

Current Concerns

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US-Russia tensions flare up on multiple fronts

by M.K. Bhadrakumar*



M.K. Bhadrakumar
(Picture ma)

Amidst the escalating tensions with China, the United States should have kept the troubled relationship with Russia on an even keel. But the opposite is happening. For the first time since the presidential election in Belarus on 9 August, Washington has openly sided with the protests in Minsk and dared Russia to intervene.

Berlin has simultaneously announced that the Russian opposition leader *Alexei Navalny* was poisoned by Novichok nerve agent.¹ Curiously, Germans went public with the explosive information without even notifying Moscow first. Presumably, the US was in the loop, given Navalny's standing in Russian politics.

Most certainly, Washington and Berlin have moved in tandem over Belarus and Navalny respectively. A major confrontation is brewing. The warning over Belarus came at the level of the US Deputy Secretary of State *Stephen Biegun* who conveyed a harsh message to the Kremlin via the cold war era megaphone *Radio Liberty*:

"The last four years have been very challenging for US-Russian relations, but it is possible that it could be worse. And one of the things that would limit the ability of any president, regardless of the outcome of [the US presidential election in November], in developing a more cooperative relationship with Russia, in any sphere, would be direct Russian intervention in Belarus."²

Within hours, Secretary of State *Mike Pompeo* stepped in "demanding an immediate end" to the Belarus government's moves to curb the protests and warning

of "significant targeted sanctions" in consultation with Washington's transatlantic partners.³

This is a direct challenge to President *Vladimir Putin* who had stated last week that Russia is obliged to intervene in Belarus under the Russia-Belarus Unity Pact of 1998 and the Collective Security Treaty. (See my blog *Anatomy of coup attempt in Belarus*, August 30, 2020.)⁴

The US intention is to put Russia on the dock with the simultaneous diplomatic offensives on two fronts. The Russian ambassador to Germany was summoned to the foreign ministry in Berlin a few hours ago;⁵ meanwhile, the protests in Minsk are enjoying a fresh lease of life.

The Russian Foreign Minister *Sergey Lavrov* today condemned the "attempts made by several foreign states" to fuel the protests in Minsk and noted "a rise in NATO activity near Belarusian borders."⁶ The Russian and Belarusian intelligence agencies are in touch.

The Belarus foreign minister *Vladimir Makei* visited Moscow today for talks with Lavrov. The chiefs of the General Staffs

of Russia and Belarus discussed on the phone today "the state and the prospects of bilateral military cooperation and also the pace of preparations for the Slavic Brotherhood joint drills."⁷ A visit by Belarus President *Alexander Lukashenko* to Moscow is expected shortly.

While the Navalny affair is more of the stuff of propaganda to smear Russia's reputation in the western opinion,⁸ Moscow will focus on the Belarus situation. Putin underscored last week that amongst the former Soviet republics, Belarus "perhaps is the closest, both in terms of ethnic proximity, the language, the culture, the spiritual as well as other aspects. We have dozens or probably hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of direct family ties with Belarus and close industrial cooperation."⁹

Lavrov didn't mince words when he hit back today, "Moscow will provide an adequate and firm response based on facts to those who are trying to derail the situation in Belarus...(and) to turn the repub-

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"Accusations against Moscow were hasty and unfounded"

"Kremlin spokesman *Dmitry Peskov* commented on the alleged poisoning of Russian government critic *Alexei Navalny*, in which Moscow is said to be involved – and stressed Russia's interest in the clarification of the case. Asked by journalists whether there were people and forces in Russia who could benefit from 'poisoning' Navalny, Peskov said: 'I cannot answer the question of who could benefit from poisoning this person. I don't think anyone could benefit at all – if you look at the situation simply objectively. That should probably be the starting point,' said the Kremlin spokesman.

Referring to the statement by German Chancellor *Angela Merkel*, who stated on Wednesday (1 September) that Navalny had been the victim of a crime and should have been silenced, Peskov pointed out that there had not yet been any dialogue between Merkel and Russian President *Vladimir Putin* on this matter. He also made it clear that there was currently a lack of informa-

tion regarding the cause of Merkel's claim that Navalny had been poisoned. According to the Kremlin spokesperson, Russia is interested in clarifying the case. 'We want this, for this we need information from Germany. This information is not available to us at present. Both the Kremlin and our doctors and specialists have been trying to clarify this situation since day one. And you would have to be deaf not to notice it,' Peskov added.

Earlier, Peskov had already called for full cooperation with Germany in the Navalny case. On 27 August, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office had addressed the German judicial authorities and asked the German doctors responsible for the case to provide information on the treatment and the findings on the patient Navalny. According to the Kremlin, accusations against Moscow were hasty and unfounded."

Source: de.sputnik.com
of 3 September 2020
(Translation Current Concerns)

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lic away from Russia and undermine the foundations of the Union State.”¹⁰

What is Washington’s game plan? Indeed, it suits President *Trump*’s campaign if his administration is seen as hanging tough on Russia. In substantive terms, Washington probably chose to go on the offensive considering that Russian intelligence has zeroed in on the CIA blueprint to stage a colour revolution in Belarus.

In fact, there has been a dizzying array of standoffs involving Russia in the most recent days. The US and Russian military clashed six days ago when a vehicle forming part of a Russian convoy in north-eastern Syria rammed an American armoured vehicle injuring 4 US soldiers,¹¹ prompting *Biden* to taunt *Trump*, “Did you hear the president say a single word? Did he lift one finger? Never before has an American president played such a subservient role to a Russian leader.”

On 31 August, the US military announced that over the next 10 days it will be conducting live-fire exercises just 70 miles from Russian border. On 28 August, the US flew six nuclear-capable B-52 bombers over 30 NATO countries in a major show of force. Two of them flew over the Black Sea and were intercepted by two Russian fighter jets, which crossed within 100 feet of the nose of one of the bombers, reportedly disrupting its ability to maintain its bearing.

On 27 August, the Russian guided missile submarine *Omsk* surfaced off the coast of Alaska and participated in live-fire exercises in the Bering Sea. Also on 27 August, NORAD sent two F-22 jets to intercept three groups of Russian military maritime patrol aircraft off the Alaskan coast.

Belarus is a special case

“Most important, Moscow will not be prescriptive. *Putin* has supported *Lukashenka*’s proposal to draft a new constitution and hold fresh presidential and parliamentary elections, but transition should be lawful and orderly. This Russian approach has been already evident in Kyrgyzstan (2005) Turkmenistan (2006), and Uzbekistan (2016). Even in the case of Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004 and 2014), Russia didn’t oppose transitions but the West turned them into geopolitical contestations to instal anti-Russian regimes.

However, a caveat must be added. *Putin* also underscored that Belarus is a very special case. He said, in a clear reference to the US, ‘some forces would like to see something different happening there (Belarus). They would like to influence these processes and to bring about the solutions that would suit their political interests.’ Russia cannot afford to see such nefarious designs succeed in Belarus.”

M.K. Bhadrakumar, “Anatomy of coup attempt in Belarus”, indianpunchline.com of 30 August 2020

„The tone is becoming partly warmongering“

“Presumption of innocence, logic and common sense seem superfluous when it comes to opinion making against the Russian government. We know this from the *Skripal* affair. In the case of *Navalny*, too, all doubts have already been dispelled, if German politicians and journalists are to be believed. According to the media, the German government considers it ‘beyond doubt’ that *Navalny* was poisoned with the chemical nerve agent *Novichok*. A special laboratory of the Bundeswehr would have detected this.

Chancellor *Angela Merkel* spoke of an ‘attempted poisoning’ of one of Russia’s leading opposition members: ‘He should be silenced.’ The current tenor of many media is that the attempted poisoning must be followed by a reassessment of the relationship’ between Germany and Russia, while at the very least a stop to *Nord Stream 2*, which is being demanded, and further sanctions. The tone is becoming partly warmongering.”

Source: www.nachdenkseiten.de of 3 September 2020

With growing signs of Russia digging in, the Plan B over Belarus is surfacing. Both Belarus and *Navalny* are noble causes that come handy for Washington to rally Europe and re-establish its transatlantic leadership, which has been in tatters lately with the EU, France, Germany and UK joining Russia and China to block the *Trump* administration’s attempt to impose “snapback” sanctions against Iran.¹²

Above all, Washington feels frustrated that its clumsy attempts to create daylight between Russia and China have floundered. China has voiced support for *Lukashenka*; the Sino-Russian juggernaut is puncturing holes from all sides in *Trump*’s maximum pressure strategy against Iran.

In a feature article entitled „China, Russia Deepen Their Ties Amid Pandemic, Conflict with the West“¹³, *Radio Liberty* recently listed several new Russia-China economic projects in the pipeline to boost the relations further.

