is an admirable example for the fact that even in most difficult circumstances the human being is able to defend freedom and dignity. During the numerous and serious attacks on his physical and mental integrity, he neither ducked his head nor did he lose a single millimeter of his inner substance.

He represented his political convictions in public as fearlessly as the young educated communist under Hitler and his criticism of Russia under *Stalin*. He did

Erwin Jöris

Ein Leben als Verfolgter
unter Hitler und Stalin



Erinnerungen gegen das Vergessen

On Erwin Jöris' death

There are not many people alive who witnessed and underwent the whole past century, who experienced physically what war and dictatorship mean, who were shaped by hunger and distress and political repression. One of them is *Erwin Jöris* who died on 17th November 2013 in Cologne, just a few weeks after his 101st birthday.

Erwin Jöris comes from a "proletarian family" and grew up under poor circumstances. Under this prevailing situation it is understandable that his father was a communist. He believed that a communist system would improve the living conditions in Germany. Influenced by his father Erwin early joined the Communist Youth Federation (Kommunistischer Jugendverband) from where during the Weimar Republic he fought against the upcoming National Socialists. As soon as the Nazis had assumed power Jöris was imprisoned in a concentration camp. Released from there his comrades smuggled him into the Soviet-Union where he lived a couple of years. He very quickly realized that the Soviet System was not a farthing better than the National Socialists. That was why he was "disposed of" to

the Ural. There he worked in an engineering factory. On adventurous ways he was able to get back to Germany, became soldier in war, was in Russian captivity, but could return to Berlin unscathed. In 1950 he fell into the hands of the Russian secret service. He was accused for anti-Russian propaganda and the "betrayal of the Proletarians" and sentenced to 25 years forced labour. Like many other oppositionists to the GDR he was deported to Workuta 160 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle.

Andreas Petersen has documented all this in his very readable book titled "Deine Schnauze wird dir in Sibirien zufrieren." ("Your trap will freeze in Siberia"). *Current Concerns* reported a few times about him and some years ago he presented a paper at the meeting "Mut zur Ethik" ("Courage to Take a Moral Stance") which was received with great interest and applause.

After *Konrad Adenauer* had visited Moscow he was released to Germany in autumn 1955.

Everybody who met Erwin in the concentration camps have kept him in unforgettable memory. He did not rail against his fate. In spite of the terrible burden,

the hunger and the separation from home (with which he – like all other Germans in the GULag – was not allowed to be in contact) and all the climatic inclemencies he always kept his humour. He kept his "Berliner Schnauze" (intrepid, bold manner in which Berlin people speak) also to reinforce the comrades' confidence, courage and perseverance in their prevailing hopelessness. He was a "good comrade" in the best sense. Since he learned the Russian language during his first stay in the Soviet-Union he was able to communicate with Russians, Ukrainians and people of the many other nations in the camp always remaining unwavering to his own opinion. He was an upright man.

After his return home from the GULag Erwin Jöris lived and worked in Cologne. Until his death he stayed in contact with many former camp-comrades who congratulated him on his 101st birthday on 5th October 2013. All of them are mourning for him – a lovable man and a great contemporary witness. It was always a great benefit to speak with him.

Prof Dr Werner Gumpel

"Intrepid under Hitler and Stalin"

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not miss any opportunity to reveal dictatorial power and ideology.

He took it for granted to enter in unprejudiced, open and equivalent dialogues, as well in political Berlin during the war and pre-war period as in the Soviet Union.

He also sought and conducted this equivalent dialogue here at the round table as everywhere else.

He often said: "I'm not interested in whether someone is left or right. I'm interested in what he says." His interest in the other human being was never subject to any barriers.

Those, who got to know Erwin Jöris in person, saw a man, who despite the persecutions and imprisonments in totalitarian states, had remained an independent free spirit. In a free and open way he spoke with everyone and he was honest towards himself as well as towards the political dissenter. The ability to conduct an open and honest dialogue – even with his judge in the Nazi period – allowed him to find out in a quick and reliable way, who he was dealing with. Generalizations and superficial considerations were alien to him. His profound historical knowledge and

the exact knowledge of the current situation were the basis for his differentiated political analysis – also of the present.

In his book "A life as a persecutee under Hitler and Stalin", he writes on the last page: "Since I got to know both dictatorships, I nowadays still stand up everywhere and always as well to ensure that neither a red nor a brown dictatorship will return. That's my job until my end."

In lectures and publications, on radio and television, in personal conversations, in many school lessons and in his book he fulfilled this task and warned to observe the social and political development and to act in time.

In the school lessons, it was fascinating to see how pupils of all school types listened to him and discussed with him. They were grateful to experience a contemporary witness who, as a persecutee under Hitler and Stalin, had fearlessly stood up for his ideals, and they felt his firm will, running like a red thread through his life, to defend his own freedom in all situations and to fight for the freedom of others. Many of them came and keep coming back to Erwin Jöris and remember him.

Near Siegen, after Erwin Jöris had been in their class, pupils created a room in their school for Erwin Jöris on their own

initiative and under their own direction and documented his life there.

Only a few weeks before his death, a high school graduate visited and interviewed him for her work about concentration camps. She was deeply impressed by Erwin Jöris' attitude to life, by the way how he, in spite of the violent attacks on his physical and mental integrity, described to her still something positive, something encouraging, and she was impressed by his whole constitution.

Yes, he regarded it as his task to stand up until his end to help ensuring that a dictatorship would not return – and he fulfilled it.

Erwin Jöris left deep traces behind among young people – and also among us.

Today we say goodbye to our friend Erwin Jöris. We will miss him very much. His work, his openness, his capability to be at eye level in dialog, and his commitment to freedom and democracy, his love of truth, his sharpness in thinking, his courage, and his attitude to life have been and will remain a model for us. We will honor his heritage.

We are grateful to have known him over many years and to have learned from him.

*Heidrun Vogel,
participant at the round table, Cologne*