These include one of the world’s largest polymer plants that Russia is building in Amur, near the Chinese border costing \$ 11 billion in collaboration with China’s

giant *Sinopec Group*; commencement of natural gas supply to China through the 2,900-kilometer *Power Of Siberia pipeline*¹⁴; plan to start work on a second pipeline, *Power Of Siberia 2*¹⁵; plans to more than triple Russian gas deliveries to China; new scientific cooperation testing vaccines for COVID-19; concerted “de-dollarisation” plan aimed at limiting the use of dollar in bilateral transactions and so on. •

¹ <https://www.rt.com/russia/499702-Nowichok-nerve-agent-used-to/>

² <https://www.rferl.org/a/deputy-state-secretary-vows-continued-u-s-support-for-freedom-in-belarus/30816585.html>

³ <https://www.rferl.org/a/30817270.html>

⁴ <https://indianpunchline.com/anatomy-of-coup-attempt-in-belarus/>

⁵ <https://tass.com/world/1196619>

⁶ <https://tass.com/politics/1196463>

⁷ <https://tass.com/defense/1196551>

⁸ <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-russia-politics-navalny-statements/russia-says-germanys-statements-about-navalny-are-unsubstantiated-ria-idUKKBN25T2ML>

⁹ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63966>

¹⁰ <https://tass.com/politics/1196451>

¹¹ <https://www.voanews.com/archive/russia-blames-us-military-vehicles-collision-syria>

¹² <https://en.isna.ir/news/99061208968/Joint-statement-of-Joint-Commission-of-JCPOA>

¹³ <https://www.rferl.org/a/china-russia-deepen-their-ties-amid-pandemic-conflicts-with-west/30814684.html>

¹⁴ “Power of Siberia” is a natural gas pipeline from the Russian republic of Yakutia and the Irkutsk oblast to the Pacific coast, which has been under construction since 2014. On 2 December 2019, the first 2,157 km long section from the deposit *Tschajandinskoje* (Yakutia) to *Blagoweschtschensk* went into operation, bringing the first export volumes to China. (Wikipedia) (editor’s remarks)

¹⁵ In May this year, Russian gas giant *Gazprom* has announced to begin a feasibility study for its “Power of Siberia-2” pipeline project that would pump up to 50 billion cubic meters of natural gas to China per year via Mongolia. (<https://pgjonline.com/news/2020/05-may/gazprom-begins-preparation-for-power-of-siberia-2>) (editor’s remarks)

Source: <https://indianpunchline.com/us-russia-tensions-flare-up-on-multiple-fronts/> of 2 September 2020

Novichok and Nonsense: From a post-factual to a post-logic world

by Gilbert Doctorow*



Gilbert Doctorow
(Picture ma)

“Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.” These words of sage commentary from the late Senator *Daniel Patrick Moynihan* of New York State were

overturned half a decade ago when we entered the world of “fake news” and facts became irrelevant to public discourse. Since then American political elites and their respective media outlets on both sides of debate have shamelessly invented the “facts” as suited their latest polemical position. The occasional modifier of what cannot be factually proven is “highly likely.”

Regrettably the latest news coming out of Germany yesterday (2 September) regarding the *Navalny* poisoning case indicates a further ratcheting down of the possibilities for civil discourse in the direction of dispute resolution by brute force, that is to say, by war. Our leaders seem to have taken leave of their senses and are putting to us narratives that absolutely defy logic.

Chancellor *Merkel* announced that German military experts attribute *Alexei Navalny*’s poisoning to the Russian nerve agent *Novichok*, the same poison that was allegedly used by the Russian military intelligence forces against the *Skripals* in *Salisbury*. We have heard a great deal about *Novichok* in that connection, but the single most relevant information to the present case is that it is a tightly controlled substance which only state entities might have access to and that its use would have to be approved at the highest levels. Given this background, given that the Russians

were notified of the expertise findings on *Navalny* by megaphone diplomacy, that is to say without any prior warning via diplomatic channels, and given the insistent demand by *Merkel*, backed up moments later by the head of NATO, by the head of the European Commission and by a spokesman of the White House that the Russians explain what happened, what we have here is a very lightly disguised accusation that *Vladimir Putin* ordered the poisoning. All the ducks in the West are now aligned against Russia, with *Mme Merkel* leading the charge.

Russian counter-demands that the proofs of German toxicity findings be shared with them have gone unanswered, just as they were in the *Skripal* case. Thus, a Russian “explanation” of what happened to *Navalny* in the *Tomsk* before his flight will almost certainly not satisfy their accusers in the West.

What we may expect next is a new round of Western sanctions against Russia, quite possibly entailing suspension of the highly contested *Nord Stream II* pipeline project. If that is so, then the *Navalny* poisoning will have turned around the German state position on relations with Russia – and with the United States, which has tried unsuccessfully to cancel *Nord Stream II* by bullying Germany – just as the downing of *MH 17* in the summer of 2014 brought Europe on board the US-led sanctions campaign against Russia over its annexation of *Crimea* and intervention in the *Ukrainian* civil war in the *Donbass*.

The only problem with this entire scenario is that it makes absolutely no sense from start to finish. Even reputable mainstream newspapers like *The Financial Times* said in their reporting from the outset of the *Navalny* case that there were many oligarchs in Russia, including one or two whom they named, who would gladly have organised the murder of *Navalny* for their own reasons, whereas the *Kremlin* had every reason not to want this anti-corruption, anti-*Putin* campaigner to be harmed because the reaction in the West was entirely predictable. The Editorial Board of the *FT* was busy cooking up a wholly different case for sanctions against Russia which they released one day (2 September) ago: should *Putin* order his forces to intervene in *Belarus* to crush the opposition to President *Lukashenka*.

Now the identification of *Novichok* as the poison takes the whole scenario to a level of utter absurdity. Had the *Kremlin* wanted to silence *Navalny*, which is the basic accusation that *Merkel* deliv-

ered yesterday (2 September), it had a vast array of means to do so. Given what we have heard about the tight controls applied to this military grade poison and its identification as specifically Russian in origin, the Russian President might just as well have had *Navalny*’s throat slit and written his signature on the blogger’s forehead.

But even this illogic passes muster in our media. We are told that *Putin* wanted to show that he can do whatever he likes, to thumb his finger at the West for its pusillanimity. To cut to the quick, we are being told that *Vladimir Putin* is a madman. And the message is coming from none other than *Angela Merkel*, still leader of Europe’s strongest economy, most populous nation, and determining force of policies in *Brussels*. In which case, suspension of *Nord Stream II* would be a mere tap on the wrist. The logic, if any can be salvaged from her story, is that *Putin* should be physically eliminated, like *Saddam Hussein*, like *Gaddafi* ... for “violating all of our fundamental values” as she claimed yesterday (2 September).

I found it most interesting that the *BBC World* reportage on the *Navalny* case yesterday (2 September) evening explained to listeners that Russian state possession of the agent *Novichok* would be in violation of the convention on chemical weapons, which is why a domestic Russian crime becomes an international cause célèbre. At the same time they noted that both Germany and the United Kingdom have “small quantities” of *Novichok* in their military labs for control purposes. Insofar as it has relevance in our post-logic world, I would suggest that both Germany and the United Kingdom intelligence forces are as likely to have had the means to poison Mr *Navalny* as the *Kremlin*’s forces, and unlike the *Kremlin*, they had far more reason to do so. It is scarcely believable that the *Kremlin* did it. It is scarcely believable that Russian oligarchs did it, since they would then be pointing a finger directly at *Putin* and would not survive.

One final point is that the *Navalny* poisoning comes at a moment in international relations that is vastly different from that which prevailed at the time of the *Skripal* poisonings two years ago. Back then there was only one *Big Baddy* in the world, *Russia*. Today (3 September), the United States under *Donald Trump* has shifted the global villain’s label to the *People’s Republic of China* and in the run-up to the November elections, he has steadily raised

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Will the country be more peaceful and free now?

Germany after 29 August in Berlin

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

The – understandable – hope that in German politics something would change for the better due to the 29 August demonstrations and rallies in Berlin is most likely mistaken. It rather seems like the public appearances in Berlin are just the flip side of a political coin where both sides are lacking factuality, seriousness and orientation towards the common good.

Big words were chosen in the announcements of the events planned for 29 August 2020. “Millions of Democrats expected in Berlin. On 29 August, the democracy movement is again inviting people to Berlin to fend off the most comprehensive attack on civil society in human history. The festival of love, peace, freedom and equality of all people marks the climax of the ‘Summer of Democracy’ and the beginning of a long overdue revolution,” one of the many calls said. In another, it read: “Saturday, 29 August, 2020: On this historic day, Berlin will celebrate the festival of freedom – the organisers of *Querdenken 711*, who have already skilfully staged the mega-demo on 1 August, are expecting several millions of participants! This will be the most important day in German history since 1945! This event may force the government to resign!”

Berlin, 29 August 2020

Here now a short overview of what really happened:

- An association from Stuttgart – it calls itself *Querdenken 711* and would like

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the diplomatic, military and commercial pressure on the PRC in areas as diverse as uncoupling the economies to bolstering ties with Taiwan. Trump has been twisting arms in Europe to follow the American lead on China, but resistance on this issue has been surely much greater than resistance over sanctions on Russia. As we learned during the visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister to Germany two days ago (1 September), the PRC is one of Germany’s top three export market, with annual sales topping ninety-six billion euros. Given these facts, Ms Merkel has every reason to redirect Europe and America’s lust for sanctions to her neighbour directly to the East, the Russian Federation. That is to say, she has “every reason” if logic plays any role today in state behaviour.

Source: <https://gilberdoctorow.com/2020/09/03/novichok-and-nonsense-from-a-post-factual-to-a-post-logic-world/> of 3 September 2020

“Isn’t the time far too serious to indulge in mass events like the one in Berlin? What kind of ‘community’-experience is it when there is nothing on offer apart from a lot of noise and many empty words? Who really believes that the 29 August was ‘the most important day in German history since 1945’ or the ‘beginning of a long overdue upheaval’?”

to be a coalition movement of all those who see the state measures against the Corona pandemic as the abolition of basic rights and the road to a dictatorship – had again registered several events in Berlin, four weeks after a first major appearance in Germany’s capital. In the run-up, the organisers said that several million people from far and near were expected – “Berlin invites Europe – Festival for Freedom and Peace”. Even the presidents *Trump* and *Putin* had received an invitation. In an interview, a protagonist in the secondary field had mentioned that only these two could save Germany from a dictatorship.

- The red-red-green government of the State of Berlin, the Senate, had wanted to ban the planned events a few days before 29 August. The state’s Senator of the Interior, a member of the SPD, said: “I am not willing to accept for a second time that Berlin is misused as a stage for Corona deniers, ‘Reichsbürger’ (Reich Citizens’ Movement) and right-wing extremists.” This wording did not do justice to the majority of the demonstration and rally participants.
- Not only the organisers, but also many others, for example the “Bild-Zeitung”, widely read in Germany, the CDU politician *Carsten Linnemann* and in Switzerland even the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” criticised the ban – adding in a commentary on 1 September: “Democracy can bear a few muddleheads”.
- In two court instances, the organisers contended successfully for the ban to be lifted. Nevertheless, the day before the planned meetings, there were claims on the “net” that (German?) tanks were on their way to Berlin – and that an unusual number of soldiers had been seen in trains heading for Berlin. Days before, the editor-in-chief of a magazine supporting the events in Berlin had already painted the scenario of rolling tanks. After all, it was all about the “Strasse des 17. Juni”¹ – which, according to the organisers, would later be renamed “Strasse des 29. August”.

- At noon on 29 August, it was announced that the demonstration was to be broken up by the police despite the court’s decision: because of a lack of compliance with the rules of social distancing. Prematurely, *Spiegel online* reported that this had already been implemented. The police commissioner of Berlin had previously warned of the danger of violent clashes, should the events take place. Before and during the event, the organisers had and have repeatedly declared their commitment to non-violence.
- While at the rally around the “Berlin Victory Column”, which finally did take place, “peace” and “freedom” were repeatedly chanted and calls were made for observance of the distancing rules, a group of more than 100 people from a different rally in front of the Reichstag ran up the barely secured stairs in front of the Reichstag entrance – among others with black, white and red flags². Three policemen guarding the Reichstag entrance stood against them until a few minutes later a group of hundred policemen approached. Later the three police officers were received and honoured by the Federal President. The headlines and political speeches after 29 August were mainly limited to what happened in front of the Reichstag.
- A planned two-week “protest camp” of *Querdenken 711* on the “Strasse des 17. Juni” was evacuated by the police during the night of 29 to 30 August because of non-compliance with the distancing rules. The German supreme court, the Federal Constitutional Court, confirmed the ban. The organisers’ plan had been to have the “protest camp” draft a new German constitution.

Contributions for the rally: from Hare Krishna to the Revolution

Since it had not been possible on 1 August, this time all those who should/want-

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"Will the country ..."

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ed to sing or talk had their say. The contributions ranged from Hare Krishna songs to schmaltzy "love" songs and questionable children's and parents' performances to calls for a "revolution". One speaker, who is also co-editor of the "alternative" popular paper *Demokratischer Widerstand*, was wearing a dark suit and declared that he only put on his suit for weddings or for the revolution. On that day, he said, "Long live the revolution!" His goal is a new state in Germany, the "Free Federal Republic of Germany". There was no shortage of big words: "Love", "Freedom", "Peace" – just like on 1 August. The time was "ripe for a new system". Several speakers repeatedly tried to get the participants of the rally going with loudly chanted sayings.

Most likely not worth remembering

Is it worth to remember anything that was said and sung on stage on 29 August? I don't think so. No sentence was formulated that will go down in history. But one should think about the performance as such. One speaker said that the event in Berlin would also reach the "souls" of people. What emotions might he have had in mind? Should this post-modern pot-pourri of dissatisfaction, lamentations, esotericism and loud attacks be groundbreaking? Too much noise prevents thinking. There was a lot of noise around 29 August. Can this be a sensible alternative to a policy that is indeed questionable in many respects?

And what would it really take instead to prevent the chasm between those in power, a large majority of citizens who are still on the side of those in power today and a sizeable minority who cheer for events like those in Berlin, from widening even further?

Three questions

Jan Gerber, head of the political research department at the *Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture* in Leipzig, has formulated ideas worth considering in an article entitled "The populists are prototypes of a new party system"³. Unlike many others, he did not turn the term "populism" into a political struggle term, but analysed it with interesting thoughts. Among other things, one can read: "Populism is less a political programme than a political style. Whereas the established parties argue with practical constraints, he relies on emotions and affects. Mood-dependent ad hoc decisions take the place of lengthy negotiation processes, missing programmes are replaced by improvisation". And at the end of the text it says: "Sooner or later, however, the party landscape is likely to change along the lines of populism. [...] Perhaps the party landscape of the future will emerge from the populist organisations of the present." Indeed, one can get the impression that we have already covered a long way along this path in our countries.

But we can also ask ourselves whether we citizens want this to happen and whether there are not better alternatives: alternatives for the common good that do not rely on emotions and affects, ad hoc

decisions depending on mood and improvisation, but rather again on objectivity, seriousness, programmatic approach and lengthy negotiation processes.

The following questions may help to stimulate further thinking:

1. The German philosopher and Enlightenment philosopher *Immanuel Kant* already wrote in 1784, that is five years before the French Revolution, in his famous essay "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?": "A revolution is perhaps probably a waste of personal despotism or of avaricious or tyrannical oppression (*herrschaftlicher Bedrückung*); but never a true reform in ways of thinking can come about; but rather, are new prejudices, just as well serve as the old ones to harness the great unthinking mass (*gedankenlosen großen Haufens*)". The course of the French Revolution and many other revolutions proved him right. Also the balance of the so-called "peaceful revolutions" according to the specifications of *Gene Sharp* (see box) and US intelligence services rather raises many questions. Where are we today, mentally and emotionally, while also politically?
2. The same German philosopher also dealt with the question of freedom in great detail. "Freedom" was one of the core themes of the Enlightenment philosophers of his time. Who remembers how much effort, care and knowledge it took to form the filigree ideas of a free and democratic order into constitutions and then – for all their imperfection – to try to live such constitutions? Who really believes that the slogans of 29 August can become historically powerful in terms of progress in Germany for the common good?
3. Isn't the time far too serious to indulge in mass events like the one in Berlin? What kind of "community"-experience is it when there is nothing on offer apart from a lot of noise and many empty words? Who really believes that the 29 August was "the most important day in German history since 1945" or the "beginning of a long overdue upheaval"? It could, however, become an important day if it encourages a real pause for thought and reflection. •

Gene Sharp and the «non-violent action»

km. Through *Wikipedia*, the reader learns that *Gene Sharp* who died in 2018, was a US political scientist, founder of the *Albert Einstein Institute* which focused on studies on non-violent and the spread of non-violent action. His most famous book, "The Politics of Non-violent Action" (1973) delivers a negotiation-oriented way for non-violent action. Sharp classified his methods in the following subgroups: non-violent protest and persuasion, social non-cooperation, economic boycott actions, strike actions, political non-cooperation and non-violent intervention. *Petra Kelly* smuggled "The Politics of Non-violent Action" to the GDR and gave it to the civil rights activist, *Gerd Poppe*. Volume II was adopted by the *Democratic Initiative* in Leipzig in early 1989. Sharp tried to exert concrete influence in Myanmar, where his instructions for action for liberation movements "From Dictatorship to Democracy" were distributed in 1992,

which have since been translated into over 30 languages. The 4th edition was published in 2012. Sharp's theories influenced many liberation movements in Eastern Europe: *Otpor* in Serbia, *Kmara* in Georgia, *Pora!* in the Ukraine, *KelKel* in Kyrgyzstan and *Subr* in Belarus. His liaison in these movements was the US Colonel *Robert Helvey* (ret.). In addition, he was referred to by the initiators of the revolution in Egypt in 2011, which led to the resignation of President *Hosni Mubarak* in February 2011. One of the *Alternative Nobel Prize* awards, each worth 50,000 euros, went to Sharp in 2012. The reason given was that his studies on non-violent resistance had been applied in the jungles of Burma as well as in Cairo's Tahrir Square. He has also advised governments on how to organise non-violent resistance to a military invasion.

It must be added that in reality the „non-violent actions“ were often associated with violence.

¹ On 17 June 1953 a revolt in the GDR was defeated by Soviet tanks. The Federal Republic of Germany subsequently declared 17 June a national holiday.

² The flag with three horizontal stripes of equal width in the colours black-white-red was the flag for warships and merchant ships of the North German Confederation from 1867 to 1871, the flag of the German Reich from 1871 to 1919 and, from 1933 to 1935, also the flag of the "Third Reich" for a transitional period before the swastika flag was introduced as the sole national flag. The colour scheme was also black-white-red.

³ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 29 August 2020, page 36

They want our money, not democracy!

by Zoltán Kiszelly*



Zoltán Kiszelly
(Picture ma)

Now it is official. The SPD Federal Minister of Finance has announced what everyone already knew: The EU's indebtedness is "such a great idea" that the EU should get even more into debt. His comrade, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, *Michael Roth*, then immediately attacked Poland and Hungary to make sure they would not prevent the upcoming big debt orgy.

East of the Elbe we were and are sceptical about any kind of Union. These come and go, but the nations remain. Hungary is now a member of the European Union, whose Kafkaesque centres in Berlin and Brussels are taking the bull by the horns (trying to escape) and, by saving the euro, to increase Europe's international economic power.

And why all this? After the Brexit, and in the event of President *Trump's* re-election, the UK will most likely join the trade agreement between the US-Canada-Mexico – the successor to *NAFTA* – which will undenia-

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bly become the largest of the three poles of the world economy. At least the Dutch and the Poles will be interested to see whether the British have made a good choice.

Berlin wants to keep the rest of the EU together at all costs, Brussels wants to extend its bureaucratic power. These two claims meet in the rescue of the euro and the euro zone. The European Central Bank has already shot its powder, its balance sheet total is approaching 50% of euro zone GDP. So now the entire EU has to go into debt, so the member states outside the euro zone can also be turned into interest servants. The British did not want to wait for this.

The 750 billion euro bail-out package was justified by the negative economic impact of the pandemic and presented as a one-off borrowing. According to *Olaf Scholz*, however, this is "a good idea" for financing the EU. There are more than enough ideas: the socialist Spanish government wants to introduce the basic income; the Italians want to build a tunnel between Messina and the mainland; Berlin wants the EU to switch from nuclear power to renewable energy and from diesel to electric cars, and so on.

And why all this? Berlin and Brussels want to issue more, much more Eurobonds on the international financial markets, which is expected to have several political and economic advantages. The joint indebtedness would reach levels that would make their countries' withdrawal unaffordable or at least very expensive even if *Marine Le Pen* (May 2022) or *Matteo Salvini* (2023 at the latest) were elected.

Eurobonds would strengthen the global role of the euro and enhance the value of European stock exchanges. This is a good opportunity and a pretext for the "completion of the euro", i.e. the harmonisation of deposit guarantees and bankruptcy procedures and, subsequently, the harmonisation of fiscal and social policies within the euro zone. Common taxes and direct EU revenues can then be introduced to pay off the common debts, which would preferably be voted on by majority vote.

How do they intend to achieve this? *Michael Roth* is right. Time is running out. Most of all for the southern states of the euro zone. If there were no new EU budget, the old one would continue proportionally.

The EU Commission has found the appropriate means with the democracy monitoring which debuted in autumn. All member states will be screened, but it is already clear that it will be an issue with the problem children in the East. Especially if the neoliberal NGO thief is set to catch a thief. *George Soros* sends his regards!

It is grotesque that the German Foreign Office, so sensitive, was silent when *Macron* and *Marc Rutte* sent their police forces with rubber bullets against the yellow vests or with mounted units against peacefully demonstrating Dutch pensioners. They are already in the bag. They are all globalists. Not like us Central Eastern Europeans, who know that national currency and manageable national debt are as much a guarantee of our freedom and national sovereignty as unanimity in EU votes. •

The endgame of turbo capitalism

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V.*



Eberhard Hamer
(Picture ma)

After *Richard Nixon's* suspension of the US dollar's gold backing on 15 August 1971, another president of the USA – *Donald Trump* – issued a decree in August (8 August 2020) announcing a new financial order: he completely abolished the wage tax liability for wages up to \$ 100,000 for six months. A decision of far-reaching consequences!

Up to now, the world financial and monetary system has functioned in such a way that states, banks and corporations could go into unlimited debt, because the central banks provided millions, then billions and now trillions of dollars in funds

"out of nowhere", i.e. without any backing. According to the understanding of the high finance syndicate and a statement by *George Soros* "these funds never be repaid, are perpetual loans". The interest as well as the costs of the state apparatus and the costs of redistribution (about half of the revenues) do not have to be paid by the financial speculators or billionaires (nor by the 30% or so underclass, who are either completely tax-free or at least receive more transfer payments than they themselves have to pay taxes). Rather, 80% of our taxes and social security contributions have to be paid by the 94% medium-sized companies and the employed middle class (the "better earners"). They are the exploited of our old capitalist system. These hard-working "creators of value" as entrepreneurs and employed persons in charge have so far always had to bear the inter-

est and amortisation of the national debt as well as the transfer payments to two thirds of the remaining "living in our country". The situation has now changed in that the unrestrained increase in money supply no longer reckons with back-payment and therefore also no longer reckons with redemption, and that the interest rates have fallen to zero and cannot be increased, because even a 1% increase of interest rates would drive countries such as Italy, France or Spain into national bankruptcy.

The endgame of capitalism is thus only directed at money multiplication, debt multiplication, financial speculation and the buying up of material assets, as long as people still accept the worthless money at all. Basically, it is consistent when *Trump* does not want to tax the lower and middle

Corona – and how on with economy

ds. The global COVID-19 pandemic shows us once again how vulnerable human life is. The virus has not only attacked health and life, but also endangers the economic existence of countless people.

It made it clear how prone to failure the globalised economy is: If the global supply chains are interrupted in one place, the wheels in other places stand still. Medicines become scarce in Europe when the production of basic medical substances comes to a standstill in China. And finally, the virus has brought to light abuses – such as the working and living conditions of temporary workers – recalling the days of the slave trade; and this in the economically strongest country in Europe. In the rich countries of the northern hemisphere, aid packages worth billions have been able to prevent mass unemployment.

But the long-term economic consequences are still difficult to predict; especially in the poor countries of the southern hemisphere. Here the virus already meets poverty, lack of social security and unstable political conditions, as the example of the Congo shows. The truth is that colonialism has never stopped. It continues in unfair trade relations between the North and the South; not only in Africa, but also in Latin America and some south-eastern European countries. Raw materials and human labour continue to be ruthlessly exploited and the diverse cultures and economies of indigenous peoples continue to be ignored and largely destroyed.

Huge resources of land are being used for the industrial production of food for the North, and e-waste and other waste from civilisation is being taken to the

poor countries of the South, where children go to waste dumps to look for recyclable materials. In view of such circumstances, can we trust that everything will be the same as it was before corona and that the economy will flourish again if we stimulate consumption in rich countries with expensive buying incentives? Or is it not necessary that we use all our intelligence and skills to develop new economic models that are no longer based on profit but on people's needs, thus making their livelihoods more secure and more just?

I think we have an obligation to do so, and I am confident that it can be done if we get to work without the usual left-right scheme. After all, we managed to land on the moon, and there should be an economy for the benefit of all. •

"The endgame of turbo capitalism"

continued from page 6

incomes anymore. He does not need these taxes either, because he can retrieve any amount of money from the corrupt FED (central bank) for state financing and has already retrieved 2 trillion in order to pursue the corona economic policy. These 2 trillion dollars were transferred to *Blackrock*, so that *Blackrock* could "nurture" the stock markets with them.

Nixon's abolition of the gold backing already had worldwide consequences, namely the "liberation" of the money supply from its backing and therefore a fifty-fold increase of the money supply in the last 50 years, and also a forty-fold increase of the gold price.

Similarly, the end of the wage tax for the lower-and middle income classes will end the system of enrichment of the state and private financial system through exploitation of the factor labour. This will be the beginning of a new financial world order, in which capital can no longer live off work and states can no longer tax performance the higher it is. Since 51 million Americans are unemployed, ostensibly because of corona, but in reality, because of the world economic crash that has begun, and do not know how to pay their rent and maintenance, Trump has also introduced a basic income, namely that every Amer-

ican should receive \$ 400.00 per week in state benefits. He did not say how he intends to finance all this, but he has at least compensated the lower class and a part of the middle class for the fact that the financial industry can enrich itself through money multiplication, loans and speculation without limits, even without benefits.

The outcry against this decree of Trump comes predominantly from the US high finance.

Unlike the socialists, who enforce benefits for themselves and their supporters by having to compensate for this redistribution by pillaging others – the high achievers – Trump, like high finance, takes money out of nothing that is not taken from anyone. His redistribution is therefore all-round and final.

The new financial order, however, has an internal and an external risk.

Internally, redistribution works as long as the state can dispose of money. It can dispose of money as long as it can call up money from the central bank in its control, theoretically without end. The financial system would then function like the food supply for the population. As long as there is still food available, the population can be supplied internally, with money as well.

The danger of inflation has been fought, as before, with the coercive means of zero interest rates and "dammed infla-

tion", as already demonstrated by National Socialism and imitated by the socialist states. But how long will it last? Externally, on the other hand, the value of the US dollar will soon fall significantly as a result of Trump's program. This will benefit US foreign trade in the short term, but in the medium term it could mean the collapse of the dollar empire and the power of the financial oligarchs, who up to now have been able to use their billions to buy international influence and control countries and companies. If the dollar is no longer worth anything, their influence and power will be gone. One commentator saw Trump's new course as a "final blow against the international oligarchs' cabal" because they are the ones who want to chase Trump out of office.

But once Trump has made "life without a payroll tax" acceptable, the other states will no longer be able to avoid the exploitation of their high achievers and the middle class on a national level. The alleged corona round of the EU has shown where the money for state corruption (500 billion euros) and social measures (100 billion euros short-time work benefits for all) will come from: from nowhere, from bonds and from the ECB – without back-payment.

Trump's decree of 8 August 2020 is "helicopter money for all", not only for big business as it has been up to now. •

Alpine shepherdess in the canton of Grisons: “You do everything, and yet there are always killings. This goes to the psyche.”

**Regulation of the wolf population
by the affected mountain cantons – Yes to the hunting law**

Interview with Christian and Evelina Venzin, farmers in Curaglia, Val Medel, canton of Grisons

mf. Christian Venzin runs a farm together with his wife. They are involved in an alpine corporation, whose territory reaches from 1,600 meters to 2,500 meters above sea level on the right side of the Val Medel valley towards the Lukmanier pass. It is 795 hectares of steep, partly very steep, stony terrain. Nearby is also the recently discovered wolf pack, called the “Stagia pack”.

Current Concerns: The wolf is again native to Switzerland since 1995. In the last years it has spread more and more. How long has the presence of the wolf been a problem for you?

Evelina and Christian Venzin: There was a first killing on the alp on 9 August 2019, and a second killing shortly afterwards. However in the following time, wolves were observed in the area the whole time. It started on 10 May 2020: On a pasture down in the valley at Rein da Medel two goatlings and two lambs were killed and one goatling was missing. Two lambs were torn from our herd. One was dead, the other was still alive, but it was wounded so badly that it had to be released. I was in shock through this experience. It was exactly the day

we went up to the alp with the sheep and knew that this problem would be much bigger up there. There a safe fence as protection against the wolf is not possible everywhere.

What was the reaction of the farmers in the valley to these events they were suddenly confronted with?

We are not to blame for the wolf being there. But maybe we simply pushed the whole thing a bit to the back of our mind. One actually knew about the presence of the wolf, but hoped to be spared from this danger. Maybe it is a way of dealing with a problem that you know is not really solvable. With the current density of wolf presence, this is even more so. This threat to our animals, to our existence, goes to our psyche and we sleep restlessly. What additionally comes up to us is an enormous additional effort to protect our herd sufficiently from the wolves.

How does the fact of wolf presence change your work, animal husbandry, alpine and pasture farming in general?

We have about 1,300 sheep on the alp, the alp was and is always herded. It was common for the animals to move free-

ly on the alp. Only dangerous places or passages where the animals should not go are secured with fences. But since the wolf came, it is no longer possible to let them graze unfenced. As soon as one pasture is eaten off, one must “re-settle” them, that is, fence in a new area and drive the sheep there. This is not always successful with the whole flock. Just today I received a voice message from the shepherdess that she hopes that all the animals will come with her. She was very worried. The shepherds can no longer manage alone the constant fencing, which means that we farmers have to assist increasingly. The fence material needed for this is flown to the alp. For the Ganaretsch Alp Corporation, the additional costs amount to 30,000 Swiss francs as of today just because of the wolves, and the summer is not over yet.

We also have two livestock guardian dogs on the alp, but for about 1,300 sheep we actually need more dogs. I have now applied to Agridea for livestock guardian dogs for our farm. The waiting time for these dogs is very long.

The hikers worry us because we have some pastures where hiking trails lead through the middle of the meadow. Here the problems with the guarding dogs already start. Then we still have pastures, which are located at roads, which are heavily used. Because of the high volume of traffic, there is an extreme pressure for the guardian dogs.

The alp does not know where to get the money from. In the end we have to pay for it ourselves, because until today we have not received any assurance of support. The alp has now contacted various organisations and requested support. We will receive a maximum of 2,500 Swiss francs from the Swiss government if they accept our measures. The Surselva Farmers’ Association approved a loan yesterday evening in Obersaxen to hire a lawyer to clarify with the federal government who will pay for these additional costs.

My wife and I are thinking about giving up sheep farming and buying ten additional suckler cows – we already have twenty. The floors are indeed suitable for sheep, but the strain and the amount of work are simply becoming too much.

Letter to  the Editor

The lovely, beautiful wolf

There was a time when hunger and misery were just around the corner. These days all that is forgotten. Our ancestors knew why the wolf was shown the master. There wasn’t meat on the table every day, and every animal that was killed was a loss and was missing. The import of food was also limited.

Who tells us that it will always be like today? Too much and too little are close together. At the beginning of the corona pandemic in March, we saw how the shelves in the shopping centres were emptied.

The wolf causes serious problems for us farmers. We receive requirements from the agricultural office:¹ If there are no herding dogs on an alp, the farmer does not get any compensation for killed animals. However, there are nine other months, besides the time on the alp, where some animals are at pasture. For a few animals, the farmers cannot af-

ford any protection measures. Nevertheless, the wolf can strike there too. Furthermore, not only sheep are affected. On many alps there are stony and sloping areas. When the wolves look for their prey at night, even frightened cattle and calves can quickly break their legs or fall.

Therefore, everyone must realise that the hour has come for this predator.

*Heiri Hösli, mountain farmer,
Ennetberg, Ennenda (Glarus)*

¹ From the “Information letter on large carnivores and herd protection 2020” of the Department of Economics and Interior, Office for Agriculture, canton of Glarus, of 11 August 2020: “Dear animal owners. It is a fact that wolves are present in the canton of Glarus. The killing of livestock must therefore be expected at anytime and anywhere. [...] It must be expected that in the future only the killing of livestock caused by large carnivores will be compensated where reasonable herd protection measures have been taken.”

"Stop salami tactics ..."

continued from page 8

It has not been a good summer for us and nor for the shepherds. The fact that they stay up there is admirable. It is very difficult for them to come to terms with all these terrible images. At the moment they even camp with the animals on the pasture. Every night a certain restlessness is perceived in the herd. The director of the Plantahof made the following comment in an interview: "The challenge is not to be mastered without the instrument of an effective, targeted and rapid regulation." A farmer wrote: "We are lied to and deceived in the media." In the tabloid newspaper "Blick" an article was published with the example of an alp, where reportedly it should work with livestock guardian dogs. The shepherdess is from *Pro Natura*. For 600 sheep four shepherds are in action. *Pro Natura* has financed the shepherds' salaries with donations. David Gerke, president of the *Wolf Switzerland group*, is also involved in this alp. Do you think this is possible on a normal alp? We have twice as many sheep, we would have to employ eight shepherds. Nobody can finance that. We had a good shepherd from Germany who had been employed on our alp for seven years. He also gave us a promise for 2020.

In the fall of 2019, Mr Boner, the person in charge at the Plantahof for herd protection, met with the shepherd and the farmers to work out a concept. Shortly before the start of the alp, the shepherd cancelled. He said that he could no longer sleep because he probably knew what was in store for him. Now we have a German shepherdess on the alp, who has been herding sheep and cows in our area for years. The second shepherd is from Brig, he worked in Norway in a company that offers husky tours for tourists. Because of corona he lost his job and came back to Switzerland.

The shepherdess has a lot of trouble with the images. She always said: "You do everything, and yet there are always killings." That goes to the psyche. Since a few weeks the wolves are permanently present. A week ago two sheep were outside the fence, they were found boned the next morning. The wolves are hungry. They don't go away from here so fast anymore, with this supply of sheep. Usually they only eat little of an animal, but now they need food for the puppies.

Mr Boner's plan was to drove the sheep only into a night pen. This worked in spring in the area around Sogn Gions in the bottom of the valley up to the rocks. As soon as they were grazing further up in Munplaun, Muschaneras, it was no longer possible, because the shep-



On the Grisons' Alp Nera in the municipality of Casti-Wergenstein, a wolf tore a calf from its suckler cow herd. This was reported by the Grisons Farmers Association. (Picture Grisons Farmers Association)

herds did not bring the sheep into these night pens. The reasons for this are the partly steep, unclear and extensive terrain.

When looking at the reports of killings from the Office for Hunting and Fishing of the canton of Grisons, it is noticeable that there are suddenly many more reports of killings in 2020 than there still were in 2019. Does this have to do with a new recording system for livestock killings?

No, it is not a new registration system. It is a fact that livestock killings have increased by leaps and bounds in 2020, while very little happened in 2019. This means that the wolf presence is very high.

Also, reports from the Office for Hunting and Fishing of the canton of Grisons show that killed sheep have repeatedly stayed outside the fence. What is this all about?

If it is an area as large as our alp and the fences cannot be placed everywhere in a stable way because of the characteristics of the terrain, they escape. Therefore the reports that the killed animals have been outside the fence. The longer the fence, the more difficult it is to maintain the voltage. Every blade of grass that contact it drains power. It cannot be handled reliably. The fact that animals stay outside the run happens again and again, also on the pastures down in the valley. Sometimes they jump over it.

If the fence is folded outwards, the sheep have broken out. If the fence is folded into the enclosure, then someone has got in from outside. It also happens

that wolves herd game into the fence, which then falls down inwards, and the wolf no longer has any obstacle separating him from the sheep. Incidentally, it is only a matter of time before the wolves jump over the fence, the shepherds say.

What are the effects of adapted animal husbandry on animal health?

Due to the narrower and more extensive fencing, they are closer together, and this can lead to more parasite infestations, lung and stomach worms, and tapeworms, because the grass becomes more polluted. There are also increased claw infections.

Does the federal government's financial compensation work for the killings?

We are compensated by the cantonal Office for Hunting and Fishing. This is working quickly. We had two killings in spring. These have been paid fairly. There were two lambs. That's just not possible! Because if the wolf kills sheep and you cannot find them, or those who simply don't come back from the alp in autumn, none of this is compensated. A farmer we know, who let about 80 goats graze on alpine pastures as part of a project in Surses Radons to reduce the forest cover, 13 of his highly pregnant goats were killed. Days later, they were found and some were still alive. He said that of course he didn't have the milk payment he would have had over the winter from these goats, and no one will reimburse him. The animals which ran away and the missing animals, no one will replace them either.

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"Stop salami tactics ..."

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Last year, they had heavy losses on an alp in the canton of Grisons with 400 sheep. In the end, about 60 sheep were missing. But only the cases confirmed by the gamekeeper will be reimbursed. That's all right. Even in normal years, there are always losses, even in the barn. But when you hear the claims of the opponents, how many animals fall because nobody is looking at them, this does not reflect reality. We have had two shepherdesses for many years; our alp has never been unherded.

How do you see the future if the hunting law is adopted, as if it were rejected? This question you should ask Mr *Arquint*, head of the Office for Hunting and Fishing of the canton of Grisons. There are many who say that little will change. It is difficult to say what will change after the vote. What if we win, what if we don't?

One thing is certain: these wolves are here with us, they smelled blood, and they will stay. It is a pack that remains; a single wolf keeps on wandering. For example, the one who killed on our alp in 2019

was shot down in the canton of Thurgau in January 2020. He was sick and had mange. However, he was a loner. Then we see how the wolves will kill game in winter, they need meat. What happens in autumn, when there are no more animals up there, do they come down to our sheep in the valley?

With the wolves that are here now, I look into a dark and uncertain future. Suddenly they jump over the fences, and then it is over anyway.

It worked great for us before. We have good pastures, we would have enough space, and suddenly the wolves come and turn everything upside down. Personally, I say: I will not go through a second summer like this. We have our work here, then you always have in mind: "When do we have to go up again for fencing?" We have very good shepherds now; maybe they will stay until the end. Is there anyone else who would like to do this afterwards? We have also supported them very well.

Without the help of us farmers, this would never have been possible, even though the two of them are tough. On an alp in Vals a shepherdess could no longer cope with this pressure and left the alp prematurely.

Another problem is that if the alp is no longer cultivated in the future, there will be more avalanches when the grass is high and "terracing" due to the sheep will disappear; nobody talks about this, nobody thinks about it.

Because of this year's summer, when more Swiss people came to the mountains, we also had the opportunity to talk to some of them and found that people have no idea what is happening here. They quickly read through some information, but because of that they don't know more.

It is also not so easy to explain to someone what is going on. You cannot say in two words: "The wolf destroys everything." The opponents are very active. Pro Natura, WWF and now the *Mountain Forest Project*. The *Mountain Forest Project* is no longer supported by a few communities because of its position on the wolf issue.

We do not hear any comments from our local authorities. On the list of Grisons tourism communities that now support the law, our community is also not listed, which is extremely unfortunate.

Thank you very much for the interview. •

(Interview by *Monika Fry*)

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“Chance-21” says yes to the popular initiative “For a moderate immigration”

Our country needs independent civil movements

Interview with Viktor Rüegg*, “Chance-21”

mw. In the joint efforts of various citizens’ groups for a direct democratic and neutral Switzerland, several years ago, together with friends, I got to know some of the active members of “Chance-21”, who also held municipal parliamentary seats in the canton of Lucerne for a while. Before the federal referendum on the limitation initiative, I accidentally came across “Chance-21” again: As one of the few groups outside the SVP and AUNS (Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland), it recommends support for the initiative.

In the following, the arguments of “Chance-21” for the initiative are presented as well as a conversation with Viktor Rüegg about the party landscape in Switzerland and the reasons why “Chance-21” has chosen the path of an independent political citizens’ group.

Current-Concerns: Mr. Rüegg, I am very pleased to be able to talk to you. Could you first explain what the goals of “Chance-21” are?



Viktor Rüegg
(Picture Chance-21)

Viktor Rüegg: We don’t see ourselves as a party, but as a movement of people who are positioned between the Greens and the SVP. On the one hand we have ecological and also social concerns, but on the other hand we

also want to ensure that Switzerland’s independence and the small-scale nature of our decisions are respected. It is simply not possible to reconcile the two, either with the SVP or the Greens or with others on the left. This is why we have been around since 1995, when we participated in National Council elections as the “Movement for a Neutral Switzerland” and then twice as “Chance-21”. Since 2003 we have had one seat in parliament each in the city of Lucerne and in the commune of Kriens. Since 2010 the political movement no longer exists

* Viktor Rüegg is a lawyer in Kriens, canton of Lucerne. From 2004 to 2009 he held a mandate for the “Chance-21” in the parliament of the city of Lucerne. Up to date he chairs a “Less is more” committee, which fights the construction of a large sports hall with 4,000 seats in Kriens as completely exaggerated (see *SRF News* of 22 July 2020)

Self-determination is a prerequisite for a living democracy

Therefore Chance-21 says yes to the Limitation Initiative



We recommend supporting the “Initiative for Moderate Immigration” because

- * we don’t want to give up self-determination, since it is a prerequisite for a living democracy and our most important asset to be able to participate in decision-making processes in the future,
- * our social security systems will be disproportionately stressed by further, uncontrolled immigration,
- * population can’t grow endlessly. It has “doubled” within 80 years (from 4.3 million to 8.6 million inhabitants) and this is the main reason for the uncontrolled demand for resources,
- * the increasing traffic on congested roads and in overcrowded trains is already pushing mobility to its limits,
- * in Switzerland 29 km² (!) are built up annually, which corresponds to the area of Lake Brienz. We also have a

responsibility towards future generations who want to live in this country,

- * urban sprawl in Switzerland is already reaching alarming dimensions,
- * our quality of life is decreasing more and more due to the increasing number of inhabitants,
- * we regard as important that our lifestyle be balanced and in harmony with nature.

The success of this initiative is much more important than ostensibly assumed!

This can be derived in particular from the financial commitment of various large corporations (e.g. Coca-Cola). The fact that international corporations and think tanks are interfering in the voting campaign should give us food for thought.

Or do you seriously believe that these neoliberal multinationals and organisations focus on the wellbeing of the Swiss population?

Your vote matters!

Source: <https://www.chance-21.ch/2020/08/17/deshalb-sagt-chance-21-zur-begrenzungs-initiative-ja/>
of 17 August 2020

externally, only internally. Four times a year we hold discussions on voting slogans, and a group of interested people meets to exchange views.

Today, the conditions for “Chance-21” would perhaps be better if we started again, probably we would have more popularity. Back then we were able to get three to four per cent of the votes, here in the city of Lucerne, that was enough for one seat. Today, with the climate problem and with corona, there would perhaps be more willingness to decide more on a small-scale level and to reduce the big, international issues. But if there is to be something new, it must come from below, from the twenty or thirty-year-olds.

Core difference: International alignment or small-scale, direct democratic decisions?

What you have said about the parties is also of concern to me and to us at Current Concerns. You said that they can’t go together, certain arguments from the SVP and the Greens.

For us at “Chance-21” it does, but not for the political parties.

But if you look at the arguments of “Chance-21” for the limitation initiative (see box), then there are quite a few that every Green could sign. Why is it not possible to create a broader political committee or campaign for a “Limitation Initiative”?

This is probably difficult because the demarcation from the SVP is so desperately defended. In the last twenty or thirty years there has been a connection between the FDP, the centre and the left, who agree that international action and decision-making should be taken. That is the big political sticking point for us. At “Chance-21” we believe that there are certainly issues that need to be regulated internationally, for example in relation to airspace. But we feel that most decisions are better anchored at the local or national level and can also be made in a direct

“Chance-21’ says yes ...”

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democratic manner, rather than somehow being regulated internationally, where direct democracy is ruled out.

That is the core difference. The people of the FDP, CVP are for economic reasons, because of the big corporations, for the international level, and the left is for so-called “solidarity” reasons, the Internationale of the left, for this level. They have come together against the “right-wing nationalists”, who are more national and small-scale positions. This is the main struggle of the last thirty years.

And the question of the EU linkage.

The EU is of course a fine example of the international, undemocratic level. Everyone is in favour of it, with the exception of the SVP. It goes on to the UN level, where some areas are affected. And for us at “Chance-21”, the key question is: Do we want direct democratic, small-scale, self-determined decisions, or do we give that up and say that some delegates should decide for humanity, whether in Brussels or in the UN or wherever. That is the core question for us.

You plausibly explain why many are against the SVP, but isn't it also true the other way round, that the SVP also sets itself apart from the others?

Yes, of course the SVP also has its fears of contact, in the social and ecological area. For example, it has long denied that climate change is happening. Today it says that it is happening, but that that is normal that has always been the case. But this is an issue related to our way of life, for example so let's leave aside how devastating it is. A party like the SVP can be expected to give an opinion on how to tackle the problem. This is an example where the SVP does not take up serious concerns of the other side either. That is why we are not part of the SVP; I am not in any party.

“We do not care which party is behind a slogan”

The arguments of “Chance-21” are partly the same as those of the SVP, and some of them, as already mentioned, would actually be the concerns of the Greens.

Yes, we are not afraid of contact if we find something reasonable. We do not care which party is behind a slogan. We are an independent movement that thinks and discusses and decides for itself. I always look at the reasons and arguments of both sides, and from the analysis we come to the result. We recommend a yes to the initiative for moderate immigration, but it is difficult to actively fight for it.

I believe that the mutual demarcation between the parties will remain so in the coming years. Something new must come, perhaps at some point, we'll see.

When the GLP [Green Liberal Party, which split off from the Zurich Green Party, mw] came into being in Zurich, at about the same time as “Chance-21” in 1995, 1996, we contacted them to see

if it would be possible to set up a branch in Lucerne. But we soon realised: In the whole question of global corporations, of international business, they are on the same level as the FDP. They want to create the best possible conditions for international companies, also in Switzerland. This is at the expense of SMEs, and we are more on the side of small structures. The economy is more directly determined, more democratic and more controllable in SMEs than in large companies.

At the time, it was thought that the green liberals were an opportunity to unite the various points of view.

We hoped so too, but we knew after the first exchange of letters: this is hopeless. So we stuck to the path of an independent citizens' movement.

Thank you very much, Mrv Rüegg, for the informative and stimulating conversation.

(Interview Marianne Wüthrich)

Free movement of persons with Switzerland's EU – with what benefits?

mw. The limitation initiative aims to mitigate the negative effects of excessive immigration. The question now arises as to the positive effects of the free movement of persons. Here are the remarkable statements of two renowned Swiss economists on the question: Has the free movement of persons boosted wages and economic growth – also per capita?

Reiner Eichenberger, Professor of Economic and Financial Policy at the University of Fribourg: “No, of course not. Immigration means large and rapid population growth. It only inflates the economy as a whole, but over time it has increasing overcrowding effects: land, infrastructure, environmental goods, etc. become scarcer and more expensive, which of course reduces real per capita income – correctly calculated. The normal citizens are the losers.

The winners are those who benefit in the short term from the inflation of the economy, state budgets and problems: Governments, politicians who like to regulate, umbrella organisations, big landowners and some managers.”

Professor *Christoph Schaltegger*, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Lucerne, answers the question as follows: “The causal effect of the free movement of persons on wages, economic growth and productivity can hardly be precisely determined. [...] The free movement of persons has presumably resulted above all in a quantity effect: more people have produced and consumed more goods and services in Switzerland.”

Source: Kälin, Karl and Altermatt, Sven. “Wie viel wert sind die bilateralen Verträge?” (How much are the bilateral agreements worth?), in: St. Galler Tagblatt of 1 September 2020

Immigration to Switzerland – remote- or self-controlled?

The history of Switzerland's traditionally generous immigration policy

by Dr. rer. publ. Werner Wüthrich

On September 27, we will vote on four referenda at the federal level – on paternity leave, a hunting law (which makes it easier to shoot wolves), on the acquisition of fighter aircraft and on new child deductions in federal taxes. On the same day, there will also be a vote on a popular initiative that aims to create the constitutional basis for the resumption of our autonomous control of immigration (Limitation Initiative). Let us look at some of the related considerations:

How did the Swiss population deal with immigration in earlier times? – In the decades before the founding of the federal state in 1848, Switzerland was rather a poor country of emigration, and famine was still a frequent occurrence after failed harvests. Up to the 19th century, many of our young men still earned their money in the military service abroad. All over the world, we find the traces of emigrants mainly from mountain cantons like Glarus, Wallis, Graubünden or Ticino. The country was still many years behind the United Kingdom, France or even Germany, especially in railroad construction. But things changed.

With the founding of the federal state, industrialisation got a boost. At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a large number of pioneering companies in Switzerland. The country profited from capable newcomers who founded companies, including pioneers such as *Henri Nestlé* and the Briton *Charles Brown* (*BBC*, now *ABB*). Switzerland had also become a tourist country.

Before the First World War, the proportion of foreigners in the population was a high 14.7 % – much higher than in other European countries. Belgium ranked second in these statistics with 3 %. Swiss borders were largely open. Anyone could come, but they had to look after themselves. During the First World War and then in the interwar period, the number of foreigners fell again – especially during the economic crisis of the 1930s.

1960s: sharp increase in immigration during the boom

By 1945, only about 5 % of the population were foreign. However, this figure rose markedly in the course of the boom of the postwar decades, reaching about 13 % in the early 1960s and 15 % in 1968. These statistics do not include the seasonal workers who worked here for a few months without their families joining



EEA vote of 6 December 1992. (Picture ma)

them and then returned home (seasonal worker statute).

Many problems of the boom remained unsolved: About 30 % of the workforce came from abroad. There were no more unemployed people. Those who lost their jobs found a new one within hours. As a result of the overheated economy, the whole infrastructure was massively swamped. School buildings were too small, the sewage system was inadequate, and modern waste incineration and sewage treatment plants were almost completely absent. Water and environmental pollution was so bad that it was impossible to swim in most lakes. The road network was by no means sufficient any longer, the highways were still under construction, housing construction was hopelessly behind, and rents and prices in general were rising. Economists no longer spoke of full employment but of overemployment.

Attempts to dampen the economy

During the 1960s and 1970s, Parliament repeatedly adopted emergency measures (which were immediately put into effect) to curb the economy. Each individual federal decree was voted on individually afterwards – a total of eleven times. One temporarily capped the number of employees in the individual companies (creation of additional jobs was prohibited), others provided for credit limits and construction stops for luxury single-family homes, prices were to be monitored, and much more. Such rigorous measures

were not aimed specifically at foreigners, but were intended to cool down the overheated economy in general. The people voted aye every time (*Rhinow* 2011, p. 36; *Linder* 2010).

First initiatives to control immigration

Soon, a number of popular initiatives were launched that went down in history as so called “Überfremdungsinitiativen” (foreign infiltration initiatives). They demanded that the authorities should directly limit immigration. The Democratic Party of the Canton of Zurich successfully collected signatures for a federal popular initiative as early as 1965. It called for a restriction of admitted and short-term foreign residents to only one-tenth of the resident population. The number of foreign residents was to be reduced by 5 percent each year until the realisation of this percentage (*Hofer* 2012, no. 89; *Linder* 2010, p. 303).

Let us look at a bit of party history: The Democratic Party of the Canton of Zurich had its roots in the FDP (Free Democrats) of this canton. It split off in 1941 and founded a party of its own. A reunion took place in 1971. In the same year the Grisons and Glarus Democrats, together with the BGB (Farmers’, Trade and Citizens’ Party), founded the Swiss People’s Party SVP, today the largest party in Switzerland.

"Immigration to Switzerland ..."

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Majority of the people rejects foreign infiltration initiatives

The fate of the first so-called "Popular Initiative Against Foreign Infiltration" was unusual. The Federal Council and Parliament rejected it. The Federal Council appealed to the initiators to withdraw it as the authorities had taken a whole series of stabilisation measures for the economy. The number of employees in the companies were about to be capped and the total number of foreign workers limited. A referendum campaign would only heat up the mood, lead to unpleasant arguments and damage the reputation of Switzerland. Federal Councillor *Schaffner* (FDP) invited the initiative committee to a personal meeting – and was successful. The canton of Zurich Democrats withdrew their initiative in 1968 (Linder 2010, p. 303).

The 1970 Schwarzenbach Initiative: The newly founded National Action Party ("National Action against foreign infiltration of our homeland and our people") was against this withdrawal. One of its representatives, National Councillor *James Schwarzenbach*, therefore launched the second foreign infiltration initiative shortly afterwards and founded his own party – the Republicans. It demanded that resident foreigners should not exceed 10 % of the population. 17 cantons would have had to reduce their annual resident population by more than half. A withdrawal was not possible this time because the text did not contain a withdrawal clause. The initiative was rejected almost unanimously in parliament. A fierce and emotionally charged voting battle began. From today's point of view, some people will think: 10 % – so what? – today we have almost 25 % – and Switzerland has not gone under. But back then conditions were quite different.

For many politicians, the phenomena brought about by the economic boom were new and unfamiliar. They still had the images of the economic crisis of the 1930s with its high unemployment in their minds. After the war, the "Schwarzenbach Initiative" was to become an important vote. Almost 75% of the voters went to the ballot box on 6 July 1970. 54 % rejected the initiative – despite the urgent problems existing on the economic front – and to the great relief of the Federal Council and the large majority in parliament who had fought for a nay. However, the aye vote was still high. Large cantons like Berne and Lucerne accepted the initiative. The mood remained tense, as the next popular initiative on immigration had already been submitted. This called for the number of foreign residents to be reduced to 12.5 % of the Swiss resident population within 10 years. Yet another popular initiative called

for a tightening of naturalisation practices (Linder 2010, p. 303, 331, 355).

End of the boom – Switzerland remains a popular immigration country

When the economic boom came to an end in the 1970s, many jobs were cut again. A large part of the urgently necessary tasks had, however, been undertaken. Many sewage treatment and waste incineration plants had been built. It was again possible to swim in the lakes. The construction industry had even built too many new apartments, so that rents fell. In 1977, the two popular initiatives mentioned above were brought to the vote, both on the same day. But only 45 % of the eligible voters went to the ballot box. The result was clear: a large majority of voters and all cantons rejected both initiatives. Switzerland had come a long way toward adapting itself to becoming a popular immigration country, and it had also succeeded in integrating many of the immigrants well – at that time mainly from countries such as Italy, Spain and Portugal. Modern Switzerland could not have been built without the skilled craftsmen from the south. They had already made a major contribution in the 19th century, for example in the construction of the Gotthard tunnel and other bold infrastructure constructions, and later also the many hydroelectric power stations throughout the country and the numerous dams in the mountains.

1980s – further popular initiatives

As a reaction to the so-called foreign infiltration initiatives, the catholic workers' and employees' movement had launched the "Mitenand-Initiative" (Together-Initiative) in 1977 – with the goal of bringing about a new "humane" policy on foreigners. Social security and family reunification were to be better regulated and work permits for one season only (seasonal worker statute) were to be abolished. Parliament and the Federal Council recommended rejection and, as a counter-proposal, referred to the ongoing revision of the Federal Law on the Settlement and Residence of Foreigners (Bundesgesetz über die Niederlassung und den Aufenthalt von Ausländern) (ANAG). This new law would significantly improve the legal situation of foreigners. The people and all the states followed the authorities and clearly rejected the 1981 popular initiative with more than 85 % (Linder 2010, p. 400).

In the 1980s, the proportion of the foreign resident population continued to increase. As a result, the National Action again launched a popular initiative. For 15 years, the number of immigrants should not exceed two-thirds of that of emigrants per year - as long as Switzerland's resident population was over 6.2 million (today 8.4 million). In 1988, again more than 70 % of

voters and all cantons said nay to this numerical restriction (Linder 2007, p. 460).

1990s: influx as a result of the Yugoslav wars, and FDP "18% Initiative"

In the 1990s, the proportion of foreigners in the population rose again. Countries of origin were primarily Yugoslavia and, more recently, Germany. In 1991 it was 17.1 %, in 1994 18.6 %, and once again a popular initiative was submitted. The so-called 18-percent Initiative came from the ranks of the FDP: National Councillor *Philipp Müller* (the later party president of the Swiss FDP) demanded that the proportion of foreign residents should not exceed 18 % of the total population. With his popular initiative, Müller followed the so-called democratic line within the FDP, ie the group wedded to far-reaching citizens' rights and direct democracy. Parliament and the Federal Council rejected the initiative. But in contrast to earlier years, the authorities reacted more calmly. To be sure, there were problems, but many of those existing in the sixties and seventies had been solved or defused. Also, the integration of the many immigrants from southern states had gone better than many people would have thought – so 64 % of voters and all cantons voted nay this time as well (Linder 2010, pp. 460, 593).

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After 2000: Free movement of persons with the EU

On 6 December 1992, the people rejected accession to the EEA with 50.3 % of the votes, after the Federal Council had submitted the application for membership. The ratio of votes was even clearer with the cantons: 18 of 26 (full and half) cantons voted against, only eight for membership. After that, the Federal Council continued to hold on to its goal of accession until 2005. In 2000, a vote was taken on the Bilaterals I. These included the free movement of persons, which is at the core of the political EU, as a central element. Since its foundation in 1957, the EU has pursued the goal of forming an ever closer union with porous borders and a "European" population – similar to that in the USA. This concept was controversial from the start. Together with Great Britain and other countries, Switzerland founded the EFTA (*European Free Trade Association*) as a counter-model in 1960. This largely preserves the political sovereignty of its members and strives in this manner for deeper economic cooperation (*Wüthrich 2020*, pp. 293-318) (Great Britain only joined the EU or the then EC in 1974 and recently left again).

In 2000 there was a risk that the Swiss people would reject the whole package of seven treaties because of the free movement of persons and the political objectives associated with this. For this reason, the Federal Council had been beating the big drum hard, claiming that no more than a net number of 8,000 to 10,000 people would immigrate per year. Many of the older generation will have thought at the time: no problem, we have already experienced much more difficult situations. So the sovereign agreed. But reality proved to be different from the claim.

A state political problem needing to be solved (popular initiatives 2002, 2014 and 2020)

There were years with a net immigration of towards 90,000 a year – as many as once in the 1960s boom – about one million within 13 years. – In 2002, 81% of the electorate and all the cantons voted against the popular initiative "Yes to Europe", which called for the opening of accession negotiations. In 2014 the people approved the mass immigration initiative, which called for more moderate immigration. In contrast to earlier initiatives, it did not demand a reduction in the number of foreigners from an already high 25%. Rather, it simply wanted to restore the right of Switzerland as a sovereign country to manage immigration independently, as it had done repeatedly for decades.

Under pressure from Brussels, parliament and the Federal Council refused to actually implement this popular verdict. In the proven "Swiss model", political powers are separated and power is shared. The people rank at the top. Today, parts of the power are shifted away from the people to the authorities (so that there is talk of a controlled democracy). But the authorities sometimes no longer adhere to the constitution, and this fact has already emerged as a problem of state policy in recent years (for example, in individual decisions of the Federal Supreme Court). It is still unresolved today and is also demonstrated by the appearance of Federal Councillors showing a lack of the appropriate restraint in referendum campaigns. If no countermeasures are taken, this problem will increase with the political integration provided for by the planned framework agreement with the EU. In "Brussels" the people do not participate in any power at all – apart from the elections to the EU Parliament (which has only very few competences). So this is a question of the sort that essentially arises in Switzerland.

The new popular initiative now on the table expressly demands that the free movement of persons with the EU be terminated, if there is no other way. It also does not demand that the high number of foreigners be reduced, but rather that Switzerland, as a sovereign country, should merely regain the right to independently shape its policy in this central area of society – as it has done many times before – with the participation of the people.

Switzerland is sticking to its traditionally generous immigration policy – even in difficult times

Over the last fifty years – since 1970 – a large number of referendums have been held on immigration and related issues. Sometimes passions were running high. Worth mentioning here are referenda on measures to alleviate the housing shortage, to improve tenant protection, to improve the integration of immigrants, to manage limited space carefully, to protect the environment, and many more.

As a result of numerous votes, the traditionally generous immigration policy was confirmed and a political culture was reinforced in which citizens feel they are taken seriously; they have a voice and can express themselves, even in difficult times, and they can thus contribute to finding solutions (*Wüthrich 2020*, pp. 335-345). The author of this article thinks this is one of the main reasons for the stability, social peace, prosperity as well as the active and lively policies we have today. – Do we really want to delegate decision-making authority to Brussels to an even greater extent – with consequences that

are tantamount to a paradigm shift and not at all foreseeable?

Direct democracy as glue that holds it all together

With its four language regions and cultures, Switzerland is a multifaceted country: the proportion of foreigners in this country is now at a record 25 %. 300,000 cross-border commuters have found a job here. Also today, more than 700,000 Swiss people live abroad. Swiss companies have created around three million jobs abroad. There is a lot of foreign capital invested in Switzerland. The country is therefore more cosmopolitan and liberal than many other countries and remains a popular immigration country. The popular initiatives that are repeatedly brought forward to control immigration and its consequences in one or the other way are rather a reaction to this openness and sometimes also a pressure valve for conflicts and issues that parliament and the Federal Council do not tackle – in no way are they a sign of isolation or even of xenophobia, as is sometimes claimed. Rather, they are even important for cohesion.

Open for future challenges

Switzerland's population has doubled since the Second World War and will continue to grow. There is already talk of the "Switzerland of 10 million". I think it would be gross negligence to renounce the sovereignty and the direct participation of the people in such a central area of society, especially after the positive experiences of the last fifty years. Moreover, the eventful history of the last decades has shown that the world is forever changing. Even today: as a result of the current crises nobody knows what is still to come. The EU is changing. Great Britain has left and is reshaping its relationship with the EU – without the free movement of persons. The EU has decided on taking the first steps towards a fiscal and debt union ... The people's "aye" to the mass immigration initiative in 2014 was a pointer in the direction of a policy that leaves scope to react flexibly to the coming challenges, including new ones – and to do so in the familiar and proven direct democratic manner that is part of Switzerland's political culture and at the core of its successful model.

Will an "aye" to the initiative endanger bilateral relations?

After a popular "aye" vote, the Federal Council has one year to renegotiate immigration – excluding freedom of movement. If Brussels does not respond, the Federal Council will have to terminate the agreement on the free movement of

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Letter to  the Editor

Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons – Considerations against the current

The army of conformists has long been on the warpath. And under the aegis of *Economiesuisse* – formerly “in situ” – it is leading a crusade against the popular initiative to restrict (not abolish!) freedom of movement between the EU and Switzerland. The closer the date of the vote gets, the longer the list of associations of various kinds, urging that the initiative be buried under an avalanche of no votes. They want to make us believe that if this bill is adopted on 27 September 2020, the Swiss will not get a foot anymore on European soil the next day. They also argue that the problem raised by the initiative does not exist, as fewer foreigners have settled in Switzerland last year than in the previous year.

Allow me, therefore, to make a few considerations speaking against it.

With regard to the threats mentioned above, the following should be considered:

1. the agreements “threatened” by the so-called guillotine clause (This means that if one agreement is cancelled, the remaining agreements also fall away, translator’s note) are only six of the “first package” (not already the hundred and odd-numbered others), including the infamous transport agreement allowing all trucks on the continent to clog our roads at will, practically for free; an agreement that is certainly of more interest to the others than to us!
2. secondly, that the famous “guillotine clause” is not activated automatically, but only if all 27 EU countries agree.
3. with regard to the number of foreigners, it cannot be ignored that the millions and more people who have settled in our country in the last 12 or 13 years, continue to develop quietly with all that this implies (explosive construction activity, expensive rents, increase in road traffic, and so on).

But is Switzerland really so ailing that it does not even have an ally among all 27 member states? All these countries are trading intensively with us. (Just think of the fact that every year Switzerland buys on average 33 billion euros worth of goods from the EU more than it sells!) Well, do you think that such a partner of interested industrialists would “spit on it”? It is possible that some bureaucrat dreams of punishing Switzerland for the possible crime of lack of Europeanism. But that all European industrialists think this way has yet to be proven!

Of course, in order to find allies a long diplomatic work is necessary. Is that why the Federal Council is so hostile to the initiative?

*Franco Celio,
former member of the Great Council for
the Partito Liberale Radicale Ticinese
(Free Democratic Party of Switzerland)*

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persons. On the basis of the guillotine clause this would also invalidate the other agreements of the Bilaterals I. However, the chances for solutions are good, even if today’s statements by individual commissioners from Brussels sometimes sound different. Both sides are interested. The EU will stick to the transit agreement in any case, because it considers the North-South link for trucks (and also for electricity) as of strategic importance under current conditions. The Swiss contribution to the Cohesion Fund is part of an amicable solution.

Broad agreement

The basis for Switzerland’s economic relations with the EU is the 1972 free trade agreement between the EFTA countries and the then EC, which was approved by all cantons and 72.5% of voters. Since then, the agreement has been supplemented with and refined by over a hundred supplementary treaties. These treaties can be developed further. These agreements are

beneficial to both sides and do not require any political involvement or connection, so that there is broad agreement.

Should we deviate from this path even more than we have already done, just to gain one or two economic advantages? – Switzerland imports more from EU countries than it exports there. As its third most important trading partner, it is a good and reliable business partner that is not to be offended by a state policy issue that goes beyond purely economic relations and that is basically regulated independently by each sovereign country.

Epilogue

Jakob Kellenberger negotiated the Bilaterals I with the EU on the free movement of persons a good 20 years ago. Afterwards he was president of the *International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC*. In 2014 he published the book “Wo liegt die Schweiz? Gedanken zum Verhältnis Schweiz – EU” (Where is Switzerland? Reflexions on the relationship between Switzerland and the EU). In it he also reflects on the political and economic development in the years follow-

ing “his” treaty and comes to the following conclusion:

“The return to the free trade concept of 1972 may indeed be the obvious way forward for a country that is struggling with the conditions for a successful post-92 bilateralism and that has no political ambitions that could only be realised by joining the EU.” (*Kellenberger* 2014, p. 186) •

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